

# Supporting Survivors; How to respond & refer

Office of Victim Assistance (OVA)



Office of Victim Assistance  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

# Objectives

- OVA's confidential services
- Who to refer to OVA
- How you respond matters
- How to increase helping skills
- Trauma informed responsible employee reporting
- Self care





Office of Victim Assistance  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER



- **Free and confidential**
- Information, counseling, support, & advocacy with professional advocate counselors
- For ALL CU students, graduate students, staff, faculty
- People do not have to identify with the word “victim” to receive our services
  
- 303-492-8855, after-hours phone support
- Center for Community (C4C) N450 (new location)
  - Drop-in hours Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm



# Therapy/Counseling and Advocacy

- Therapy is more about processing the impact of trauma
- **Advocacy**
  1. Resource education and accessibility
  2. Navigating systems, understanding how systems work
  3. Resource accompaniment
- OVA is a confidential advocate program



# If someone experiences . . .

- Physical Assault
- Sexual Assault
- Crime
- Hazing
- Death/loss\*
- Sexual harassment
- Natural/human- made disasters
- Experiences of bias
- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Intimate partner abuse
- Stalking
- Serious accident related to a crime
- Other . . .

OVA is here to help and is incident specific



# When NOT to refer to OVA services

## ➤ When the presenting issue or concerns is:

- Minor accidents/non-criminal
- Medical illness
- Mental health concerns
- OVA does not diagnose or prescribe medication
- Trauma in history, but is not the presenting issue
- People who are/were charged by police or the school for the incident they are seeking services for\*

## ➤ Refer to:

- CAPS (Counseling & Psychiatric Services) 303-492-CAPS
- SSCM (Student Support and Case Management) 303-492-7348
- FSAP (Faculty Staff and Assistance Program) 303-492-3020



# What impacts someone disclosing?

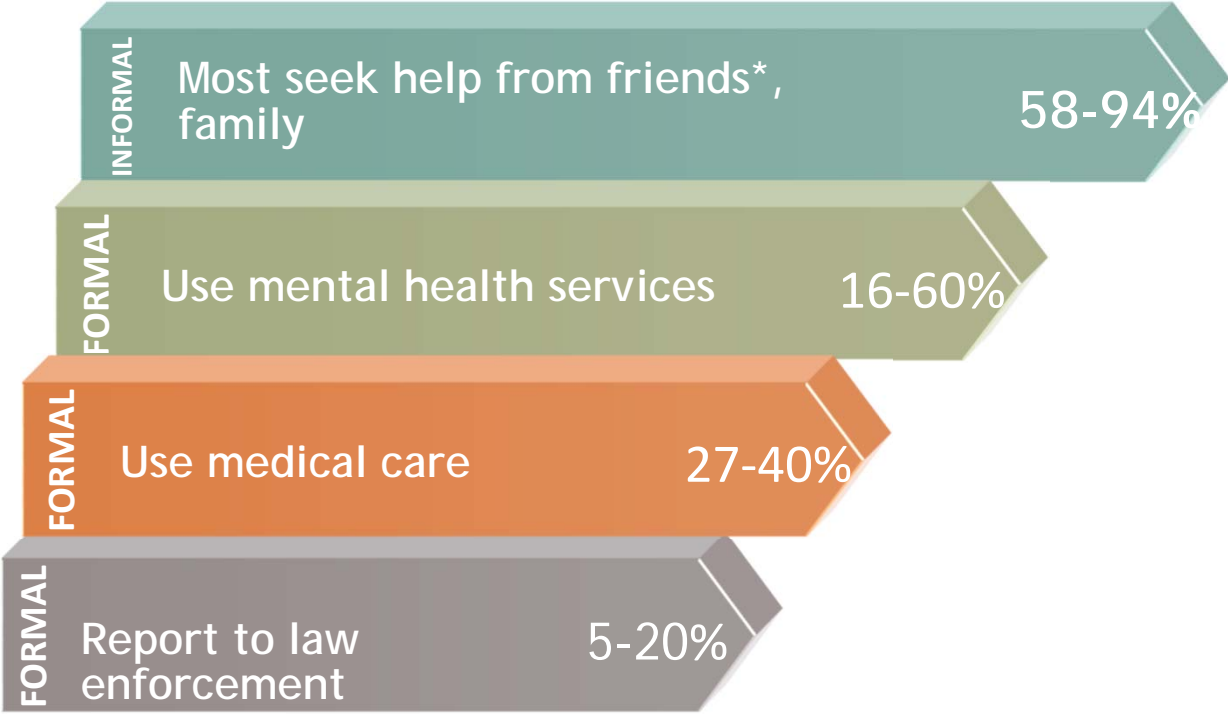
- Previous telling experiences
- Past experiences with systems
- Identity
- Financial concerns
- Media
- Fear of...
- At CU: “did not think it was serious enough to tell”

## Unique Barriers for Marginalized/ Underrepresented Populations

- Due to oppression and discrimination:
  - Experience more negative responses
  - Harmful stereotypes influence response
  - Systems built to support dominant group
  - Allegiance to group identity



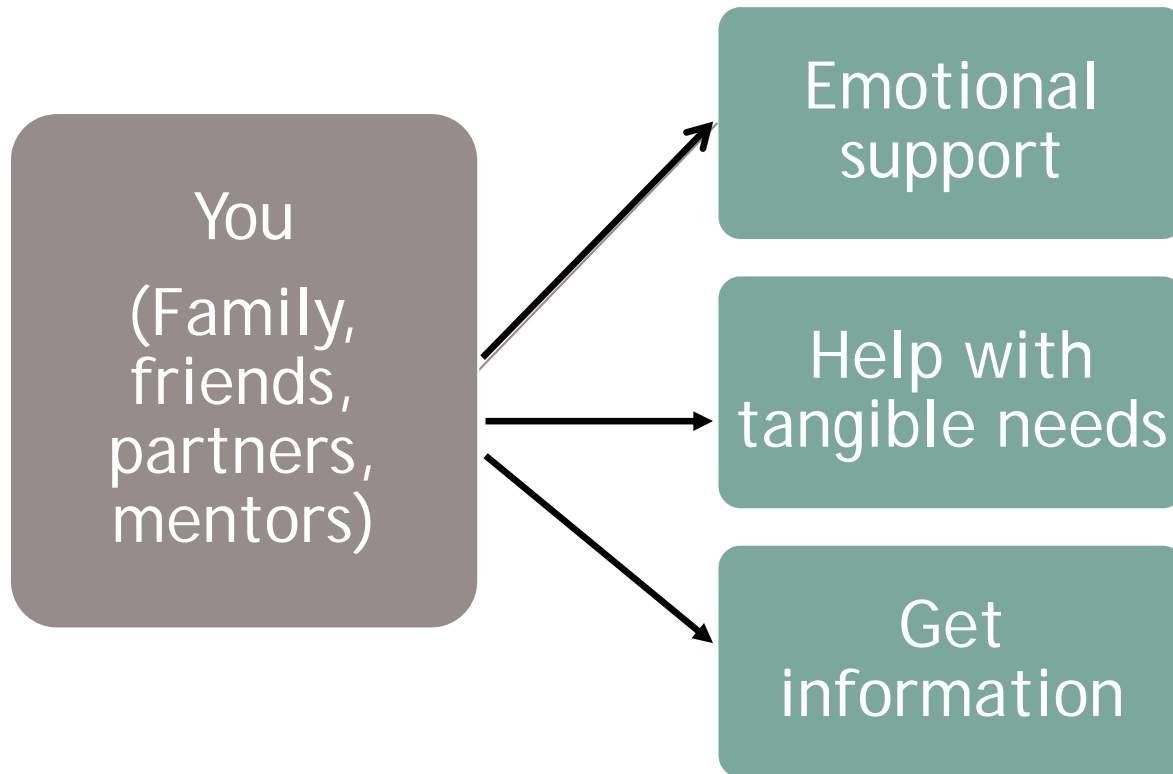
# Informal and Formal Support



\*Supported by CU 2015 Sexual Misconduct Survey



# Benefits of informal support



# Benefits of Confidential advocacy (OVA)

- Research demonstrates that “survivors who worked with advocates
  - reported receiving more services from the legal and medical system”
  - report LESS secondary victimization
- Advocacy decreases victims feeling guilty, depressed, and self blame
- Having an advocate at the start also help lead to victims seeking out future support and services

Campbell (2006), *Rape Survivors' Experiences with the Legal and Medical Systems: Do Rape Victim Advocates Make a Difference?*



# Impact of Negative Responses

- Creates an additional, measurable negative impact
  - Post traumatic stress
  - Delayed recovery
  - Poorer health
  - Self blame, shame
  - Minimization, questioning the experience
  - Silenced - will not tell someone else
- This impact can sometimes be over and above the actual traumatic event itself!



# Unsupportive Responses

- Taking control any more than you have to
  - Telling them they have to...
- Escalating the emotions of the situation
- Defining or labeling their experience
- Asking why questions
  - “Why did you . . . ?”
- Verbalizing judgment in the moment
- Telling them “I know how they feel,” “I understand”
- Minimize, blame



# Supportive/Positive Responses



- Start by believing
- Check on safety
- Listen/be open
- Follow their lead
  - Let them decide what is best for them
- Respect the survivor's need for privacy
- Summarize what you hear
- Normalize and validate their feelings
- Ask if they want to know about support resources
- Ask what would feel supportive to them
- Call OVA and/or help bring them over



# Who Is a Responsible Employee at CU?

A responsible employee\* is any employee who:

- Can hire, promote, discipline, evaluate, grade, formally advise, or direct faculty, staff, or students;
  - Examples: (not limited to): faculty, teaching assistants, residence advisors, academic advisors, coaches, supervisors, and anyone who leads, administers, or directs University programs.
  - If you do not know if you are, ask your supervisor.
- *\*This does not include OVA, CAPS, FSAP and Ombuds staff*



# What are you required by CU to report?

- Stalking
- Sexual Assault
- Intimate Partner Abuse
- Discrimination
- Sexual and Protected Class Harassment
- Retaliation



# How to tell a person you have to report

- **Support first**
  - Once there is a disclosure, offer your support
  - Avoid saying STOP!
  - Let them know you are here to help, tell them you are glad they came to you
  - Mention CONFIDENTIAL resources for additional support
- **Explain your obligation**
  - Let them know you recognize they are dealing with a difficult situation
  - It is part of your job to let OIEC know about the situation, so that they can potentially put an end to the behaviors and connect the person to resources
  - Let them know the university takes this seriously and wants them to be aware of resources on campus available to them.





# Responding to the person once you share your obligation to report

- Others knowing may bring up emotions
- Increase the person's control of the situation
- Let the person know:
  - They will not lose all control-they CAN CHOOSE who to talk to or not
  - OVA's **confidential** advocates can assist them through any legal, university conduct, academic, or medical systems
  - You will not be telling everyone about this



# Acknowledge Impact - Utilize Self-Care

- It is normal for people hearing about trauma to have emotions arise
- reporting confusion, images, filling in the blanks, shock, your own past experiences, feelings of inadequacy for not knowing how to respond, etc.
- Preventative
- In the Moment
- In Response to



**Please take out your phone and save  
OVA's info:**

[www.Colorado.edu/OVA](http://www.Colorado.edu/OVA)

303-492-8855 - has after hours phone  
support

▪ [www.facebook.com/CUvictimassistance](http://www.facebook.com/CUvictimassistance)



# Office of Victim Assistance (OVA) at CU Boulder: Cheat Sheet for CU Faculty

*OVA offers free and confidential service for all CU students, staff and faculty who have experienced a potentially traumatic or life disruptive event.*

**Hours:** 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday (except on University holidays), Summer: 8:30am-4:30pm  
**Phone:** 303-492-8855 (has after-hours phone coverage)  
**ER phone:** If no one answers the above number during office hours and it is urgent call 303-818-0590  
**Location:** Center for Community, fourth floor, N450  
**Website:** [www.colorado.edu/OVA](http://www.colorado.edu/OVA)

## Distressing events that OVA covers:

-Bias-Motivated Incidents	-Hazing
-Crime	-Serious Accidents
-Deaths (related to crime/police involvement)	-Disasters (natural and human made)
-Harassment (sexual and otherwise)	-Sexual Assault
-Intimate Partner Abuse (domestic violence)	-Discrimination
-Physical Assault	-Other...
-Stalking (persistent unwanted behaviors)	

## Services offered:

- OVA is a free and confidential office for students, grad student, faculty, and staff.
- OVA provides advocacy, information, consultation, and short-term counseling.
- All OVA staff are professional trauma informed clinicians and can provide counseling and advocacy.

## When not to refer to OVA services (instead refer to campus counseling centers-CAPS and FSAP):

- People who've been charged by the police or the university in the incident they're seeking services for.
  - There are circumstances where one may report profiling based on identity. OVA may be able to provide advocacy in cases regarding the bias. Please call OVA to consult in these cases to ensure we are directing the client to the most appropriate services.
  - Please also consult on intimate partner abuse cases as sometimes consultation is need here to help make the best referral.
- When the presenting issue is hospitalization due to suicidality or impact from psychiatric emergency.
- People seeking documentation or advocacy regarding mental health.
- Medical concerns and accidents not related to a crime.
- Grief and loss related to illness, age; not criminal related.

## What is Advocacy?

Advocacy can vary based on what the individuals needs or wants. Advocacy can include:

- Informing about reporting rights and options.
  - Sometimes people are unsure if they want to report to the police and or the university.
  - OVA is very familiar with reporting processes and can explain what to expect in a reporting process to assist an individual in making an informed decision that is right for them.
  - OVA will support whatever the client decides is best for them whether they decide to report or not. If the individual decides to report OVA can be present as an advocate during the reporting process.
- Information on medical options.
- Exploring housing options and advocating for housing changes due to safety concerns.
- Academic advocacy such as exploring academic options, assistance and support with notifying professors of needed accommodations, documentation for withdrawal, late drop, or tuition disputes.
- Providing information on how to get a civil protection order (restraining order) and accompaniment to court.
- Safety planning.
- Assistance in navigating and on-site accompaniment for medical, law enforcement, legal, university, and other systems.
- Information on additional on and off campus resources and referrals.

## What if the person does not want to report?

OVA can provide advocacy whether someone reports an incident or not. Regardless if a person wants to report to the police or the university, the individual has rights and options. OVA can assist in addressing the individual's needs confidentially.

## **How to connect a person with OVA:**

- With consent from the person in the room, on the phone or in email, call or email ([assist@colorado.edu](mailto:assist@colorado.edu)) OVA. OVA can speak with the client directly or through you to answer any questions over the phone, or request an advocate to come over in the moment.
  - If you call the main line 303-492-8855 and no one answers and the client has any immediate concerns please call the emergency cell phone at 303-818-0590 during business hours. For after-hours there is phone support on the main line 303-492-8855.
    - Immediate concerns could be a recent incident, current safety concerns, a client wants to report (there may be time considerations in some situations.)
    - If not immediate we return calls usually in less than one business day.
- Ask the person if it is okay to give OVA their contact information for OVA to outreach to the client. Then call OVA on the main line 303-492-8855 and provide the person's name, contact information, and reason for referral. OVA will then outreach. This could be done by email, which is less secure.
- **OVA has drop in hours Monday-Friday from 11am-4pm**, so for new or returning clients they can drop in without an appointment to discuss what they are looking for.
- Call us anytime to consult or discuss potential referral.
- A person may not want to be connected with OVA but may have questions about a current system they are going through. They can call us and speak with us anonymously.
- We are a resource to you too, to answer questions. Consultation, and provide support to you in your experience of helping the impacted person.

## **Other After-hours community victim advocacy services:**

- **Call 911 in emergencies**
  - The Boulder Police and the Boulder County Sheriff's Office have their own law enforcement victim advocates, these advocates are not confidential meaning they are part of the police departments.

## **Confidential 24-hour hotlines and victim advocacy services:**

- **OVA has afterhours phone support on our main line, 303-492-8855, press 2**
- Moving to End Sexual Assault (MESA), Boulder County's Rape Crisis Center 303-443-7300
- Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence (intimate partner abuse/domestic violence) 303-444-2424
- Mental Health Partners, Crisis/Mental health line, 1-844-493-TALK (8255)
- CAPS, Counseling a Psychiatric Services, for CU Students has afterhours phone support, 303-492-CAPS

## OVA Topic Areas

### **Accident**

- Serious accidents which are incapacitating, life-threatening and/or criminal in nature, which seriously disrupt someone's ability to function in the academic/work environment.
- For advocacy of injured person, OVA must speak directly with injured person.

### **Assault**

- A physical attack, often includes some sort of violence
- Includes current familial violence

### **Bias, Experiences of Bias**

- If someone is harassed in relation to their identity and or protected class
- Involves behavior, speech, or expression that is motivated by bias based on perceived race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender identity, gender expression, disability, age, sexual orientation, political affiliation/philosophy, veteran status, pregnancy status, and has a negative impact.
- Even if motivation of the experience is unknown or unconscious, OVA is a resource if there is negative impact.
- This is a broad term for when it is not discrimination.
- Can be ongoing, or a one-time incident
- Hate crimes are included in this topic area

### **Burglary**

- Is the unlawful entry into a structure, such as a home or business, with the intent to commit a crime inside.
- The crime of burglary, though most often equated with theft, doesn't actually require that a theft occur, or even be intended.

### **Criminal Mischief**

- An offense against property that typically involves any damage, defacement, alteration, or destruction of property.
- Common forms include vandalism, graffiti, egging, toilet papering, or some other destruction of property.
- If damage is connected to identity/protected class, that is then an experience of bias.

### **Criminal Trespass**

- When a person enters or remains on another's property without the owner's consent.
- The property in question could include, but is not limited to, a house, apartment, or office building.
- Different from Burglary as that requires an intent to commit a crime.

### **Death-Student/Faculty/Staff\***

- Death of someone who is a current (within the past semester) CU Boulder student, staff, or faculty
- OVA only does grief services if the death is related to a crime/policy violation and or is related to another OVA topic area, such as disaster, partner abuse, or accident.
- For grief related to illness, health, and age refer to SSCM and CAPS (see last page for more information).

### **Death-Other\***

- Death of someone not affiliated with CU Boulder, including people who have not been affiliated with CU for more than a semester.
- OVA only does grief services if the death is related to a crime/policy violation and or is related to another OVA topic area, such as disaster, partner abuse, or accident.
- For grief related to illness, health, and age refer to SSCM and CAPS (see last page for more information).

### **Disasters**

- Can occur in our natural environment, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, or fires and the like.
- They also can be humanly or mechanically generated, for example school/work/public shootings, an explosion in a building, arson, active harmer, or lab accidents that have mass impact.

### **Discrimination**

- Conduct that deprives an individual of a benefit of employment or educational opportunity on the basis of identity.

<p><b>Harassment (Non-protected class)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwanted contact. Anyone who feels harassed, annoyed, or alarmed by another person's actions.</li> <li>• Can be on-going or a one-time incident.</li> <li>• Harassment is not based on a protected class. Protected class harassment is under experiences of bias.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hazing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any activity expected of someone joining a group (or to maintain in a group) that humiliates, degrades and/or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intimate Partner Abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A pattern of one person inflicting emotional and/or physical pain/abuse on another in order to control their present/former partner.</li> <li>• Abuse and violence takes many forms; emotional, psychological, financial, physical, reproductive, and sexual.</li> <li>• The people involved have had or are in an intimate relationship and could be past/present partners, co-parents, or in a causal relationship.</li> <li>• IPA can impact people of all genders and sexual orientations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Menacing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a person threatens specifically to cause harm or injury or suggests/threatens danger.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Predatory Drugging</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a person uses a substance to maliciously subdue another person, rendering them incapacitated.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Robbery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theft (the taking of money or goods in possession of another) accomplished through the use of physical force or fear.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual Assault</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwanted, non-consensual, sexual contact.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual Offense</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwanted sexual behavior that is not sexual harassment and there was not physical contact, e.g. flashing, peeping, videotaping without all parties' knowledge, sexual extortion, stealing undergarments, etc.</li> <li>• This would include sexual exploitation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual Harassment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwelcome sexual attention that interferes with an individual's working or learning environment.</li> <li>• It may involve intimidation, threats, coercion, sexual advances, request for sexual favors or other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stalking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.</li> <li>• Fear includes emotional distress, which can include causing a person to respond by altering their activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weapon Violation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using or carrying a weapon in an illegal, dangerous, or intimidating way that is not menacing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific incidents that are potentially a criminal or policy violation and that cause safety concerns or potential for harm, harm to an individual that does not fall under other OVA topic areas.</li> <li>• Can include familial abuse</li> <li>• Also OVA is not here to label someone's experience and they may not know or have the words for what has happened.</li> </ul>

- ✓ OVA provides response and support services (counseling\* and advocacy) for CU students, staff and faculty impacted by traumatic or life disruptive incidents (past or present), such as the ones stated above in OVA Topic Areas list.
- ✓ An appropriate referral to OVA is one where the traumatic or life disruptive incident is the primary presenting issue – and what the client is wanting to address in treatment.

## **OVA is not the appropriate resource for clients with these presenting issues:**

- Mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, academic stress, homesickness, roommate disputes, etc.
- Psychological/ behavioral concerns of others
  - Includes people who are impacted by another person's suicidality (which includes people who are contemplating or have attempted suicide), self-harm behaviors (including but not limited to cutting, burning etc.), or mental health (anxiety, depression, psychotic break, etc.).
  - This is no longer one of OVA's topic areas as of Jan. 2016, but we do still have people drop in for this and we refer them to CAPS or SSCM.
- Minor accidents (not life threatening, incapacitating or criminal in nature)
- Medical illness or injury to self or loved ones
- Addictions
- Eating disorders
- OVA does not diagnose or provide medication
- People charged by the police or the school for an incident they are seeking support regarding, aka people who are the defendant, suspect, accused, or respondent

Refer to CAPS, FSAP, and or SSCM for these topics

## **\*OVA made changes to grief services - January 2018**

- Counseling services:
  - **OVA will no longer be offering grief counseling.**
    - For grief counseling refer to CAPS and FSAP.
  - **OVA will still provide** our short-term counseling services around the experiences of death **IF** related to an additional OVA topic area
    - For example death due to intimate partner abuse or an accident that was criminal in nature, or mass violence.
- Advocacy Services:
  - **OVA will no longer outreach or offer advocacy for grief and loss cases not related to crime, such as** loss due to health issues, illness, age; these will be referred to CAPS/FSAP for counseling and SSCM for academic support.
    - **A crime related grief** would be death by suicide, homicide, accidents, overdoses.
  - **OVA will continue to provide advocacy on grief and loss cases that are related to crime.**
    - Advocacy will include outreach, academic advocacy, assisting with the criminal justice process related to the death, and provide psycho-educational and resource sessions.
    - **OVA will continue** to go on scene with the police when called out for a death notification (telling someone that someone has died) or to respond to the scene of a death on campus, like a death in the residence halls.