Guidance on Responding to Reports of Sexual Harassment and/or Assault

Sexual violence...

- Any sexual act without someone’s consent. Examples include groping another person, exposing oneself, sexual comments about a person’s body, and taking pictures of a body part that is considered sexual in nature.
- Victims and offenders can be people of any gender, background, ability etc.

What do I do if I witness or someone reports an act of sexual violence?

Your interaction with a victim, though brief, is critical. This is because the experiences victims have with professionals like you can not only get them to help immediately, but can even influence whether they seek additional, on-going help. Remember the training you have already received about responding to reports of crime. To help you remember what to do when interacting with a victim of sexual harassment or assault, think of the word S.E.E.K.

- **S: safety**
  - Address immediate safety and/or medical concerns.
  - Protect privacy and confidentiality as much as possible.
    - You are in a public setting where you can be overheard. Be discreet when talking to the victim and dispatching to OCC.
      - Go to an area of the platform/bus stop where there are fewer people but do **NOT** use information booths.
    - Limit what you talk about.
      - Tell the victim they don’t have to tell you the details of the incident for you to help.
      - **Only** ask for essential info:
        - Date and time of incident
        - Location of incident
        - Description of offender
      - Do not talk to others who are not relevant to the assistance of the victim about details of the incident.

- **E: empowerment**
  - Do not force the victim to stay and wait for TPD
  - When possible offer options. (e.g. “If you want to call TPD later here is their phone number.” “Do you want me to call an ambulance?”)
If the victim has a disability, remember your training. Always ask the person if they need assistance related to their disability and how you can best assist.

- **E: empathy**
  Every person reacts differently to a traumatic event. Appearing distressed, calm, laughing etc can all be normal reactions to trauma.
  - Accept what the victim is telling you as fact. It’s not your role to determine whether a report is valid.
  - Let them know that they are not at fault. Do NOT use “I would have…” or “Why did you…” statements or make any judgments of the victim.
  - Tell them you respect the courage it took for them to tell you.

- **K: knowledge**
  - Let the victim know what to expect (e.g. “TPD has been called and is on the way.” “I will have to fill out an incident report. (“____will get a copy of the incident report.”)
  - Share resources (See below.)

**Hearing or witnessing trauma can impact you as the responder.**

- Each individual may have a different reaction. A few examples of reactions are not being able to sleep, loss or increase of appetite, not wanting to socialize or significant changes to your routine, feeling numb.
- There is support for you. Call the MBTA Employee Assistance Program (617-222-5381) and/or BARCC.
- In addition, the MBTA does not tolerate violence against employees. If you experience sexual violence on the job report to OCC, a supervisor, and/or TPD.

**Boston Area Rape Crisis Center**

24-hour Hotline: 1-800-841-8371

www.barcc.org

**MBTA Transit Police**

617-222-1212

TTY: 617-222-1200

This project was supported by Grant No. 2014-FW-AX-K006 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.