



Crisis and Emergency Response

Working with survivors of sexual violence requires an advocate who has a good understanding of what a crisis is, as well as a demeanor that creates space for the survivor to have confidence in our response to their emergency. In order to provide an appropriate response to what the survivor has shared, we must know the following: What is a crisis? What is the difference between a crisis and an emergency? What are the correct actions to take to address the needs presented before me? As we answer these questions, we will always keep in mind our core tenants of survivor-centered, trauma-informed and intersectionality as the foundation of our engagement with the survivor.

A crisis is an event that removes a person from what is the norm in their life. When this occurs, there are emotional changes and a difficulty in navigating back to the norm of life. The life-altering event has rendered a person in need of assistance to return to what they have deemed their norm. During a time of crisis, a person's decision-making skills may be temporarily hindered by the event. Their ability to function and do the day-to-day tasks that were once done with ease now seem insurmountable.

An emergency, which is often used interchangeably with crisis, is a serious event or set of circumstances in which necessitates an immediate action to take place. Emergencies are signified by their requirement for an urgent or sudden response. An emergency is usually unexpected and recognizable by the harm that has occurred. A crisis and emergency can occur simultaneously or independent of one another. An emergency can be what shifts a person into a state of crisis.

Sexual violence is an emergency. Sexual violence is an emergency that propels a person into crisis, which is the impetus to the calling of a hotline. Survivors who are calling our hotline are doing so because the strategies that they have employed in the past during difficult times are no longer working. They have reached out to us as invited guests on their journey to healing. As an invited guest, it is imperative that in our response we remove our personal thoughts and feelings and focus solely on what has been identified as needs by the survivor.

The State of Michigan Sexual Assault Hotline, is supported by Crime Victim Assistance Grant Award awarded to the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence by the Division of Victim Services, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The grant award comes from the Federal Crime Victims Fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services."



Crisis and Emergency Response

In many cases, the advocate is the first line responder to a survivor who is facing an emergency/crisis situation. The call to the hotline may be the first time in which a survivor has reached out to anyone for assistance.

Therefore, the response that is provided by you, the advocate, has to be one that is trauma-informed, intersectional and survivor-centered. With a trauma-informed approach, those who are being served feel a sense of safety, from their own terms of safety. While on a call with a survivor, you will identify what safety means to the survivor by listening from a place of empathy, validating emotions, and being present on the call. As an advocate, you will also work to establish rapport by believing and being open about the services that are provided and their availability. The survivor is the one who has contacted you for service. Therefore, the survivor is the expert on the nature of the call. As an advocate your communication on the call should demonstrate respect for the survivor as well as reflect a belief that the survivor is the expert on their life.

It is necessary to address intersectionality in crisis and emergency response to ensure we are being trauma informed. To be mindful of intersectionality requires that we take into account the ways in which identity has impacted and/or has the ability to impact an individual's experiences in life. Additionally, how a person can manage their crisis or emergency by understanding of available options, resiliency/resources, systems engagement, and communication capacity/willingness. The way in which a person moves through the world; marginalization and/or privilege shows up when there is a crisis. As an advocate we listen and respond to the person based on all of the information that is shared to assure that the response is tailored and inclusive.

Survivor-centered in a crisis and/or emergency can be achieved simply by following the lead of the survivor. Once the survivor shares with you the nature of the crisis and/or emergency, validation of feelings and recognition of the experience is critical. Express belief to the survivor. Express that it is not their fault. When the survivor is in a place where they feel they have been heard and validated, options are then shared. The options shared should also contain the outcomes that may exist with each option. This allows for the survivor to make an informed decision around their lives. To get the survivor to the point of being able to make the decision, validate

The State of Michigan Sexual Assault Hotline, is supported by Crime Victim Assistance Grant Award awarded to the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence by the Division of Victim Services, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The grant award comes from the Federal Crime Victims Fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services."



Crisis and Emergency Response

and acknowledgement that their victimization was not their fault is the responsibility of the advocate.

As an advocate, we take our time with the survivor. The survivor in the midst of their crisis and/or emergency requires an advocate who is capable of being present and not being propelled into crisis. The crisis belongs to the survivor and as an advocate, our role is to assist the survivor in moving out of crisis.

We remain calm while with the survivor. We believe, we affirm it is not their fault, we are present, we listen, and we provide the help needed during this time of crisis. The presence of an advocate who is not only well-versed in resources, is a necessity for a survivor. Your ability to listen, empathize and connect will be the gateway to the survivor feeling supported enough to take advantage of the resources that you have carefully gathered.

Crisis and emergency response requires an advocate who understands that a crisis belongs to the survivor who is experiencing the crisis. Advocates are positioned to assist the survivor in navigating through the crisis and/or emergency situation. By utilizing a trauma-informed, survivor-centered and intersectional approach, the advocate will be a value to the survivor as they are move forward in their healing.

For additional support in assisting a survivor, contact 1-855-VOICES4.

The State of Michigan Sexual Assault Hotline, is supported by Crime Victim Assistance Grant Award awarded to the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence by the Division of Victim Services, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The grant award comes from the Federal Crime Victims Fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services."