

**Campus Technical Assistance
Institute
Atlanta, GA
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The Initial Call/Dispatcher Training

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Objectives

1. Enhance victim's first impression of the multi-disciplinary response team.
2. Identify what information is important for officers when dispatched to a sexual/gender-based violence related incident.
3. Identify ways to preserve the 911 call and use the tape to enhance potential prosecution.

Importance of Call Taking

- First point of contact (First impression matters!)
- Victim first impression
- Critical for Officer/Victim Safety
- Target audience changes approach (i.e. Dispatchers vs. Officers)
- Enhances communications between first responders and dispatchers
- Importance of preserving 911 recording as evidence
- Language barriers

911 Call

“The Physician”



What Information is Important

- Is there an injury?
- What's happened?
- What's happening now?
- Location?
- Suspect present?
- Weapons?

Call Priority

- Domestic in Progress - High – two officers.
- Reports of sexual assault should be treated as **high priority**, regardless of the length of time between the call to 911/Dispatch and the incident of sexual assault.

If Caller Is Not The Victim

- **Domestic:**
 - Get as much information as possible.
 - Treat the call the same as an in-progress domestic violence situation and send two officers, if possible.
- **Third Party Reporting:**
 - Follow departmental protocols

If the Caller is Not the Victim cont.

- If the suspect answers or takes control of the phone, the dispatcher should establish neutral ground to help deescalate the situation and keep those at the scene involved.

If the Caller is the Victim

- Use a calm, controlled voice. Be aware that the victim's level of emotion over the phone may not correspond to the level of violence that is occurring or did occur.
- Understand the victim's level of fear.
- *The primary consideration is the victim's immediate safety.*

If the Caller is the Victim cont.

- Ask the victim if she/he can speak freely.
- Be aware that suspects may have scanners.
- Use “code” to talk with the victim – if the suspect is still present.

If the Caller is the Victim cont.

- Obtain information from the victim about past domestic violence calls, stalking, etc. For instance, the number of times law enforcement has been called or other reports were made, the highest level of previous violence, previous use of weapons, information on valid **orders of protection**, etc. (including university/school administrative No-Contact orders)

If the Caller is the Victim cont.

- If possible, encourage the victim to go to a safe place and wait until the officer(s) arrives.
- If that's not an option, keep the victim on the telephone until the officer(s) arrives.

If the Caller is the Victim cont.

- Don't rely on the victim's demeanor when assessing seriousness of call.
- Be aware Crisis Response varies from person to person and culture to culture

911 Tape

Audio 911 Tape:

Calm Kyle



Eliciting Important Information

- Victim safety
- Re-assurance (let victim know officers are on their way, they will be there to help, etc.)
- Stay on the telephone
- Danger / lethality assessment
- Specialized questioning techniques, i.e., coding in the event the victim can't speak freely
- Nature of the call (emergency or “in-progress”)
- **Language and Cultural Considerations**

Safety Concerns

- Dispatchers *should not* cancel law enforcement response to a domestic violence or sexual assault report based solely on a follow-up call or at the request of the caller. Advise the responding officer(s) of the call. The officer(s) should check the welfare of all present at the scene and assess if a crime was committed.

Safety Concerns cont.

- Know the hang-up procedures. If a call is disconnected, call back. If the victim is disconnected or hangs-up, the dispatcher should call back and send an officer(s) to the scene immediately.

Special Considerations for Sexual Assault

Demonstrate patience and respect at all times with the victim reporting a crime of sexual assault. The victim may be in crisis and may exhibit behaviors ranging from rage, outbursts, and crying to calmness, unresponsiveness, or laughter.

This may occur whether the incident is reported immediately or after delay.

Special Considerations for Sexual Assault

- Victim safety (Medical Attention/SANE)
- Re-assurance (Advocate/Team/Resources)
- If suspect known, information/location
- Criminal Options and Campus Options (Conduct Hearing)
- Use of Weapons/Threats
- Preservation of Evidence

Preservation of Evidence

- Direct the victim to preserve evidence by refraining from engaging in any of the activities listed below.
 - 1. Changing clothes
 - 2. Washing
 - 3. Urinating or defecating
 - 4. Consuming any food or beverage
 - 5. Combing hair
 - 6. Touching, destroying, or moving any items at the crime scene

Reassure the victim that law enforcement may be able to identify and recover evidence even if she has engaged in any of these activities.

Preserve and Use Information for Prosecution

- Preserve 911 recordings and dispatch printouts.
- Retention schedule – to make sure they are kept beyond this case disposition for use in potential future cases.
- Record nature of the dispatch call and information from dispatch in their report.

Discussion Question #1

What aspects of policies for law enforcement/campus security responses to sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and stalking are effective and what need to be modified on your campus?

Discussion Question #2

Describe how policies and procedures are being implemented in practical settings and what the strengths and limits are of the policies and procedures in those practice settings.



Homeland Security