Who Are We?

We are a team of faculty and scientists at *Rutgers University-Newark* and *Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences*. We work in partnership with local community-based organizations such as churches, health clinics, and wellness centers that provide support to survivors of sexual violence.

What is Our Goal?

In women who are survivors of sexual violence, we seek to understand how the brain systems for learning, memory, and decision making are affected by trauma.

Why is This Innovative?

Most previous studies of PTSD have been done with male survivors of combat trauma. Relatively little is known about PTSD in women survivors of sexual violence.

Community Resources

Rutgers University Behavioral Healthcare
Access Center: (800) 969-5300

Newark Renaissance House, Inc.
Julie Griffith, *President and CEO*
50 Norfolk St.
Newark, NJ 07103
(973) 623-3386

SAVE of Essex County
Sexual Violence Services
Rape Care Hotline: (877) 733-2273
www.familyserviceleague.org

La Casa de Don Pedro – Family Success Center
Hispanic Women's Resource Center
23 Broadway
Newark, NJ 07104
(973) 483-2703

Integrity House
Maribel Nunez, *Director of Women's Residential Program*
103 Lincoln Park
Newark, NJ 07102
(973) 623-0600

Bessie Mae Women and Family Health Center
220 S. Harrison St.
East Orange, NJ 07018
(973) 766-1303
www.bessiemaehc.weebly.com

Purple R.E.I.G.N. Social Services
Asia D. Smith, *CEO and Founder*
220 S. Harrison St. (Suite 101)
East Orange, NJ 07018
(973) 937-8775
www.purplereignss.org

For Survivors of Sexual Violence in Greater Newark

A Guide to Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress (PTSD)

RUTGERS
UNIVERSITY | NEWARK

www.memory.rutgers.edu
(973) 353-3674

Some Definitions

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence is a sexual act committed against someone without that person's freely given consent. It includes both completed or attempted forced penetration, as well as other unwanted sexual contact.

PTSD or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition triggered by a terrifying or traumatic event, either experiencing it or witnessing it. While most people recover from initial symptoms naturally, those who continue to experience problems long after the trauma may be suffering from PTSD.

Signs & Symptoms of PTSD

To be diagnosed with PTSD, an adult must have all of the following *for at least one month:*

Re-experiencing symptoms such as flashbacks or reliving the trauma over and over, often accompanied by physical symptoms including a racing heart or sweating.

Avoidance symptoms such as staying away from places, events, or objects that are reminders of the traumatic experience or avoiding thoughts or feelings related to the traumatic event.

Arousal symptoms such as being easily startled, feeling tense or "on edge", having difficulty sleeping, or frequent angry outbursts.

Mood and thinking symptoms such as negative thoughts about oneself or the world, feelings like guilt or blame, and loss of interest in enjoyable activities.

> **To participate in research studies and contribute to understanding PTSD in survivors of sexual violence,**
>
> **Call: (973) 353-3674**

Treatments for PTSD

There are several treatments for survivors of sexual violence that may help reduce PTSD symptoms:

Talk Therapy is a type of counseling in which a therapist helps a person understand and change how they think about their trauma and its aftermath. The most common form of talk therapy for PTSD is called "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy" or CBT.

Exposure Therapy creates a safe environment with a therapist for someone to confront fearful images or thoughts that are associated with a traumatic experience.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing has someone think or talk about their traumatic memories while being distracted by eye movements, hand taps, or sounds.

Group Therapy allows people to talk about their trauma, and build relationships with others who have had similar experiences.

Antidepressant medications may help some people control some of the emotional symptoms of PTSD.