

# NATIONAL JUDICIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM\*

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## UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE:

### PROSECUTING ADULT RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

*Understanding Sexual Violence: Prosecuting Adult Rape and Sexual Assault Cases* is a model four-day curriculum developed under a grant from the Department of Justice Violence Against Women Office. The National Judicial Education Program (NJEP) developed this curriculum at the request of judges nationwide who asked NJEP to adapt its highly regarded judicial education curriculum on rape trials to create a similar program for prosecutors. The curriculum is part of a joint project with the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) to provide prosecutors with tools for successful sex crimes prosecutions, especially in cases involving nonstranger rapes. This curriculum was piloted in six states and received high praise from the prosecutors who participated, as described below.

*Understanding Sexual Violence* provides the most current information for sex crimes prosecutors including up-to-date research on a variety of topics including: societal attitudes toward rape, the effect of these attitudes on charging decisions, victim's reaction during and after the sexual assault as it affects victim interviewing and preparation, Rape-Related Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, jury selection and jury deliberation, sex offenders and sex offender treatment and forensic sexual assault examinations. How this research relates to more effective prosecution is explored through the example of a case file, which is used throughout the four-day training. Case files are familiar to all prosecutors; for a prosecutor, this is how most cases begin. The curriculum also employs interactive teaching techniques through the use of small group exercises and plenary discussions.

The curriculum is designed for presentation by either local prosecutors or by NJEP and APRI faculty. It consists of a Faculty Manual, a Participant's Binder, and a Resources Book, Volumes I and II. The Faculty Manual explains in detail how to present the curriculum. The Participant's Binder is the substantive content to be conveyed and includes all the worksheets and handouts to be used at the program. The Resources Book is a series of reports, articles and excerpts that provides background on the curriculum and allows the reader to consider these subjects in greater depth.

Presentations of the curriculum have been very well received. Following are comments from prosecutors who attended the two pilot programs.

- “After twenty years as a prosecutor, this is the first time I understand how to try these cases.”
- “I found this [victim impact section] extremely effective and it gives me a better sense of understanding the victim.”

- An experienced prosecutor stated: “When I first read the case file I thought that I’d never indict this case...by day two I thought the case was looking better...by the end of the training I believed I could win this case at trial.”
- “Excellent presentation. What a great resource for us.”

*Police, victim advocates, rape crisis counselors and probation departments will find this curriculum useful and adaptable to meet their needs as well.*

Judges interested in this curriculum should know that it is an adaptation of NJEP’s original curriculum, **Understanding Sexual Violence: The Judicial Response to Stranger and Nonstranger Rape and Sexual Assault**. Please visit [www.njep.org](http://www.njep.org) for more information.

The full set of materials includes the Faculty Manual, Participants Binder, and Resources Book, Volumes I and II. The price for these materials plus postage (19 lbs.) and handling is \$200.00.

**The Faculty Manual and Participants Binder are available online at <http://www.mincava.umn.edu/documents/usvpros/>.** The Resources Book, Volumes I and II is only available in hard copy and can be purchased separately for \$115.00.

If you are outside the United States, postage will depend upon your location and postal preference, i.e. surface or air.