



Strategies for Victim Notification

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About Joyful Heart Foundation

VISION

The vision of the Joyful Heart Foundation is a world free of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse.

MISSION

Our mission is to transform society's response to sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse, support survivors' healing, and end this violence forever.

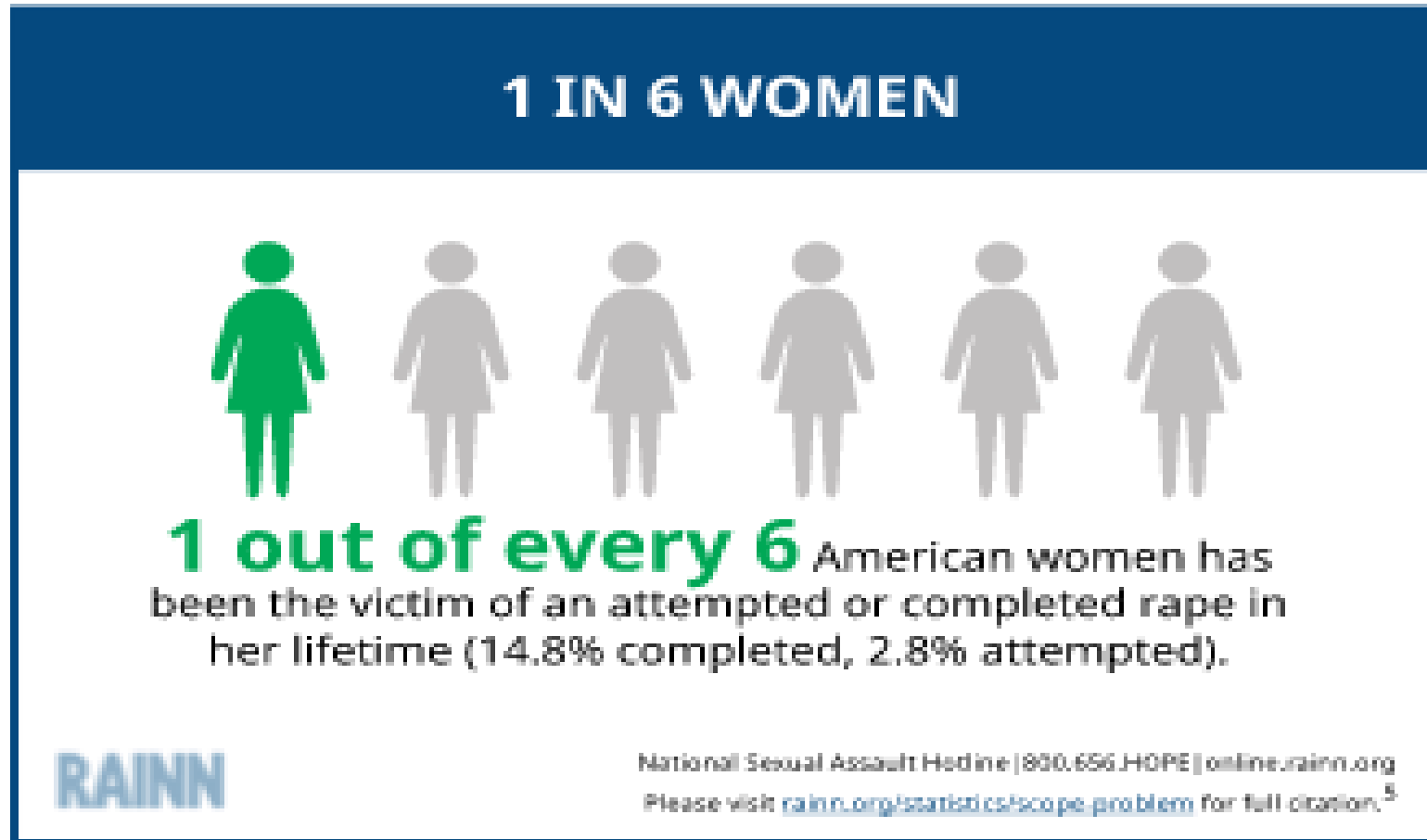
About RAINN

- RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (**800.656.HOPE, online.rainn.org y rainn.org/es**) in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country.
- RAINN operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the Department of Defense.
- RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help victims, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Framing this Conversation: the National Landscape

- **Each kit represents a survivor and a lost opportunity** for healing, justice, and enhanced public safety.
- SAKI is part of a **national reform movement** – from state laws to new and improved complementary federal programs.
- In victim notification – and all aspects of this work – we must strive to be **victim-centered** and **trauma-informed**.

Scope of the Problem



Chronic Underreporting

**OUT OF EVERY 1,000 RAPES,
994 PERPETRATORS WILL WALK FREE**

344 are reported to policeⁱ



63 reports lead to arrestⁱⁱ



13 cases get referred to prosecutorsⁱⁱⁱ



7 cases will lead to a felony convictionⁱⁱⁱ



6 rapists will be incarceratedⁱⁱⁱ



RAINN

National Sexual Assault Hotline | 800.656.HOPE | online.rainn.org

Please visit rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem for full citation.¹

Trust Promotes Physical & Emotional Healing and Well Being

- Suicidal or depressive thoughts.
 - 94% of women who are raped experience PTSD symptoms during the two weeks following the assault.
 - 33% of women who are raped contemplate suicide.
- Substance abuse.
 - 3.4 times more likely to use marijuana
 - 5 times more likely to use cocaine
 - 10 times more likely to use other major drugs
- Impact on Relationships, Productivity.
 - 38%: work or school problems, which may include significant problems with a boss, coworker, or peer
 - 84% of those victimized by an intimate partner experience professional or emotional challenges

Trust Encourages Reporting

The Majority of Sexual Assaults Are Not Reported to the Police

- Only 344 out of every 1,000 sexual assaults are reported to police.
- That means **about 2 out of 3 sexual assaults** go unreported to law enforcement.

A Closer Look

- 20% of female students report
- 32% of female non-students report
- 28% of individuals who are elderly report

Trust Promotes Successful Prosecutions



Notification: Approach with a Plan

Contacting a survivor after a significant time lapse can bring up difficult emotions and memories, and can trigger traumatic responses.

We have a responsibility to conduct notification in a way that avoids compounding trauma for survivors impacted by the backlog.

The when, who and how of notification have remained largely unanswered as jurisdictions struggle to develop procedures.

JHF Research on Victim Notification

Initiated in 2011 after work in Detroit and Los Angeles.

We brought stakeholders together: criminal justice, social services, advocacy, policy, and research professionals, as well as survivors.

We partnered with Dr. Courtney Ahrens of California State University at Long Beach.

Notification Decision Points

- **Whether and When** to notify?
- **Who** should notify?
- **How** to notify?
- **What** information should be included during notification?



Decision Point One: Whether and When to Notify

One of the first questions communities must ask is do we notify all survivors or a subset of survivors?

For example:

- Will you notify only those whose cases will proceed ?
- Will you notify only those whose SOL has run out?
- Will you notify only those where you've tested and gotten a "hit" in CODIS?

What Study Participants Said: Whether/When to Notify.

Participants in JHF's recent study had varying opinions based largely on their philosophies about notification.

- General survivor support for widespread contact and the right to make choices about whether and when to receive further communication.
- Some expressed concern about unintended consequences/harm and advocated for notification only in cases that are actively progressing.
- Others believed notification needs to happen even if there's no apparent case progression.
- **Overall: the majority of participants supported offering survivors a voice and choice in the process.**

Decision Point Two: How to Notify

Create a survivor-centered approach to notification that ensures safety, confidentiality and agency.

Notification should be done in an empathetic, sensitive and kind manner.

Notifiers should offer choices and control over decisions to survivors. This includes opting-in or out of notification.

Notification methods should take into account a survivor's current life circumstances and culture.

What Study Participants Said: How to Notify

Opinions again varied as to the best approach.

- No one-size fits all in the delivery mechanism.
- Ultimately, it's less about the *how* logistics and more about the *tone* of the interaction itself.
- Many supported a multi-stage approach.
- Strong support for a personal approach that:
 - Conveys that the investigation of the serious crime is a priority.
 - Shows concern for well-being.
 - Allows notifiers to assess survivors' reactions and needs in real-time and make timely referrals; and
 - Enables notifiers to provide immediate answers to questions.

Decision Point Three: Who Notifies?

This is key. Best practices:

- Map this out with a multi-disciplinary team in place.
- Include victim advocates. They are trained in crisis management, and likely to be well-prepared to respond to survivors' varied responses.
- Include community-based advocates and be mindful of inclusivity and culturally-competent notification.
- Train and support notifiers!

Decision Point Four: What Information Will You Share?

Reminder: in some states/jurisdictions, you may have a state or internal protocol to abide by that spells out what information the victim has a right to – consult your local law.

- Some general rules of thumb:
 - Follow survivors' lead.
 - Empowerment is key. The information belongs to the survivor.
 - The goal is to enable them to make informed decisions.
 - This is about more than a transaction about test results.
 - Be prepared:
 - Bring resources/referrals.
 - Be ready to answer questions about the process, the criminal justice system, who to contact/call for support, ongoing information, their rights, etc.

Take-Home Messages

- Notification is tricky: plan, prepare, place survivors' needs at the heart of every decision.
- Formalize the plan. Convene stakeholders to develop a written policy.
- Incorporate the principles of empathy, understanding and support.
- Build trust, provide education and support to promote informed decision making and survivor healing and engagement.
- Support and prepare your notifiers.

Call on Us for Support!

ENDTHEBACKLOG.ORG

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