



**Talking Points: Questions You May Get & Possible Answers:
A Quick Reference to Guidance Document for Media Response
 (PEC 2015)**



Question	Answer	Page
<p><i>Why did this happen?</i></p>	<p>Basic Response: Sexual violence happens worldwide in epidemic proportions, which has a great deal to do with why it happened here.</p>	3
	<p>Root Causes Response: When we send clear messages about some people having more value than others, we create a power imbalance that can encourage or support people with power to take advantage of people without power. For example, when sex is framed as a commodity, it is set up as a zero sum game. Those with power (most often men) “win” when they have sex. That sets women up as the “losers” in that game. We can create healthier and safer norms around sex when we frame it as a mutually beneficial interaction where both people have the right to voice what they want, like, and need from that interaction.”</p>	3
<p><i>But why here, and to us?</i></p>	<p>We know something may have happened in this community that is shocking/upsetting; there is much to be learned from understanding that the same thing happens in all communities and understanding why that is.”</p>	2
<p><i>Isn't sexual violence just part of the human condition?</i></p>	<p>Sexual violence may be epidemic, but it is not endemic. It's not a <i>natural part of human development; it's a learned behavior, and understanding how we learn it is one step in creating healthy and safe communities.</i>”</p>	2
	<p>The pain that this event has brought to us is so personal and local; it reminds us how much we care about our community. We are most conscious of the pain right now, and the anger/frustration it causes, but we can act out of our caring. Sexual violence is not inevitable. We have the tools and resources to support healthy relationships and challenge the norms, rules, attitudes, and beliefs that allow for sexual violence to happen.</p>	3
	<p>We are actors even when we believe we are doing nothing: we are making choices all the time that either support or challenge a culture of violence</p>	2
	<p>Our community has a history of coming together when times are hard. Right now, we are in the midst of a tragedy and it takes time to recover; but our community has the strength to learn and to draw on our experience as we</p>	4

Question	Answer	Page
	move through this pain. Our strengths are.....”	
<i>What about teen dating violence? How do we keep our young people safe?</i>	When it comes to safety, youth are an important community resource. The Oregon Healthy Teen Survey responses in our community indicate that 15% of teens engage in these risky behaviors. We can build on the 85% of teens who are already making healthy choices, and support that 15% with skills and information they need.	3
	If approximately 10% of men are likely to perpetrate, then roughly 90% of men are likely to support healthy, respectful and loving relationships. Working with youth, giving them the space to act on these positive inclinations, helps our community to thrive.”	3
	Youth are hungry for accurate and honest information and examples about sexuality and we keep them healthy when we provide that!	11
<i>How can we stop this violence? Is there something we could have done?</i>	Our community cares about health and safety. We’ve accomplished X, Y and Z. With our caring and our energy, we can also	4
	Our community values everyone having access to opportunity – examples. This is the foundation of creating violence-free communities.”	4
	We are actors even when we believe we are doing nothing: we are making choices all the time that either support or challenge a culture of violence	2
<i>Do we need better laws, or better enforcement to stop sexual violence?</i>	Justice is an important factor in addressing domestic and sexual violence. We can better achieve social justice by holding ourselves and others accountable. We can practice this by examining and interrupting oppressive jokes, comments, and assumptions and thus, step forward as partners in prevention.	11
<i>Isn’t the answer to talk to girls and women about how to keep themselves safe?</i>	It’s not about women protecting themselves, or about men protecting women: it’s about changing the culture so that all our community members can be safe.	6
	When women are valued more for their self-efficacy than for their ‘purity’ our communities will be safer and stronger.	6
	People/genders can be different from each other. Diversity is a sign of community health. The problems come when the differences have different values; when male ‘freedom’ is more important than female well-being.	6

Question	Answer	Page
<p><i>Shouldn't women take measures to keep themselves safe, like carrying mace and avoiding dark places at night?</i></p>	<p>Most women are hurt by people they know – family members, dates, acquaintances, coaches, teachers, or friends. Telling women they should defend themselves against strangers probably does less to protect them than to reinforce the notion that victims are responsible for the criminal actions of perpetrators, and thus to blame for their own assault.</p>	10
	<p>Our fear of dark corners is likely more the result of pervasive messaging than of the actual risk. And, to repeat, what makes dark corners dangerous is the perpetrator that may be hiding, not the woman walking past.</p>	
<p><i>She was <u>drinking</u>, so it's at least partially her fault. She should have known better than to get drunk around guys.</i></p>	<p>Entitlement and the perpetrator's choice, not drinking, causes sexual assault: giving youth good information about health, including sexual health, opens the lines of communication and supports them in making healthy choices.</p>	10
<p><i>She was <u>drinking</u> [said of a young person who is not of age to drink].</i></p>	<p>Giving youth good information about health, including everyone's responsibility to get consent and how consent is impacted by drug and alcohol use, opens the lines of communication and supports them in making healthy choices.</p>	10
<p><i>Didn't he do it because of <u>mental illness</u>?</i></p>	<p>Sexual violence is about entitlement; he was more likely following the messages coming from media, peers, institutions that tell him that violence is normal, victims will be blamed for it, and perpetrators will not be held responsible. If we were barraged by healthy, pro-social messages, you wouldn't be asking me this question.</p>	7
	<p>There's no evidence that mental illness is associated with committing sexual violence. In fact, there is evidence that, unlike other kinds of violence, mental illness is NOT a risk factor for sexual violence. Most people who have mental illness don't commit sexual violence and it adds to the stigma of mental illness to link the two this way.</p>	7
<p><i>The perpetrator had a <u>history of child abuse</u> that caused him to be sexually violent.</i></p>	<p>Child abuse is all too prevalent in our communities. Even so, the great majority of people who are abused do not grow up to be sexually violent, and making this assumption simply adds to the burden that victims of child abuse already bear. Child abuse puts people at higher risk for</p>	7

Question	Answer	Page
	continued victimization and the attendant traumatization.	
<p><i>Aren’t both men and women victims of this kind of violence?</i></p>	<p>It’s important not to confuse the use of any physical force with power and control, and exercise of entitlement, that are fundamental to gendered violence. Our culture upholds attitudes and norms that support men’s dominance and the subordination of women in society and in interpersonal relationships. We actively encourage men to be dominant and controlling in their lives, so that violence and manipulation are acceptable reactions for men who perceive their dominant status being threatened.</p>	8
	<p>While the rates of victimization among men and women may, on the surface, appear similar in terms of the number of individual acts perpetrated by or against men and women; when we add the context of exercising power and control to maintain dominance, the rates are much more skewed.</p>	8
	<p>For example, the 2010 National Intimate Partner Violence Survey found that 72% of women and 18% of men experienced fear as a result of their experience. 62% of women and 16% of men were concerned for their safety; and the same % experienced any PTSD symptoms. Additionally, virtually all stranger sexual assault is committed by men.</p>	8
<p><i>What about same sex relationships? If there isn’t a man in the relationship, is that kind of power and control violence absent?</i></p>	<p>A 2013 special report of the 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) revealed that sexual minorities experience rates similar to, and in many ways higher than, heterosexuals. In considering these rates it is important to keep in mind that factors such as the internalization of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic cultural beliefs, have been shown to be highly correlated with the existence of intimate partner violence within the LGBTQ community. These oppressive attitudes play out in both heterosexual and LGBTQ communities.</p>	8
<p><i>Wasn’t the victim partly to blame/asking for it by... [fill in the blank]?</i></p>	<p>Sexual violence is always the responsibility of the person who chose to commit sexual violence. Sexual violence happens when someone feels entitled to power and sex and makes the choice to not get consent. When we look to the victim for fault, we’re often looking for reasons it wouldn’t have happened to us (and therefore we can feel safe). When we do that, we let danger live on and any one of us could be the next victim. <i>What made the park dangerous that night was the perpetrator being there, not the victim</i></p>	8

Question	Answer	Page
	<i>walking alone, or wearing a short skirt, or stiletto heels, or!</i>	
<i>The perpetrator must be some kind of monster to do what he did. [often, when the perpetrator is not white].</i>	Calling abusers/perpetrators “monsters” disconnects them from the roots of violence – again with racial/racist alignment. Whereas when the abuser is a person of color the violence becomes a racial/ethnic characteristic.	9
	Sexual violence is monstrous for every victim, yet it is perpetrated by our neighbors, relatives, coworkers – regular people who believe they are entitled to exercise power over others without their consent. To call a perpetrator a “monster” fools us into thinking that we can recognize rapists by how they look, and that’s dangerous because often those looks involve racial stereotypes.	9
<i>Men have been doing this since the beginning of time. He just couldn’t help himself.</i>	A small percentage of men commit the majority of sexual violence. So it would be more accurate to say, “A small number of men have been doing this since the beginning of time.” And that makes me ask, “What about the majority of men who <u>can</u> help themselves?”	9
	Sexual violence is not inevitable. When we actively promote healthy speech, interactions and relationships, we create critical mass/peer pressure that can interrupt violence. We can dismantle the support system that lets violence happen.	9
<i>Wasn’t this just a hook-up gone wrong?</i>	Sexual violence is most frequent between people who know each other, that is, people who have a preexisting relationship. What goes wrong is when one person stops caring about what the other person wants, needs, likes or feels, and opts for entitlement and/or power rather than consent.	9
<i>Isn’t this just an induction ceremony that got a bit out of control (e.g. sodomy in athletic or fraternity groups as “hazing”)?</i>	Sexual violence is sexual violence. This is a clear example of how violence is about one person using their power to hurt another person; in this case it’s also about how our social message about what it means to be a “real man” leads to real harm.	9
Points that can fit anywhere!	We support everyone’s right to decide when sex is right for them.	11
	Consent lets people express what they want, like, need, and what gives them pleasure in a relationship.	11
	We all have a role in supporting healthy interactions, relationships and sexuality.	11

