

LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TO NON- STRANGER SEXUAL ASSAULT

Detective (Ret) Sandy Hein

**What is a non-stranger
sexual assault?**

The Non-Stranger Offender

- **Commits crimes in the context of an interpersonal relationship.**
 - Rapes wife/partner
 - Takes a friend home after a party when he/she doesn't have a ride
 - Parent who rapes the babysitter when taking her home.
 - College student who befriends the new freshman and invites them to an exclusive party
 - Guy who rapes his co-worker after hours

The Non-Stranger Offender

- Looks for targets that are vulnerable
 - Have emotional baggage
 - Submissive/accepting/responds to authority
 - Is marginalized in society
 - Can be intimidated
 - Appears needy
 - Can be charmed and who trusts

Weapons

- Kindness
- Conning
- Inexperience
- Manipulation
- Alcohol/drugs
- Perception
- Bystander Cooperation
- Threats
- Presence (Use of Force Continuum)

Victim Behavior

- Delayed reporting/ third party reporting
- Contact with offender after the incident
- Inconsistent responses
- Changes or leaves out pieces of the scenario
- Self blame/ questions judgment
- Previous claims of victimization
- Reluctance to get the offender in trouble

Offender Manipulation

- Tries to get the investigator to focus on the victims behavior, not his.
- Talks to friends about how “she came on to me”
- Portrays the victim as “crazy” or just “saving face” from a one night stand
- “She’s just trying to get back at me because I said I didn’t want to see her again”

Offender Manipulation

- Gets the victim drunk and then claims they were so drunk they don't remember the truth
- Comes across as very truthful and charming
- Nice and polite to victims' friends and family
- He has plenty of opportunities therefore he doesn't need to rape someone
- He says "I just got sex, I would never rape someone!"
- There was no "real force"

Combating the manipulation

- Get the offender to focus on their own actions, not the victim's
- Humanize the victim and provide a context for the behavior

Challenges to Investigations

- Usually no physical trauma or injury
- Issue is consent
- Past consensual sex between victim and offender
- Alcohol and/or drugs are often involved
- Victims often have credibility issues
- Offender has no criminal history and is usually an upstanding citizen
- No witnesses other than character

What is the best way to handle non-stranger sexual assaults?

- ▣ Have a clear and concise Departmental policy in place
 - Specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations defined
- ▣ Sexual Assault Response Team
 - Agreements with local crisis/advocacy center, SANE program, and Prosecutor's office

First Responders

- ▣ Make contact as soon as possible and assess victim's needs. Stay with the victim!
- ▣ Evaluate and secure the crime scene
- ▣ Request Detective and Crime Scene Investigators

First Responders

- ▣ Get only basic information from the victim and establish the offense
- ▣ Do NOT conduct interviews of victim or suspect
- ▣ Record observations of scene and victim and document in a basic incident report

Detectives

- ▣ Interview Survivor
- ▣ Evaluate where and what the crime scene consists of.
- ▣ Assess evidence. Search Warrant, Court orders, subpoenas needed?
- ▣ Interview witnesses
- ▣ Interrogation of suspect

Detectives

- ▣ Coordinate with other SART members
- ▣ Complete/review all reports and prepare for prosecution
- ▣ Determine evidence to be processed
- ▣ Follow up with the victim

Best Practices

- ▣ Survivor centered/trauma informed
- ▣ Team approach/SART
- ▣ Specific policies/protocol and agreements in place
- ▣ Trained/dedicated investigators and prosecutors

References

- ▣ Archambault, J., Sergeant (Ret), Sexual Assault Risk Reduction Curriculum
- ▣ Canaff, Roger. “Women, Children, Sex, Violence.”
- ▣ Unknown. “Non-Stranger Rapists, Their Motivations and Their Techniques.”
- ▣ City of Alexandria Police Directive 11.15; Response to Sexual Assaults