



Sexual Assault
DEMONSTRATION INITIATIVE
Enhancing Sexual Assault Services

LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Sample Interview Guide

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Sample Interview Guide

This sample interview guide is part of the *National Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative Toolkit* on community assessment approaches to support the growth of sexual assault services within dual programs. Interviews are a tool for assessment work and this guide provides an approach to use community leader interviews as conversations with a purpose. You are welcome to use or adapt to your community needs.

Tracking

Set up a system to record the date, time, interview and interview details.
See example below for tracking:

Date: _____
Interviewer: _____

Time Started: _____
Time Ended: _____

Type of Organization:
____ Community Organization
____ Hospital
____ Law Enforcement
____ School
____ Other: _____

Scripting

It is helpful to create a script for how to conduct interviews. Below is a sample script that can be adapted to describe the goals of the interview.

Welcome/Introductions

Thank you for talking with me. Let me tell you what I would like to talk with you about today. Our agency provides support to survivors of sexual and domestic violence. We have many ways of helping survivors of sexual violence, such as our 24-hour Helpline, one-on-one support, and medical and legal help. However, we realize that many people in the community do not know about these services or they may know about them and not feel comfortable calling us.

To help us reach out better to survivors, we want to hear from community leaders like yourself about how you think we can reach the people you serve more effectively, what the community thinks about sexual violence, and how we can make this issue more visible in our communities.

I appreciate your taking time out from your busy schedule to share your thoughts. While I have some questions to ask, what I am most interested in is hearing your perspectives. If there are things I ask that you do not want to talk about, simply let me know and we'll move on to something else. And if there are things I don't think to ask that you want to tell me, please let me know. If you want to stop talking at any time, let me know, and we'll stop. Everything you tell me will be kept confidential.



As needed, let them know about what your agency is currently doing to support sexual assault survivors. Interviews can be powerful educational opportunities.

Suggested questions to open up the interview

- It will help me to hear how much you already know about our agency and, specifically about our sexual assault program.
- Did you know that we provide services to survivors of sexual violence, in addition to the work we do for domestic violence?
- What sexual assault services do you know about?

Provide an overview of sexual assault services

The extent to which you tell them about your sexual assault services will depend on how familiar they already are with this aspect of your work. Remember to keep the focus on sexual assault services as they may tend to focus their thoughts on domestic violence and

needs for sheltering survivors.

As needed, let them know about what your agency is currently doing to support sexual assault survivors. Interviews can be powerful educational opportunities.

Questions about perceptions of sexual violence

The purpose of these questions is to understand the community leader's own definition of sexual violence. Do not correct their understanding at this time. If there is misinformation about sexual violence that you think needs to be corrected (e.g., belief in myths), come back to it at the end of the interview and offer additional/corrective information by explaining how your agency understands sexual violence and what you are doing to support survivors.

- What does sexual violence look like in the community you serve?
- Who is victimized?
- Who commits sexual violence?
- Why does it happen?
- How do you think sexual violence affects the survivors? What impact does it have on them?
- What do you think survivors most often need?
- What do they need practically?
- What do they need in terms of emotional support?
- Besides the impact on individuals, are there other ways that sexual violence affects your community? Does it have ripple effects?

Questions about leader's experiences with disclosures

- Is sexual violence an issue that comes up in your work?

- Have you ever had someone in your community disclose an experience of sexual abuse, assault or rape to you?

If "Yes":

- Why do you think they told you about their experiences?
- What kind of support do they seem to be looking for?
- What kind of support, if any, can you provide to them?
- What do you do when they need something that you can't provide?

Questions about referrals and coordination between systems

- When would people in your organization/department be most likely to call our agency in to help in a case of sexual assault?
- What would you be looking for from us?
- How can we make it easier for you to do your job?
- In what circumstances would you not call our agency when dealing with a case of sexual assault?
- Are there things we are not doing in sexual assault cases that you wish we would do?
- Is there anything we are doing that makes your job harder?
- Are there things you wish you knew more about sexual assault or that you would like training on for your staff?
- What would be the easiest way for your staff to participate in training or community discussions (e.g., in-person vs. online, local trainers vs. outside experts)?

Discuss reaching out

One thing we know from working with survivors is how difficult it is for them to reach out for help. There is an incredible amount of shame they often feel as well as fear that others will blame them for what happened or that they will not be believed.

- In light of that, how can we better reach survivors in your community [or people you serve] and let them know that support is available from our agency?
- Where are places the message would be heard?
- Are there people who could spread the word?
- What means are best for spreading the word (e.g., personal contacts, word of mouth, posters, hotline cards, presentations to groups, etc.)?
- What do you think people in your community [or people you serve] need to hear in order to trust our agency?
- What fears might they have about calling us? How can we alleviate those fears?
- Since we are a small community, how can we decrease peoples' fears about others finding out?

Questions about other successes

Learning about successes in the community can provide you with good information for your program. Consider including the following questions.

- Are there other projects that have been successful in your community [or organization] that we can learn from?
- How did they reach out to people?
- Why were they seen as valuable?
- What made them effective?

Include a closing

Each interview should have time for closing comments. Use these questions to solicit final thoughts.

- Is there anything else you want to tell me?
- Is there anything we can do to support your work or ways we can work together?

Make sure to offer your thanks and convey your respect for their work. Provide brochures or other resources the community leader might use if the interview is in person. Provide any necessary information about how your agency understands sexual violence and what you are doing to support survivors.

Develop a follow-up plan

Providing follow up after an interview shows you respect the person's time. Send a written thank-you note. It is also important to follow up on any requests they made or opportunities for collaborative work that were discussed in the interview.



