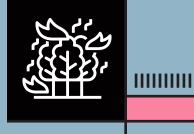
PREVENTING SEXUAL **VIOLENCE IN DISASTERS**

What is a disaster and what does it have to do with sexual violence?



A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impact that exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.¹





This includes natural disasters and human-caused disasters.²

The conditions created by disasters and public health emergencies increase risk factors of sexual violence. Those who use violence will often take advantage of the vulnerabilities created by disasters.³

We can prepare for the challenges disasters create. We can increase connective factors, strengthen our communities, and be ready to provide help when needed.



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Disasters do not affect everyone in the same way, because many of our systems make things worse for some people more than others. For example, people who are already experiencing housing security will experience hardships during a disaster.⁴

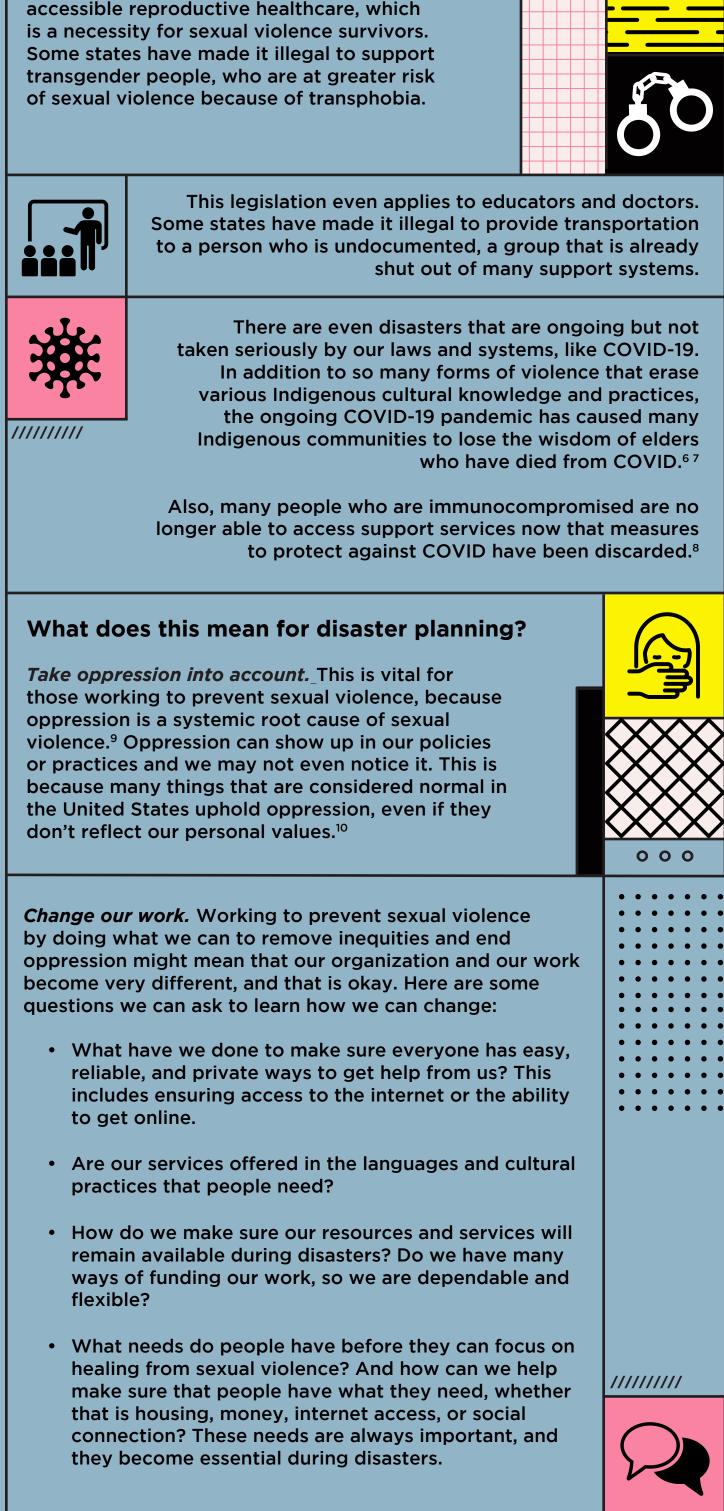


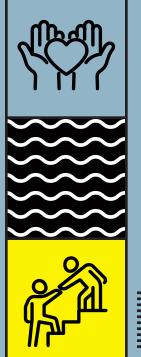


When an entire system, including the laws, policies, and practices of that system, make things worse for some people and better for others, that is called oppression. This inequity means that the systems we rely on during disasters might not help everyone equally. This puts entire groups of people more at risk when disasters happen.

Our current systems are shaped by the past, and impact us today. Historically, legal practices in the United States allowed slavery and encouraged destroying Indigenous communities and their homes, languages, and cultural practices and structures.⁵

Currently, some states have made it difficult or illegal to access safe and





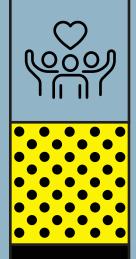
Build Community. Community connectedness is a protective factor which may lessen the likelihood of sexual violence perpetration or victimization. Building a connected community can help prevent sexual violence during disasters. We can create communities that exist outside of harmful systems, where safety comes from each other.

These communities can be places where people are helping each other out, making sure people have what they need, as well as building positive connections and enjoying being in community together. We can learn from communities that are already doing this.

Currently, the needs of the few determine social and political policy. We need to envision a way of life where all have access to resources that are equitably shared across all races and cultures and construct the structures that will support that.

A note:¹¹ The idea that each field is separate from each other is called "siloing." The movement to end sexual violence is connected to other movements - like environmental justice, labor organizing, reproductive justice, and economic justice. This means that we must break down the silos that keep our work separate, diversifying and building our funding so we can be flexible when needed. Recognizing these connections can make it easier to work together to end oppression and make our communities thriving spaces that are prepared for disasters.







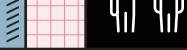
What do we need in our movements to end sexual violence?



We can learn from past disasters to know how to move forward. We may learn that our own work has contributed to harm. We can be accountable to each other about our individual and collective history and answer honestly whether we are learning lessons or recreating harm in our work. From here, we can make the changes we need.

It is important to learn lessons from past disasters. What went right and was helpful for people, and what went wrong and was not helpful? We can listen to the people who were most hurt by disaster responses. We can pay attention to people most impacted who are talking about the disasters we are living through right now.







We are stronger when we work together. There is no better time than right now. We can work together toward dismantling oppression and build systems that prioritize everyone's well-being. We can make the big changes that are needed.

Have courage to influence the systems and policies to ensure resources are equitably shared, and that racial and gender-based violence is eliminated in all its forms.



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For more information, visit the NSVRC's Sexual Violence in Disasters Resource page: www.nsvrc.org/sexual-violence-disasters

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