


**ABC/PMN TV**

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**The S.A.R.T. Approach**

Why all communities should have a  
SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM

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**WHAT IS A SART?**

- A SART is a Sexual Assault Response Team that works to coordinate the community's response to sexual assault. Its mission is to facilitate a collaborative, victim-centered approach to the prevention of and response to sexual violence.
- The development of a coordinated and collaborative response to sexual assault benefits the victim and the community and must be a collaborative effort.

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**DEFINITIONS & EXAMPLES**

- There are many examples of SARTs throughout the country.
- Each has defined itself somewhat differently.
- Keep in mind: There is no one best model or practice

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**GUIDING PURPOSE**

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Every SART must have a purpose. That purpose must address their specific needs and the vision of the entire group. Guiding that purpose must be the improvement of the community response and services for survivors of sexual assault.

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**THE MAKEUP OF A SART**

A SART team should consist of a core team:

- Law enforcement personnel,
- A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner,
- A sexual assault survivor advocate from a community-based non-profit service provider agency, if available, and
- A prosecutor.

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### BEYOND THE CORE TEAM

The SART multidisciplinary team may also include other professionals, disciplines, and community members who play significant roles in a community's effective response to sexual assault.

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### QUESTION?

ARE THE SART MEMBERS WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE THE VICTIM FEEL SUPPORTED AND EMPOWERED?

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### OVERALL GOAL: The Victim-Centered Approach

•SART member agencies must demonstrate an overall commitment to the goals of victim and community safety, perpetrator accountability and survivor emotional healing.

•The needs of the sexual assault survivor and the needs of the criminal justice system are balanced to ensure the victim-centered and offender-focused approach is maintained.

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## MICHIGAN PROGRESS

In a 2010 survey conducted by the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board, twenty-seven communities responded that they currently have a SART effort in place.

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## FORMAL vs. INFORMAL

Communities that have chosen to organize formally have developed different types of teams. While every county may not have a formalized collaborative effort in place, some have developed a "team" approach to helping victims of sexual assault.

Other groups have formed multidisciplinary or coordinating councils consisting of various community agencies that meet regularly to discuss how each member agency may better serve survivors of sexual violence.

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## FORMAL TEAMS

**Lansing Area C.A.S.A.R.T.**

Since the summer of 2004, the Lansing area CASART has been a multidisciplinary team that collaboratively responds when a sexual assault is reported, and seeks to improve community responses and services for survivors of sexual assault.

As defined by the Capital Area Sexual Assault Response Team (CASART) Policies & Procedures handbook, revised 04/01/07, Lansing, Michigan.

**Washtenaw County S.A.R.T.**

The Washtenaw County SART has been in existence since 2000.

**Grand Rapids area SART**

**Wexford County**

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## INFORMAL TEAMS

### OTHER COUNCILS WORKING TO IMPROVE THE RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT:

- The St. Clair County Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council
- Various coordinating councils and other multi-disciplinary bodies exist throughout the state
- Some informal groups also work independently, but communicate regularly to discuss ongoing concerns with the sexual assault response in their community.

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## WHY ARE SARTS IMPORTANT?

- Survivor Safety
- Community Safety
- Perpetrator Accountability
- Survivor Emotional Healing

### SECONDARY VICTIMIZATION

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## SECONDARY VICTIMIZATION

WHAT'S THAT?

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Assessment of secondary victimization consists of identifying interactions with community systems, exploring exposure to victim-blaming attitudes, behaviors, and practices, and determining impact on the survivor. Examples of secondary victimization behaviors committed by the legal system include encouraging survivors not to report, telling the survivor that the case is not serious enough to pursue, and questioning the survivor about how she was dressed. (Campbell & Rape, 2005)

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In medical settings, secondary victimization behaviors may consist of not explaining the risk of pregnancy or STDs from the assault, being rushed or inattentive with the survivor, and asking if drugs or alcohol were used by the survivor prior to the assault. Survivor's reactions may include feeling guilty, culpable if alcohol was involved, depressed, anxious, distrusting, and reluctant to seek additional help.

Current Trends in Psychological Assessment and Treatment Approaches for Survivors of Sexual Trauma, Nicole P. Yuen, Ph.D., Mary P. Koss, Ph.D., and Martin Store, Ph.D.

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## WHAT DOES A SART DO?

The SART multidisciplinary team creates policies and protocols that guide those responding to sexual violence in the community. The policies and protocols ensure that the community response is effective and that each member addresses the needs of the victim with professionalism and sensitivity.

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### UNIFIED COMMITMENT

SART members must each demonstrate a commitment to its goals and objectives of victim safety, community safety, and perpetrator accountability.

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### UNIQUE ROLE OF THE PROSECUTOR

"Prosecutors are uniquely positioned to ensure that the criminal justice system response to a reported sexual assault case is adequately offender-focused . . . Offender-focused prosecution facilitates the use of prosecutorial tools such as prior bad acts . . ." OREGON SART Handbook: Version III, July 2009, pg. 49.

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### COMMUNITY DRIVEN DECISION

The SART functions as a community within a community to make decisions that improve the response to sexual assault. Requiring a community-driven decision making process ensures that improvements are implemented and flow down to the first responders.

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## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The SART serves to help member agencies build relationships as well as educate each other. The existence of a SART presents the opportunity to cross-train its members. As each agency becomes familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the other, the SART's fosters better communication among its members. The sharing of information between member agencies aids in the effective delivery of services to survivors. Ultimately, the relationships that develop among SART members helps the SARTs work to grow.

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## THE OREGON MODEL

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## SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE OF OREGON

The OREGON Sexual Assault Response Team is a multi-disciplinary, inter-agency collaboration that unites its members in a coordinated, victim-centered approach to the intervention and care for sexual assault survivors.

As defined in the SART Handbook, Version III, July 2009, published by the Sexual Assault Task Force of Oregon.

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## SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE OF OREGON

The state of Oregon is a front-runner in the creation of the SART. After recognizing certain problems in the response to sexual assault in their communities, a group of victim advocates spearheaded a statewide multidisciplinary conference to assess how Oregon addressed adolescent and adult sexual assault. In May of 1999, 130 people from all relevant disciplines spent two days at the Sexual Assault Summit and the top needs identified at the Summit were:

- Adequate, specific, and quality training for responders.
- More financial resources to improve local responses.
- Adequate, specific, consistent and useful data.
- Closer and more cooperative local collaboration in the response to sexual assault response.

Sexual Assault Task Force of Oregon, SART Handbook, Version III, July 2009.

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## THE EARLY STAGES: COMMUNICATION & RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

SART'S must start with interagency communication, which begins with TRUST.

"Trust certainly requires an understanding and respect for the roles and responsibilities among SART members. . . . It is recommended that the development phase include ample time for the clarification of roles. If the functions of a SART are to work collaboratively to mitigate trauma, increase community safety, and prevent future victimization, more than peripheral familiarity between the responders is needed. It is as important to understand the technical components of the duties of the SART members as it is to "know each other's hearts and minds." Ultimately, the desired outcome is for the SART members to call on each other for assistance and direction, as well as hold each other accountable on behalf of the victims and a victim-centered response."

Reprinted with permission from the SART Handbook, Version III, July 2009, Sexual Assault Task Force of Oregon

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## SUSTAINING THE SART

- CROSSTRAINING OF AGENCIES
- PROTOCOL DEVELOPMENT
- MEETINGS
- CASE REVIEW

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## GOALS ACHEIVED

- Better, more victim-centered care for victims in the acute stage.
  - An increase in the number of victims coming forward for help.
  - More requests for advocacy services by victims after the acute stage.
  - More medical and mental health follow-up services accessed by victims after the acute response.
  - Better quality of evidence collection and a more consistent use of evidence and expert witness testimony during prosecution.
  - An increased percentage of victims reporting their assault to law enforcement.
  - Victims expressing greater satisfaction with the acute care they received from medical personnel and law enforcement, as well as a greater confidence in the legal system's ability to achieve a form of justice for them.
  - More law enforcement cases referred to the District Attorney for review.
  - More cases ending in findings of guilty.
- Sexual Assault Task Force of Oregon, SART Handbook: Version III, July 2009. Pg. 2.

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## HOW DO WE DEFINE SUCCESS?

Defining success for your SART may mean different things. Depending on the purpose statement and the goals defined during the development of the SART, success might not be able to be quantified. Instead, consider answering this question: Do survivors in the community feel listened to, validated, informed and supported by the available agencies? If yes, then positive change and progress is being made. If the SART can promote and maintain this type of victim-centered approach to the community's response to sexual assault around, success is certain.

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