

A
User's Guide
for the
PACT Program
(Promoting Awareness
Of the
College Transition)



**WEST VIRGINIA FOUNDATION for RAPE
INFORMATION and SERVICES**

www.fris.org

The PACT Program was adapted by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) from its original version, which was developed by the Jane Kopas Women's Center at the University of Scranton with assistance from the Women's Resource Center of Lackawanna and Susquehanna Counties. It is revised and reprinted with permission from both PCAR and the Jane Kopas Women's Center

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USER'S GUIDE PACT PROGRAM

PURPOSE

Promoting Awareness of the College Transition (PACT) is a guide designed to promote awareness of the high rate of sexual victimization among new college students. During the first three months on campus, known as the “Red Zone,” freshmen experience a high incidence of sexual assault.

It is therefore essential to educate students about sexual violence before they arrive on campus. Freshmen students may be more vulnerable to victimization because of their newness to the campus environment. As students come to campus and experience a sense of “freedom,” they often meet new friends and test limits with alcohol and drugs. PACT prepares students to recognize potentially dangerous situations, educates them on ways to reduce their risk of victimization, and makes them aware of where to seek help and assistance for themselves or friends.

AUDIENCE

This information is designed to be shared with **high school seniors** who will be entering college. The PACT Program is most beneficial when presented to students before they actually arrive on campus.

The PACT guide provides information on the following topics:

- The “Red Zone” and why it is dangerous
- Sexual assault
- Issues related to consent
- Drug facilitated sexual assault (DFSA)
- If you or a friend are a victim of a sexual assault
- How men can help to prevent sexual assault
- Reducing the risk of being sexual assaulted
- General issues related to sexual violence
- Warning signs of a battering personality
- Helping a friend who has been a victim
- Characteristics of a healthy relationship
- Stalking
- Prevention and crisis resources

FACILITATORS

Sexual violence involves the most intimate interpersonal violence and is one of the most unreported violent crimes. Therefore, in doing sexual violence prevention work, the presenter must have sufficient knowledge on the issue to address not only the prevention component but also be able to provide crisis intervention and support to those in the audience who might disclose sexual victimization. Disclosures of victimization often occur during classroom awareness/prevention sessions.

TIPS FOR FACILITATING ACTIVITIES

As the facilitator you will need to guide the conversations to ensure that students stay focused on the topic at hand.

Consider the age/developmental level of your audience because this will impact how you present the issue and the level of discussion that you can anticipate.

Tips for effective facilitation:

- Clearly explain the purpose of the session to students.
- Create a non-threatening and friendly environment.
- Provide opportunities for interaction by using a mix of activities and approaches to engage students. Be sure that you do NOT push them past their comfort zone.
- Encourage participation by everyone.
- Ask open-ended questions to stimulate thinking.
- Use probes to clarify and add depth to responses (e.g., “Tell me more about that.” “Can you give the group an example?”).
- Seek opportunities for learning. If you are unable to answer a question, acknowledge that you will need to get that information and make it a point to follow-up at the next session. Be honest about what you know and don’t know.
- Recap what has been learned (What), how they reacted to the information (Feelings), how they interpreted what they learned (So What), and how they will take what they learned and apply it to their everyday lives. (Now What).¹

¹Tips for facilitating activities were adapted from a documents created by PREVENT – Preventing Violence Through Education, Networking and Technical Assistance.

<http://www.prevent.unc.edu>

HOW TO USE THE PACT GUIDE

Use the material in the PACT guide to assist in educating high school students about issues of sexual violence on college campuses, especially during the period known as the “Red Zone.”

The information in this guide book should be presented in its entirety. Guiding students through the material and emphasizing important points will maximize their learning experience. Research shows that students are less likely to utilize or remember information if they are given the material to read without interaction and discussion. Allow time for question-and-answer sessions to help students clarify points on which they are unclear or need additional information.

It will be important for the facilitator to decide the benefits of having males and females working together in the same session(s). Some topics may be more effectively addressed if presented in separate sessions to single gender audiences. For example, the signs of non-consent might be most helpful with male audiences, while the risk reduction strategies might be information more pertinent with female audiences.

The facilitator should create an environment that provides accurate information about the subject and encourages genuine discussion. Though this topic may be uncomfortable to discuss, communicating honestly and with a level of sensitivity will benefit students' understanding of the risks of sexual violence and help them to prevent violence from occurring.

In addition to using the PACT Program guide in classroom sessions, it could be helpful to have copies available in other areas of the school to encourage students to take a second look at the material (i.e., school nurse's office, guidance office, health educator's room and/or the library) when they are alone and have more privacy than the classroom setting provides.

INITIAL RESPONSE TO A VICTIM'S DISCLOSURE IN A CLASSROOM PRESENTATION

It would be best to let the class know ahead of time that the topic will be discussed and to offer that anyone who may be uncomfortable with the topic can make other arrangements with the facilitator for that class period. When sexual violence is discussed in a classroom setting, initially acknowledge that there may be people in the room who have experienced violence and request that everyone in the group be respectful of this fact. Let group members know how to contact you (or other professionals such as a victim advocate from the rape crisis center) if the discussion disturbs them or motivates them to disclose an experience of victimization. Clearly disclose your mandatory reporting obligations.

Most disclosures will occur after a presentation. One individual may want to talk about the experience; another may just want referral information. Always find a safe and private place where the person can talk without fear of disclosing personal information to others.

You do not need to ask questions about the details of the incident; only ask about the person's immediate needs. Answer questions and provide referral information. Encourage them to seek resources to help with their situation. Do not judge the victim or tell them what you think he/she should do. Offer assurance that there are people willing to help. Be a good listener. Victims need to know that they are believed and that what happened to them was NOT their fault.

DISCLOSURES OF VICTIMIZATION

If a person discloses sexual victimization during an educational presentation, attempt to acknowledge the disclosure without stopping the presentation. A sincere comment (such as “I am so sorry that you have had to go through that experience and I would be happy to talk with you after this presentation if you would like”) validates the disclosure and offers support while still maintaining the purpose of the program.

RESPONDING TO A VICTIM

Your response to an individual victim must be adapted to that person’s needs and circumstances. Keep in mind that a victim’s experiences and reactions to sexual violence may be affected by multiple factors, such as (Office on Violence Against Women, 2004):

- Age/developmental level
- Gender and/or gender identity
- Existence of a disability
- Language needs and communication modalities
- Ethnic and cultural beliefs and practices
- Economic status, including homelessness
- Immigration and refugee status
- Sexual orientation
- Military status
- History of prior victimization
- Past experiences with the responding systems (medical, criminal justice, victim advocacy, etc.)
- Whether the violence involved alcohol and/or drugs
- Prior relationship with the offender, if any
- Whether the assault was part of a broader continuum of violence and/or oppression (family violence, gang violence, hate crimes, trafficking, etc.)
- Whether physical injuries were sustained and the severity of the injuries
- Whether the victim was engaged in illegal activities at the time of the violence (voluntary use of illegal drugs or underage drinking) or has outstanding criminal charges
- Whether the victim was involved in activities prior to the violence that traditionally generate victim blaming (drinking alcohol); and
- Capacity to cope with trauma and the level of support available

Because there are so many variables that can affect a victim’s experience of and reaction to sexual violence, it is critical to **ask each victim: “Is there anything I should know that will enable me to better assist you?”** Listen carefully to what is said, observe the verbal and non-verbal cues, and let the victim guide you in how to best support her/him.

STATE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO DISCLOSURES OF VICTIMIZATION

In West Virginia, a victim can decide whether or not to report sexual violence to law enforcement **UNLESS the situation meets the criteria for mandatory reporting**. If a mandatory report is NOT required, encourage the victim to initiate the report and help connect the victims to other resources and information.

MANDATORY REPORTING

In West Virginia, state law (WVC§9-6-9) has identified individuals who must report suspected abuse or neglect of *adults* who are incapacitated or of emergency situations where adults who are incapacitated are at imminent risk of serious harm. These mandated reporters include: medical, dental and mental health professionals; Christian Science practitioners; religious healers; social service workers; law enforcement officers; humane officers; state or regional ombudsmen; and employees of nursing homes or other residential facilities. An adult who is considered “incapacitated,” according to state law, is someone who cannot independently conduct daily life sustaining activities due to a physical, mental or other infirmity. Abuse, neglect or an emergency situation involving an adult who is incapacitated should be reported to the local Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Adult Protective Services (APS), *or* the 24-hour hotline provided for this purpose (800-352-6513).

Mandatory reporters of suspected or observed mistreatment of a *minor* in West Virginia include: medical, dental or mental health professionals, religious healers and members of the clergy, Christian Science practitioners, social service workers, school teachers and other school personnel, child care or foster care workers, humane officers, emergency medical services personnel, peace officers or law enforcement officials, circuit court and family court judges, employees of the Division of Juvenile Services and magistrates. Reports should be made to DHHR, Child Protective Services (CPS), *or* 800-352-6513 (same as above number).

The initial verbal report to DHHR should be followed within 48 hours with a written report, using DHHR’s forms or forms your organization has developed for this purpose. (Also see WV S.A.F.E.’s training module, *Sexual Violence 101. Mandatory Reporting*, through www.fris.org.)

EVALUATION

It will be important to know if the PACT information has had an impact in changing the attitudes and behaviors of students. Have students complete a simple evaluation to assess what they have learned and how it will impact their decisions. This feedback will help you identify what information was successfully received so that it can be replicated in future sessions.