Myths and Facts

Goal:
To provide officers with pertinent information about non-stranger sexual assault in order to strengthen response to and investigation of these crimes.

FACT: Sexual assault is a crime of motive and opportunity.
The offender uses the victim's trust to isolate him or her from others.

FACT: Victims of non-stranger sexual assault often do not identify their experience as sexual assault.
Victims of non-stranger assault often blame themselves for or in their home.

MYTH: A prior or current relationship or previous acts of intimacy are insufficient indicators of consent.
A prior or current relationship or previous acts of intimacy are sufficient to establish consent.

MYTH: 5/6 of assaults/rapes occurred within one mile of the victims home.
73% of assaults/rapes occurred within one mile of the victims home.

FACT: Most assaults/rapes took place far from the victim's home.
Approximately 2/3 of reports rape cases are perpetrated by someone known to the victim.

FACT: 73% of assaults were committed by non-strangers.

FACT: Most sexual assault victims are acquainted with the suspect in some way, yet rarely expect intimacy with the suspect.

FACT: 38% of rapist are a friend or acquaintance, 28% are an intimate, 7% are a relative.

FACT: A previous intimate contact/relationship are insufficient indicators of consent.
A prior or current relationship or previous acts of intimacy are sufficient to establish consent.

FACT: Victims of non-stranger sexual assault oftentimes blame themselves for the assault.
Victims of non-stranger assault often do not identify their experience as sexual assault.

FACT: Most sexual assault victims are acquainted with the suspect in some way, yet rarely expect intimacy with the suspect.

FACT: Sexual assault is a crime of motive and opportunity.
The offender uses the victim's trust to isolate him or her from others.

Response and Investigative Tips

Focus on evidence to establish that consent was absent and fear was present, including:
- Evidence of physical or verbal resistance
- Detailed account of the victim’s thoughts and feelings during the assault
- Suspect’s size and strength, in comparison to the victim’s
- Information regarding the environment in which the assault took place
- Information regarding the victim’s post-assault behavior
- Information regarding the suspect’s pre/post behavior

Additional information to include in report:

- Approach every case with an open mind and without making assumptions.
- Write a detailed narrative. Be careful not to use words that imply consent.
- Document detailed descriptions of the victim’s condition as observed including the victim’s feelings as expressed.
- Photograph any physical evidence and document clearly.
- Capture details of suspect’s pre-mortisation and grooming behavior.
- Use exact words of victim and suspect and place those in quotations.
- Interview, do not interrogate, the victim.
- Arrange unbiased, independent translation if English is not the first language of the victim, witness, or suspect.
- Provide the victim with resources on local counseling services.

IACP Investigating Sexual Assaults: Concepts and Issues Paper
IACP Sexual Assault Guidelines and Investigation Strategies and Sexual Assault Model Policy