

Key Messages for practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who have Experienced Sexual Violence

Sexual violence and assault

Sexual violence includes sexual assault and abuse, rape, unwanted sexual advances, harassment, intimidation, sexual coercion, forced prostitution and human trafficking¹

Sexual assault includes any sexual behaviour:

that causes someone to feel uncomfortable, frightened, intimidated or threatened;

or

that someone has not agreed to, where another person uses physical or emotional force against them²

Sexual assault is an abuse of power and is never the fault or responsibility of the victim²

Rates of sexual violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Australia

Key points

- *1 in 5 Australian women have experienced sexual assault since age 15*
- *Rates 5 times higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*
- *Females aged 10-24 years main victims*
- *High rates of under-reporting and non-disclosure*

Around 1 in 5 women, and 1 in 20 men in Australia have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.³ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are thought to

experience sexual at rates 2 to 5 times higher than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.⁴⁻⁸ Unreliable recording, under-reporting, and non-disclosure by many victims makes estimating rates of sexual assault for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people difficult.^{4,5,8}

Prevention (Primary Prevention)

Key points

- *Culturally appropriate design and implementation*
- *Begin in early primary school years*
- *Community driven*
- *Long term and sustainable*
- *Holistic, flexible approach*

Primary Prevention is concerned with preventing sexual violence / assault before it occurs, including initial perpetration and victimisation. It also aims to tackle the underlying causes of sexual assault and abuse; and increase protective factors that promote pro-social behaviour - such as respectful relationships.^{9,10}

School based programs are one such mechanism. Considerations for such programs need to take into account an earlier entry point in working with Aboriginal and Torres Islander students.

Early Intervention and Identification (Secondary Prevention)

Key points

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander / culturally appropriate workforce*
- *Family and recovery orientated*
- *Coordinated with other key services and programs*
- *Awareness raising and community education*

Early Intervention and Identification (Secondary Prevention) involves early detection of risks for victimization and perpetration.⁹ It considers the known factors for victims and perpetrators of

sexual assault, and targets prevention efforts towards these 'at risk' groups.⁷ It also includes the immediate response after sexual violence and dealing with the short-term consequences, by responding to those at risk of victimisation. Early intervention aims to prevent the re-occurrence or progression of sexual assault.⁹

Support/Response (Tertiary Prevention)

Key points

- *Victim-centred*
- *Holistic health approach*
- *Culturally appropriate response and assessment*
- *Collaborative*
- *Evaluate to build evidence base*

The third stage of prevention, Support/Response (Tertiary Prevention) aims to recognise and reduce the risk of repeat victimisation and harm; and reduce the risk of the perpetrator re-offending.⁷ This includes responding after sexual violence has occurred; preventing or improving consequences and impacts for victims of sexual violence; providing support for victims; providing behaviour

change programs for perpetrators; and policing and criminal justice systems responses.⁹

Perspectives from Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Providers

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and service providers in Queensland emphasised the need for co-designed programs with a focus on primary prevention. All programs and responses should be holistic and take a healing approach, considering family, historical and local community factors. When working in regional and remote areas respect must be paid to local protocols.

References

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