

Sonoma County Media Guide Sexual Assault, Child Abuse, and Human Trafficking



May 2019

*Developed in partnership with the
Monterey County Rape Crisis Center*

Role of the Media

The media plays a critical role in educating our community and shaping discourse at the national, state and local levels. Verity created this guide with the help of the Monterey County Rape Crisis Center to support local journalists and media outlets by providing straightforward and accurate information on sexual violence and human trafficking, best practices for interviewing trauma survivors, and the most up-to-date resources to our local area.

Definitions

Sexual Assault: Sexual assault is an umbrella term for many forms including rape or attempted rape, any unwanted sexual contact, sexual battery, verbal and physical harassment, stalking, and/or threats.

Sex Trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act which is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age¹.

Labor Trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion, for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.

Child Abuse: Child abuse occurs when an adult intentionally hurts a child or willfully fails to act so that harm to the child is a result. It includes neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse of a child by an adult or the ignoring of said abuse to the child by any individual or groups of individuals.

¹ <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/human-trafficking/>

Statistics

- In 2018, Verity provided services to over 1,300 survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones.
- 1 out of 3 women, 1 out of 6 men, and 1 out of 2 trans people experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime².
- There are an estimated 24.9 million people who are victims of human trafficking around the world, and of those, about 25% are children³.
- The National Human Trafficking Hotline was notified of 6,244 cases of sex trafficking in 2017 alone, a 13% jump from 2016. The National Human Trafficking Hotline receives more calls from California than any other state⁴.
 - Verity's Bilingual Human Trafficking Therapist saw 15 unique clients in 2018
 - 5 Human Trafficking clients received support applying for T-visas while 26 Human Trafficking clients received temporary housing through Verity and its partner agencies in 2018.
 - Advocacy, outreach, information, referral and case management services were provided to over 70 survivors of human trafficking in 2018.
- During 2015, the most recent year data is available, Sonoma County had a child abuse and neglect reporting rate of 31.3 per every 1,000 people⁵.
 - 20.4% of reported cases consist of physical abuse.
 - 6.0% of cases reported are of sexual abuse.

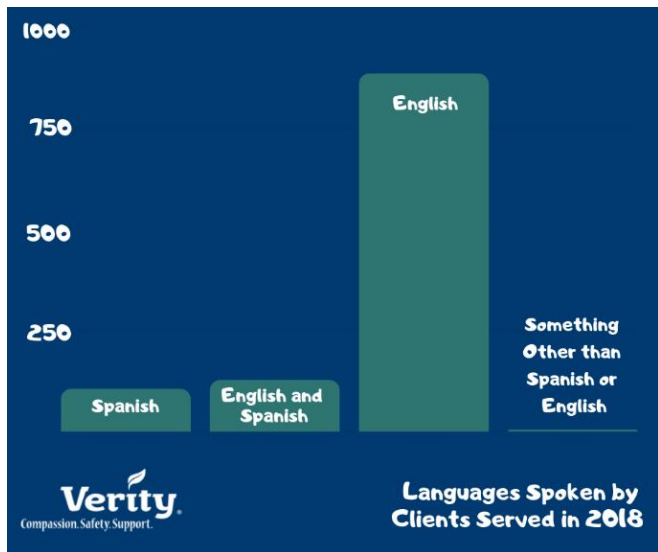
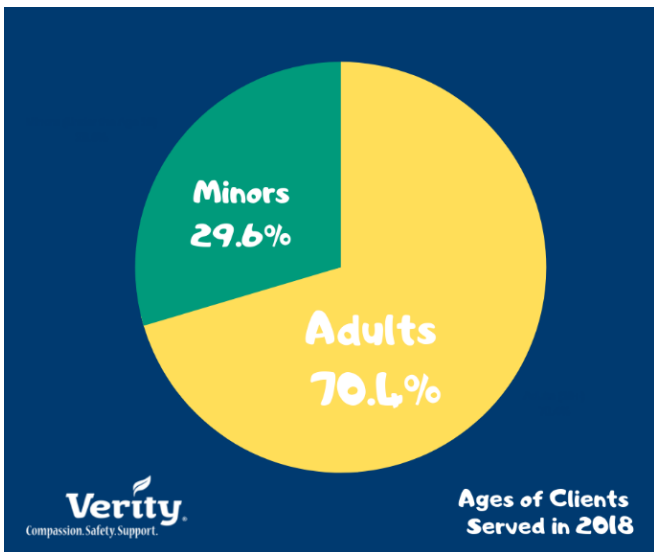
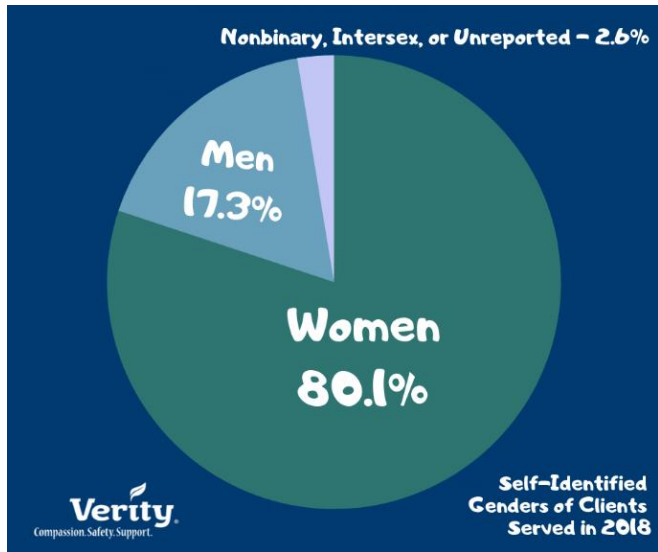
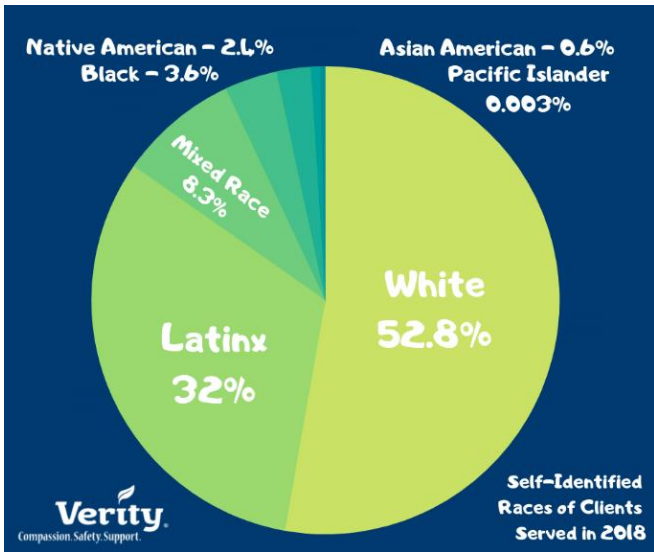
² National Intimate Partner & Sexual Violence Survey, 2010

³ International Labor Organization, September 2017

⁴ Polaris Project, 2018

⁵ KidsData.org

Statistics



Verity's Services & Resources

24-HOUR CRISIS LINE: (707) 545-7273

Verity's crisis line is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including holidays, in Spanish and English. Advocates provide crisis intervention services and referrals to survivors, family, friends, and community members. These advocates have undergone a 40 plus hour training in sexual violence, human trafficking and child abuse and are available to listen and to assist survivors in our community. Folks are welcome to call our hotline no matter how long ago the assault happened and whether or not they know if any assault happened. This line is also available as a resource to individuals in detention facilities to access support and to report incidents of sexual assault/abuse that have occurred while in custody or prior to their being remanded to custody.

ADVOCACY

Verity provides advocacy services for survivors of sexual violence and human trafficking in Sonoma County. We have advocates located at our North Santa Rosa main office on Piner Road, at the Family Justice Center on Mendocino Avenue, and at the Petaluma Police Department. Advocates are available to accompany survivors during forensic medical exams, law enforcement reports and court appearances as well as providing additional supportive services and access to basic human rights and needs.

REPORTING

Survivors of sexual assault, human trafficking and child abuse often have questions about what their options are for reporting the abuse they experienced. Verity Advocates can work with survivors to inform them of their options for reporting and help guide them through the process. Some survivors choose to never report. When survivors do report to law enforcement, Verity staff and trained volunteers are available to accompany them. In some instances individuals choose to remain anonymous in the report. These survivors are still eligible to have the forensic medical exam and their evidence will be stored up to two years should they decide to report during that time.

Verity trains staff and volunteers to become state-certified Sexual Assault Advocates, giving them the credentials to provide confidential and privileged services and communication to victims/survivors of sexual assault⁶.

⁶ California Evidence Code 1035.4

Verity's Services & Resources

ACCOMPANIMENT

Verity accompanies and provide support for survivors undergoing Sexual Assault Forensic Medical Examinations, interviews with law enforcement, and a variety of other venues in which a survivor chooses to have their advocate present⁷. Anyone interested in having a Sexual Assault Advocate present to make a law enforcement report, to go to a law enforcement interview, or accompany you at another venue, can contact us at 707-545-7270.

COUNSELING

Verity offers individual and family therapy to survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking. Anyone interested in our therapeutic services can call the office to set up an appointment for an intake. Once the intake has been assessed, we will contact you with the next steps. All Verity services are free of charge.

Individual therapy involves one-on-one counseling and is confidential. Short-term individual counseling is offered to survivors of rape, attempted rape, childhood sexual abuse, incest, or any other type of sexual violence as well as human trafficking. Individual therapy is also available for friends and family of survivors when we have vacancies.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Our weekly and monthly groups offer a safe and confidential environment to rebuild self-esteem and regain a sense of control. We offer a group for female and nonbinary survivors, a group for male and nonbinary survivors, and a group for parents and guardians of minors who have experienced trauma. Please contact us for more information about our current schedule.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

Verity promotes community education and awareness through outreach events, tabling, training, programs and seminars. Verity offers child and teen abuse prevention education programs and sexual violence prevention clubs in various schools and community groups across Sonoma County and facilitates groups in Juvenile Hall, Probation Camp, Valley of the Moon Children's Home, and the Main Adult Detention Facility. The team also makes presentations to local faith organizations, service clubs, and other community organizations.

⁷ California Penal Code 679.04

Beginning a Conversation with Survivors

Before beginning a piece, it would be best for reporters to talk to advocates and staff at local rape crisis centers to gain insight on the dynamics and forge connections with experts in the field. Remaining in contact with experts allows for the exploration of stories from new angles. It is important to be transparent with the survivor regarding the interview - to explain the purpose of the story you are planning to write, to inform the survivor of the details of the interview, such as its time, place, location, and medium (phone, video, in person, etc.) In addition, ask the survivor for permission to report the story, and whether or not they wish for their identity to remain confidential. Assume and make every attempt to keep the identity of the survivor confidential unless the survivor expresses that they wish to be identified. Something to keep in mind is that some survivors may want to be interviewed by the media, but not all will. Because of the nature of trauma, a survivor can relive the experience when being questioned or interviewed.

For those that do choose to be interviewed, it is then crucial to allow these survivors to share their story in their own way, their own words, and their own time. Remember that permission to write the story or to interview survivors may be withdrawn at any time, even if they had initially agreed. Whether or not the survivor initially consented to being interviewed or gave permission for the story to be written, it is best not to push boundaries and persist for approval. Remain caring and respectful of the survivor and their wishes throughout the entire process.

How to Interview a Survivor

Prior to the interview, ask the survivor if they would like to have a counselor or advocate present, as it may help the survivor feel more comfortable and supported while being interviewed. Take care to frame questions in a way that does not place blame or judgement on the survivor. No survivor is ever to blame for what happened to them. The more open-ended, considerate and non-judgmental the question is, the better.

Make sure to use appropriate language. Terms such as rape or sexual battery are clearer than euphemisms such as forced sex or groping. Also, avoid terms that stigmatize the victim, such as referring to a sex trafficking survivor as a prostitute or involved in prostitution. Note the attached chart with suggested language.

Often times, reporters will feel genuine horror about the stories they will hear. Their curiosity and need to make the world make sense, leads them to ask more detailed and personal questions to help them understand various characters in the narrative, to fill in plot gaps, or just to make sense of the interviewee's story. Reflect on the purpose of these questions and whether or not they are central to your story. If you can, notice that this is happening and remind the interviewee that they can decline to answer any of the questions they don't want to answer.

- Minh Dang, human trafficking survivor

Language Considerations

SAY THIS!	NOT THAT...
TO DESCRIBE THE CRIME	
Rape	Forced sex/intercourse or forced oral/anal sex Unauthorized sex/intercourse
	Nonconsensual sex or violent non-consensual sex
	Legitimate rape or forcible rape
	Unconscious sex or intoxicated sex
	Coercive sex or sex against their will Sex with incarcerated person
Sexual Battery	Sexual harassment or groping or unwanted touching/advances “A joke” or “funny” or “a prank”
Drug-facilitated sexual assault	Drunk nonconsensual sex or sex while drugged Sex after being given drugs or “roofied”
Child Sexual Abuse	Sex with a person under 18 Forced sex with a person under 18 Sex with a babysitter/teacher/principal/authority figure
TO DESCRIBE SURVIVORS	

Survivor of sexual abuse Survivor of sexual assault	Victim Broken, used, or impure person or lying for attention
Survivor of child abuse	Neglected or damaged child
Survivor of human trafficking	Prostitute or sex worker or criminal Sex slave
Commercially Sexually Exploited Child	Teen prostitute Teens or delinquents making the wrong choices Transactional sex or survival sex

TO DESCRIBE THE PERPETRATOR

Rapist Abuser or Perpetrator Sexual Assailant	<p>“Really promising <i>*insert any hobby/ profession/skill*</i>”</p> <p>“They made a mistake/one bad choice”</p> <p>“I just couldn’t picture it from them...” or “they’re a nice guy/gal/person” or “they just couldn’t control themselves!”</p>
Trafficker or Exploiter	<p>Pimp</p> <p>“Boyfriend”</p> <p>Business partner or entrepreneur</p>
Purchaser or Exploiter	John, Trick, Date, Buyer

To reach Verity, call (707) 545-7273. This free and confidential 24-hour service is accessible seven days a week and is a direct link to local services. All Verity services are available in both English and Spanish and free of charge.

Journalism Resources

1. [Language Guide for Child Trafficking](#)
2. [Tips for Reporting on Sex Trafficking](#)
3. [DART Resources for Reporting on Sexual Violence](#)

Media Contact

All media contacts should go to our Executive Director and/or Communications Coordinator. The Executive Director can be reached at ED@ourverity.org or (707) 545-7270 x 21 and the Communications Coordinator can be reached at Communications@ourverity.org or (707) 545-7270 x 15. Verity's Executive Director is the sole spokesperson for the agency in any media interviews or events.

Created by **Verity**
Sonoma County's Rape Crisis, Trauma, and Healing Center