



HOW CAN I PROVIDE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CARE?

Guidelines for culturally responsive care:

- Understand that culture can influence beliefs about sexual assault, its victims, and offenders. It can affect health care beliefs and practices related to assault and medical treatment outcomes. It can also influence beliefs and practices related to emotional healing from an assault. In addition, it can impact beliefs and practices regarding justice in the aftermath of a sexual assault, the response of the criminal justice system, and the willingness of victims to be involved in the system.
- Understand that some victims may be apprehensive about interacting with responders from ethnic and racial backgrounds different from their own. They may fear or distrust responders or assume they will be met with insensitive comments or unfair treatment. They may benefit from responders of the same background or at least who understand their culture. Conversely, in smaller ethnic and racial communities, victims may be more likely to know the responder and doubt the responder's ability to maintain confidentiality.
- Be aware that cultural beliefs may preclude a member of the opposite sex from being present when victims disclose. Also, it may be uncomfortable for victims from some cultures to speak about the assault with members of the opposite sex.
- Understand that victims may not report or discuss the assault because the stigma associated with it is so overwhelmingly negative. In some cultures, for example, the loss of virginity prior to marriage is devastating and may render victims unacceptable for an honorable marriage. Even discussing an assault or sexual terms may be linked with intense embarrassment and shame in some cultures.
- Be aware that beliefs about women, men, sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race, ethnicity, and religion may vary significantly among victims of different cultural backgrounds. Also, understand that what helps one victim deal with a traumatic situation like sexual assault may not be the same for another victim.
- Help victims obtain culturally specific assistance and/or provide referrals where they exist.

Adapted from: Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. (1997). Police Response to Crimes of Sexual Assault Training Manual. East Hartford, CT.; and Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. (1998). Standardized Training Curriculum. East Hartford, CT.

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