



Summary: Introductory Multisectoral Training on the Collection, Documentation, and Use of Forensic Evidence of Sexual Violence

Overview

The multisectoral training represents the first in a series of trainings developed by the Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). It is intended to serve as the introductory training which provides an overview of the key concepts and essential tools for the multisectoral approach to collection, documentation, and use of forensic evidence of sexual violence. This training is also intended to be broadly applicable without providing in-depth information on special considerations for particularly vulnerable groups (such as children and adolescents). **It is very important to note that this training alone is not sufficient to care for child survivors.**

PHR's multisectoral training on the collection, documentation, and use of forensic evidence of sexual violence aspires to:

1. build the capacity of national professionals; and
2. develop greater multisectoral collaboration among those professionals, all toward the overarching goal of achieving justice for survivors.

More specifically, the training seeks to improve the collection, documentation, preservation, use, reporting, and transfer of forensic evidence in cases of sexual violence within and between medical, law enforcement, and legal sectors.

Topics covered in the training include the importance of the multisectoral response to sexual violence, medical evaluations and interviewing techniques, forensic evidence collection, and the presentation of evidence in trial, among other topics. The training is highly interactive and experiential with a focus on skill-building exercises and multisectoral learning. You will participate in modules related to both your own profession and complimentary sectors that provide hands-on experiences that can be immediately applied to your professional practice. This approach emphasizes the importance of an effective multisectoral response and interoperability among sectors.

This training equips you to work as a first responder in a multisectoral and survivor-centered process to collect, document, use, analyze, preserve, and transfer forensic evidence of sexual violence to support prosecution of these crimes.

NOTE that this is not equivalent to the training required to be a certified forensic expert. This training is not a replacement for medical specialization in these areas and further training is required for working with special populations (for example children).

At the end of this training, you will:

- Have enhanced technical skills and capacities to collect, document, use, analyze, preserve, and transfer forensic evidence of sexual violence;
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of each sector in the medicolegal process to support survivors of sexual violence;
- Use a survivor-centered approach to ensure that survivors of sexual and gender-based violence remain at the center of the medical-legal response; and,
- Have cultivated networks of collaboration among medicolegal professionals (and other allied stakeholders) to use medical forensic documentation and investigations to corroborate allegations of human rights violations that enhance survivors' ability to access justice.

Intended Audience

The training targets multisectoral groups of medical, legal, and law enforcement professionals engaged in the medicolegal response to survivors of sexual violence. This training curriculum is designed to develop the skills of front-line first responders who are interacting directly with survivors of sexual violence.

This curriculum is designed to be used to train professionals who are working to support survivors of sexual violence in a particular community, as the materials are designed to provide participants in the training with the skills needed to collaborate as multisectoral groups of professionals. The training should include doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, police officers, forensic laboratory analysts, investigators, survivor advocates, lawyers, magistrates, and judges working together to support survivors of sexual violence in the same geographic location.

Training Modules

Note: *It is important that the content of these training modules, as outlined in the sections below, must be adapted to the context in which the training is being delivered. The medicolegal response is different in each community and country context due a variety of factors including different legal frameworks, medical systems, resource availability, history of conflict-related sexual violence, barriers to accessing justice, and cultures.*

Only after the curriculum has considered these context-specific considerations and adapted accordingly will the training be fully relevant and applicable for multisectoral actors to apply the lessons learned in this training to their daily professional work.

0. Introduction.

This module offers an introduction to the organization convening the training, the training team, and the participants. This module is also used to establish the ground rules for the training.

1. Introduction to Sexual Violence and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

This module offers an overview of sexual violence, including definitions, global prevalence, myths, risks, causes, and contributing factors as well as medical and psycho-social consequences at the individual, family, and community levels. It also discusses the contextual factors of sexual violence in times of conflict and the pursuit of justice.

2. Survivor-centered Approach to Responding to Sexual Violence.

This module focuses on the survivor-centered approach to care including the principles of a trauma-informed approach, understanding special considerations for working with vulnerable populations including men and boys, creating safe environments, and informed consent. This module reviews the four UN Guiding Principles of response to sexual violence and the key elements for delivering a survivor-centered approach to care and justice.

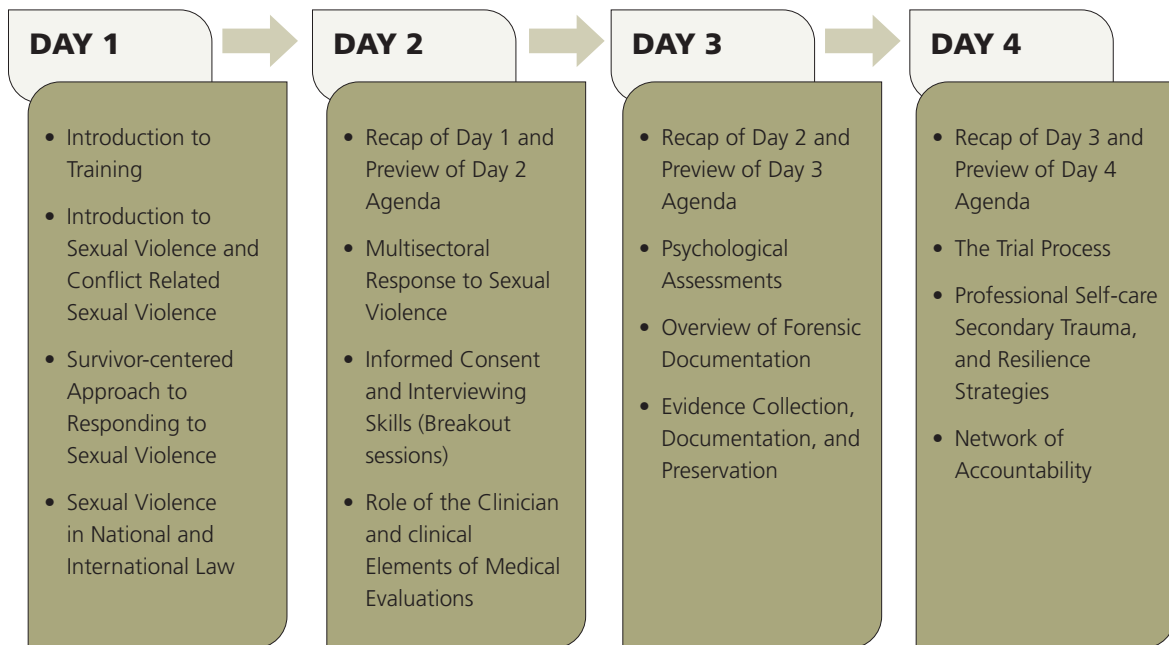
NOTE: This curriculum does not provide specific training on how to respond to sexual violence committed against children. Further advanced training is needed before caring for child survivors of sexual violence.

3. **Sexual Violence in National and International Law.**
This module presents an overview of national and international laws that address sexual violence, outlines the legal obligations for each sector under national law, and introduces the importance of forensic evidence.
4. **Multisectoral Response to Sexual Violence.**
This module explores the respective roles of the three sectors, health, legal, and law enforcement, in responding to sexual violence and discusses the goals of multisectoral collaboration and the importance of an effective community response to sexual violence.
5. **Informed Consent and Interviewing Skills.**
This module reviews the critical skills used for interviewing survivors from the clinical and law enforcement perspective. It addresses the process for obtaining informed consent. Furthermore, it examines interview techniques and how to ask key questions. These skills will also be practiced in smaller breakout groups.
6. **Role of the Clinician and Clinical Elements of Medical Evaluations.**
This module probes the elements of medical evaluations, including the clinician's intake of patient history, behavioral observations, and physical examination techniques, in response to sexual violence survivors who present at the health clinic or hospital. This module addresses the clinical and legal roles in sexual violence medical evaluations, identifies common injury patterns, and demonstrates effective forensic documentation techniques.
7. **Psychological Assessments.**
This module provides an overview of the psychological impacts of sexual violence, how to identify and document them during the examination, and how to provide trauma-informed care and referral.
8. **Overview of Forensic Documentation.**
This module introduces the medicolegal forms used to document forensic evidence of sexual violence. This module will explain the value of standardized medical certificates (and introduce context-specific standardized forms as applicable), the use of medical terms, and the process by which the form is used and transferred to police investigators. Participants will practice using the form and receive feedback from experts on the form.
9. **Evidence Collection, Documentation and Preservation.**
This module reviews the role of the police in conducting investigations of sexual violence. This module gives an overview of systematic crime scene investigation, including the types of physical evidence that may be found at the scene, on survivors, and on perpetrators. This module also emphasizes the standards for evidence collection and preservation, maintaining the chain of custody, and taking photographs to supplement or corroborate the written documentation provided in the medical certificate.
10. **The Trial Process.**
This module reviews the role of different actors in the trial process. This session will identify what information and evidence is most useful and how to prepare to testify and share findings in court. It also reviews the challenges of securing victims and witnesses during investigations and trial processes as well as the protections available to them to support their participation.
11. **Professional Self-Care, Vicarious Trauma and Resilience Strategies.**
This module covers the key elements of secondary trauma as experienced by professionals working regularly with survivors of sexual violence. This module reviews the common signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma and identifies strategies and tools to improve self-care. This module also details the development of personal resilience strategies and post-traumatic growth.

12. Network of Accountability.

This module is action-focused and explores the respective roles of the three sectors, health, legal, and law enforcement, in responding to sexual violence, the goals of cross-sectoral collaboration, and the importance of an effective community response. This module outlines mechanisms for developing and maintaining a sustainable network of professionals committed to improving prevention, treatment, and justice for survivors of sexual violence and encourages participants to create an action plan for ongoing collaboration.

Training Flowchart



Additional Materials

- Video: What is Informed Consent? <https://phr.org/what-is-informed-consent/>
 - This film provides an overview of the key steps for clinicians to follow to obtain informed consent from patients before, during, and after a forensic examination for sexual assault.
- Video: How to Obtain Meaningful Informed Consent. <https://phr.org/how-to-obtain-meaningful-informed-consent/>
 - This film provides an overview of the key steps for clinicians to follow to obtain informed consent from patients before, during, and after a forensic examination for sexual assault. This film is intended to be screened for clinicians.
- Video: What is Forensic Photography? <https://phr.org/what-is-forensic-photography/>
 - This film provides an overview of the key elements for documenting photographic evidence of sexual violence in connection with a sexual assault medical examination. This film is intended to be screened for clinicians.
- Foundational Principles for Applying the Concepts of Consent, Assent, Dissent and Evolving Individual Capacity to Ensure Trauma-informed Documentation, Justice, and Reparations Processes for Child Survivors of Sexual Violence. https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Foundational-Principles_7.19.24_EN.pdf
 - These foundational principles provide key considerations for professionals to use when developing and implementing consent and assent processes for child survivors of sexual violence that respect children's right to be heard and evolving capacity within trauma-informed justice and reparation processes.

- Forensic Medical Certificate. <https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Forensic-Medical-Certificate.pdf>
 - A standardized medical form to collect, document, and preserve court-admissible evidence of sexual violence.
- Forensic Medical Certificate: Practical Guide. <https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Medical-Certificate-Companion-Guide-DRC-FINAL-ENGLISH.pdf>
 - This practical guide provides tips for healthcare providers who are using the forensic medical certificate to conduct a clinical evaluation of a survivor of sexual violence.
- Facts about the Hymen. https://phr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/PHR-Hymen-Fact-Sheet_English-FINAL.pdf
 - This factsheet presents facts that show that the examination of the hymen is not an accurate or reliable test of sexual activity, including sexual assault.