

Sexual Violence and You

What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence has a lot of forms and is called by a lot of different names. Some people call it rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment or sexual abuse. Sexual violence can include:

- Being forced to listen to someone talk sexually to you
- Being forced to look at or participate in sexual pictures or movies
- Being forced to kiss someone
- Being forced to look at or touch someone's private parts
- Being touched in a sexual way when you don't want to be touched
- Being forced, tricked or manipulated to have any type of sexual activity

Unless you say yes, it is wrong for someone to touch you in a sexual way. If this happens to you, tell someone. Keep telling until you get help.

How will you feel?

Every victim of sexual violence has different feelings. Some feelings you might have include:

- Guilt
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Anger
- Depression
- Sadness
- Denial
- Shame
- Trouble eating
- Trouble sleeping
- Bad memories of the sexual violence

No matter how you feel, remember it wasn't your fault. You can get help. Tell someone what happened to you. There is nothing wrong with you.

What can you do?

If you are a victim of sexual violence — *tell someone*. You do not have to keep it a secret. Ask for help. It is not your fault. You didn't do anything wrong.

Who can you tell?

Tell someone you trust. The people you can tell might include:

- A friend
- A family member
- A support staff person
- A counselor
- A rape crisis center worker
- The police

What is a rape crisis center?

The rape crisis center (RCC) is a place that helps victims of sexual violence. This help is free. The workers will protect your privacy. The rape crisis center workers will not talk to anyone else about what happened to you.

How will the RCC help me?

The rape crisis center will give you support and information. The workers at the center will talk to you on the phone any time of the day or night. They will also go to the hospital emergency room and go with you to talk with the police.

- **Medical Advocacy:** The rape crisis center worker will help you understand what happens when you go to the hospital.
- **Criminal Justice Advocacy:** The rape crisis center worker will help you talk with the police or go to court.
- **Counseling:** The rape crisis counselor will listen to you and help you find ways to feel better. The counselor will have information and ideas that you can try.

The rape crisis center is there to help you. Remember that sexual violence of any type is a serious crime. These are crimes that could happen to anyone. No matter what happened to you, the sexual violence was not your fault.

Medical Care

Medical care is important if you have been sexually assaulted. The emergency room at a hospital is the best place to go for medical care. They have special ways to treat you and they will collect evidence of the assault. You do not have to pay for the exam.

Going to the hospital and seeing a doctor or nurse can help make sure that you are okay. They will also save evidence for the police. You decide if the police get the evidence.

The doctor and nurse at the hospital will talk with you about:

- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- Emergency contraception (birth control), and;
- Evidence collection (collecting hair, skin, fingernails, etc.)

If you want, the advocate will answer your questions and stay with you during the exam.

Working with Police and Going to Court

If you report the assault to the police, they will ask you what happened. They will ask about the person who assaulted you.

If the police arrest the person who hurt you, the prosecutor will decide if there is enough evidence to start a court case. If the prosecutor decides to start a court case, he/she will “file charges” against the person who hurt you.

If the prosecutor decides to file charges, there will be several different parts to the prosecution. The rape crisis center advocate and the prosecutor will tell you about each part. When you have questions, ask the advocate to be sure you understand what is happening.

Guardians

If you have a guardian, you can still get help after a sexual assault – **YOU DECIDE.**

You can get medical care and have evidence collected at the hospital without your guardian's agreement. The physician will decide if you can release the evidence or if your guardian will make that decision. If your guardian - is not willing to send the evidence to the lab, then a law enforcement officer will come to the hospital to do that.

You can get help from a rape crisis center with or without guardian consent. You can have multiple sessions without guardian consent. After five sessions, if you want to continue, your guardian must give permission. Rape crisis workers can talk to you without your guardian in the room, but your guardian is allowed to know about your services.

If your guardian is the one abusing you, please tell someone and keep telling until you receive help.

Healing

You can heal from sexual violence. Your rape crisis counselor can help you. You may also want to tell some of your friends and family so they can support you.

It is hard to understand why you were sexually assaulted. Everybody has different feelings about sexual violence. You may experience big changes in your feelings. The emotional reaction to sexual assault is complex and often confusing. Your feelings and experiences are not unusual.

Sexual Assault can be a traumatic experience. You will feel better in time, but the event may change your life for a while.

Talk with someone who understands to sort out the emotional aftermath of a sexual assault. **Remember that the sexual violence was not your fault. It is okay to tell about it and ask for help.**