

EN_RCI Event Recording

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Farrah: Hello everyone and a warm welcome to the Responding to Critical Incidents of Sexual Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions. I'm so excited to welcome you to this space. My name is Farrah Kahn and I'm the Executive Director of Courage to Act. Today's training is a part of our National Skillshare where we feature subject matter experts in conversation about urgent issues, emerging trends and promising practices and strategies to address gender-based violence on campus.

Our presenters today are authors of the workbook, Responding to Critical Incidents of Sexual Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions. This workbook is now freely available for download via the Courage to Act knowledge centre. So, please download a copy, share with everyone. It's a really great resource and I say that as someone who wrote it but also as someone who really saw the need for it. Before we begin a quick note on language and accessibility. Attendees can view live captions on this session by clicking on the link the chat box. You can also listen to this session in French by selecting French Language Channel using the interpretation menu.

So, go to the next slide. This work is taking place across, on and across traditional territories of many Indigenous Nations. This land that I'm on is on the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse Indigenous First Nations, Inuit, Metis people. Toronto's covered by Treaty 13, an agreement signed by the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaty signed by multiple Mississaugas and the Chippewa bands to peacefully share and care for these resources.

This agreement was broken by European Settlers. The process of colonization in Canada over the past few centuries has enacted a systematic genocide against Indigenous Peoples of this land. We see these acts of colonization and genocide continuing today in the forced sterilization of Indigenous Women, the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous Women, girls and Two-spirit People, the over-representation of Indigenous Children in care, the criminalization of Indigenous People resulting in the over-representation in prisons and environmental racism and land theft of the Indigenous territories.

As we come together to respond to the experiences of gender-based violence we must acknowledge that this is a de-colonial struggle. This cannot be separated. Supporting decolonization and Indigenous sovereignty is critical to working towards a culture of consent and accountability. Today we'll take action by inviting everyone here to read The Calls for Justice within Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. You can download the worksheet on your institution,

how your institution can answer these calls to action through the link in the chat.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about Possibly Seeds. Possibly Seeds leads the Courage to Act project. We are a leading Social Change consultancy dedicated to gender justice, equity and inclusion. We believe safe equitable workplaces, organization and institutions are possible. We believe safe equitable workplaces, organization and institutions are possible.

With over 20 years of experience working with community organizations, Governments, private and public institutions we care deeply about the impact of our work. Currently we're leading Courage to Act which is a multi-year national initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence on post-secondary campuses in Canada. It builds on the key recommendations within Possibility Seeds final report Courage to Act: Developing a National Framework to Address and Prevent Gender-based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions. Our project is the first national collaboration of its kind to bring together over 170 experts, advocates and thought leaders from across Canada to address gender-based violence on campus.

I want to take a moment to also acknowledge our funders. Our project is made possible through the generous funding and support from the Department for Women and Gender Equality or WAGE, Federal Government of Canada.

Today especially we're going to be talking about a subject around crisis on campus around sexual assault. This can bring up a lot of feelings. This work is hard and for many of us including myself we had burnout, or we are really tired and exhausted and traumatized in this work. And so, to make sure that we take care of ourselves we're having these conversations. If you have a glass of water beside you make sure you have it in your hand. Make sure your feet are on the floor and make plans for after the conversation. You matter in this work. You're precious and we need you. One of the things you can do, we have a self-care section on our Skillshare webpage. You can visit our self-care room by visiting the link in the chat.

Speakers wise I'm really excited to introduce you to all the speakers today who I have been working with for the past five years on this project and they're wonderful. So, Deborah Eerkes is a sexual violence response coordinator at the University of Alberta and the co-lead of the Courage to Act Reporting, Investigations and Adjudication Working Group.

Amal Elmi is the Equity Education and Services coordinator at Carleton University's Sexual Assault Support Centre, and the co-lead of the Response and Support Working Group for Courage to Act. And Sarah Scanlon is a long-time gender justice advocate who's currently the Associate Director of Sexual Violence Response at Wilfrid Laurier University. And my name is Farrah Kahn. I'm the CEO of Possibly

Seeds, the Executive Director of Courage to Act and the co-lead of the Response and Working Group at Courage to Act.

So, now let's get into the conversation. So, one of the things that we really saw only had these, when we brought together this group, and I will tell you that this guide took us a long time to even come to what we now see because there was a lot of conversation in our group. We took time to say to each other what do we want, and we created something completely different and then said actually, that's not going to work. Let's do something different and kept having conversations, kept building and I think as Sarah said this tool is ongoing.

There's still things we want to keep adding. I think every time I let Deb touch it she adds more. It's great. But one of the things that we talked about is what happens to our institutions, to us when we hear about a critical incident. So, a student goes, a story goes viral on TikTok because they talk about being sexually assaulted on campus. A faculty member is stalked and harassed and sexually assaulted in class or someone puts a note about a Varsity Team committing sexual assault against multiple students. We go through the same things that we talk about. We go through flight, fight or freeze.

We go to that place of feeling immobilized sometimes by it and wondering OK, what do I do. We feel overwhelmed as an institution or we go to that place, OK, we've got to fix it right now and everything has to happen right now, right now, right now and we're left with not having a plan and can feel like everybody's doing that in that moment.

Whenever I talk to sexual assault survivors I talk about the normal things that come up for us around sexual assault. So, shame, blame, fear and guilt. And I feel like those feelings also merge when we witness collectively harm. We can feel like that. So, we came together as a group and I also want to acknowledge Don McDermott who is also from Wilfrid Laurier who was one of the, is one of the co-authors, that we came together and had conversations about how do we attend to shame, blame and fear. How do we go from a place of being frozen when these things happen as a campus community to a place of being proactive?

And so, we really looked at a tangible guide that was proactive to look at this issue and that's the conversation we're going to have today. Want to go to the next slide. So, we're going to talk about three areas, before an incident, after an incident, before, during and after an incident. And in each one of them we created the five C's, convene, collaborate, coordinate, communicate and care. And we're going to take time in each and each of us are going to share kind of our most important salient pieces we've put in there.

I really want to emphasize two things that are in guide that I really appreciate. We went from a framework of support first, and what does that mean, is that often times when we hear large conversations about sexual violence in the media about campus people go to a place of you've

got to report, people have got to come forward and report to the Police, people have got to do this, they've got to report. You know we've got to adjudicate this and what we say actually is support first from a place that people that have been harmed get the support and care they need, have a place to get compassion before we move to a place of adjudication and investigation.

Because the thing is if, we know the research shows if you go to someone and say tell me everything that happened and start investigating before they're in a place where they feel safe, they won't be able to give you the information that you need. So, we really, that is our methodology throughout and the framework that we use. And we really talked about principles of this work. How we talked about inclusivity, we talked about accessibility, transparency as a part of that.

So, you'll see each of us talk about that piece but support first was an overarching framework that we all said that was really, really important. I want to go to Deb first to talk about your favourites. Because Deb, you know this was, this was you section of love I feel like. You were in there saying OK, let's get this.

Deborah: Thanks, Farrah. Yeah, and I think you'll see in the guide that the before section is the vary longest section. There's a reason. You want to plan, plan, plan so that when something does happen you've got a plan in place, everyone knows what they're doing. So, I think that's you know, even structurally in the guide it reflects what you should be doing on your campuses to, to start thinking about these things. And again, you know that support first role is so important. It's important to articulate the post-secondary role as support first.

And so, the people remember when an incident does happen, they're not thinking about policy enforcement. They're not assisting the Police in criminal investigations and they're not themselves trying to investigate what happened, they are supporting. But it's, so one of the things I really wanted to talk about is when Police are involved and in critical incidents on campus this happens quite often.

So, recognising that the Police could very well be involved in a critical incident and planning for that. So, anticipating the harm that could come from having the Police on campus and having measures in place to support those affected. And when we talk about those affected we're talking about not just the survivors but witnesses who are being interviewed. Those in community with a history of experiencing Police or, sorry, experiencing or witnessing Police violence such as members of the Black, Indigenous or other non-whites and non-gender conforming communities. We want to make sure that when they see the Police on campus they have the support they need.

And, and we also want to be clear that some Police involvement can be harmful and we do have to mitigate that harm. So, to reduce that harm beforehand we talk about in the guide having a MOU with the Police,

agreeing on what are the roles of the post-secondary versus the Police in a critical incident so that there isn't that crossover and there is no confusion when that critical incident does come, happen and it will. It's not an if it's a when.

I'll stop there and pass it over back to Farrah, I think.

Farrah: Thank you, Deb. Yeah, and I, that piece about the if or not a, it's not an if it's a when was something that we kept saying. I think there's this idea that you know you always have to treat the sexual violence as just anomaly or something that won't happen, but it's going to happen to your campus. Some stories go in the paper and some don't. That doesn't mean it hasn't happened on your campus and doesn't mean that one campus is worse than another. And so that's why we think having a plan in place, so bringing people together, the convening, the making sure people are collaborating, coordinating what that looks like, communication and care are really important.

For me one of the biggest pieces within this is around having a plan around communication. So, I really looked at the communication section as important. Having things already in place so that you know if you know that a critical incident happened do you have information on how to attend to trauma if somebody comes to you and says that I've been harmed. Do you have that information? Do you have a package for people that have witnessed sexual assault? Or are feeling, fielding calls from students that are feeling really overwhelmed in that moment. So, do you have something that they can understand, OK, I'm having a panic attack, what is that.

So, having some basic information around that will really help. I think having the communication and kind of how you're going to talk to each other, so who's on call that evening, who needs that information right away, who's going to share that information, what does the phone tree look like? And yes, I said phone tree. Yeah, so you know not everything has to be always on email but making sure that people are nimble and quick.

Also, what information is shared, recognising confidentiality is really important. And survivors have the right to confidentiality. So, really thinking about that through is something that we've talked about a lot. I'm going to pass it on now to Sarah.

Sarah: Thanks. Yeah, I think the, there's a language that we use in the book that I really appreciated that spoke to the cascade of impacts that come out of experience of sexual trauma. And I really appreciate that language because well, I think before I would've used language like ripple effect etcetera. But language cascade effects really indicates and speaks to how one, on thing can trigger another thing which can trigger another thing and it really can create a widespread impact, a cascade of impacts across the survivor's and those closest to them lives.

And so, for this reason I really adamantly have pretty strong feelings about the role of the gender-based violence or the sexual violence office within the critical incident team, because it is their job to be doing needs assessments, to be doing system advocacy and reflection. And being able to map out all the different ways that incidents like these can impact a survivor's life. And that is their job normally, that is case work. That is what we should be doing in sexual violence response work but when we look at critical incidents what starts to happen, because they're higher profile there's much more involvement from different offices, there's higher risk and risk can mean a lot of things. It could mean risk around increase of escalator harm or it could mean media risk or litigation risk.

All of the sudden other needs start to move up the hierarchy of importance as opposed to the cascade of very, very significant live-altering impacts that the survivor is having to manage as well as their case worker. So, it is really critical that direction is being taken from the gender-based violence and the sexual violence office to ensure that the, as Farrah spoke to, those really quick fight-flight response, got to get stuff done, very reactive responses on the institution to frankly cover their own assess a lot of the time, isn't happening at the cost of trying to manage and respond to and support the survivor around the very real harms and impacts that are showing up in their lives.

And so, I will say over and over and over again like how are we looping in the gender and sexual violence office. How are they taking the lead? How are we getting a better sense of the needs from those folks? How are we communicating with them you know whose voice is representing? These types of things are really, really critical because what happens is if, particularly when we have people are newer in positions, they're really reactive whereas if you look at the gender and sexual violence office this is what they do. They full-time are responding to these types of harms and yes, there's other types of increased pressures but we still need to be centering, our job is to respond to the cascade of impacts of survivors because they are at the centre of the harm. Thanks, Farrah.

Farah: As you can see we're, we are very, this is such a big, broad conversation and we're very invested in this. Amal, can you come in? I know you really, and I went through a lot around the before, around how to ensure that people are working together.

Amal: Yeah, thank you, Farrah. And you know we had a lot of conversations on you know when we were thinking about having the plan in advance, who was going to be around the table to support the deliverables or the objectives of that plan and making sure that sexual violence offices are not the only ones making sure that the plan is being executed. And also making sure that you know this work isn't going to fall within a sexual violence adjudication committee within a post-secondary institution. It's really going to be a much more broader, so we're going to need to have different expertise and different perspectives on the table.

Maybe that will look like having student affairs or a student conduct office. You'll probably need a your communications office like Farrah was saying, communication is going to be a really big part of this plan. And I think things are going to evolve and those are the conversations that we had when putting this guide together is that the situation is going to evolve really quickly. You might need to call other offices or additional offices to come and support you.

Maybe you'll need to have human resources if you have employees who are impacted. You might need to get support from unions as well. You'll probably need support from the financial aid office or potentially academic advice when you're talking about care and support, which we'll talk a little bit about later on. So, making sure that all of those pieces are reflected on and addressed before is really, really critical. And when you're thinking about who you want at the table also ensuring that there's shared values or even guiding principles around this work because some of this work might be really new.

Maybe you've you know you haven't worked very closely with your media relations team or your communications team. I think the reason why we put this in the before is you know trying to be really intentional with those relationships so again, we don't have sexual violence offices creating communication plans or doing media briefs and you know working Saturday afternoon to try to like scramble and put this all together. Yes, Sarah.

So, really trying to be intentional on the before section as to who do we need at the table and how do we make sure that everyone feels equipped to get this done in a way that doesn't cause harm and it's done in a way where everyone is very clear on their roles and their responsibilities.

Farrah:

Thank you, Amal. Exactly. You know and that's why having an RCI team even before an incident happens is what we really encourage with this and this guide really is about bringing those people together from very different frameworks, and I think that's great. Like you know as a sexual, a person that works in sexual violence I'm not going to be an expert on communications. I need the communications expert there. I need security there. I need people that are senior administrators there so that people can have that conversation beforehand and have a plan in place and that's what we really see it as.

So, the next section we're going to talk about is during an incident but really what we're really saying and I think Deb said it and Amal has said, Sarah has said it, is you have to have the work done before an incident so that you're not left in crisis during, right. And obviously you can never plan for all the things that happen. As someone who's worked in this field for a very long time I always think that you know every case that I deal with is different. There's always new emerging things but if I have some of the baseline things together then it's easier for me to attend to the challenges.

So, in the first kind of part that I would kind of go into around during is around communication. Ensuring again, that you have that communication plan and you have the skeleton template that you've done before so now you bring it into life. Who are you going to communicate with? Who needs to know information and really recognising there's senior leaders that need to know. There's the survivor, the witnesses, the families, those people you have to communicate with. And also having communication with the broader community.

And transparency is a part of that. People want to know. At the same time with that I think we do have to talk about respecting survivors and there's only so much information we can provide in a way that doesn't harm a survivor because in the end there is a person that was harmed here. And sometimes there's such a push for transparency that it actually hurts the person that was harmed and doesn't give them the right to autonomy or personhood.

And so, we really think that communication is a big one that I see as it. Deb, what was for you the big part and during an incident that you saw?

Deborah: I think want to reinforce again the, the need to understand the different roles. And so, again if the Police are on campus absolutely we need to make space for them to do their job which is to investigate or manage a, a crime. Our job then as the post-secondary is support first and so we want to acknowledge the Police presence. We want to let them, you know help them as we can in terms of access to buildings, but we're not going to try and do their jobs for them.

And so, we want to make sure that again support for those who might be traumatized by either the event or a Police presence is really important to keep in the back of our minds. Crucially I think the thing I want to say the most is that this is not the time to think about investigating or laying charges under policy or any of that. This is the time to just manage the crisis and then afterwards you can talk about things like policy enforcement. So, for me Farrah, I think that's the most important piece during.

Farrah: Because there is such a push during to, to get everything done and if we have to, we have to respect the fact that there's procedural fairness, there's a whole process of doing this from a trauma informed place. Yeah. Sarah, what for you during, what would be something that would be so helpful and something in the guide that you really saw as imperative?

Sarah: I think something for me across, I've been doing sexual violence specifically on campus for around seven years at Laurier. Obviously, I've been doing community work a long time before that, but one of the things that I really noticed in coming to do institutional work and, and overseeing an office is the lack of coordination and consistent skills and training around gender-based violence related risk assessment.

And this is something I feel extremely strongly about. I think a lot of people who even are in the field are not trained in risk assessment in the way that we really need to that we should be, responsibility wise should be. And so, I think risk assessment is like one of the most critical first steps of a critical response incident team. And if you look to community, and this is the reason why I really love this model. And when Farrah first approached me about it I was like this model means so much to me because in the community it actually was built as a way to make sure that people survived, literally. That was these, these teams were brought together to assess risk because different offices and different organizations have information that all needed to come together to make sure that we could make, do good risk assessments with as much information as possible.

We don't always have a long time to do good risk assessment with a survivor. We don't always have, within one person access to the person who caused harm to other people in their community. We don't always have all the information about housing or addiction, mental health crisis, around trafficking. And so being able to make sure that everyone who has information can give it in a way as much as possible to a person who is able to do that solid risk assessment is extremely critical and it creates opportunities to make sure that we decrease the, the chance of escalation happening.

And so, the during stage is a short period. It's like 24 to 48 hours, right. It is, it is the second it's happening and directly afterwards. And so that risk assessment it needs to be happening immediately and I really push institutions to be recognising and prioritizing GBV related risk assessment because most risk assessment models that exist on institutions don't incorporate it from a good trauma informed and GBV lens. I do also want to name, because much respect to Jesmen Mendoza and the team that are doing this work, Possibility Seeds with this amazing team of folks is coming out.

I'm extremely looking forward to it because we haven't seen a model like this before, which whenever people ask me this I'm like I combine essentially six models to do the work internally. So, I can't point you to one for a quick answer but one is coming out with experts who created it, September 2023, which is specifically a gender-based violence risk assessment on campus. So, look at Possible Seeds for that just a plug.

Farrah: Thanks Sarah. Yeah, so now I'm really excited about Dr. Sandy Jung and Dr. Jesmen Mendoza's risk assessment. I think it's going to really be game changing for a lot of us on this. Amal, what about for you? What have you seen in this part? What do you want people to really take away?

Amal: I think my biggest take-away is the care section. And I know we had lots of conversations on what it looks like to provide survivor-centered care but I know we even kind of expanded that in the during section of when we're thinking about care and support we also have to think about first responders who are usually caseworkers. We have to think about

witnesses and like the broader community, potentially friends, families, loved ones and certainly employees as well, faculty and staff who have been impacted as well.

So, I'm trying to take an [unintelligible 00:27:31] that there is wraparound care and maybe that will look like workplace supports or accommodations. It can certainly look like academic accommodations and you know Possibility seeds did just release a toolkit on academic considerations which could be really helpful while thinking about all the different supports a student and survivors might need.

And also thinking about you know folks who have caused harm as well and ensuring that they're connected to trauma informed supports too. And one take-away that I had for this section is really ensuring that caseworkers and frontline staff are supported because this work is already difficult. When we're talking about critical incidences, when we're talking about a crisis, these are situations where if there's not already burnout you know staff members, frontline staff can reach a point of just pure depletion.

So, really making sure that supports are available to staff members. Maybe that will look like you know stepping away for a little bit. Maybe that will look like looking externally. What is in my community that can support if I don't have the right, enough resources on my campus? So, thinking about do we need to have support from our local rape crisis centre or sexual assault support centres. Do we need to contract additional counsellors to provide support?

But really making sure that you know the frontline staff are feeling cared for because when we're thinking about critical incidences, we're also thinking about this work is going to go beyond the Monday to Friday nine to five. This work is going to be a lot of evenings and certainly a lot of weekends so we don't want to reach a point of burnout and we certainly don't want to reach a point of you know feeling depleted in this work.

Farah: I really appreciate you naming that, Amal. Because I think that was something we heard time and time again from, from people when the critical incidents occur. So many people in roles that were the frontline workers because they were providing the support for so many different people themselves were not given the support that they needed. And so, really ensuring that there's different groups of folks that are given that care.

And we talked, we, in the guide really talked deeply about what that could look like. Talking also about in before, in the before section for the RCI group to do self work as a member of it. To think about, OK, what are things that are going to bring up harm for me or bring up trauma for me. What are ways that I can attend to it? What are the support systems that are going to be put in place for the RCI team? As in managing a

crisis what is the care that's going to be put in place is really critical. So, thank you for naming that.

OK, we're going to talk about the next section which is after. In this section I will say this, when we were putting this together initially we were just going to do a before and after and then we split up into three because we did actually see the importance of naming the work that needed to be done after an incident as separate from during. And some of those really clear things was care for us and really attending to the impacts of trauma. I think for a lot of institutions are talking about mental health but it hasn't extended enough for to go to a place of saying are we committed to creating trauma informed institutions, education environments. What would that look like?

And when it comes to crisis incidents and we don't have that in place lots of people don't have the language to understand what's happening for them. So, you might send multiple emails asking why something's not being done not realising that that's your trauma response because you feel overwhelmed about what's happening. So, the part that I really thought was important in this section was around care. What did care look like and making sure that there was private time not only for the survivor because absolutely they need that care and compassion and for the person who's caused harm absolutely needs that support, but also for the people in the broader sense. So, family members.

You know we had so many family members come to us after a critical incident in crisis and worried. So, having things prepared for them. Having resources prepared. That's another thing, is that Amal has raised, is having that connection with external organizations so that they're prepared when something happens that they're not caught off guard, that you let them know that things are coming down the pipe, that more people may be asking for support and services. But care also for the frontline workers who may have directly worked on that case or had to support that survivor in that moment or survivors, are they getting the support.

We actually said you know get an external counsellor to meet with them and have debriefing sessions, have clinical supervision for them so that they get external support that is not connected to HR or you know to even the sexual violence office. Because they themselves also need that support. Also making sure that campus community has conversations about it. So, normalizing conversations about the impacts of trauma is critical in these times.

And talking about as we named around the trauma also of institutions. So, talking about the fact that when Police involvement is there because of historical and current targeting of Black and Indigenous communities, of racialized communities, of queer and trans communities, there is also the trauma there as well. So, how are we talking about that? How are we providing supports is critical.

So, that's a big one for me. Deb, what about for you? What did you see in after incident that was really clear for you?

Deborah: It's no surprise, Farrah, that I will be talking about making complaints and having investigations. Only after the campus is safe and the, and the support is in place should we ever start talking about investigations. So, I think that's, that's really key for me. And one of the things that I think we really need to think about is, and you mentioned it earlier, people can't articulate what they need to if they don't feel safe.

And so that part has to happen and then we can get into working with those who are affected by an incident to understand their options and then supporting them in making their own decisions about what they want to do. I think this is really crucial. I think many institutions you know, we immediately jump to we need to investigate, we need to get started on this and we forget that step about working with those affected to let them know it's, it's not required. It is not something that, that they are forced or should be forced into doing.

So, where a person affected decides to make a complaint with the, under the policy we need to follow that policy and provide a procedurally fair and trauma informed process. We cannot immediately expel or fire someone. We absolutely need to have procedural fairness in all of our responses, particularly these, these formal responses. And then of course taking those you know harm reduction steps as well and you can find a lot of that in the, in the comprehensive guide that we generated through Courage to Act.

Where the post-secondary itself decides to initiate a complaint it should be important to inform survivors and witnesses of what they're doing and why, and allow to choose their own level of participation, if any and respect their choice of whether or not to participate. And then I think the last point I want to make is that it is the responsibility of the institution, not of survivors, to keep the environment safe. So, making sure that we're not pressuring survivors because we're, we're putting on to them well, if you don't do this future folks might be subjected to this. That is you know far, far, far too much pressure for someone who's already been subjected to so much harm.

So, figuring out ways institutionally how do we take that responsibility back because that's where it belongs. And I will stop there.

Farrah: Everybody's cheering you on. Thank you, Deb, for naming that. Sarah, what about for you? What was the critical piece in here that you saw? Sarah, just -

Sarah: Sorry.

Farrah: Unmute. There you go.

Sarah: Something was hovering over my microphone and I couldn't remove it and it was an x. I was nervous just to hit the x in case I just, technology you know. Yeah, I think something for me, I think actually this whole section felt really important to me because I think the process of like this is where we should be really slowing things down, this is where we should be like saying, communication. This is where start like checking on our work, should be really important.

And one thing I want to name, and the folks that know me they'll know that is something that I want to bring up a lot when I'm working on institutional universities around GBV because I think that historically there hasn't been a lot of focus on this, is making sure that we're doing really good trauma informed and violence informed work with folks who caused harm.

And I think like you know gender-based violence offices on this, on campuses is still pretty new. You know I think for most universities it's been under eight years. For some it's under five. And most GBV workers were hired not to work with folks who caused harm. And so, what I want to offer is that I think that in the during stage people have that really quick response of talking to folks who caused harm and then I'm always like, OK, so how are you continuing that relationship. My opinion and perspective is that every person who caused harm is attached to a, should be getting a caseworker. One who has a really solid understanding of mental health, of anti-oppression, of trauma informed approach, about violence.

They need to have an analysis about violence and how it shows up. They need to have a good model to be like listening in those conversations for how violence continued to show up, for accountability work. They can, they need to be able to see the humanity of the person who caused harm while simultaneously not diminishing any harm that they caused or potentially caused.

And a really good assessment around crisis assessment. Always making sure, I want to be really transparent that for folks who cause harm, in particular folks who maybe even didn't fully intend to cause the amount of harm that they did, going through an internal reckoning with themselves is very common and having thoughts of suicide reality is common.

And so, the institutions need to be prepared to doing mental health work, be doing information sharing, be doing referrals and resource sharing, making sure they're getting connected to supports both around accountability work which, reach out, there's resources on the Possibility Seeds Courage to Act site around, around different options around that.

But also, that person needs to be plugged in and to go back to my previous point, that is good risk assessment. That is how we make sure that harms don't increase on lots of different levels is when the person who caused harm is brought in because we believe in their ability to

transform behavior, and because they deserve information, resources and tools.

Farrah: Thank you so much, Sarah. I would do a quick plug also for a podcast that I'm a part of called Healing Comes in Waves. We have an interview with a woman who was raped and her, the person who raped her. And it's, they went through a sort of justice process and it's beautiful to hear the two of them talk about it but also talk about accountability looks like, and we need more, we need more resources. That's a whole other conversation but you know resources for opportunities like them or.

Amal, tell us the key things and then we're going to get to some great questions that already see. So, so good.

Amal: Yeah. The first thing that stuck out for me after an incident is the convene section again. So, you know having folks who are at the table doing this work, bringing everyone back together to have a conversation or a debriefing conversation on what went well, what needs to change, what was missing in the plan. And one thing that I really appreciated that's in the guide is acknowledging that a lot of the folks or all the folks who are a part of the RCI team have witnessed a really harmful situation and who are also part of resolving some really complicated situations as well.

So, making space to not only have a conversation about sort of the work aspect but also talk about like how you're impacted by this work and how we can move forward and support each other after as well. And quickly the second section that kind of stuck out to me as well is to communicate. And I know you spoke about how important the communicate section is in the pre-section, Farrah.

And I think it's also really important to have a conversation after the fact as to did our communications plan do what it was set up to do. Where we able to send out communication in a really timely and trauma informed way? Was there, you know I think one of the conversations that we also had when putting this guide together is that information is going to be flowing so quickly it's going to be very overwhelming.

So, I think part of you know having a conversation after the incident is where we able to address any confusion? Was there any conflicting information that we were able to address? Were we a part of maybe putting out confusing information or conflicting information as well? So, having those conversations I think is really critical and it's also a preventative measure as well.

Farrah: Yes, the debrief part in the after section was such an important part that we named and debriefing, getting an external person to come in for you to talk about you know things you could do differently. What can they look like? Documenting it, having conversations and doing that annually will allow the institution to better respond to these things and build up a better version of this guide that we have. Like this guide is really a draft. We see this as something we can build on.

I saw a number of the questions so I'm going to actually, I'm merging some of them because some of them are very alike. So, you know I see there's a couple questions of what do you do, what is the approach in a critical incident when the survivors don't want to report?

So, we've seen that, right. We've seen [unintelligible 00:41:48] people will come forward, put something on social media or someone will say I heard someone was harmed or we ourselves as frontline workers will get a, a survivor reporting to us but doesn't want to report. But the community hears about it. And then everybody's like oh, you're not doing anything if you're not reporting.

I'll start us off because I really want to be clear is that reporting isn't the end goal. Less than ten percent of survivors report. So, we need to shift the narrative of that and do some work around that piece. And the other piece is too, is that institutions can do things that are outside of reporting. So, they can provide more education, more support, we can recognise start naming that. If we're working from a support first framework, because someone asking is this survivor centered framework.

Support first is a survivor centered framework. It also goes even deeper. Its trauma informed. It talks about we can support people from where they're at. Work where people want to be, not where we assume justice looks like. And we are very explicit that we call the criminal legal system not the criminal justice system, recognising that for so many survivors it is not a justice system.

So, I think you know really thinking about that piece and that's where you're communications team, and I'm grateful for the communication teams that I've been lucky to work with that really will sit down and say, OK, how do we talk about these complex conversations in a way that doesn't shut down people's fears and needs but also explains to people, people have a right to not report. They have a right to talk about their story but they also have a right not to report. I'm going to go, anybody else want to go on that one.

Deborah: Actually, if I could jump in on that one. I want to add to what you said because you said that reporting is not the end goal. I will also go so far as to say those complaint processes don't meet the needs that the community thinks it's going to meet. These are confidential, locked down processes. So, we don't get transparency. We don't get making an example out of this. And, and very often we don't get justice for the survivor. It doesn't look like what they need in order to get out of it.

So, I think again we can, we have all kinds of options available to the institution to say we are responding and here's what we're doing. We're examining the context in which this happened and making changes to the environment and to the, to the culture so that it won't happen again.

Sarah: Can I add one thing, Farrah? I think that there is something to be said around, and this is in that pre-work, is having some like structured

phrases and like language. I think that I would encourage most communications teams to get practice in talking with the, always double check with your GBV team. But I do think that there, it's really important because people rightly so are often outraged and they're outraged in a way that doesn't actually align with the survivor's needs.

And so, I'm going to point to an example, Dalhousie University, a significant large case happened, sexual harm across the School of Dentistry and the survivors, the women who experienced harm actively chose a restorative justice pathway. The community, the country, the media blew up, was outraged. Exploded [unintelligible 00:45:11] there was protesting how violent this was and yet no-one was actually asking or thinking about, expect for the people who initiated it, what the survivors wanted and what was best for them.

And so, I think having language in place, you know I get probably weekly emails from faculty or people who'd been disclosed to and are demanding information from me about why we're not taking particular steps. And so, I think making sure that you have language that you've really worded, you word smithed, you've crafted, you've thought about the intentionality of holding a line of like it's actually completely inappropriate for me to share this information with you.

Our job is to support survivors and to make sure that their needs are being met as much as possible around an extremely awful incident. If you're feeling activated which it sounds like you are, I'd be happy to connect you to resources and supports. These are really awful things and I understand that you're feeling concerned but we promise you we are taking directive from the survivor and those most impacted by this.

And I think like taking time just to do that, otherwise people are sending out quick messages and it is creating escalation and then people are posting publicly stuff, we've seen faculty do it who are well-meaning, but are publicly posting stuff about incidents that are happening that goes against the needs of survivors and it goes against confidentiality of the institution.

Farrah: Yes, to all of that. I think I got a little bit emotional in that, in the fact that there's been times where you know when we have these conversations on why we wanted this guide, is we saw a lot of, lots of ways that people were dealing with this. And all of the sudden everybody's an expert on sexual violence and we forget the person that's most impacted which is the person who was raped or sexually assaulted and they get lost. And that's, we see that with the way the criminal legal system works as well where survivors often times can't speak in the media about these stories and people are sensationalizing it.

We've seen it with Hockey Canada. We've seen that in so many ways where everybody's deciding what justice looks like except the person who's been harmed. I remember Kathryn Borel who made a, like a deal so that, she did go forward with the, in the trial against Jian Ghomeshi.

And you know there were some survivors that were protesting that and I said if she made that decision not to go forward then we should be celebrating her decisions because that's the decision that she made.

And so, finding ways to really understand that has been really important for us in respecting that. I'm going to go to one last question because we have a little bit time. And so, you know both people are like, there was you know two different questions that were pretty much the same that said, OK, this sounds great but how do I put that in my institution.

One of the things that we try to help you with this guide is for, a lot of us are doing the frontline work, but it's also for administrators. And we actually very kindly had Janet Morrison who is the president of Sheridan look this over. We had Don who's a senior level administrator. So, we had people that were in senior leadership roles look at this as well because we wanted to see would there be buy-in.

The thing is that sadly risk is the conversation we have to have and when you don't have an RCI team you put your institution at risk. You put workers at risk. You put staff, students at risk because you don't have a plan you know and it's, it's really treating it as not an if but a when. And we do this, we recognize that until the revolution comes, until feminism is here to stay forever and not intersectionality, people actually understand it and anti-Black racism ends, capitalism ends, lots of things need to end for sexual assault to not happen. We need to put these plans in place.

So, one of the things to talk about is risk aversion. I think another thing is at TMU what we had, we have is a collaboration team already that meet bi-weekly with student conduct, human rights services, sexual violence, to talk about casework and to talk about responding. And then bring in other parties to do that. And so, building a culture of collaboration is key to this and really treating it that that one person who's that person that won office cannot hold all of this. It's too much. Sarah.

Sarah:

One thing that I found earlier on that was kind of useful as a way to initial frame a group like this is to use it as a debrief. So, ask people to come together to walk through incidents that have happened in the past two years that have impacted or been connected to multiple different offices. Where multiple different offices are brought in to do different parts and ask it to be a debriefing exercise which the, the resource does speak through obviously. It talks about debriefing as a critical piece, as a part of the process.

And you can use it as a way to jumpstart the team and then talk about like well, what would it look like if we did some of these preplanning beforehand and using the questions from the guide, the before section of the guide as a way to frame that debriefing process will be really useful. And it might feel a little bit less like antagonistic to folks to be like we're forming this team and we're telling you we're doing it versus like, hey,

we're like really interested in this collaboration. We're really interested in deepening our relationships and we recognize that all of our offices have dropped balls, like literally every day. It's mortifying because this work is so important. We all have to like recognize in our egos even though it is heartbreaking we mess up a lot. All of us do.

And coming from a place of like humility and wanting to get better versus pointing fingers at other offices or other teams and asking people like let's just check in and let's be honest with each other about what we could do differently next time might be a way to start that.

Amal: Just quickly too, I think one of the conversations that we had as to if folks didn't see the need to have an RCI team or even an RCI plan, I think our universities sexual violence policies are not going to give us the answers that we need. And it's not going to address certainly at all the crises and the examples that we've provided in the guide. So, we really want to think in a way that's more broader and a way that's more holistic.

Because like what Deb was saying, we're not talking about investigations. We're not talking about adjudication committees. We're talking about care support and we're talking about having a plan in place where we are addressing risk and we're putting universities in a place where they're much more equipped to provide that ongoing support for folks who need it.

Farrah: I think it's, that's the piece is that we need to see this as something that can't be written down in policy that doesn't have to be an arduous guide. We also recognize that not everything is in this guide right now. That there's things that we missed, there's things that we're not experts on. You know there's things that we were like yes, this needs to be in here but it could be more robust. And it's also that things are hopefully going to change for the better in a lot of our campuses in all of these conversations.

It's really, you know when these crises has happened we are a community. Sometimes we are the small town in our community. We're the biggest population areas. We are that, and when these happen it's heartbreaking and it harms everyone. So, having these plans in place is about reducing harm, it is about caring for the community. It is not about making things look nice for everybody else outside of it. It's actually caring for people and that's what we talked about it being trauma informed. Because we want trauma informed campuses.

We are going to end. Deb, do you want to, did you want to jump in before we end? No, you feel good? OK. I just want to –

Deborah: I love that as an ending spot, thank you.

Sarah: Can I offer one quick thing? Just a reiteration that got named before but I, I think that's something that Farrah spoke to at the beginning and I just want to say, to come back to, is that this is really hard work. It is, it like

sits on our bodies, it sits on our hearts, it's, most of us have been touched by sexual violence in some form in our lives and so you know like take care of yourself, take care of each other and I feel like this idea that we have to be super, hyper professionalized as we respond to these incidents and then we don't like slow down and check in with ourselves and check in with each other.

This is hard stuff and so like don't over professionalize and don't push down this work because it's not going to actually serve us in the long run. And I think I just want to reiterate that and hope people really read that in the book.

Farrah:

Yeah. I think the reason why many of us wanted to do this is because we are, these are the times when crises happen or the times that we remember in our careers and we, there's so much heartbreak for ourselves when you're holding a survivor's hand or you're in a situation where you're talking to a parent that's devastated or you're talking to a faculty member who is completely activated from witnessing something horrific that they were told.

We do this because we care. We do this because we want better. And so, we look at this as a draft so if you are like, you're missing this part, great, we want to hear it. So, please send us all those things. We want to know. We want to know how we could do better. I'm going to just put the, the slideshows on for just a second to wrap us up but please, we look forward to emails. We really are humble about this because we see this as a behemoth. It took us a long time to get this together. I want to do a shoutout for Jiaqing Wilson Yang who edited this in the most generous, kindest way, just go to the next slide, and really made us feel safe around it.

Do you want to go to the next slide? So, I want to leave us with these quotes and this is one of my favourite quotes and it's by Rachel Remen and she says, the expectation that we can be immersed and suffering and lost daily and not touched by it is unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.

So, you know and really we encourage you if you're doing this work, the next slide will just talk about this one book that we all saw as the book. So, if you haven't read Trauma Stewardship that talks about trauma exposure response and what happens. So, many of us in space could say you know many of these things on this circle you know from a sense that one can never do enough to an inability to embrace complexity to chronic exhaustion, I'm feeling that right now. Fear, guilt, sense of persecution, disassociated in most moments, these are what affects people who are doing the work.

We cannot say this enough, but we cherish everybody who does this work. It is so hard. The resources are so little. We are in a, going into a recession. Survivors are dealing with the most complex challenges right now. They don't have a magic wand to fix them. So, we ask you to be

gentle with yourselves as you have these conversations. And also, be gentle when you're reading this because it is hard to have these conversations.

I'll leave you with our favourite quote by Mia Mingus. It's on our next slide. And it says, if we're truly committed to ending oppression and violence then we must be committed to each other. Then we must live out the simple truth that we need each other. We need each other.

And I feel like this, writing this guide I could not have done it alone. The conversations that we all had together, the hard conversations where we didn't agree or we had different ideas or we kept busting out with new ways of thinking of this was an honor.

And I want to thank the authors here. It's an honor to work with Amal, Deb and Sarah and Dawn. I want to thank Laura, Anoodth, Maya, Jiaqing, Aubrianna, so many of our team that's been doing the work on this. And I want to thank all the audience here. You've all been so committed to this project. We had some really great people as advisors on this and just cannot thank the community enough for making this possible.

[End of recorded material 00:56:35]