



## Creating the Most Effective Collaborative Infrastructure

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Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) are crucial in promoting a coordinated and survivor-centered response to improve survivors' experiences seeking help. SARTs bring together responders (e.g., rape victim advocates, nurses and doctors, police, prosecutors, etc.) to assist sexual assault survivors. We define infrastructures as the structures and processes that SARTs use in their teamwork such



Figure 1 Photograph by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels. CCO.

“SART infrastructures have the potential to help build team efficiency, improve relationships, and improve practices in responding to sexual assault. However, many infrastructures continue to be challenging to implement in practice--and when they go wrong--can exacerbate existing tensions between disciplines or promote practices that are not survivor-centered.”

as formal coordinator roles, trainings (when responders teach each other about their roles), and case review (when teams assess their response to specific cases to identify what they did well and what they could improve on). SARTs vary in how they use infrastructures to guide their work together. Teams with more infrastructures may collaborate better and be perceived as more effective. This study explored the helpful versus challenging aspects of SART infrastructure.

### Highlights

**While infrastructures can improve teams' relationships and work, some are difficult to implement.**

**SARTs could first focus on infrastructures that build trust and buy-in before adopting other accountability-focused infrastructures.**

**Improving SART infrastructures can help promote SART collaboration and thereby improve survivors' experiences.**

## Methods

We phone interviewed leaders from 169 SARTs across the United States about barriers and facilitators to achieving SART goals. The interview transcripts were coded to include responses related to multidisciplinary/SART team factors. We then analyzed the responses to identify patterns. From this, a broader theme of SART infrastructure emerged.

## Results

- SARTs use different infrastructures to guide their work. These included mission statements, formal protocols, subcommittees, team leadership roles, trainings, meetings, and case review.
- Infrastructure is helpful for building relationships and trust among members, making the team's work more efficient, and improving the response to sexual assault.
- Some infrastructures were difficult to implement for some teams. For example, teams struggled to hold meetings and trainings if members did not have the time or funding to attend, or were just not engaged in the SART's work.
- Some infrastructures created unintended issues on teams. For example, some activities like case review or developing protocols led to tension, or resentment among members at some times.

## HOW DID A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE INFORM YOUR WORK?

Community Psychology values collaboration, particularly across disciplines, to strive towards common goals or tackle complex issues. Yet, collaboration is not always easy to do, nor do well. Therefore, this research can help encourage successful collaboration among members of multidisciplinary collaborative interventions.

### What Does This Mean For Research and Evaluation?

This study only included SART leaders. Continued research can examine different SART members' perspectives of what infrastructures they find helpful versus challenging. Additionally, research may further examine how other factors and team characteristics (e.g., team age) may relate to SART infrastructure.

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