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### Rape Recovery Center: How Language Impacts Outreach

Over the last several years, there has been increased attention and awareness around sexual assault and harassment. With movements like #MeToo and a greater public dialogue, many individuals are feeling motivated to seek effective resources for healing and prevention. The Rape Recovery Center (RRC) is a non-profit organization located in Salt Lake City whose mission is, “to empower those victimized by sexual violence through advocacy, crisis intervention and therapy and to educate the community about the cause, impact, and prevention of sexual violence” (Rape Recovery Center, “Our Mission”). This report will use rhetorical analysis to compare and contrast three documents of different genres from the Rape Recovery Center for effectiveness in fulfilling organization’s mission. The three documents are: *A Guide for Family and Friends of a Sexual Assault Survivor* informational brochure, the *2018 Rape Recovery Center Annual Report*, and the *Yo Pregunto. I Ask.* campaign promotion poster.

#### A GUIDE FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF A SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVOR

*A Guide for Family and Friends of a Sexual Assault Survivor* is a four page brochure, originally created ten years ago but was revised this year by the direct services and administrative teams of the RRC. It is intended to educate and inform family and friends of basic supportive responses they can practice with sexual assault survivors to minimize trauma and promote healing. It accomplishes this intention by offering situation specific language, conversational tools, and

emotional support and resources to family and friends of survivors. The brochure is designed with the RRC logos, colors and font, while the text is arranged in columns marked by headings and subheadings. The headings and subheadings give a framework for the basic responses for crisis support with smaller paragraphs of detailed instructions. This design allows the information to be approachable for readers through a quick scan or a thorough reading. The text is written from the perspective of a supporter, addressing specific concerns this audience has:

Your instinct may be to want to take control and right this situation for your loved one. It is important for you to understand that control has been taken away, and the greatest gift you can give right now is the freedom to make their own choices on how best to proceed.

Follow your loved ones lead. (Rape Recovery Center, “A Guide” 2)

The “you” in this text is the supporter. This quote also demonstrates the conversational yet authoritative voice of the text. The language is instructional and understanding of the supporter’s perspective, while being direct and simple. The text contains many imperative sentences, such as “Don’t limit the survivor’s independence by making decisions for her/him” (Rape Recovery Center, “A Guide” 2). The simple sentences and vocabulary make it accessible to most readers. Most of the suggested responses in this brochure follow this outline: address the supporter’s reaction, explain why this response is not helpful, and redirect to a healthy, supportive response. The text assumes the reader is a supporter of a survivor of sexual assault in need of guidance and support to manage the crisis. This document is circulated specifically within the RRC community and clients, along with other healing resources tailored for survivors and their supporters. Collectively these resources work to create a healing environment for the survivor and their family by providing options for recovery, including therapy, classes, and literature. One

limitation of this document is the cohesiveness of the different headings and subheadings, while each topic individually is very information. It is difficult to see how the different topics relate or build upon each other. Overall, the guide is effective in fulfilling the mission by advocating for survivors with their families and friends, providing tools for crisis intervention, and educating family and friends about the cause, impact, and prevention of further trauma in regard to the sexual assault.

#### 2018 RAPE RECOVERY CENTER ANNUAL REPORT

The *2018 Rape Recovery Center Annual Report* is a statistical report of the RRC's activities and programs, board and staff members, client demographics, as well as the organization's spending and donor contributions. The document was written by the Development Director, Morgan Stinson. Its purpose is to highlight the accomplishments and progress of the RRC, recognize and praise staff, volunteers, and donors, demonstrate the value of the organization's services to the local community and leadership, and attract potential donors. The document can be accessed on the RRC website, along with previous annual reports. The report is designed with the RRC logos, colors, and font with an emphasis on visual aides to communicate information, including photos, infographics, and charts. The sentences are exclamatory and declarative with the structure being more complex. The document begins with an address from the Executive Director of the RRC, Mara Haight, she states:

Along with this increase in services, we have been inspired by the many community members and organizations who have supported our center throughout this year. We are so grateful for the many supporters who volunteered their time, coordinated service projects, hosted fundraisers, and donated their own resources to help our organization

grow. Our circles of support continue to grow as our community seeks opportunities to join our movement to build a culture of consent and healing. (Stinson 2)

This quote demonstrates that the report is intended for viewing by the general public, as the director is addressing several different groups involved in the organization and extends an invitation to the broader community to join in the movement. The document appeals to this audience by positively showcasing the RRC's activities and demonstrating the healing impact through client testimonials, which are highlighted in text boxes throughout the report. The overall voice of the document is inclusive, upbeat, and collaborative, using words such as "we" and "partners" and "access" (Stinson). The reader doesn't need foreknowledge of sexual assault to understand the document; in some ways, the report acts as an educational platform making readers aware of the services by offering simple vocabulary and language around sexual assault, however, the main goal is make a positive impression of the organization to the larger community. The trauma-related topics in the text are approached broadly.

The Rape Recovery Center works collaboratively with many partners to bring education and outreach to communities throughout Utah. We partner with many agencies, along with Junior High, High School, and College campuses throughout Salt Lake County to provide information around healthy relationships, consent, trauma and services. (Stinson 7)

This document circulates with other annual reports, as well as texts directed at local leadership and donors. Because funding for the organization is dependent on governmental and private funds, these documents are tailored to convey the value of the organization in terms of time and money donated. The annual report supports the mission of the RRC by educating the public on

the impact of sexual assault in the community and advocating for resources and funds to continue providing healing and prevention tools.

#### YO PREGUNTO. I ASK. PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN POSTER

The *Yo Pregunto. I Ask.* campaign poster was created for Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) by the RRC's Educational team, which consisted of staff and community volunteers. After conducting a public survey to determine the theme of the campaign, the Education Team contracted a local artist, Miriam Flores, to create the images and art. The team used these images to create various media for the campaign, including this poster. The poster was available online, through social media, and at the RRC. The document is brightly colored with larger fonts in capital letters, highlighting the theme of "uplifting consent" (Rape Recovery Center, "Yo Pregunto"). There are graphics of children wearing t-shirts with the words: empowerment, voice, and respect written on them. Some of the text is in both English and Spanish. The RRC logo is found on the document but it does not follow the typical color scheme, font, and images of the RRC because of their collaboration with a community artist. There is contact information listed for the RRC, including hashtags, media handles, and website addresses. The majority of the text is dedicated to describing the events and activities that are part of the campaign. This campaign and poster were created to meet the educational needs of the community regarding sexual assault per the public survey. Each of the events listed on the poster is an opportunity to learn more about the services of the RRC and the topic of consent. It functions as a form of outreach, appealing to the public's desire to keep their children safe from sexual harm. The text is direct, simple, and exclamatory, and the voice is conversational and

inviting. The catch phrases are accessible and memorable to the public, such as “Let’s Get Consensual!” and “Yo Pregunto. I Ask” (Rape Recovery Center, “Yo Pregunto”).

Hey Salt Lake, “Let’s Get Consensual!” Join us at a bar hop to support the Rape Recovery Center and Celebrate National Sexual Assault Awareness Month!

Hit the town and kick-off Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), all while you and your friends help support the RRC! We will have volunteers at each stop so you can learn more about how to get involved in SAAM. Can’t wait to see you there! (Rape Recovery Center, “Yo Pregunto”)

These quotes demonstrate the casual tone of the poster and intention of creating awareness and support of the RRC as well as educating the community about sexual assault. This document circulates with all RRC educational and outreach literature, as well as other media and text that were a part of this campaign specifically. It works together with these other texts to educate the public sphere about general topics related to sexual health and safety. The dialogue is prevention focused rather than crisis-centered. The campaign poster fulfills the mission of the RRC by educating the community about sexual health and sexual assault prevention.

#### EFFECTIVENESS OF THE RRC DOCUMENTS IN FULFILLING THEIR MISSION

There is a cohesiveness to the three documents in presentation and approach. These documents are circulated among all the RRC’s literature and campaigns which are directed towards the local community to increase awareness, education, and prevention of sexual assault. The consistent use of the RRC’s logos, colors, and font make these documents recognizable over several genres, as well as giving them credibility. The conversational and collaborative voice appeals to a wide variety of audiences, while the simple and concise text makes the information

accessible for many reading levels. All three documents reflect the theme of the organization's mission to empower and educate through resources and tools. This direct but casual approach is effective for outreach and education of the public, survivors, and supporters.

While all three documents operate under the general theme of the organization's mission, each document individually addresses specific needs that show up within niches of the local community. One document is tailored to the needs of supporters, while another document targets volunteers and donors, and the third aims to increase awareness of the general public. In approaching each of these needs, the language, visual aides, and tone shift subtly. These subtle shifts are represented in the sentence structure, utilizing the imperative in the informational guide and declarative and exclamatory in the report and promotional poster. This small grammatical change influences the different tones and voices of the documents. While the RRC in general is approachable, the changes in tone align with the purpose of each document. The guide contains more specific information in an authoritative and knowledgeable manner. The statistical report uses collective terms and highlights accomplishments to give a positive impression, while the campaign dials in on memorable catch phrases people will remember to increase awareness.

Collectively these documents work to fulfill the mission of the Rape Recovery Center. Through the annual reports, the RRC attracts funds and volunteers by demonstrating the positive impact the organization is having on the community in terms of prevention and healing. The promotional campaign poster operates to educate the public on general sexual health and safety practices. The informational guides are targeted to support the survivors of sexual assault and their families and healing from the effects of the immediate crisis. The rhetorical analysis of the three Rape Recovery Center documents shows a commitment to the overarching mission of the

organization. This message is a thread throughout the three pieces, while also demonstrating diligence in approaching the specific needs of the community through attention to language use and perspective.

Works Cited

Rape Recovery Center. "A Guide for Family and Friends of a Sexual Assault Survivor."

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