

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*“The actions of righteous women ripple on through time and space and even generations.”*  
~Virginia U. Jensen

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### WELCOME

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Congratulations! You have been selected to join the Rape Victim Advocacy Program Advocate Training because of your outstanding qualities. THANK YOU for choosing to make the commitment to learn more about sexual assault advocacy and using your new knowledge and natural helping abilities to become an advocate. As an RVAP volunteer, you will come to appreciate what an integral role you have in the healing process of sexual assault victims, their family, partners and friends. The knowledge and skills you will learn during your volunteer experience will remain with you throughout your life.

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### ABOUT THIS MANUAL

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**Chapter 1:** Introduction to the structure of RVAP and the services we offer, training expectations, the role of RVAP volunteers, and volunteer policies and procedures.

**Chapters 2-5:** Social issues that perpetuate rape culture, the impact of sexual violence, tools and skills of effective advocacy.

**Chapters 6-7:** The role of an advocate in the legal and medical settings.

**Chapters 8-12:** Unique issues, including sexual harassment and stalking, domestic violence, suicide, childhood sexual abuse, and how to help significant others.

**Chapters 13-15:** Summary of training and preparation for advocacy, policies and procedures of taking call, issues and characteristics of perpetrators, and the importance of self-care.

**Note:** Individuals who are new to this field can feel overwhelmed by all the information presented in these few short weeks of training. Remember: it is not expected that you will memorize everything you read or hear. We suggest you use the section at the end of

each chapter entitled “What You Need to Know.” The section will outline what you must know prior to volunteering with RVAP.

## What’s in a Name?

We often refer to victims of sexual assault as “victims/survivors.”

The term *victim* is often used to describe someone who is in the midst of, or has just experienced, a crime being perpetrated upon them. Advocates generally use the term victim to describe an individual in the early stages after an assault has occurred, generally at the hospital and police department. It is at this point that most individuals identify with the connotations of the term.

The term *survivor* is used to describe an individual who has begun to make their own healing choices. We tend to use the term survivor with anyone who is beginning to move towards healing.

However, some people do not identify as victims and some do not identify as survivors. The best advice is to listen to the individual and use the term the individual chooses. The timeframe for healing, and the move from victim to survivor is as unique as the individual.

You may notice that we use the term “victim” throughout this manual. This is for clarity and ease of reading purposes only and does not imply that all service users are comfortable with that label.

## Gendered Language

Since sexual abuse affects both females and males, we have attempted to be inclusive in our use of pronouns throughout this manual. We have chosen to adapt material to be as gender neutral as possible. As you hear presenters in training discuss sexual abuse, you likely will hear the female pronouns used more frequently but this should not be taken to mean that males are not also victims of sexual abuse.

When addressing the perpetrators of sexual abuse, male pronouns will be used most often, as men make up the vast majority of perpetrators. (To be clear, the majority of men are not perpetrators of sexual abuse, but the majority of perpetrators are men.) It is important to acknowledge that women also perpetrate sexual abuse.

## INTRODUCTION TO RVAP

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### **Principals and Standards of Practice**

Every individual who encounters this program is treated with courtesy, respect, and dignity. This includes clients (victims, their friends and families, and other types of service-users); volunteer advocates; educators; co-workers; supervisors; board members; people with whom we share space and resources; collaborators; representatives of institutions; agencies and organizations, and the general public.

We exist to serve victims of sexual violence and exploitation, and the communities for whom, and to whom, we are responsible for education about violence, victimization, and abuse. It is our duty to serve them in all we do.

It is our practice to continually learn more about violence, victimization, victims, perpetrators, dynamics of abuse, and to disseminate that information to others.

### **Agency Mission**

**Mission:** The Rape Victim Advocacy Program provides free, confidential, trauma-informed advocacy to all affected by sexual violence and promotes social change through prevention education.

**Vision:** A community free of sexual violence.

### **Agency History**

The Rape Crisis Line began in 1973 after a group of women (Women Against Rape) recognized the need for sexual assault victims to have advocates to assist them in dealing with law enforcement and medical personnel when they reported a rape. Further, victims needed a safe place to process their sexual abuse experiences and to receive support.

In the beginning, they found an attorney willing to loan out his office and phone at night in order to staff the fledgling Rape Crisis Line. Volunteers took turns sleeping on the floor of that office. Soon, the Women's Resource and Action Center (WRAC) created a part-time coordinator work-study position and applied for funding with the UI Student Government. The next year funding was secured from the City of Iowa City, and the Rape Victim Advocacy Program (RVAP) began.

## RAPE VICTIM ADVOCACY PROGRAM

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We were housed in the same building with WRAC. Then in 1987, we moved to our own location at 17 W. Prentiss Street. In October 1998, we moved to 320 S. Linn Street. In June 2010, we moved next door to 332 S. Linn Street.

### **RVAP Directors:**

Karen Letty – 1973-74

Terry Kelly – 1974-81

Karla Miller – 1981-1991

Diane Funk – 1991-1993

Christie Munson – 1993-2000

Theresa Klingenburg – 2000-2002

Karla Miller – 2002-2014

Jen Carlson – 2014-2016

Adam Robinson – 2016-

Volunteers have been the backbone of RVAP since its inception. You are joining this distinguished group who have changed people's lives by virtue of their work as advocates.

Since 1974, RVAP has developed more services and in 1996, we expanded our service area to include Cedar, Iowa and Washington counties. What began with one ¼-time person has now grown to be staffed by several full-time individuals, work-study students and practicum students.

In 2015, RVAP hired their first male-identified advocate, and began accepting male-identified volunteers.

### **RVAP Community Involvement**

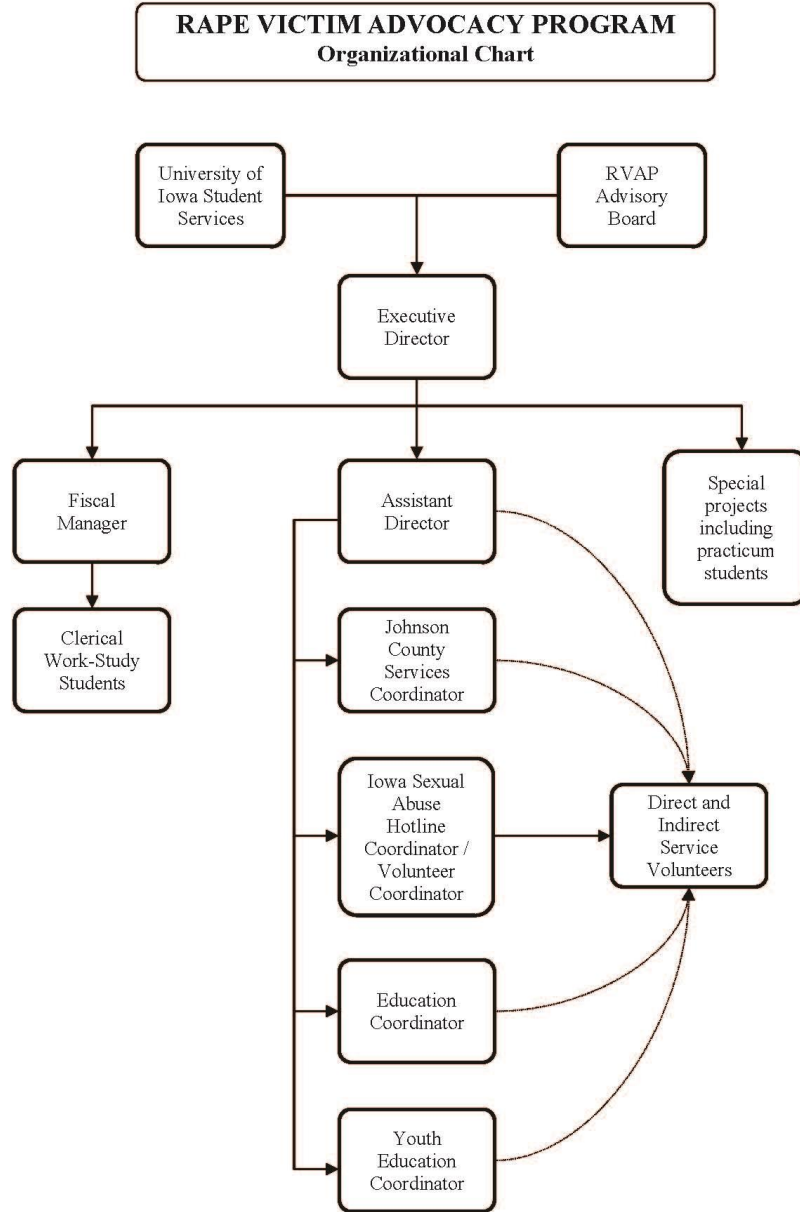
RVAP is a member of the Johnson County Sexual Assault Response Team (JCSART), which meets every other month. JCSART is a coalition of sexual assault nurse examiners, rape victim advocates, law enforcement officers, emergency room staff, and prosecuting attorneys developed to coordinate the community's response to sexual assault. The goal of JCSART is to meet the needs of assault victims as they progress through the health care and criminal justice systems, and to develop good cases in order to hold offenders accountable.

RVAP also belongs to the Johnson County Sexual Assault Investigation Team (JCSAIT). This coalition includes representatives from local law enforcement, the County Attorney's Office, JCSART, hospitals, and community agencies. The JCSAIT

covers recent cases, discusses pending prosecution, communicates about how things are going, and shares resources.

As a United Way agency, we participate in various activities, including the annual United Way funding campaign. RVAP and many other United Way agencies benefit from these funds, so please encourage friends and family to donate.

## RVAP Structure



## **RVAP Funding**

Since its inception, RVAP has grown into an agency with an annual budget over \$500,000 used to provide victim services to Johnson, Cedar, Iowa, and Washington counties.

Primary funding comes from a variety of sources including:

- City of Coralville
- City of Iowa City
- Crime Victim Assistance Division
- Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- Johnson County Council of Governments
- UI in-kind support
- UI Student Government
- United Way
- Other grants
- Donations/Fundraising

## **RVAP VOLUNTEERS**

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There are many opportunities for volunteers at RVAP as listed below:

**First-call advocates** offer information, support and referrals to callers on the statewide Iowa Sexual Assault Hotline (ISAH), or on our local Rape Crisis Line.

**In-person advocates** accompany sexual assault victims during evidentiary medical exams, police interviews, and any other processes arising from sexual assault, sexual harassment, or stalking.

**RVAP Advisory Board Members** are responsible for agency oversight, fundraising, development, and agency planning. Time commitment is approximately two to six hours per month.

**Special Projects:** Occasionally, we have special projects requiring volunteers with specific skills.

All direct service volunteers are required to complete our thirty-two hour training that is offered three times per year.

## **RVAP SERVICES**

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In addition to 24-hour emergency services, RVAP provides individual and group counseling, referrals, and prevention programming. RVAP services are for women and men, 13 years old and up. All services are free of charge and available to any victim or partner, friend, or family member of a victim who needs them.

Note: RVAP cannot serve anyone who is a perpetrator of sexual violence, domestic violence, dating violence, or a hate crime. We can make referrals for perpetrators.

### **24-hour Rape Crisis Line & Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline**

Staff members answer the Rape Crisis Line during the weekdays, and volunteer advocates answer it on nights, weekends, and holidays. Services include listening, support, and information. We provide 24-hour in-person medical and legal advocacy to victims in Cedar, Iowa, Johnson and Washington counties. We also offer referrals to local agencies to callers from across the state. We have 24-hour access to the Language Line, which provides confidential interpreting in 80 languages, Relay Iowa, and a TTY machine for persons who are Deaf or hard of hearing available from 9am-5pm, M-F.

Rape Crisis Line: 319-335-6000 or 1-800-228-1625 (24 hours)

Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline: 319-335-6002 or 1-800-284-7821 (24 hours)

### **Individual Counseling**

Staff provides counseling services during office hours. Victims or significant others can meet with a certified counselor up to twenty-four times (sometimes longer, depending upon circumstances). Counseling sessions typically are 50 minutes to an hour. The victim or significant other chooses the direction of conversation. The role of the counselor is to listen, clarify, support, and share information and local resources. We talk to victims who were assaulted at any time—whether a week ago or twenty years ago.

### **Advocacy**

In addition to hospital and police advocacy, RVAP staff members may do any of the following:

- attend a deposition, court hearing, or trial
- write a letter to a property manager or employer
- write a letter to an academic department or instructor
- accompany someone to a follow-up medical appointment



- assist with information about other resources

## **Support Groups**

We offer support groups throughout the year. The focus of the groups may vary from semester to semester. Groups are usually eight to ten weeks long. Each group has two facilitators who are RVAP staff members, and is limited to six to eight participants. Most groups are closed (meaning no new members may join after the group has begun). People may sign up by calling the office to make an appointment to meet with one of the facilitators prior to the beginning of the group.

## **Education Programs, Training and Consultation**

RVAP staff members present programs by request to university groups and classes, schools, and religious and civic organizations on a variety of topics related to sexual violence. Staff members also provide training for law enforcement, paramedics, nurses, social workers, and other professions.

Volunteers may represent RVAP by staffing information tables at events, and helping to organize rallies or other programs open to the public. Volunteers sometimes assist with developing RVAP informational materials, previewing videos for use in presentations, and helping plan Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April.

## **Information Bureau, and RVAP Website**

We have printed information and brochures available at the office free of charge. The RVAP website ([www.rvap.org](http://www.rvap.org)) is extensive and accessible.

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## **EXPECTATIONS FOR TRAINING**

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All personal information exchanged during training is confidential. It is okay to tell other people in your life about what you are learning, but you may not discuss other people in the class or any experiences they talk about, or specific information that RVAP staff and volunteers give about people who have used RVAP services. You will be expected to read and abide by the confidentiality agreement. This agreement applies to all your work with the agency, not just training.

## **Attendance**

RVAP volunteers must complete all training sessions before volunteering. It is extremely difficult to make up missed parts of training. If you experience an illness, emergency, or conflict that will keep you from a training session, let a staff person know ASAP. We will try to arrange for you to make up a session if we can. Please be at

training at the specified time. We are committed to starting and ending each session on time.

## **Safe Space**

We require and ensure safe space for each other at all times. Safe space means (1) non-judgmental listening, (2) validating each other's feelings, and (3) no victim blaming.

Sometimes during training, people disclose personal information about their own sexual abuse experiences. It is important to remember that we may not have the time to talk about those issues during the training session since the focus is skills training. Additionally as a trainee, you can call the Rape Crisis Line if you need to talk, and staff members are available at the office during the day if you would like to spend additional time processing.

## **Two-way Screening**

Training is a time for you to get a feel for what it is like to be an advocate. By being in RVAP training, you are already doing the work of educating yourself and gaining skills to educate others. Sometimes trainees realize that the timing is not right for them to be a volunteer, the volunteer role is different from what they had pictured, or their own issues and feelings are more present for them than they had first thought. It is okay to go through training and then decide that you do not want to be an active volunteer. Please let us know at any time if you wish to change your volunteer status.

Similarly, sometimes RVAP staff will feel that a trainee is not ready to be an active volunteer. This might have to do with a trainee's skill level, behavior, or differences in philosophy. Sometimes we will ask that a trainee obtain extra practice before becoming an active volunteer. If this happens, we will provide an explanation to the trainee. Neither RVAP staff nor volunteer-trainees should assume that being a part of training automatically qualifies an individual as a volunteer.

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

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- Commitment to our mission
- Commitment to our Principals and Standards of Practice
- Services we offer
- In order to become a Rape Crisis Line advocate, you will need to:
  - Attend all training sessions and be punctual
  - Read all training materials

- Satisfactorily perform a virtual role-play with a staff member
- Schedule a post-training interview with the Volunteer Coordinator to discuss your readiness to take a call shift



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