

# DOJ Guidance on Improving Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence

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Fallacy # 1: The **victim's account** is not evidence.

Fallacy # 2:  
**It's he said, she said ... and**  
cannot be  
proven.

Fallacy # 3: Women routinely falsely report rape.

Fallacy # 4:  
Investigators & prosecutors are fungible.





# Myths v. Reality



- Victims report immediately
- Victims give linear, emotional accounts
- No physical evidence + no witnesses = no case

- Some victims report immediately; many delay
- **Victims' behavior & accounts vary**
- **Victim's account is evidence; these cases are proven differently**



# Gender bias:

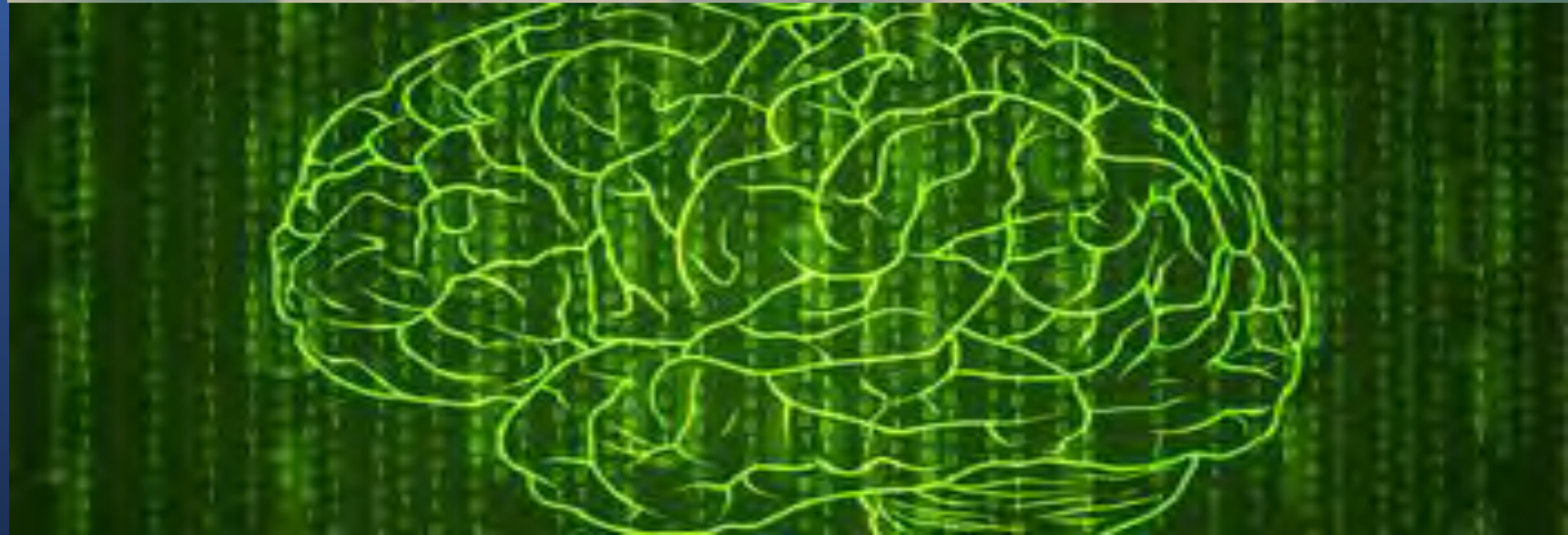
- Thwarts investigations
- Further harms victims
- Undermines offender accountability



**Principle #1:**  
Recognize & address biases, assumptions, and stereotypes about victims



**Principle #2:**  
Treat all victims with respect





Principle #3:  
Support  
thorough and  
effective  
investigations

- ✓ policies
- ✓ training
- ✓ resource allocation

Principle #4:  
Appropriately  
classify reports of  
sexual assault &  
domestic violence

Principle #5:  
Refer victims  
to appropriate  
services



## Principle #6:

Properly identify the predominant aggressor in incidents of domestic violence

Principle #7: Prevent officer-perpetrated sexual assault and domestic violence & hold officers who commit such offenses accountable

Principle #8: Maintain, review, and act upon sexual assault & domestic violence data



# Achieving offender accountability & victim safety

- Recognize myths & fallacies that often derail sexual assault investigations
- Let science, data, & the law be our guide
- Address & (try to) improve responses by implementing the eight principles





THANK  
YOU!

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