

# **HOW TO INCREASE STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY IN YOUR CAMPUS COMMUNITY**

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**ASJA International Conference 2002  
Clearwater, FL**

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This program provides training on facilitating the Student Accountability in Community (SAC) Seminar, an early intervention for abusive students. The SAC Seminar is a four-session alternative educational sanction that can be run in an individual or group format. The program will be interactive and follow a train-the-trainer model. Participants will be given the existing curriculum and training materials.

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The Student Accountability in Community (SAC) Seminar is a joint effort between the Judicial Affairs Office (JAO) and MSU Safe Place, an on-campus domestic violence shelter. SAC is an early intervention for students who use power-and-control tactics in an attempt to manipulate others. Power-and-control tactics are such things as coercion, threats, intimidation, economic abuse, violence, male/white privilege, using others, obfuscation, and emotional abuse. The seminar includes one individual intake session and three individual/group sessions (depending on the number of participants for a given week).

## **History of SAC**

SAC started in August 1998, motivated by three major factors. First and foremost, a desire to intervene with male students who were being abusive toward other members of the university community. Second, there had been an ongoing discussion among some Student Services staff for something like the Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drug (ATOD) seminars, but for abusive students. The third factor was the Campus Assessment of Responses to Sexual Assault (CARSA) study, which interviewed student services staff about prevention and response to male violence at Michigan State University. Among other things, the study found that a male student's first intervention for being abusive was often a formal criminal charge (e.g. sexual or domestic assault). This was in stark contrast to noise violations or minors in possession of alcohol. Hence, there was a need for an ATOD like early intervention to address behaviors BEFORE they became criminal.

The basic philosophy of SAC is rooted in batterer intervention groups using an accountability model. To this extent, SAC stresses understanding one's actions, choices, and consequences under the belief that any effort to make better, more respectful, and healthier decisions involves being able to accurately understand what one did and why, as well as being able to anticipate how actions affect others.

## **Seminar description**

The intake session (first session) includes going over a participation agreement and screening instrument. Participants also begin working on the 10-behaviors worksheet. In the 10-behaviors worksheet, students are asked to specifically describe in writing ten things they did during the incident. Then either the facilitator or another student (in sessions two through four) coaches them on how to make each of the ten descriptions more specific.

Once participants have successfully completed the 10-behaviors worksheet, they take one of the behaviors just described and begin working on a tactics worksheet. In the tactics worksheet, participants identify choices and consequences of their actions. If the session is in a group format, another student (the monitor) will help them improve the worksheet through constructive feedback. In turn, the facilitator helps the monitor help the student. When there are not enough students for a group, the facilitator acts as the monitor. At the end of each session, students are given homework assignments such as "Complete the 10-behaviors worksheet" or "Do two of the tactics worksheets."

## What SAC is not

SAC is not:

- X** *A substitute for alcohol and other drug interventions.*  
Students who have both substance abuse and power-and-control issues should be referred to both the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug (ATOD) Seminar and SAC Seminar, which they can attend concurrently. Students are, however, screened for substance abuse during the SAC intake.
- X** *Counseling.*  
SAC is an educational intervention and does not provide counseling or other types of psychological treatment. Facilitators will refer students who might benefit from counseling to the MSU Counseling Center.
- X** *A substitute for judicial or legal sanctions.*  
Administrators should not use SAC as a way to avoid formally holding students accountable for their behavior. Student conduct that meets the criteria for formal or legal charges (e.g. charges of domestic assault or criminal sexual conduct) should be adjudicated in the appropriate judicial system.
- X** *Program for court mandated referrals.*  
SAC is also unsuitable for students looking to meet court mandated counseling requirements (e.g. as a condition of probation). These cases are no longer early intervention. Students seeking court-mandated counseling for assault charges are referred to local batterer intervention programs.

## Referral process

Appropriate referrals are students who do not pose an immediate danger to the community AND use power-and-control tactics to abuse or manipulate others. All referrals begin by completing the SAC Referral Form or contacting the Judicial Affairs Office. Referrals to SAC may be voluntary or sanctioned, depending on whether the student has been formally charged with violating the student conduct code. With voluntary referrals, the Judicial Affairs Office will not impose additional sanctions for noncompliance, whereas students with a mandatory referral who fail to schedule an intake or complete the sessions by the required date will have a hold placed on their account. Students complete SAC when they have attended all four sessions and paid the required fee. A notification of completion is then sent by JAO to the person who originally referred the student to SAC.

Examples of appropriate referrals include students who:

1. Appear to have an "anger control" problem.
2. Get violent or destroy property when drinking.
3. Use derogatory ethnic and gender slurs against another student during an argument.
4. Try to intimidate the judicial board during a hearing.
5. Use abusive behaviors that have come to the attention of judicial affairs through another complaint.
6. Say they "Just lost control."

## Obfuscation

Obfuscation is the tactic of obscuring what happened to fit one's own interests. The most obvious form of obfuscation is someone who lies or denies what they did. But, obfuscation works at many levels. Each SAC participant is given the following directions:

Specifically describe 10 things that you did. Each statement should:

- Be specific.
- Use 'I' statements.
- Refer to only one action.
- Be free of objectifications: that is, use the person's first name instead of he's and she's.

Here are several examples, along with one thing that is wrong:

1. She was in my face.  
*Doesn't identify something he did*
2. I shrugged her off.  
*Doesn't identify 'her' as a person, i.e. an objectification.*
3. I call Jan names all the time.  
*Doesn't describe one behavior specifically.*
4. I pushed Cara away from me.  
*'Pushed' is not specific enough. Did he use his fist and punch Cara in the shoulder? Did he grab Cara and throw Cara into a wall? How did he 'push' Cara?*

### Exercise

Consider the following statements, identify what needs to be changed, and be prepared to coach someone on how to improve each description.

1. She got me frustrated.
2. Used inappropriate language.
3. I said to Sue that I felt sorry.
4. I was totally wasted.
5. He disrespected me.

## Power and Control Wheel



Originally developed by: Domestic Abuse Project, 206 West Fourth Street, Duluth, MN 55806 (218) 772-4143. Revised and adapted by: Alternatives to Domestic Aggression (ADA) Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County, 4925 Packard Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48108 (313) 971-9781 and MSU Safe Place G-55 Wilson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824 (517) 353-1100

## Choices and Tactics

In the Choices and Tactics Worksheet, participants work with one of the actions that they previously described in the Ten Actions Worksheet and consider all the tactics that they might have used. The goal is to help them see where they made their choices, how those choices might have affected others, and how they obfuscated the consequences of that action afterwards. Below is an example of the initial Choices and Tactics Worksheet from "Alex" along with some of comments.

### Example with "Alex"

1. What did you do? (One of your 10 actions on page 3)

I toilet papered Sean's door.

A specific action from Alex's Ten Actions Worksheet

2. Circle all the tactics from the Power and Control Wheel that you can identify being used in the behavior described above (in step one).

|              |                |                 |                   |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Coercion     | Economic abuse | Emotional abuse | Using privilege   |
| Intimidation | Isolation      | Using others    | Obfuscation       |
| Threats      | Sexual abuse   | Racial violence | Physical violence |

3. Pick three of these tactics and explain how you used them?

I used intimidation when I ?

I used \_\_\_\_\_ when I \_\_\_\_\_

I used \_\_\_\_\_ when I \_\_\_\_\_

Problem: Alex circled "racial violence" because Alex thought that being called a racist for toilet papering Sean's door was form of racial violence.

4. How did you minimize or obfuscate the consequences of what you did?

?

Problem: Alex probably did use intimidation, but Alex needs to explain how toilet papering someone's door is intimidation.

Problem: Alex needs to explain how Alex obfuscated the action of toilet papering Sean's door. (e.g. "I told my friends that it was just a joke" or "I thought to myself that Sean deserved it for what he had done to us during the semester.")



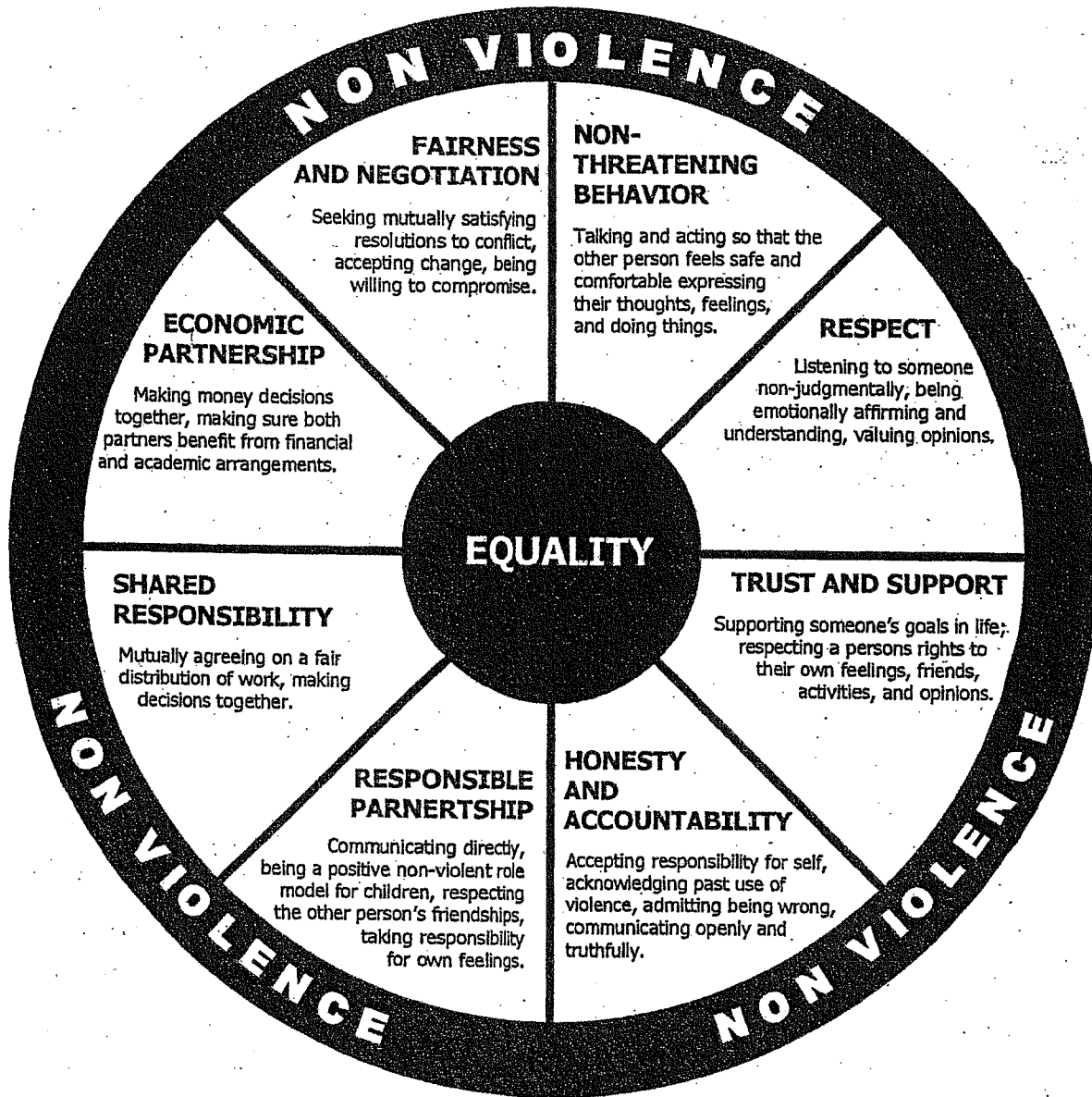
## **Accountability**

Accountability has three dimensions: responsibility, consequences, and alternatives. The first aspect of accountability is acknowledging that you did something, i.e. taking responsibility for one's actions. "I didn't do it" is an obvious example of denying responsibility for one's actions. Taking responsibility means accepting agency for the behavior, e.g. "Yes, I yelled at Sue."

To be accountable, one also needs to be able to assess the consequences of one's actions. A fundamental problem with power and control tactics is how their use distorts one's perception of reality. In the realm of accountability, relying only on the perceptions of others won't work because the very nature of power and control discourages the possibility of open and honest communication. In practical terms, this means that one has to (1) be willing to hear and respect feedback, and (2) learn and develop skills for imagining what the consequences might have been or could be in the future. For example, when someone provides feedback about how actions harmed him or her it's important to be willing to listen and respect their point of view. However, even if someone does not provide feedback about how they were affected or minimizes the consequences, it is still important to be able to assess what might have happened. For example, "How might they have felt about that joke that I made?" "How might my yelling have intimidated him?"

Acknowledging agency for one's own behavior and being able to assess the consequences on others is not enough. Without an alternative course of action, the abuse continues. The third dimension of accountability is therefore coming up with alternatives that promote equality. The problem with someone who is abusive is generally not that they can't come up with alternative behaviors, but that all of alternatives are simply variations of power and control tactics. For students in SAC, considering alternatives means being able to generate different behaviors and critically evaluating the extent to which they promote equality.

## Equality Wheel



Original developed by: Domestic Abuse Project, 206 West Fourth Street, Duluth, MN 55806 (218) 772-4143. Revised and adapted by: MSU Safe Place, G-55 Wilson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824 (517) 353-1100

## Alternatives Worksheet

In the Alternatives Worksheet, participants consider an alternative to one of the behaviors discussed in the Choices and Tactics Worksheets. On each worksheet, they try to identify one thing they could have done instead of what they did do. Participants then examine the alternative using the Equality Wheel in a way very similar to the Choices and Tactics and Power and Control Wheel. The final part of the worksheet asks them to consider how doing this alternative would have made them more accountable. That is, on which dimension of accountability (responsibility, consequences, or alternatives) would they have improved on? Below is an example along with comments.

### Example with "Alex"

1. What did you do? (One of the actions that you used for a Choices and Tactics Worksheet)

I toilet papered Sean's door.

The action that Alex is going to find an alternative behavior for.

2. What could you have done instead?

Not toilet papered Sean's door.

Problem: It needs to be a specific action so that Alex can easily visualize what else might have happened. Not doing something is not a specific because there are many things one isn't doing all the time.

3. Circle all the tactics from the Equality Wheel that you can identify be described above.

Negotiation and fairness

Non-threatening behaviors

Respect

Trust and support

Honesty and accountability

Responsible partnership

Shared Responsibility

Economic

Problem: It is unclear how not doing something communicates respect. Alex will need to consider the kinds of positive actions that might result in Sean feeling respected.

4. Pick three of these tactics and explain how you would have used them in your alternative.

I would have used respect by leaving Sean alone

I would have used negotiation & fairness by letting Sean study

I would have used \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

Problem: These are not referring to a specific action. After Alex comes up with a specific alternative action, Alex will need to link the actions to their tactics from the Equality Wheel.

5. How would this have made you more accountable?

I wouldn't have had to come to SAC.

Problem: Again, this will be easier when Alex picks a specific alternative behavior. At that point, Alex should identify all the ways that the alternative behavior would have been more accountable. Not coming to SAC would have avoided the consequences to Alex, but not to Sean.

## **Facilitator Role**

Perhaps the most important attribute for a SAC facilitator is their ability to listen, genuinely engage participants, and maintain a critical inquiry through the questioning and discussion of participants' behaviors. This does not necessarily mean that facilitators need to be of the same gender, race, or social location of participants. But, it does demand a certain focus and attention from facilitators on to how their styles contributes or detracts from the sessions.

### **Facilitator Do's and Don'ts**

- ✓ Start and finish on time
- ✓ Insist that participants write answers and revisions to worksheet questions
- ✓ Stay focused on learning objectives for each exercise
- ✓ Use first names when referring to participants and persons involved with incidents, judicial hearings, secretaries, etc.
- ✓ Challenge participants to explore the logic of their answers
- ✓ Ask what participants are learning
- ✓ Continuously assess for victim safety issues
- ✓ Be firm about expectations, guidelines, payment, etc.
- ✗ Debate
- ✗ Moralize
- ✗ Punish participants
- ✗ Try to cover up mistakes
- ✗ Be unreasonably rigid
- ✗ Give up on a student

## Ten common questions and comments (with strategies for responding)

1. *If I'm here, they should be too.*  
That might be true, but you're here and we can talk about what you did, right or wrong, that led to you being referred to SAC.
2. *I don't remember what happened.*  
Then you've got a problem because you don't know what it is that you did that caused someone to feel harassed and intimidated, and without that insight you don't have a way of preventing a similar situation from happening in the future.
3. *I couldn't come up with 10 actions, just 4.*  
Okay, let's see what you came up with and after we work through a couple, you'll probably be able to come up with some more.
4. *You want me to write exactly what I said?*  
Yes, it's important. The point of this exercise is get specific about what you did. I don't want you to make up stuff, but if you remember what you said, I'd like you to write it down exactly as you said it.
5. *You mean I have to come back?*  
Yes, you have three more sessions. SAC is a total four sessions including this one. But, you only pay \$25 for all four sessions, unless of course, you skip a session.
6. *I could only come up with 2 tactics.*  
OK, let's go through the ones that you don't think apply and tell me why they don't.
7. *Why are we talking about abusers when all I did was argue? I've never hit anyone.*  
In SAC we talk about power and control tactics, which range from overt forms of violence like hitting and punching to subtle forms like emotional abuse. In an argument, people can have different expectations of what is acceptable. When there are differences, people can feel intimidated, emotionally abused, etc. My guess is that the person filing the complaint might have felt harassed or intimidated. What's important, especially if you are going to be in a situation of managing or supervising others, is being able recognize these differences. Otherwise, you're likely to lose some good talent.
8. *What is "obfuscation" (and how do you pronounce it)?*  
Ob-fu-skae-tion. To obfuscate means to obscure or distort, usually in order to gain some advantage. An obvious form is lying. Everybody obfuscates to some extent and has a style of sorts. What's important is to know what that style is.
9. *Shouldn't there be something about female privilege or black privilege?*  
Using privilege means behaving or acting as if one has some special status, like your exempt from consequences. So if you generally believe that it's wrong for someone to push another person and then you go ahead and do that, you're acting as if you are somehow exempt or above that principle. Acting superior by, for example, putting someone down because they are a woman, person of color, etc. is another example of

using privilege. Anyone can potentially be using privilege, but it depends on the society one lives in.

If I act superior because I'm wearing blue shoes, well, I can think that but it won't carry the same kind of weight as flashing hundred dollar bills. So to understand how you might be using privilege, you also have to pay attention to how society is structured. How would society have to be structured in order for there to be such a thing as female or black privilege in play?

10. *How come you don't have to be accountable when you expect us to be?*  
How does this relate to you learning about and being accountable?

11. *You're putting words into my mouth. That's not what I meant.*  
Then there's a problem because people often go by what you say and do, not necessarily by what you mean. One of the things we can work on in SAC is becoming more sensitive to how your words and actions might be interpreted.

12. *This whole thing is being taken way too seriously.*  
What about this isn't serious?

### **Victim safety**

Because SAC deals with power-and-control behaviors and could receive a referral that involves relationship violence, it's critical to understand that under no condition should SAC compromise victim safety. Students who present a danger to others should not be referred to SAC. Students referred for past or ongoing criminal domestic violence are referred to local batterer intervention programs. Facilitators should pay close attention to any signs of relationship violence, either past or ongoing. Any indication of ongoing or potential future violence should immediately be reported to the judicial administrator or supervisor.

### **Starting a SAC Seminar at Your University**

This curriculum is not etched in stone. If you are interested in doing something like this or using parts of the curriculum, adapt it to fit the needs of your specific institution and campus climate.

One of the unique features of SAC is that it provides a mechanism for responding to problematic behaviors before reaching a specific threshold. This also means that facilitators begin to see an entirely different and subtler layer of abusive and controlling behaviors. The results can be surprising and we encourage folks to examine their own assumptions.

## Incident Exercise

The Incident Worksheet is really a warm-up exercise and helps participants focus the discussion to a specific sequence of events.

Describe in your own words the incident that led to you being referred to SAC?

Last semester we had party with some folks over. We were just hanging out, listening to music, playing video games, and doing shots. Then the Nazi RA came by and told us that we were being too noisy. We weren't even the noisiest room on the floor. I told the RA that she was being totally unreasonable, I tried reasoning with her, to make her see our point of view. Everybody was having fun that night, but she gets off writing people up while looking the other way with her friends. I even talked with her the next day and I thought everything was cool. She didn't say anything about a report or hearing. Then I got this letter saying that I had to attend a judicial hearing. At the hearing, the RA said that I was intimidating and harassing her. I tried explaining my side, but I guess that doesn't matter unless you're an RA or hall director. They told me that I had to attend this class or risk being disenrolled. So I called the office and signed up the next day.

### Ten Actions Exercise

The purpose of the Ten Actions Worksheet is for participants to describe 10 things that *they* did. Each line should...

- Be an "I" statement (e.g. "I said..." or "I pushed...").
- Specifically describe only one action (what, not why).
- Be free of objectification (i.e. persons' first names).

Specifically describe 10 actions that you did during the incident described on the role-play handout.

1. We had a party.
2. I tried to reason with the RA.
3. Talked with the RA the next day.
4. Went to the hearing.
5. Attended SAC.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



### Choices and Tactics Exercise

During the Choices and Tactics Worksheet, participants...

- Identify their choices
- Learn vocabulary for identifying and describing power and control tactics.
- Consider the possible consequences of their actions on others.

1. What did you do? (One of your 10 actions on page 14)

I said to Liz, "You don't have to be a Nazi about this!"

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2. Circle all the tactics from the Power and Control Wheel that you can identify being used in the behavior described above (in step one).

- |                     |                |                 |                   |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Coercion            | Economic abuse | Emotional abuse | Using privilege   |
| <u>Intimidation</u> | Isolation      | Using others    | Obfuscation       |
| Threats             | Sexual abuse   | Racial violence | Physical violence |

3. Pick three of these tactics and explain how you used them?

I used intimidation when I ?

---

I used \_\_\_\_\_ when I \_\_\_\_\_

---

I used \_\_\_\_\_ when I \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How did you minimize or obfuscate the consequences of what you did?

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## Alternatives Exercise

During the Alternatives Worksheet, participants ...

- Consider alternatives to a given behavior.
- Examine those alternatives using the Equality Wheel.
- Learn vocabulary for identifying and describing equality tactics.
- Identify the ways in which their alternative action would have made them more accountable.

1. What did you do? (One of the actions that you used for a Choices and Tactics Worksheet)

I said to Liz, "You don't have to be a Nazi about this!"

---

2. What could you have done instead?

I could have politely asked Liz to not write us up.

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3. Circle all the tactics from the Equality Wheel that you can identify being used in alternative behavior described above.

|                                 |                           |                       |                      |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <u>Negotiation and fairness</u> | Non-threatening behaviors | <u>Respect</u>        | Trust and support    |
| Honesty and accountability      | Responsible partnership   | Shared Responsibility | Economic partnership |

4. Pick three of these tactics and explain how you would have used them in your alternative?

I would have used respect by being polite

I would have used negotiation & fairness by asking Liz to not write us up

I would have used \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

5. How would this have made you more accountable?

I wouldn't have had to come to SAC.

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