

Appendix B. Communications

Communications from the Multidisciplinary Advisory Committee

As the multidisciplinary advisory committee (MDAC) forms its plan for sexual assault response reform, it should not underestimate the importance of clear, strategic communication with the press and the community. This is a significant consideration at all stages of the reform process.

The first question is how transparent to be with the community. Should the public have access to all levels of information? Or is there a compelling case to be made for keeping some aspects of the MDAC's work confidential?

Once the MDAC has decided what types of milestones should be communicated to the public, it should consider the best strategies for disseminating that information. In addition to traditional media, blogs and social media can be supportive. Blogs and social media also offer the MDAC full control over the content and timing of the message (although the committee should consider a policy on how to respond to comments on social platforms). Public forums or "town hall" meetings could also be used.

Regardless of the medium, the MDAC should identify the best spokespeople and storytellers for particular phases of work.

Communications from Law Enforcement

Law enforcement agencies should strive for a positive relationship with the community and the media. For sexual assault cases, this may mean holding themselves accountable for previous failures and communicating to the community how they will improve their response to sexual assault with the implementation of MDAC-approved policies and practices that align with national recommendations.

The MDAC should help investigative agencies establish a process and protocol for transparent communication with the community, covering topics such as progress made in improving the agency's response to sexual assault, successful cases ending in arrest, and improved strategies for victim reporting and engagement with the criminal justice system.

Communications from Prosecutors

Similarly, prosecutors should strive for a positive relationship with the community and the media. Rather than only emphasizing the successful cases, prosecutors should consider an approach that assures the community that they will recognize sexual assault cases as violent crimes and prosecute them as such. The MDAC should also help prosecutors convey a message highlighting actions taken for an improved response to sexual assault.