

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to talk with you about sexual violence in corrections settings. Established in 1975, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) is one of the oldest anti-sexual violence coalitions in the United States. It is a coalition of fifty rape crisis centers that provide services to the 67 counties in Pennsylvania. We also have two national projects, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC, which focuses on the prevention of sexual violence, and other AEquitas, which focuses on providing training and technical assistance to enhance the prosecution of sexual violence cases.

My colleagues at both PCAR and in the advocacy community and I, have been involved with the issue of sexual violence, which occurs in corrections settings since prior to the implementation of the Prison Rape Elimination Act in 2003. This is an issue which was long recognized as an often ignored or overlooked form of sexual violence, which presented unique barriers for both those victimized and those trying to help victims.

Rape crisis programs provide both community based prevention and interventions services. Frequently these services include organizing communities to prevent sexual violence, as well as providing counseling and advocacy services to those who are victims of sexual violence. The understanding of sexual violence has expanded since the first rape crisis centers were formed in the U. S. in the 1970s. Sexual violence has grown to include a wide range of crimes including rape, incest, child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, voyeurism, exhibitionism, harassment, and more. We also know that sexual violence can occur in a myriad of settings including homes,

schools, religious institutions, military settings, workplaces, jails, and prisons. The unfortunate reality is that sexual violence occurs more often than we like to think about. Our knowledge regarding the range of people who can be sexually victimized has also expanded to include women, girls, boys and men. Services offered by rape crisis programs have often evolved to meet the changing needs of victims of sexual violence. Rape crisis centers have also become valued parts of their communities, providing much needed expertise on issues of preventing and responding to sexual violence. They have become integral members of community collaborations responding to sexual violence, such as multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) and sexual assault response teams (SARTs).

Sexual violence is a crime of secrecy and silence; it often invokes denial. Rape, a form of sexual violence, is a devastating and often violent crime, that until recently was viewed by many as an inevitable consequence of incarceration. Parallels can be seen when looking at sexual violence in the community and sexual violence in prisons, in an attempt to explain unexplainable behavior, society often seeks to blame the victim, regardless of status. Historically, victim blaming has been a common reaction to sexual violence. It is often played out through a series of questions: Why were you there, why did you go on a date with him, why were you dressed that way, why were you alone. In a corrections setting, victim blaming is played out in the assumption that the inmate caused the sexual assault simply because he has been incarcerated.

As our understanding of sexual violence has grown we have come to recognize that collectively we each have a role to play in the prevention of sexual violence. To do this we not only need to address sexual violence which occurs, but also we need to

address the cultural factors and norms that support this violence. Both a measured and serious approach to sexual violence that occurs in a corrections setting as well as changing the underlying structures and beliefs, which support sexual violence, require a collaborative or team approach.

PCAR has worked with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections on its implementation of the PREA standards since 2005. This relationship has evolved into a partnership which has a clear focus on preventing and responding to sexual violence in corrections settings. Each partner in this collaboration brings specific expertise to the table. The PA DOC is well-versed in corrections, and PCAR has three decades of expertise in responding to sexual violence. This partnership involved cross training corrections and advocacy staff, establishing policies which addressed sexual violence and a response process which included both corrections and community responders.

This team approach is not unique to corrections, it has been found to be the best approach in responding to and preventing sexual violence in multiple settings. In the 20 plus years in which I have worked addressing sexual violence one of the biggest lessons I have learned is that sexual violence is not an issue that can be solved by one person, or one agency. Both prevention and response need a multifaceted approach. It is a complex problem, which requires the expertise of multiple professions. An approach which involves community investment and coordination, not only provides for the best response to investigating and responding to inmate victims of sexual violence, but it changes the long accepted message that sexual violence is a crime of secrecy and silence. By addressing sexual violence in a collaborative manner we challenge the belief

that sexual violence is a crime which impacts only the person who has been victimized, we acknowledge that sexual violence impacts the entire community.

On a practical note, by taking a collaborative approach to sexual violence, resources are used efficiently by limiting duplication of existing services and exploiting the expertise of each member of the collaborative. Corrections staff bring knowledge related to the workings of the prison system and community based sexual violence advocates bring tremendous experience regarding the dynamics, impact and response to sexual violence as well as the cultural factors which need to change to create a safer environment.

Since the implementation of the Prison Rape Elimination Act, and for some prior to the act, we have seen excellent models for collaboration. From jails in rural Washington to Miami, Florida, collaborative approaches have evolved which address sexual violence. These efforts have resulted in not only expanding resources, but in building relationships which extend beyond the collaboration. Corrections institutions and community based rape crisis centers have found new allies and partnerships when addressing sexual violence, both in and out of the corrections settings. In a recent conversation with a colleague from Just Detention International, I was told that in every project she worked on rape crisis centers and corrections facilities found a way to work together that was meaningful. We have seen similar results in Pennsylvania, where community based rape crisis centers have developed partnerships with jails, as well as county, state and federal prisons. Relationships have evolved which have positive implications throughout the county for many. In rural South Carolina and North

Carolina sexual assault response teams or SARTs in the community will benefit from work that occurred as part of the efforts in jails and corrections. In Pennsylvania, a state prison in a very rural area attempted to do the right thing by sending out an inmate who reported a rape. The Captain called the PREA Coordinator to make sure they were following protocol. The report happened just days after corrections held a training on PREA. Unfortunately, when the inmate arrived at the hospital, the physician in charge did not allow for a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner to be called, and the local rape crisis center was not called for support services. The Captain had concerns about the treatment of the inmate and contacted the PREA Coordinator to discuss these issues. In turn, the PREA Coordinator contacted PCAR. After leaving a message for the emergency department manager and not receiving a reply, PCAR's medical advocacy coordinator contacted the hospital CEO. After a discussion with the CEO, a risk manager contacted PCAR for follow up. The hospital agreed that proper care was not provided and is currently reviewing protocols and establishing a training plan which will involve the rape crisis center. In turn, the rape crisis center will be receiving training on PREA through the PREA Coordinator and PCAR. Both the rape crisis center and PCAR will continue to follow up with the hospital and monitor this issue to make sure victims of prison rape get proper care and support. This event is also helping the rape crisis center form a better relationship with the hospital so all victims of rape and sexual assault will benefit.

Collaborations require a deep commitment and a willingness to cross the barriers of language and perspective. Both corrections staff and advocates speak different languages, but both want to do the right thing. Obstacles can be overcome

with training which focuses on communication and understanding the roles of corrections staff and advocates. Education on the dynamics and impact of sexual violence for corrections staff and the operations of corrections for advocacy staff, help each to understand the perspective of the other. Recognizing the difference in philosophy and finding the common ground is imperative to success, it is possible. When members of the collaboration are committed to do everything conceivable to prevent rape in corrections settings and to provide the optimal response if sexual assault occurs it is amazing what can happen.

I am the first to admit that these collaborations take work, we are fortunate that as the Prison Rape Elimination Act has been implemented the resources to support these collaborative efforts have evolved. The National PREA Resource Center has tools to assist corrections staff in this area, and Just Detention International has resources for advocates and survivors. Both organizations have worked collaboratively with PCAR and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center to make sure available resources are distributed to a wide audience. It is important that collaboration continues to be modeled on a national level as well as the state and local level. Continuing to build partnerships among the corrections and advocacy communities needs to include state sexual assault coalitions as well as representatives from local rape crisis centers who can identify the “on the ground” challenges which exist. There also needs to be a mechanism for ensuring resources is provided to support the expanding work of community based rape crisis programs.

In closing, the mission of PCAR is to “eliminate all forms of sexual violence and to advocate for the rights and needs of victims of sexual assault” this is a mission that will only be accomplished by many people and systems finding ways to work together.