Sexual and Domestic Violence on College Campuses

Sexual and Domestic Violence on College Campuses prepares public safety telecommunicators to recognize and appropriately respond to domestic violence and sexual assault incidents involving college and university communities. The course examines the dynamics of domestic violence, tactics for handling domestic violence calls, sexual assault and acquaintance rape, courtroom testimony, and liability. Emphasis is placed on gathering critical information, recognizing indicators of danger, communicating effectively with victims, supporting responder safety, maintaining professional documentation and testimony, and reducing liability through appropriate call-handling practices.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Evaluate domestic violence and sexual assault incidents using an understanding of interpersonal violence and victim behavior.
2. Apply effective questioning and communication techniques when handling calls involving domestic violence or sexual assault.
3. Recognize verbal, behavioral, and environmental indicators that may signal increased danger to victims or responders.
4. Gather and relay information necessary to support an appropriate public safety response.
5. Adapt communication techniques when interacting with victims experiencing fear, trauma, hesitation, or emotional distress.
6. Apply appropriate considerations when handling reports of sexual assault and acquaintance rape.
7. Demonstrate professional preparation and communication when providing courtroom testimony.
8. Evaluate call-handling decisions for actions or omissions that could increase liability exposure.
9. Apply professional practices that support victim safety, responder safety, agency policy, and an appropriate standard of care.

Module 1: Introduction

This module introduces sexual and domestic violence on college campuses and establishes the telecommunicator's role in responding to these incidents. Learners examine the prevalence and seriousness of interpersonal violence, the unique circumstances that may affect college students, and the importance of an informed and professional public safety response. The module provides the foundation for understanding how domestic violence and sexual assault affect victims and why telecommunicators must approach these calls carefully.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Evaluate the significance of sexual and domestic violence as a public safety concern within college communities.
2. Recognize circumstances that may influence whether a college student seeks assistance or reports interpersonal violence.
3. Assess how the telecommunicator's initial interaction can affect the information obtained from a victim and the subsequent response.
4. Apply a professional and sensitive approach when receiving reports involving sexual or domestic violence.
5. Relate the telecommunicator's actions to the broader goals of victim safety and effective public safety response.

Content/Activities

- Sexual and Domestic Violence on College Campuses
- Scope of Domestic and Sexual Violence
- College Campus Considerations
- Victim Reporting Considerations
- Public Safety Response
- Role of the Telecommunicator
- Professional Communication with Victims
- Brainteasers/Knowledge Review

Module 2: The Dynamics of Domestic Violence

This module examines the dynamics that contribute to domestic and intimate partner violence. Learners explore patterns of abuse, victim and offender behaviors, barriers that can make it difficult for victims to leave abusive relationships, and factors that may influence how victims interact with public safety personnel. Understanding these dynamics helps telecommunicators avoid assumptions and better interpret the circumstances described during a domestic violence call.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Analyze reported behaviors to recognize patterns of coercion, intimidation, control, or violence within an intimate relationship.
2. Evaluate how fear, dependency, isolation, and other circumstances may affect a victim's willingness or ability to seek assistance.
3. Interpret victim behavior without relying on assumptions about how someone experiencing domestic violence should respond.
4. Recognize circumstances that may indicate an increased potential for continued or escalating violence.
5. Adapt communication with victims whose personal or social circumstances may create additional barriers to obtaining assistance.

Content/Activities

- Dynamics of Domestic Violence
- Domestic Violence Statistics
- Public Opinion of Domestic Violence
- Patterns of Abuse and Control
- Victim and Batterer Characteristics
- Barriers to Leaving an Abusive Relationship
- Special Considerations for Victims
- Brainteasers/Knowledge Review

Module 3: Tactics for Handling the Domestic Violence Call

This module focuses on practical techniques for managing domestic violence calls. Learners examine information gathering, victim and responder safety, caller communication, and the importance of monitoring verbal and environmental changes throughout an incident. Particular attention is given to recognizing background sounds or changes in caller behavior that may indicate an escalating threat and communicating relevant information to responding personnel.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Formulate purposeful questions that obtain critical information without unnecessarily increasing risk to the caller.
2. Prioritize information needed to evaluate immediate threats to victims, children, bystanders, and responding personnel.
3. Interpret changes in caller behavior, background sounds, or environmental conditions as potential indicators of escalating danger.
4. Modify call-handling strategies when the circumstances of a domestic violence incident change while the caller is on the line.
5. Relay timely and relevant updates that help responders prepare for the conditions they may encounter.

Content/Activities

- Domestic Violence Call-Handling Tactics
- Initial Information Gathering
- Victim Safety Considerations
- Responder Safety Considerations
- Questioning and Communication Techniques
- Environmental and Verbal Warning Signs
- Audio: *Cycle of Violence*
- Brainteasers/Knowledge Review

Module 4: Sexual Assault and Acquaintance Rape

This module examines sexual assault and acquaintance rape, including incidents occurring within college and university communities. Learners consider the circumstances surrounding these offenses, victim reactions and reporting concerns, and the importance of professional communication. The module emphasizes obtaining necessary information while remaining sensitive to the victim's circumstances and supporting an appropriate public safety response.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Assess information provided by a caller without allowing assumptions about relationships or circumstances to influence the response.
2. Adapt questioning techniques to obtain necessary information while minimizing additional distress to a sexual assault victim.
3. Recognize factors that may contribute to delayed, incomplete, or hesitant reporting of sexual assault.
4. Prioritize victim safety and information preservation when determining what guidance should be provided before responders arrive.
5. Communicate incident details to responders in a manner that is factual, relevant, and free of judgmental language.

Content/Activities

- Sexual Assault and Acquaintance Rape
- Sexual Assault on College Campuses
- Acquaintance and Relationship Considerations
- Victim Responses and Reporting
- Communicating with Sexual Assault Victims
- Victim Safety Considerations
- Preservation of Information and Evidence
- Brainteasers/Knowledge Review

Module 5: Courtroom Testimony

This module prepares telecommunicators for the possibility of being called to testify about their involvement in sexual or domestic violence incidents. Learners examine courtroom demeanor and appearance, preparation for testimony, the Principles of Effective Testimony, and tactics that may be used by defense attorneys to challenge a witness's testimony or credibility. The module reinforces the importance of professionalism and preparation when appearing in court.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Prepare for courtroom testimony by reviewing relevant information and understanding their role as a professional witness.
2. Demonstrate courtroom behaviors that support credibility, professionalism, and effective communication.
3. Apply the Principles of Effective Testimony when responding to questions during judicial proceedings.
4. Formulate clear, concise, objective responses based on personal knowledge and documented information.
5. Maintain composure and credibility when confronted with questioning intended to challenge or discredit testimony.

Content/Activities

- Court Testimony and the Telecommunicator
- Courtroom Professional Appearance
- Preparing to Testify
- Principles of Effective Testimony
- Honesty, Brevity, and Clarity
- Objectivity and Emotional Control
- Defense Attorney Tactics
- Courtroom Testimony Review/Brainteasers

Module 6: Liability

This module examines liability associated with the handling of sexual and domestic violence calls. Learners explore individual and vicarious liability, negligence, standards of care, and circumstances in which inappropriate or delayed responses can expose telecommunicators, supervisors, or agencies to legal action. The module also addresses call-handling concerns involving protective orders, threats, abandoned calls, and the importance of following agency policy and avoiding complacency. Methods for reducing liability include training, clearly written and updated procedures, and treating each call according to its individual circumstances.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Evaluate call-handling actions and omissions to identify circumstances that may create liability exposure.
2. Distinguish between individual and vicarious liability when analyzing the responsibilities of telecommunicators, supervisors, and agencies.
3. Apply the elements of negligence to determine how duty, breach, causation, and damages may relate to communications-center actions.
4. Assess calls involving threats, protective orders, abandoned calls, or changing circumstances to determine when additional action may be necessary.
5. Apply risk-reduction practices that promote consistent, policy-based, and defensible handling of sexual and domestic violence calls.

Content/Activities

- Individual and Vicarious Liability
- Video: *University Liability*
- Negligence and Simple vs. Gross Negligence
- Four Elements to Prove Negligence
- Liability from an Inappropriate or Delayed Response
- Restraining Orders, Threats, and Abandoned Calls
- Methods to Reduce Liability and Avoid Call-Handling Complacency
- Video: *Police Fail Rape Victim* and Brainteasers

Course Completion Criteria

To successfully complete this course and earn continuing education hours, learners must achieve a minimum score of 75%. The quiz must be completed within one hour.

- CE Hours awarded: 3
- Certificate duration: 12 Months

Technical Requirements

- Desktop, laptop, or mobile device
- Speakers or headphones
- High-speed Internet access
- A current web browser