

Dear CODAC:

Sexual trauma is NOT a behavior health issue. To group sexual trauma in with services for people suffering from substance abuse issues or mental disorders is to victim-blame people who have survived violence. Sex crime victims did not choose to be assaulted, nor is it accurate to pathologize them for sustaining physical, emotional, and mental injuries from the assault.

If a male was beaten up by a group of men in a hate crime and he sought out community support to deal with the traumatic injuries, he would not ever be classified as having a behavioral health issue.

To imply that sexual trauma falls under the category of a behavioral health issue is to take the position that sex crime victims need to make a lifestyle change, undergo self-improvement, or be guided and counseled into accepting the impact of damage done to them while the perpetrator walks free of consequences and continues to rape others. It is to imply that if a crime victim has a problem accepting serial rapists walking free and continuing their crime streak, there is something wrong with that person in need of fixing.

Sex crime victims are in need of assistance with removing threats to their physical safety through community responsibility to discourage future crime instead of leaving the entire responsibility upon crime victims to look over their shoulders the rest of their lives. Notice how none of the programs that advertise themselves as providing support to victims of sexual violence lift a finger to advocate for their legal rights to receive the service of protection and defense from law enforcement to stop the rapist from striking again.

Sexual trauma wrongfully identified as a behavioral health issue for victims of sexual violence sends the message out to the community that no crime took place and the rape victim is simply in need of counseling to stop acting like a dumb slut and stop hanging out with the wrong men. Rape victims are not in need of having their behavior reformed because they failed to carry a can of mace or didn't look over their shoulder enough or their "No" got stuck in their throat with terror. It is the serial rapists who are in need of behavioral reform. Perpetrating sexual violence is a behavioral health issue.

Best regards,

Chelsea Wright