

VICTIM NOTIFICATION:

Developing Empirically-Based Approaches for Addressing the Problem of Untested Rape Kits

Rebecca Campbell, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
Michigan State University

What Is Victim Notification?

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The process of re-contacting sexual assault survivors to inform them that a SAK had not been tested and now **will be tested** or **has been tested**

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PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Psychological Implications

■ Re-activation of assault memories . . .

- Could trigger flashbacks and other symptoms
- Could exacerbate PTSD and/or other MH
- Could increase substance use/abuse
- Could trigger substance abuse relapse

Legal Implications

- Law enforcement personnel may want to . . .
 - Review prior statements made to police/prosecutors
 - Take a new statement for the re-investigation
 - Review photo line-up of suspects
 - Discuss DNA testing results (or not)
 - Assess willingness to re-engage

What Is The Best Way to Do Victim Notification?

???????

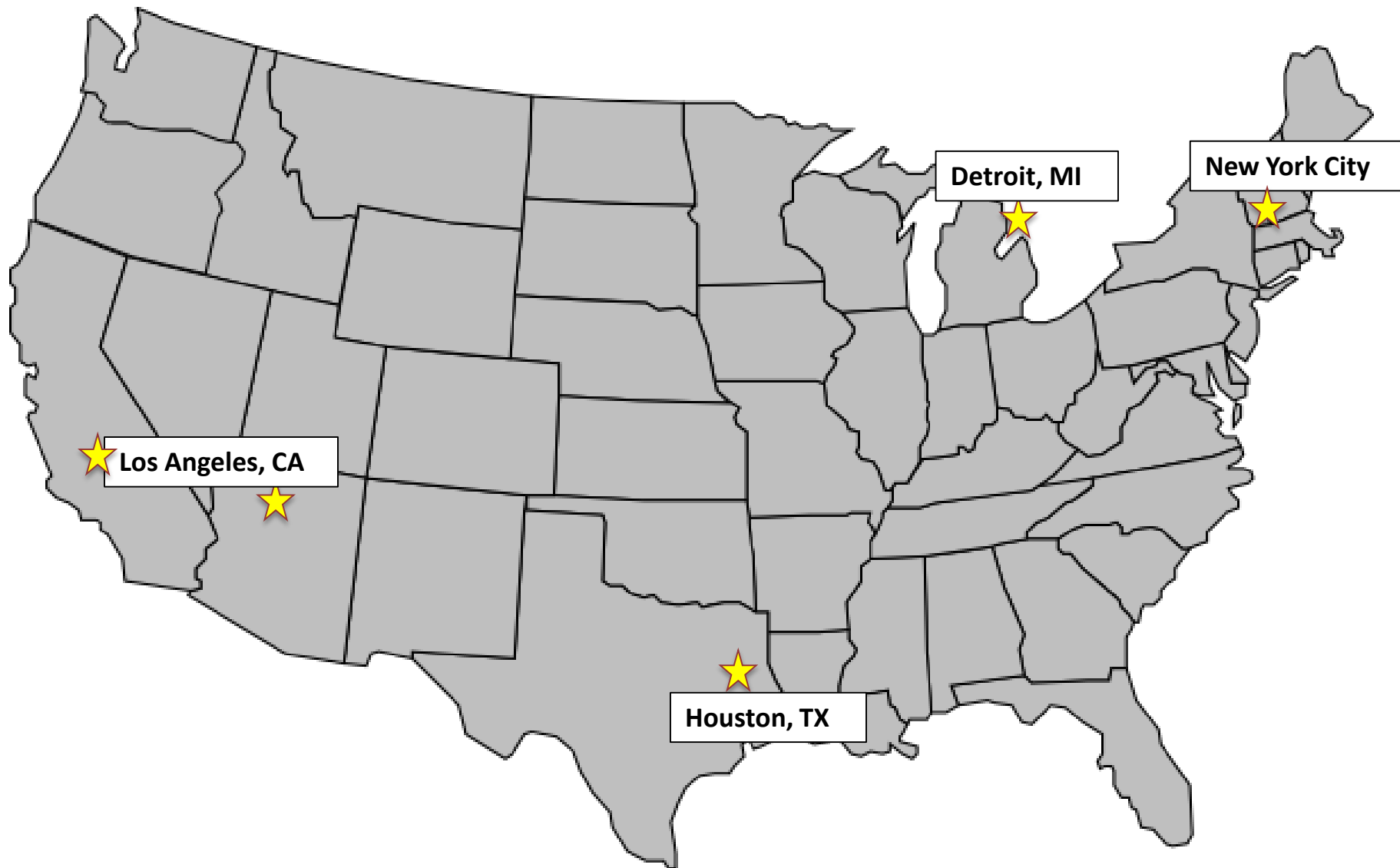
Why Don't We Have Best Practices (Yet)?

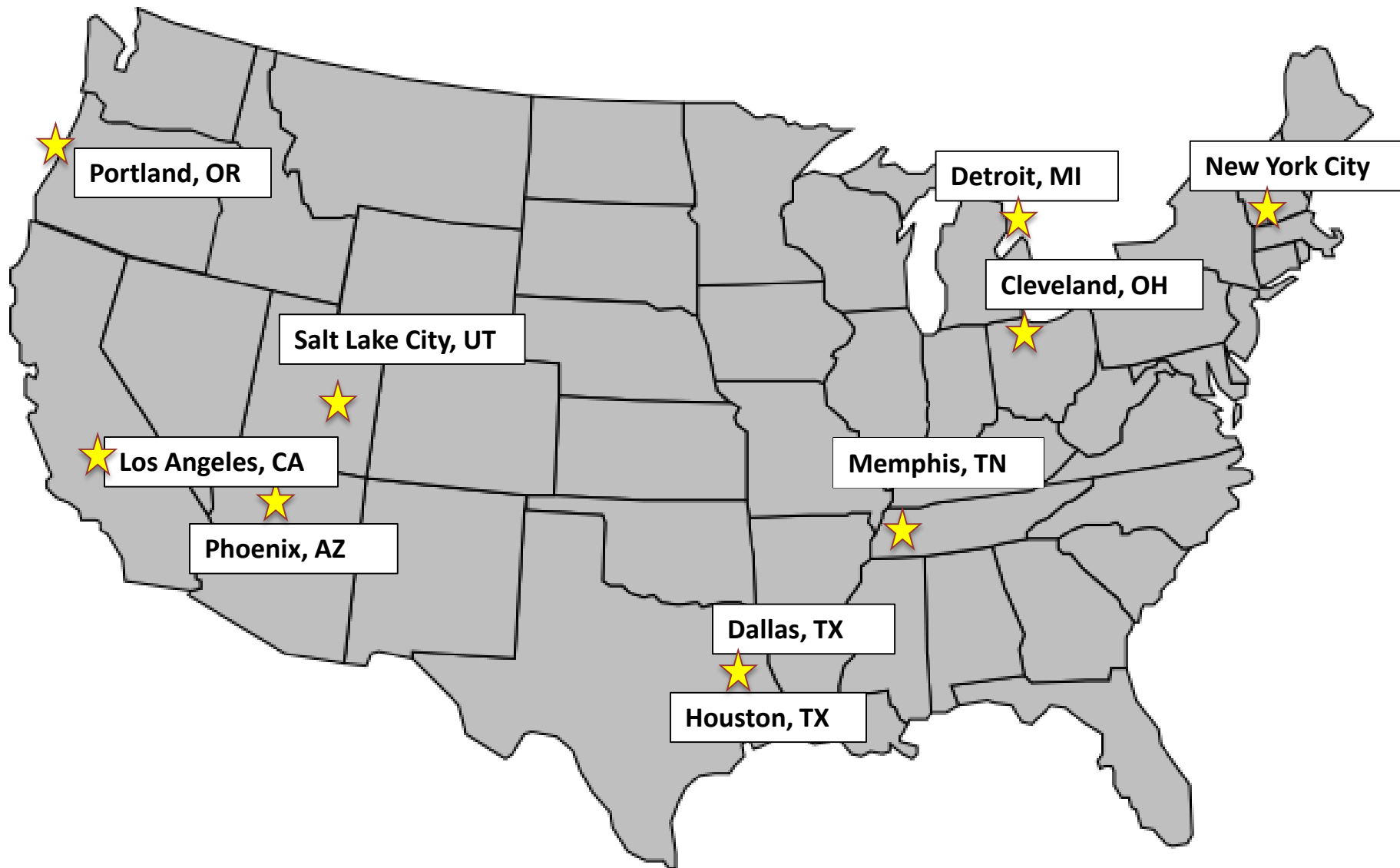
- Public recognition of problem relatively recent
- VERY limited research on issue → Detroit, Houston
- Hard to study this issue → active legal cases
- Victim confidentiality → some info can't be shared
- Community context → not a one size fits all

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Portland, OR

Salt Lake City, UT

Los Angeles, CA

Phoenix, AZ

Dallas, TX

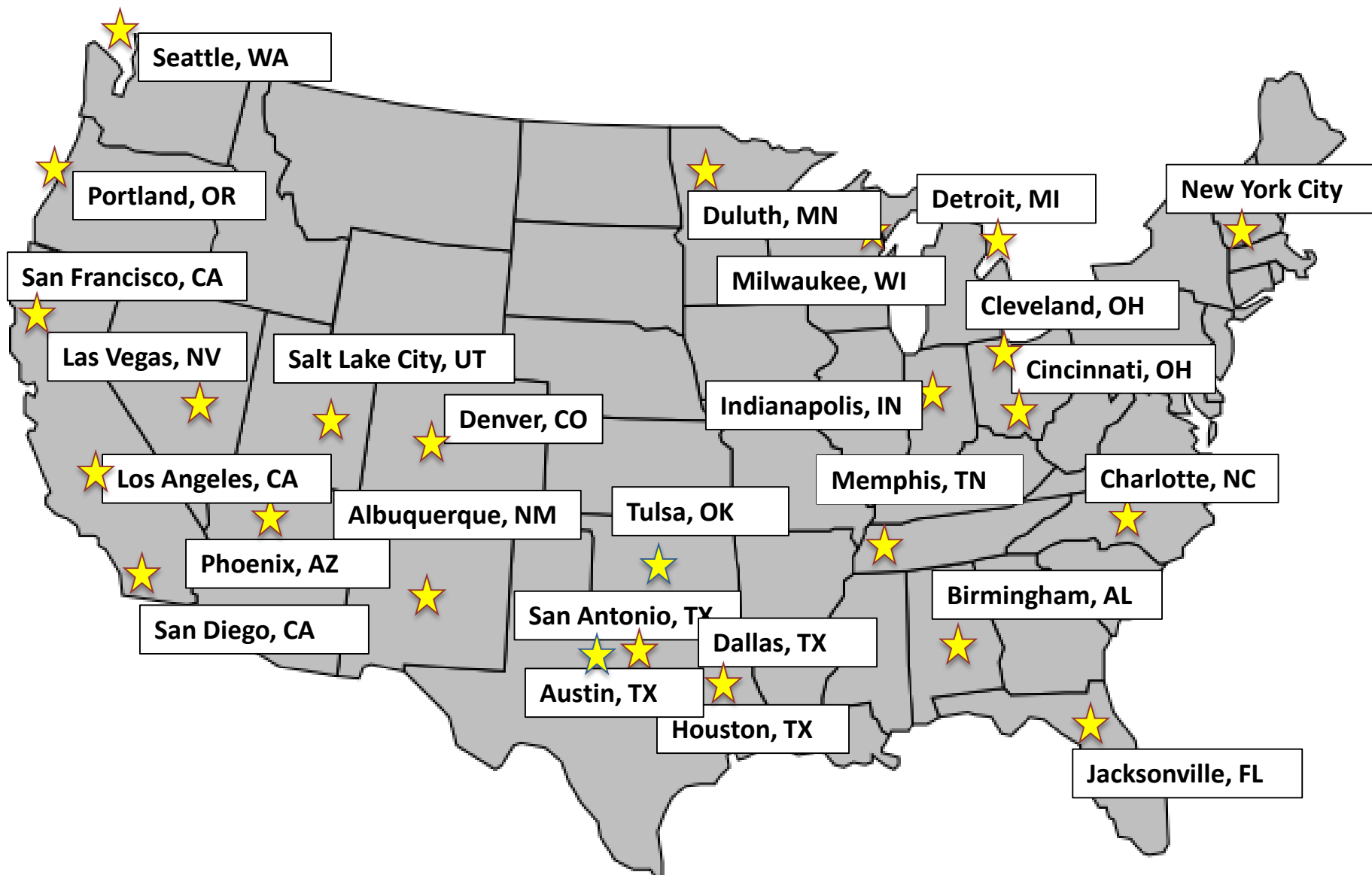
Houston, TX

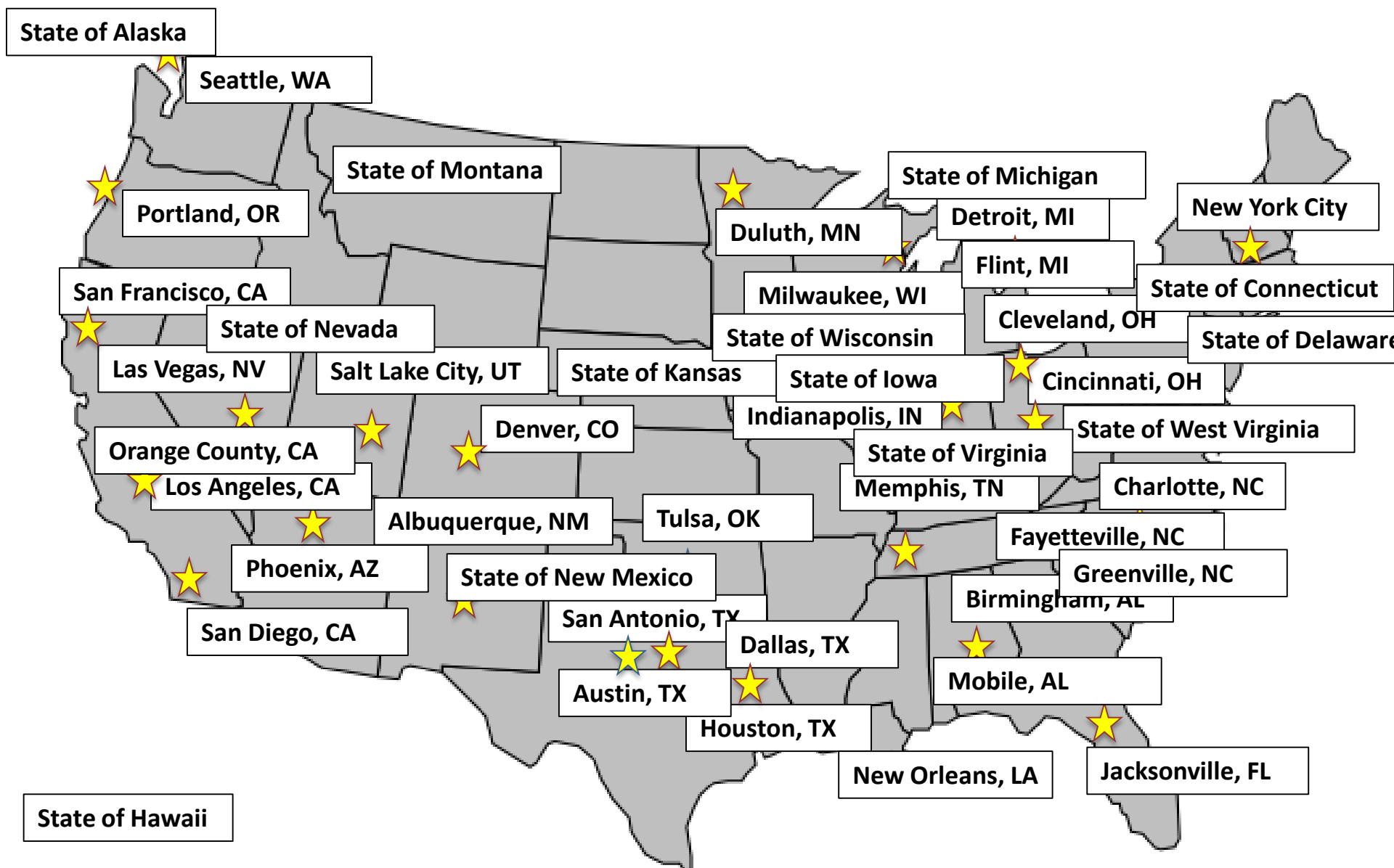
Memphis, TN

Detroit, MI

Cleveland, OH

New York City





State of Alaska

Seattle, WA

State of Montana

State of Michigan

New York City

Portland, OR

Duluth, MN

Detroit, MI

San Francisco, CA

State of Nevada

Flint, MI

State of Connecticut

Milwaukee, WI

State of Wisconsin

Cleveland, OH

State of Delaware

Las Vegas, NV

Salt Lake City, UT

State of Kansas

State of Iowa

Cincinnati, OH

Orange County, CA

Denver, CO

Indianapolis, IN

State of West Virginia

Los Angeles, CA

Albuquerque, NM

Tulsa, OK

State of Virginia

Memphis, TN

Charlotte, NC

Phoenix, AZ

State of New Mexico

Fayetteville, NC

Greenville, NC

San Diego, CA

San Antonio, TX

Dallas, TX

Birmingham, AL

Mobile, AL

Austin, TX

Houston, TX

New Orleans, LA

Jacksonville, FL

State of Hawaii

Community Setting→

Urban, Rural, Tribal,
Military, Campus

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Military, Campus

Victim Populations→

Culturally-Specific Groups,
Immigrants, Victims With
Disabilities, Members Of
LGBTQ+ Community

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of Notifications→

10,000, 200, 20

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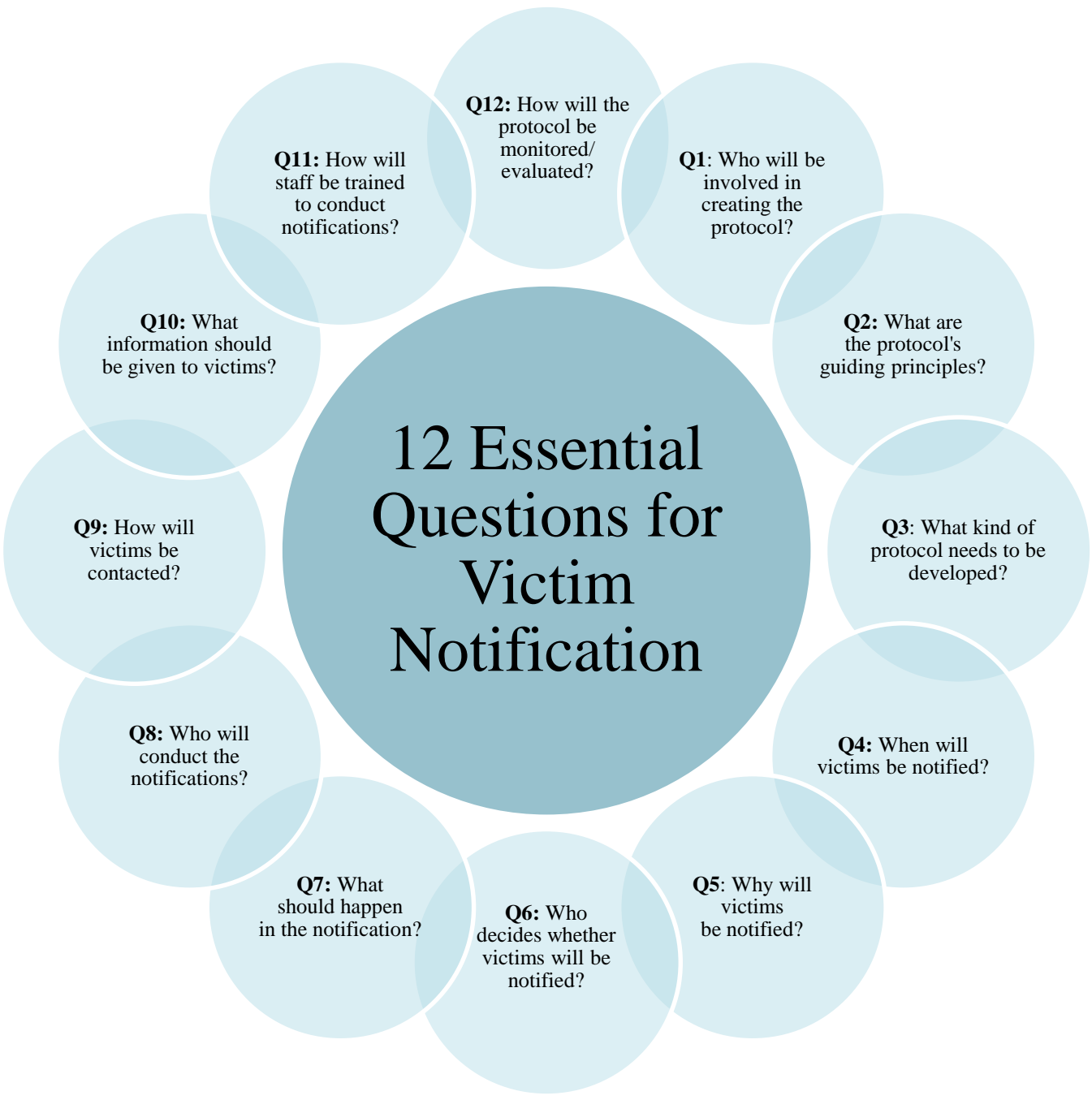
Community Resources→

Rape Crisis Center,
System Advocates,
SART/MDT

Victim Notification: Where To Start

- No “one size fits all” approach
- Need to tailor protocol to specific community and the victims in that community
- Developed an empirically-supported planning framework→ *12 Essential Questions*

12 Essential Questions for Victim Notification



Q1: Who will be involved in creating the protocol?

Q2: What are the protocol's guiding principles?

Q3: What kind of protocol needs to be developed?

Q4: When will victims be notified?

Q5: Why will victims be notified?

Q6: Who decides whether victims will be notified?

Q7: What should happen in the notification?

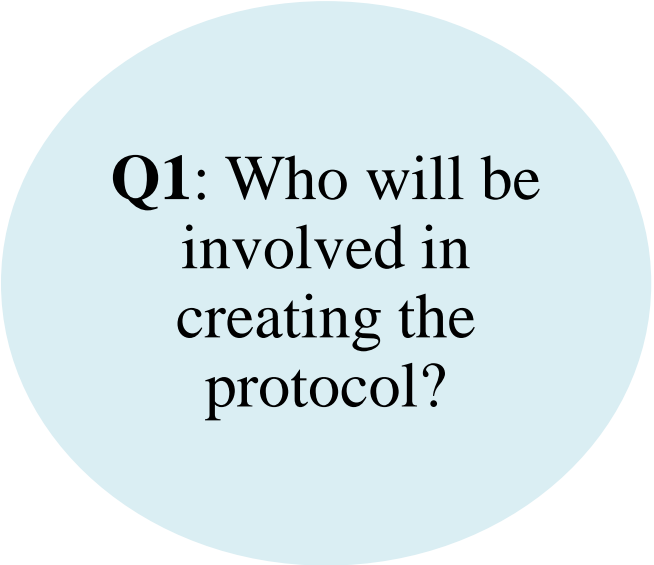
Q8: Who will conduct the notifications?

Q9: How will victims be contacted?

Q10: What information should be given to victims?

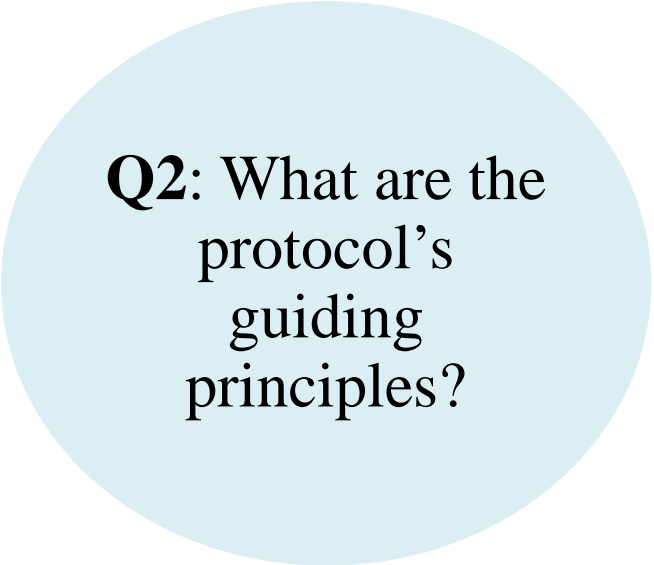
Q11: How will staff be trained to conduct notifications?

Q12: How will the protocol be monitored/evaluated?



Q1: Who will be involved in creating the protocol?

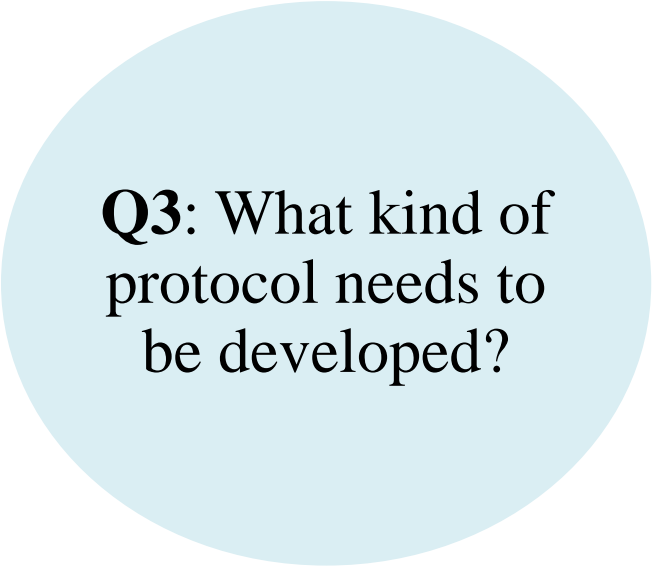
Research is very clear:
a multidisciplinary team
approach is best



Q2: What are the
protocol's
guiding
principles?

“Victim Centered”

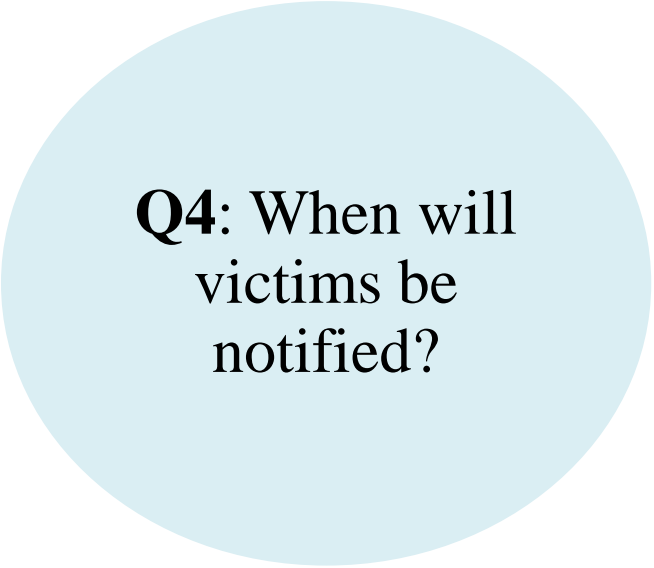
“Trauma Informed”



Q3: What kind of
protocol needs to
be developed?

“Active Outreach”

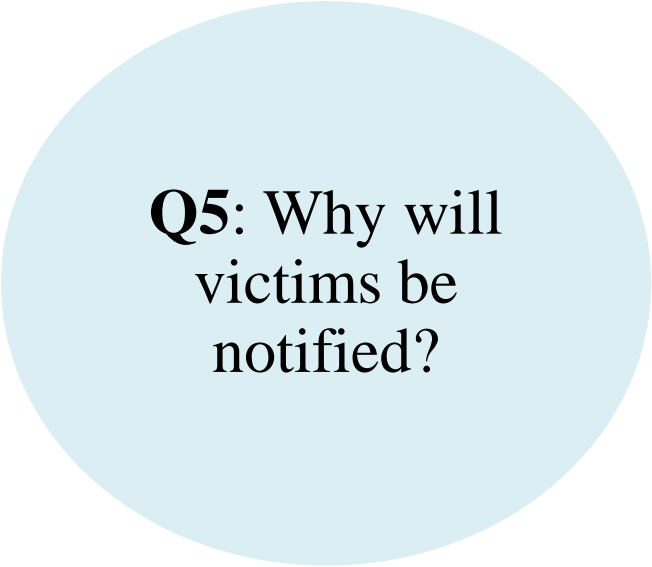
“Opt-In”



Q4: When will
victims be
notified?

Before testing?

After testing?



Q5: Why will
victims be
notified?

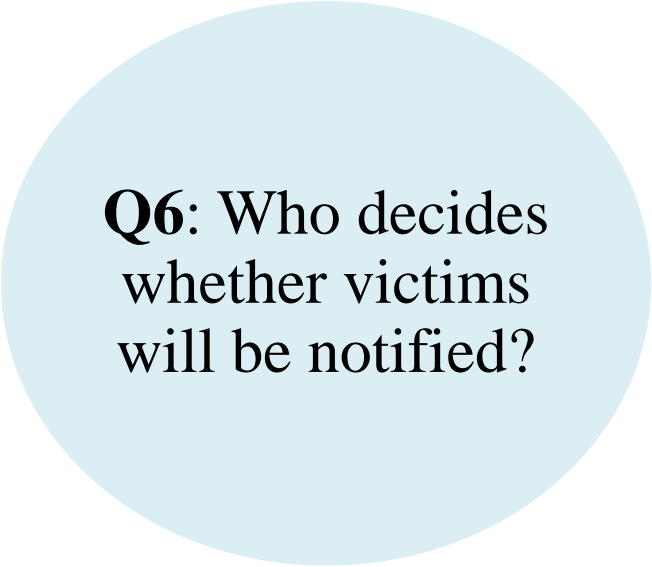
Most likely, depends on:

Forensic Testing Results

Possible Legal Action

- No DNA found in kit, case is beyond SOL
- No DNA found in case, case is within SOL
- DNA found in kit, case is beyond SOL

- No DNA found in kit, case is beyond SOL
 - No DNA found in case, case is within SOL
 - DNA found in kit, case is beyond SOL
-
- DNA found in kit, no CODIS hit (yet)
 - DNA found in kit, CODIS hit, case is SOL
 - DNA found in kit, CODIS hit, case within SOL

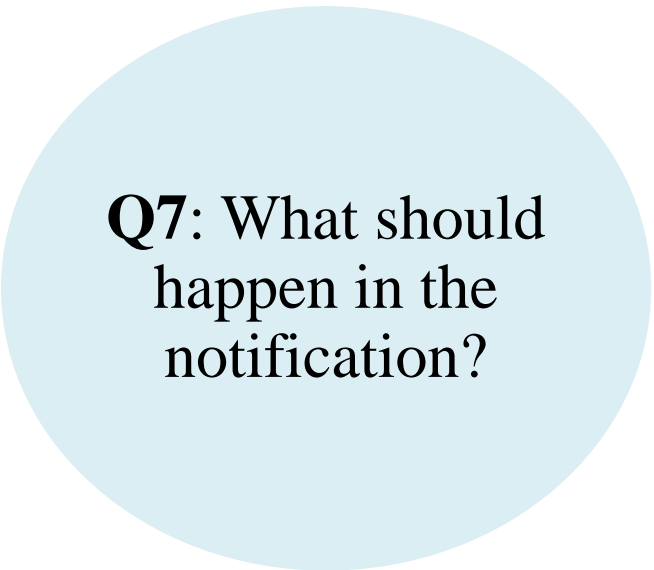


Q6: Who decides
whether victims
will be notified?

Single person?

Single discipline?

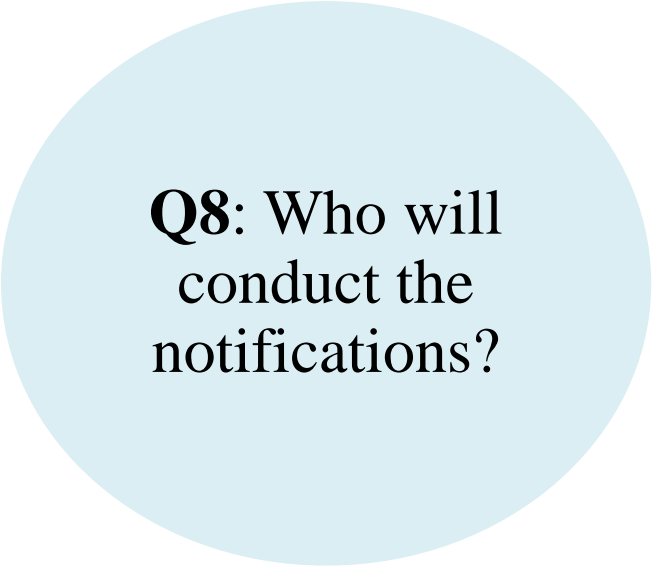
Multidisciplinary team?



Q7: What should
happen in the
notification?

Balancing legal issues
with psychological issues

Brain's ability to process
complex information
during trauma



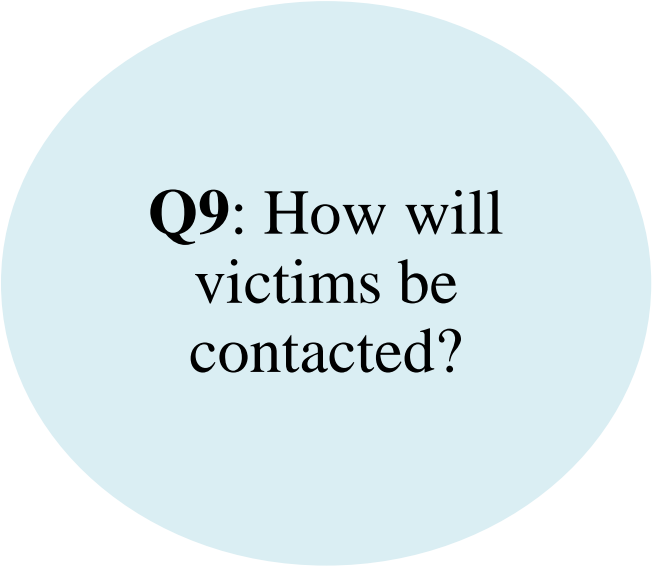
Q8: Who will
conduct the
notifications?

Law enforcement?

Systems-based
advocates?

Community-based
advocates?

Forensic nurses?

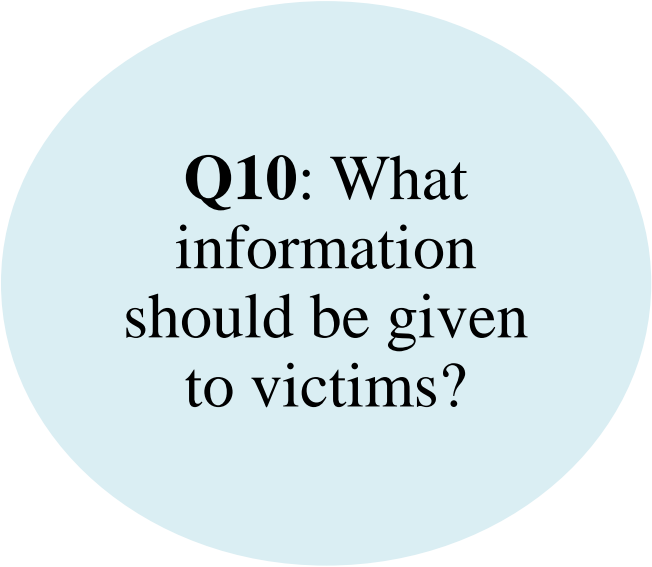


Q9: How will
victims be
contacted?

By phone?

In person?

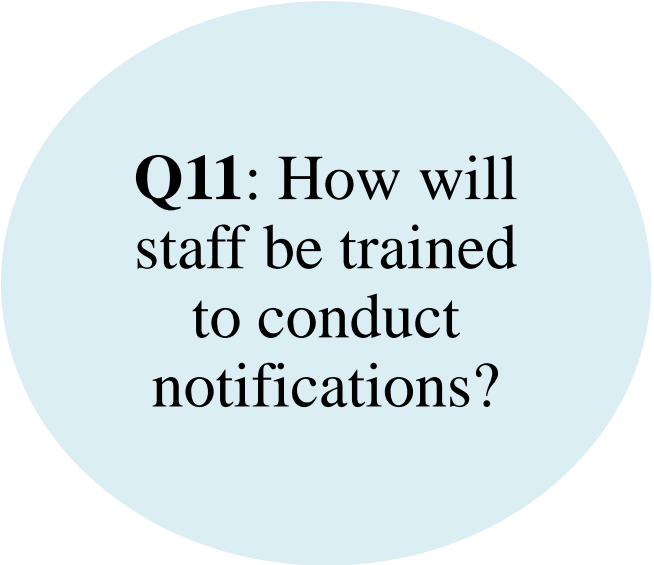
By mail?



Q10: What
information
should be given
to victims?

Forensic testing results?

Community resources!



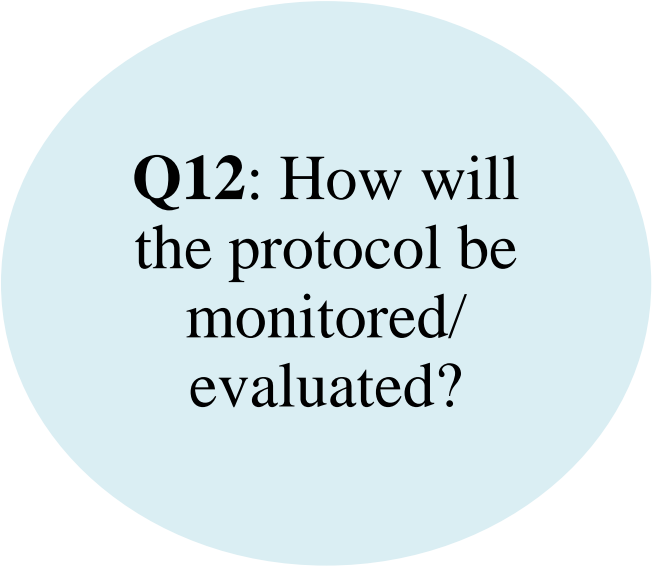
Q11: How will
staff be trained
to conduct
notifications?

Neurobiology of trauma

Implementation of
protocol

Working with different
populations

Self care strategies

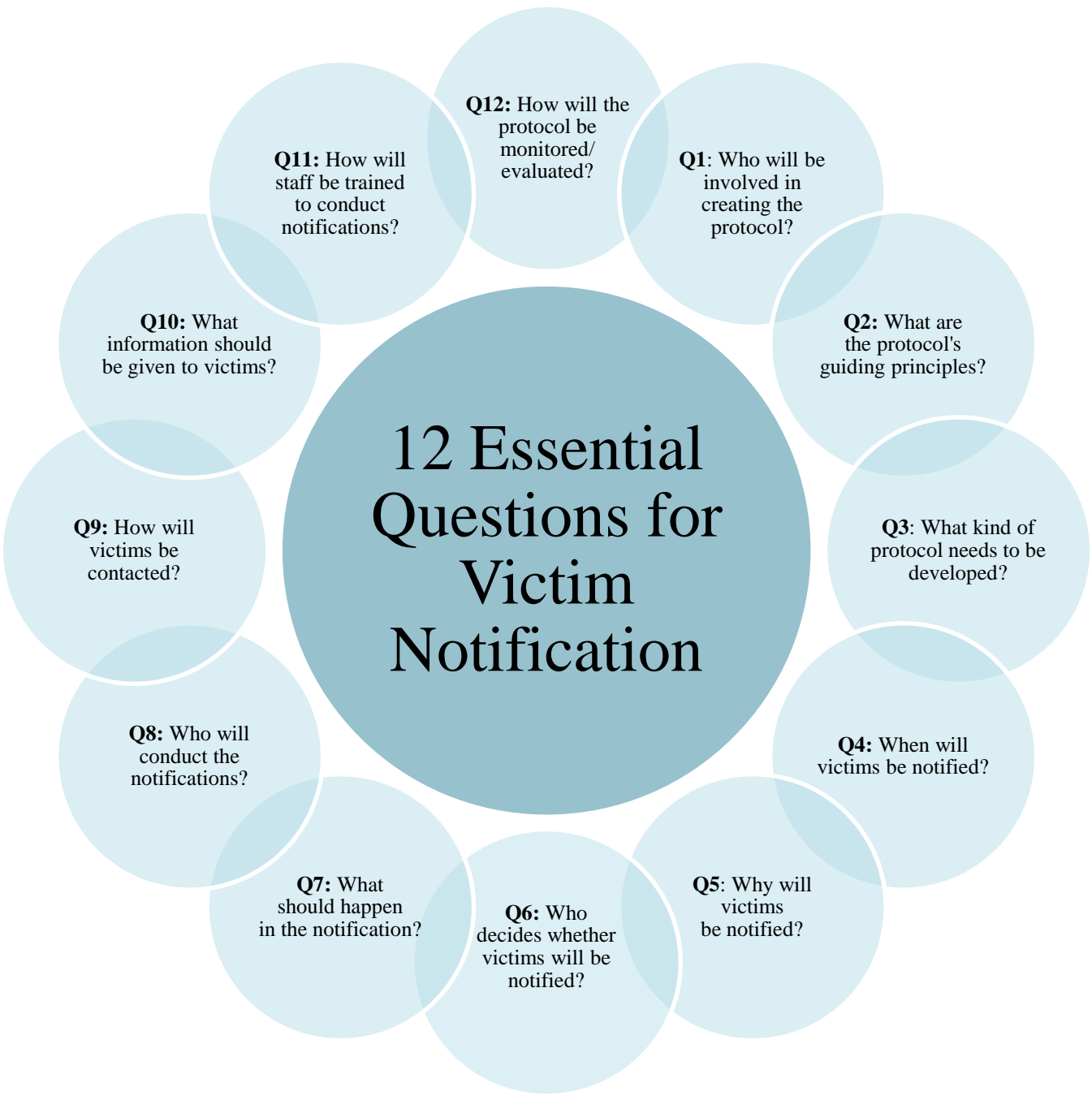


Q12: How will
the protocol be
monitored/
evaluated?

Small pilot projects

Review team

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What Does Research Say?

- Evidence that victim-centered, trauma-informed principles do work . . .
 - Most victims NOT having adverse reactions to notification
 - Most victims DO choose to re-engage
 - Most victims DO connect/re-connect with services

THANK YOU !!