

## Community Relations

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Some police departments, despite their best efforts, are experiencing strained relationships within certain segments of their community. This problem may be attributed to one explosive incident or perhaps even a long-standing history of mutual distrust. Whatever the cause, it is helpful to examine the barriers to a healthy relationship between your department and the populations you serve.

Police departments should work closely with neighborhood associations, civic organizations, business groups, churches and individuals to identify community issues and facilitate services to address these issues.

## TAASA

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TAASA provides training across the state for law enforcement through one-day trainings and multi-day conferences. TCLEOSE credits are provided.

For more information on training topics available, visit [www.taasa.org](http://www.taasa.org) or call 512-474-7190.

## Resources

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### National Center for Victims of Crime

A national advocacy and resource center for victims of crime and crime victim service providers.

202-467-8700  
[www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

### Community Relations Service, United States Department of Justice (CRS)

The Community Relations Service was established to prevent or resolve community conflicts and tensions arising from actions, policies, and practices perceived to be discriminatory on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Southwest Regional Office  
214-655-8175  
[www.vsdoj.gov/crs](http://www.vsdoj.gov/crs)

### Police Executive Research Forum

PERF is a national association of police executives dedicated to improving police services. PERF offers a cultural training curriculum for law enforcement that promotes understanding and reduces tensions between different groups.

202-466-7820  
[www.policeforum.org](http://www.policeforum.org)

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National Sexual Assault Hotline  
Free. Confidential. 24/7.

1-800-656-HOPE

# Eliminating Barriers

## A Guide for Law Enforcement



**taasa**  
TEXAS ASSOCIATION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

6200 La Calma, Suite 110  
Austin, Texas 78752  
[www.taasa.org](http://www.taasa.org)

## Why Might Victims Not Report?

Many factors may discourage sexual assault victims/survivors from reporting or seeking aid from law enforcement. In order to effectively serve the community, law enforcement must be able to understand the unique concerns and barriers that different populations face.



### Language

As our society evolves, a more ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse population emerges. The need for bilingual staff and qualified interpreters is being felt by all agencies that strive to better serve their communities. Interpreters who have been trained on sexual assault issues are the most effective method of communicating with non-English speaking victims.

### Age Groups

#### Seniors

Senior survivors of sexual abuse may think law enforcement would never believe someone their age would be a target for sexual abuse.

It is helpful for law enforcement to touch upon the possibility of sexual assault, along with other types of victimization efforts directed at this age group.

#### Adolescents

Because of assumed legal or parental consequences, adolescent victims who previously consumed alcohol or illegal substances may fear reporting the assault.

It is important for law enforcement to reassure teens that despite their potential poor choices, consent is still necessary before sexual activity is legal. It may also be helpful to offer teens your support when they talk to angry or disapproving parents.

### Gender

Sexual assault of males continues to be underreported because of the stigma associated with this crime. The violent crimes of rape and sexual assault are minimized when people believe “real” men are never raped.

Harmful sex-role stereotypes that create narrow definitions of masculinity make it particularly difficult for male survivors of sexual assault to report and seek help.

### Sexual Orientation

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer survivors frequently will not report an assault out of concern that their sexual orientation, rather than the crime, will become the focus.

Physical injuries beyond the rape/sexual assault itself may be suffered by survivors of a hate-based attack. In seeking services or help, these survivors may not disclose the sexual assault and only report the physical assault.

Survivors who are not open about their sexuality may fear that reporting and cooperating in prosecution may lead to disclosure.

### Physical or Mental Abilities

Persons with disabilities may be:

- ▶ Less able to articulate the abuse.
- ▶ Unable to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate physical contact, whether it be violent or sexual.
- ▶ At increased risk for abuse because of dependence on others for assistance or care.
- ▶ Reluctant to report instances of abuse out of fear of losing their vital linkage to major care providers or hard-earned independence.
- ▶ Considered less credible than the non-disabled person if and when they report abuse.

People with disabilities are targeted for victimization at a much higher rate than the general population. It is important to be patient and proactive when serving this community. A positive working relationship with service providers and advocacy groups for people with disabilities will increase your visibility and promote cooperation with your department.

### Residency Status

Possible barriers for immigrant survivors:

- ▶ Fear of deportation.
- ▶ Distrust of the criminal justice system.
- ▶ Loyalty to own cultural group.

For fear of being deported, many immigrants will not seek assistance through social services or report their victimization to law enforcement. For some, experiencing police corruption in their country of origin has made them distrustful and apprehensive of police in this country.