



## An Abuse of Power

Due to the imbalance of power between offenders and staff in correctional settings, sexual interactions between staff (who have power) and offenders (who lack power) are unprofessional, unethical and illegal. Some offenders who lack power may become sexually involved with staff in an effort to equalize the imbalance of power. Occasionally an offender may try to use sex to improve his/her standing or circumstances (e.g., better job, avoid disciplinary action, affect a release plan, gain privileges, etc.). Because of the imbalance of power between offenders and staff, contractors, vendors and volunteers, there can never be a consensual relationship between offenders and persons working or volunteering for the Department. The law states "consent" is not a defense to prosecution.

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Report any / all instances of suspected sexual abuse and sexual harassment to:

S.A.T.F. Director, Hector D. Olivares  
(956) 289-7410

Clinical Supervisor, Aissa Cantu, MA,  
LPC-S  
(956) 587-6024

Executive Director, Faustino Lopez  
(956) 587-6016

Residents may also submit a medical request to the Nurse for further assistance.

Edinburg Police Department 289-7700

## Hidalgo County Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

## Hidalgo County S.A.T.F

A Guide for the Prevention and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment in Community Correctional Facilities.



The Hidalgo County  
SATF has a Zero  
Tolerance policy for  
Sexual Abuse and  
Sexual Harassment.

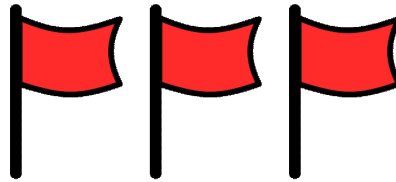
## What can I do to avoid inappropriate staff / offender relationships?

Most staff/offender sexual misconduct occurs only after seemingly innocent professional boundaries have been crossed. The following behaviors will assist you in maintaining appropriate boundaries:

- Maintain professional distance
- Focus behavior on duties and assignments
- Do not become overly close with any particular offenders
- Do not share your own or other staff person's personal information with offenders or around offenders.
- Do not discuss issues you may have with other staff or management with or around offenders.
- When speaking to offenders about other staff refer to the staff person as Ms. or Mr. or by their title.
- When speaking to offenders refer to them as Ms. or Mr. and their last name
- Do not accept gifts or favors from offenders
- Be knowledgeable of Departmental policy and procedure, rules of conduct and laws regarding sexual misconduct and sexual harassment.
- Your conduct and the decisions you make reflect not only on your own reputation, but also on that of your peers and the agency you represent.
- You will face loss of employment and possibly a felony conviction and imprisonment.

## A Duty to Report

Staff must report any inappropriate staff/offender behavior immediately. The presence of illegal and unethical behavior by staff compromises the security and safety of offenders and the entire agency.



## Red Flags:

The following are behaviors or 'red flags' that may signal you or someone you work with is in danger of engaging in sexual misconduct with an offender:

- Spending a lot of time with a particular offender
- Change in appearance of an offender or staff member
- Deviating from agency policy for the benefit of a particular offender
- Sharing personal information with an offender
- Horseplay
- Overlooking infractions of a particular offender
- Doing favors for an offender
- Consistently volunteering for a particular assignment or shift
- Coming to work early/staying at work late
- Flirting with an offender
- Standing too close to an offender
- Taking up an offender's cause or grievance
- Changing duty assignments of a particular offender
- Getting into conflicts with co-workers over an offender
- Bringing things into the facility for the offender
- Doing favors for offender's family
- Feeling the effects of major life changes (divorce, etc)
- Believing an offender is indispensable

*If you see yourself or others in this list, you should discuss this with your supervisor.*

## History of Victimization

Some staff don't think of offenders as 'victims' of staff sexual abuse or sexual harassment, especially when the offender appears to be a willing participant or even initiated the sexual or 'romantic' interactions with a staff member. The offender is always the victim because of the imbalance of power. The consent or willingness of an offender to participate may be a survival strategy or a learned response to previous or current victimization. Many offenders have a history of victimization (physical and/or sexual abuse), which may make them especially vulnerable to the sexual overtures of persons in positions of authority. Their perception of affection / love may be skewed by this background of abuse, making it impossible for them to refuse advances of a staff member. In some instances, particularly for female offenders, their survival in the community has been directly related to using their sexuality to obtain the means to survive. Coupled with low self-esteem, this carries over into their conduct while incarcerated and while under community supervision.

For more information on the Prison Rape Elimination Act please see:  
<http://www.prearesourcecenter.org>