GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Bystander
A person who, although present at some event, does not take part in it; an observer or spectator.

Bystander Effect
A sociopsychological phenomenon wherein individuals do not offer help in an emergency situation when other people are present.

Prosocial
Prosocial behaviors are those intended to help other people. Prosocial behavior is characterized by a concern about the rights, feelings, and welfare of others. Behaviors that can be described as prosocial include feeling empathy and concern for others and behaving in ways to help or benefit other people.

Diffusion of Responsibility
A sociopsychological phenomenon whereby a person is less likely to take responsibility for action or inaction when others are present. Considered a form of attribution, the individual assumes that others either are responsible for taking action or have already done so. The phenomenon tends to occur in groups of people above a certain critical size and when responsibility is not explicitly assigned. It rarely occurs when the person is alone and diffusion increases with groups of three or more.

Victim Blaming
A devaluing act where the victim of a crime, an accident, or any type of abusive maltreatment is held as wholly or partially responsible for the wrongful conduct committed against them. Victim blaming can appear in the form of negative social reactions from legal, medical, and mental health professionals, as well as from the media and immediate family members and other acquaintances. Traditionally, victim blaming has emerged in racist, sexist, and homophobic forms. The reason for victim blaming can be attributed to the misconceptions about victims, perpetrators, and the nature of violent acts.

Rape
Forced sexual intercourse including both psychological coercion as well as physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means penetration by the offender(s). Includes attempted rapes, male as well as female victims, and both heterosexual and LGBTQ rape. Attempted rape includes verbal threats of rape. All rapes are sexual assaults, but not all sexual assaults are rapes.

Sexual Assault
A wide range of victimizations, separate from rape or attempted rape. These crimes include attacks or attempted attacks generally involving unwanted sexual contact between victim and offender. Sexual assaults may or may not involve force and include such things as grabbing or fondling. It also includes verbal threats. All rapes are sexual assaults, but not all sexual assaults are rapes.

Victim | Survivor
There are two basic terms people use when describing someone who has been sexually assaulted. The most popular is to identify the assaulted as a ‘victim’ of sexual assault. This follows a logical progression: someone has been victimized, therefore, they are now a victim. We believe that if you have ever been assaulted and you have lived to tell the tale, you are a survivor. You have made it past the assault, and you have earned the title of ‘survivor’ rather than the depressing identifier ‘victim’. Being a survivor doesn’t mean you experience fewer episodes of Rape Trauma Syndrome. Being a survivor doesn’t mean you are any less entitled to emotional and physical care. Being a survivor simply means that you are not letting yourself or your life be defined by your assault.

Consent
Consent is the most misunderstood concept in comprehending the issues around interpersonal violence. Learning how to talk about consent, obtain consent, or refuse consent can help clarify each person’s responsibility to minimize the risk of unwanted sexual contacts. A working definition of consent is when one person agrees to or gives permission to another person to do something. It means agreeing to an action based on your knowledge of what that action involves, its likely consequences, and having the option of saying no. The absence of “no” does not mean “yes.” Cooperation is not consent.

Dating Violence
A pattern of assaulting and controlling behaviors that one person uses against another in order to gain or maintain power and control in a romantic relationship. The abuser intentionally behaves in ways that cause fear, degradation, and humiliation to control the other person. Forms of abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological. Victims and abusers come from all social and economic backgrounds, faith communities, and racial and ethnic backgrounds. Abuse also occurs in same-sex relationships. Both females and males can be victims of dating violence, but numerous studies reveal the reality that the majority of victims are females (usually more than 95 percent).
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Rape Culture
In a rape culture, people are surrounded with images, language, laws, and other everyday phenomena that validate and perpetuate rape. Rape culture includes jokes, music, TV, advertising, legal jargon, laws, words, and imagery that make violence against women and sexual coercion seem so normal that people believe that rape is inevitable. Rather than viewing the culture of rape as a problem to change, people in a rape culture think about the persistence of rape as “just the way things are.”

Slut Shaming
A neologism used to describe the act of making a person, especially a woman, feel guilty or inferior for certain sexual behaviors or desires that deviate from traditional or orthodox gender expectations, or that which may be considered to be contrary to natural or religious law. Some examples of circumstances where women are “slut-shamed” include: violating accepted dress codes by dressing in sexually provocative ways, requesting access to birth control, having premarital or casual sex, or being raped or sexually assaulted.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
A mental disorder in which symptoms develop after exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor (including sexual victimization). Symptoms include extreme fear, helplessness, or horror; recurrent nightmares; night terrors; difficulties concentrating and falling or staying asleep; hypervigilance, irritability, and outbursts of anger; markedly diminished interest in activities; and loneliness or feelings of isolation.

Coercion
Actions and words used to threaten, manipulate, bribe, and otherwise compel someone to submit to an unwanted sexual act.

Secondary Victim
An individual who experiences sexual violence as a bystander or as someone who knows and/or loves the victim and/or perpetrator; this individual may be affected in ways similar to a primary victim.

Sexual Harassment
Unwanted verbal sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile or intimidating environment for the victim.

Stalking
While legal definitions of stalking vary by jurisdiction, a good working definition of stalking is “a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.” Among other things, stalking can consist of: following, sending unwanted gifts (etc), damaging your property, monitoring your phone/computer, threats, posting information or spreading rumors, etc.

Physical Violence
The abuser’s physical attacks or aggressive behavior can range from bruising to murder. It often begins with what is excused as trivial contacts, which escalate into more frequent and serious attacks. Physical abuse may include, but is not limited to, pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, choking, restraining with force, or throwing things.

Sexual Abuse
Physical attack is often accompanied by or culminates in some type of sexual intercourse with the victim, or forcing her/him/them to take part in unwanted sexual activity. Sexual violence may include, but is not limited to, treating the victim and other people as objects via actions and remarks, using sexual names, insisting on dressing or not dressing in certain ways, touching in ways that make a person uncomfortable, rape, or accusing the victim of sexual activity with others.

Emotional or Psychological Violence
The abuser’s psychological or mental attack may include constant verbal abuse, harassment, excessive possessiveness, isolation from friends and family, deprivation of physical and economic resources, and destruction of personal property. Emotional or psychological abuse may include, but is not limited to, withholding approval, appreciation, or affection as punishment; ridiculing her/his/their most valued beliefs, religion, race, or heritage; humiliating and criticizing her/him/them in public or private; or controlling all her/his/their actions and decisions.

Victim Advocates
Staff, interns, and volunteers of victim service programs who work to prevent sexual violence and meet the needs of victims.

Cyberstalking
The use of the Internet or other electronic means to stalk or harass an individual, a group, or an organization. It may include false accusations, defamation, slander and libel. It may also include monitoring, identity theft, threats, vandalism, solicitation for sex, or gathering information that may be used to threaten or harass.