

The Role Disability Services Has in Supporting Survivors of Power-Based Violence: A Collaborative Approach

Victoria Benjamin-Banks, M.A. (she/her)

Director, Survivor Advocacy and Feminist Education (SAFE) Center

Joe Tiner, M.Ed. (he/him)

**Assistant Director for Access and Accommodations, Student Disability
Center**

Content Warning

- This session will touch on topics such as:
 - Interpersonal violence
 - Sexual assault
- Take care of yourself

What is Power-Based Violence

- SAFE Center believes that all forms of violence are rooted in power and control.
- Our office specifically supports survivors of sexual assault and harassment, dating and domestic violence, stalking, and adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.
- Interchangeability of power-based, interpersonal, and gender-based violence.

Who are Survivors?

- 1 in 6 Women
- 1 in 4 Men
- 75% of Trans individuals
- People with disabilities are twice as likely to experience violent crime compared to their non-disabled peers.
- 80% of women with disabilities have been sexually assaulted, and they experience intimate partner violence at a rate 40% higher than non-disabled women.
- Men with disabilities are four times more likely to be sexually assaulted than men without disabilities.
- Children with disabilities are almost twice as likely to be sexually abused.

Why are these rates so high?

- Predators and perpetrators prey on vulnerability. Children, the elderly, and people with disabilities may be viewed as "easy targets" by people intending to cause harm.

What is Trauma?

- Trauma derives from events in which people feel their safety, and/or life, is at extreme risk. This might include experiences like a car accident, natural disaster, or power-based violence.
- Trauma is 100% perception, so we cannot know how a person might react to a traumatic event.
- Traumatic events change the way our brains process information, and it can lead to invisible disabilities, like fibromyalgia or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
 - The compounding impact of trauma on people with already existing disabilities cannot be understated.

Trauma-Informed Care

- This is a way we can approach human interactions to ensure we do not cause further harm to trauma survivors.
- Similarities to universal design
- 4 R's of Trauma:
 - Realize the widespread impact of trauma,
 - Recognize the signs and symptoms,
 - Respond using trauma-informed practices,
 - Resist traumatization

Supporting Survivors

- Believe survivors
- Be empathetic
- Listen, let the student share what they feel comfortable sharing
- Don't ask the student for information you don't need
- Let students know about their resources and offer to connect them with support

BEST Model

- Believe
- Empower
- Support
- Take care of yourself

Trauma Informed DS Practices

- Informed consent related to reporting obligations
 - Ensure students understand what information is private/confidential and what has to be reported
 - Share this in multiple ways
- Giving students choices during appointments
 - How appointments are held
 - Door open or closed
 - Where students sit
- Be flexible with documentation requirements

Collaboration with Victim Advocates

- Trainings for DS staff
 - Victim advocacy
 - Trauma informed care
 - Reporting obligations
- Warm hand offs
- Joint meetings with a victim advocate
- Victim Advocates providing documentation

Accommodations to support Survivors

- Deadline extensions
- Flexibility with attendance
- Ability to leave class
- Fidget or grounding tools
- Single rooms in housing
- Trigger/Content warnings

Title IX Process Accommodations

- Accommodations for survivors while engaging in the Title IX complaint process.
- Provide questions in writing
- Providing responses in writing
- More time to process questions before responding
- Virtual meetings/hearings

Trigger Warnings as an Accommodation

- Ask faculty to give students a heads up if there is a plan to cover certain topics in class
- Does not excuse participation or engagement expectations
- Collaborate with the student on what language to use
- Engage in the fundamental alteration process if faculty have concerns or push back.

Sample Trigger Warning

"Content warnings: provide this student advanced notice of planned course content that relates to (insert student's choice of wording for triggers). Provide these warnings either discretely directly to the student or as a general announcement to the class. The student is still expected to engage in the course and complete any assignments or activities associated with the content. The student understands that some topics may come up unanticipated and warnings may not always be possible."

Sources

RAINN:Statistics

Safe Alliance: Connecting Disability with
Domestic/Sexual Assault

Questions

- Victoria Benjamin-Banks
 - victoria.benjamin-banks@colostate.edu
- Joe Tiner
 - joe.tiner@colostate.edu

Session Evaluation



tinyurl.com/AHEADFeedback

Your feedback helps shape future programming.

Thank you for attending!