

AFTER SEXUAL ASSAULT

A GUIDE TO HELP SURVIVORS THROUGH
RECOVERY FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE



ILLINOIS COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

If you, or someone you know, have been sexually assaulted or sexually abused, this booklet is for you. It contains information on emotional follow-up care, and on medical and legal procedures after the assault.



“Funding for this brochure was provided in whole or in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services.”

March 2025

AFTER SEXUAL ASSAULT: WHAT TO DO

This booklet uses the term sexual assault to mean any sexual behavior without your freely given consent. Other terms people use include rape, sexual abuse, incest, and molestation. No matter what you call it, sexual assault is a traumatic event. Everyone reacts to the trauma differently. There is no right way you are supposed to feel after sexual assault. It is important to remember:



- **Sexual assault is a serious, violent crime that could happen to anyone;**
- **No matter what, the sexual assault was not your fault;**
- **Your feelings/emotions are common reactions to a traumatic event.**
- **People are available to support you at rape crisis centers across Illinois.**

The trauma of the assault may upset your life, but it is important to remember that you have already survived it and now you can begin to recover. This booklet provides information to help. It describes options about how to get assistance to aid in recovery and healing from the trauma of assault.

Sexual Assault:

What you need to know

Sexual assault occurs at an alarming rate. Nearly 1 in 5 women in the United States will experience sexual assault at some point in their lives. Most survivors were sexually assaulted by someone they know. **Anyone** can be a victim of sexual assault regardless of age, gender identity or expression or sexual orientation. While the majority of survivors are women, people from marginalized communities such as people of color, people with disabilities, transgender, and gender nonconforming individuals experience sexual assaults at a higher rate than other communities.

If you are sexually assaulted, the most important thing for you to know is that it is not your fault. Nobody deserves to be assaulted. Responsibility for sexual assault belongs to the offender, not with the survivor. Remember:

- Only “yes” means consent. Silence is not consent.
- If you are drunk or drugged, you cannot consent to sexual activity.
- A previous relationship, previous sexual activity or even a marriage license is not consent.
- Consent must be given with each encounter and for the duration of the encounter.
- Under Illinois law, a person under the age of 17 cannot consent to sexual activity. An adult who engages in sexual activity with someone under the age of 17 is committing a crime. If an adult is in a position of trust or authority, like a family member, coach or teacher, the age of consent is 18.

What should I do if I have been sexually assaulted?

Only you, as the survivor, can decide what is best for you. This booklet highlights options you may want to consider if you have been sexually assaulted.

Seek a safe place

- Physical safety - Find a safe place where you feel protected and comfortable.
- Emotional safety - Identify what would make you feel supported and comforted. Ask for what you need.
- Reach out for support.
 - Contact a Rape Crisis Center 24-hour hotline.
 - Family or friend.

Call a Rape Crisis Center

Rape crisis centers respond immediately through 24-hour hotlines and 24-hour response to hospital emergency rooms and police stations.

These services are free and confidential. The centers provide ongoing advocacy and counseling services. Rape crisis workers will give you information about the feelings you may have after the assault or abuse. A list of rape crisis centers can be found in the back of this brochure or at

www.icasa.org. Sexual assault takes control away from survivors. It is important that you regain that sense of control by making your own decisions. Rape crisis center staff can help you explore and understand your options.

Rape Crisis Center Services:

- Free
- Confidential
- 24-hour-hotlines
- In-person counseling and advocacy
- Located across the state

Seek medical care

You may decide to go to the hospital emergency room for medical attention. It may be beneficial to do this because you may have injuries that you are unaware of. You may have been exposed to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or, if applicable to your body, be at risk of pregnancy. If you choose, medical staff can collect evidence to use in the prosecution of the offender.

A rape crisis center can send an advocate to support you and help you understand the medical examination and evidence collection and provide other assistance.

**For more information on Medical Care,
please turn to pages 8-11.**

Reporting to the police

Sexual assault is a crime. You are a survivor of a crime.

You may choose to report the crime to the police. The hospital emergency room will contact police, but you can decide if you want to talk with them. Whatever decision you make is up to you.

If you choose to report the sexual assault to the police, a rape crisis center counselor/advocate can accompany you and give you support.

**For more information on reporting to police and the
criminal justice system, please turn to pages 12-15.**



EMOTIONAL RECOVERY

Sexual assault is a crisis, and we all handle crisis in different ways. Some people go into shock after being assaulted, or experience overwhelming fear, anger, shame, or anxiety. The emotional reaction to sexual assault is complex and often confusing. Remember that your feelings and experiences are not unusual. You are not alone.

You may experience any or none of these trauma signs:

- Changing sleeping and eating patterns
- Mood swings
- Feeling irritable and short-tempered
- Having difficulty making decisions
- Feeling unmotivated, lethargic and helpless
- Crying spells
- Having nightmares and flashbacks

**Everyone responds differently to sexual assault.
There is no right way to respond. You can cope with
these feelings. You can feel better.**

Talking with someone who understands can help you sort out the emotions after a sexual assault. A rape crisis center counselor can help you. **Counseling from ICASA rape crisis centers is free and confidential.**

Remember that no matter how great your difficulty in coping with the assault, it does not mean you've developed mental or emotional problems. The recovery process may help you develop strength, insights and abilities you did not know you had.

Those who are close to someone who has been sexually assaulted may also seek counseling. This can help them cope with the stress the assault has brought to their own lives, and help them better understand and support the sexual assault survivor.



Here are a few tips for healing from the trauma of sexual assault:

- Recognize the assault will have an impact on you.
- Know that your responses are probably similar to responses that others have experienced.
- Remember that coping with trauma looks different for each person.
- Pay attention to what helps you feel better.
- Develop rituals or routines that are comforting and soothing to you.
- Make a list of helpful things to do when you feel emotionally overwhelmed.
- Try a variety of ways to cope including meditation, deep breathing, listening to music, reading, art, yoga, spiritual rituals, or anything that focuses and relaxes you. Physical activity is also a great stress reducer. You may want to take a short walk or keep to your usual exercise routine.
- Remember, significant others in your life will have their own reactions to what happened to you, and may not understand or know how to respond.
- Have the rape crisis center hotline number available so you can call for support if you need it.
- Remember it is NOT your fault even if others blame or shame you.

Recovery takes time. Be patient with yourself.



MEDICAL CARE

Seeking medical care is beneficial to protect your health and collect evidence of the assault. If you go to an emergency department, you can choose to have a physical exam, medical treatment and collection of any evidence of the assault. Hospitals in Illinois are required to notify the local police department that a sexual assault survivor has arrived seeking treatment. You do not have to talk to the police. Hospitals will also call the local rape crisis center to request an advocate. The advocate will come to the emergency department and if you wish, stay with you through the process to answer questions and provide support. If, at any point during the medical exam, you don't understand what is happening – ask. The nurse, doctor and rape crisis center advocate are available to explain things to you.

THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT EXAM

The local hospital emergency department staff will provide immediate medical attention. The emergency department responds to both the physical trauma of the assault and the process of collecting evidence of the assault. If you want, you may sign consent forms to allow the medical personnel to examine, treat, and administer medication to you, and to release information to the police. The nurse will explain the exam procedures to you and will be present throughout the exam.

Do not bathe, douche or change clothes before the exam. This may destroy evidence. If you have already cleaned, you may still access prompt, thorough medical care, and evidence may still be collected. If possible, bring a change of clothes with you when you go to the emergency room, since your clothing may be kept as evidence.

○ PHYSICAL INJURY

The exam will assess and treat any injuries that you sustained during the assault.

○ SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

If you are concerned about having a sexually transmitted infection (syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, HIV), discuss this with the doctor or nurse. They can give you preventive medicine at the time of the exam. You should receive information on any medication given to you. Make sure you know the name, dosage, purpose, and possible side effects of each drug.

○ PREGNANCY AND EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC)

Depending on your body there is a chance that pregnancy may result from a sexual assault. While the chances are lessened if you are using birth control, a test for pregnancy is recommended for all survivors who have the ability to bear children. If pregnancy is a possibility, you may request emergency contraception, a copper IUD or other forms of birth control at the time of the exam. A rape crisis center advocate or a nurse can discuss the options with you. The sooner emergency contraception is taken, the better it works. EC is not a form of abortion.

○ EVIDENCE COLLECTION

If you consent, the emergency department exam can include evidence collection. If you go to the hospital within seven days of the sexual assault and ask for evidence to be collected, hospital staff must complete a Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit. You have the right to refuse any step of the evidence collection process you do not want done.

If you are not sure that you want police to investigate the assault, you can still ask for an evidence collection kit to be completed. If you do not want the kit tested for evidence, the police department investigating the crime must store the kit for at least 10 years (or until a minor is 28-years-old.)

During the evidence collection process, the nurse will:

- Take samples from your body that may contain the offender's sperm, saliva, hair, or skin cells.
- Collect clothes you were wearing to send to the crime lab.
- Photograph bruises, cuts and other injuries that occurred during the assault.

○ THE COST

You should never be billed for emergency room treatment or any other care related to the emergency room visit, such as an ambulance ride or lab work.

The hospital will be reimbursed by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Sexual Assault Program if you do not have private insurance or Medicaid. If you have private insurance, but you are not the primary insured (e.g. you are on your parent's or spouse's insurance) you may opt out of having your insurance billed. If you receive a bill, contact your rape crisis advocate to help you work with the hospital or other provider to fix the issue.

○ FOLLOW-UP CARE AND PAYMENT

Even if you receive preventive treatment, it is beneficial to follow up with a doctor or clinic after the sexual assault.

The Illinois Department of Public Health offers free testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. For the location of the clinic nearest you, visit www.idph.org. A rape crisis center advocate can assist you in filling out forms to request Crime Victims Compensation, which reimburses certain costs related to the crime. There is usually a several month wait for reimbursement.

Vouchers

You should receive a voucher for follow-up healthcare related to the sexual assault. The voucher is good for 180 days from the date of the visit to the emergency room or approved pediatric health care facility.

Be sure to tell healthcare providers that you have a voucher before you receive services. Providers can accept or decline the voucher.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCEDURES

Sexual assault and sexual abuse are violent crimes. Like all other violent crimes, it is the responsibility of the state to prosecute the offender. **However, even if someone isn't arrested for sexually assaulting you, it does not mean the assault didn't happen. Many factors affect whether an arrest is made or a case is prosecuted.**

Seeking police assistance and court action may involve you in a long, complex process.

When you are discussing the attack with the police or state's attorney, do not be afraid to ask questions about any words or procedures that are unclear to you. What follows is a brief summary of the criminal justice process. **An advocate at a rape crisis center can support you through the process.**

○ REPORTING TO THE POLICE

Reporting to police is the first step toward finding and prosecuting the person who assaulted you. Reporting does not mean that you are committed to participating in a prosecution. Without your participation however, it is much more difficult for a state's attorney to prosecute your case.

○ THE INVESTIGATION AND ARREST

The police detective assigned to your case will conduct an in-depth interview in private with you. Since this is one of the most important phases of the investigation, it will be detailed and thorough. Based on the interview and other evidence, law enforcement may arrest the offender.

POLYGRAPH TESTS

State law says that no police officer or State's Attorney can require you to or should even ask you to take a lie detector test as a condition to investigating, charging or prosecuting your case.

○ PROSECUTION

Whenever sexual assault is committed, the State of Illinois considers the crime an act against all the people of the state. Therefore, criminal cases are handled by the state's attorney's office instead of private lawyers. The prosecutor will interview you about the case, asking some of the same questions asked by the police detective. The prosecutor will decide whether to charge the offender with a crime.

○ ARRAIGNMENT AND BAIL

The arraignment is when the defendant appears before the judge and pleads guilty or not guilty to the crime. If the defendant pleads not guilty, the judge may release the defendant into the community. The judge will set bail, which sets conditions for the defendant's release.

○ HEARINGS

After the arraignment, prosecution begins in one of two ways: through a preliminary hearing or a grand jury hearing. You may be asked to be present or to testify during a preliminary hearing.

○ PLEA BARGAINING

Plea bargaining may take place between the prosecutor and the defense attorney at any point after the charges are filed. In a plea bargain, the prosecutor may agree to lesser charges if the defendant will plead guilty.

○ THE TRIAL

Most cases do not go to trial. If there is a trial, the defense chooses whether the trial will be held before a circuit court judge with no jury (a bench trial), or before a judge and a jury of 12 people (a jury trial). During the trial, you and other witnesses may be required to testify. In addition, the results of the medical examination, laboratory analyses and police investigation will be presented.

○ Post-Trial Events

A defendant who is found guilty will be sentenced. You will be offered the opportunity to read a victim impact statement at the sentencing hearing. The defendant has a right to appeal. A finding of not guilty cannot be appealed by the state. Remember that a finding of not guilty does not mean that a crime was not committed.

○ CIVIL TRIAL

It is possible for you to sue for damages that are a result of a sexual assault. You can sue regardless of whether a criminal prosecution occurred and even if the defendant was found not guilty. To initiate a civil suit, you must hire a private attorney. The attorney may be paid a percentage of any damages awarded.



○ **PROTECTIVE ORDERS**

A Civil No Contact Order or Order of Protection can be granted by a judge. A protective order can be granted as part of the criminal proceeding or as a part of a separate civil court hearing. A rape crisis center advocate can walk you through the process for a protective order.

REMEMBER: IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT

No matter what the circumstances were, **the sexual assault was not your fault**. The trauma of the assault may upset your life, but remember that you have already survived the assault. Now, you can begin to recover.

You will not be alone on this journey. Rape crisis centers and others are available to help you recover from the assault.

RAPE CRISIS SERVICES IN ILLINOIS ...

○ NORTH

Addison*

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
Patterson/McDaniel Family Center
24 hrs. 888-293-2080

Arlington Heights

Northwest CASA
24 hrs. 888-802-8890
www.nwcasa.org

Aurora

Mutual Ground, Inc.
24 hrs. 630-897-8383
www.mutualground.org

Belvidere*

Rockford Sexual Assault
Counseling, Inc.
24 hrs. 815-636-9811

Berwyn*

Fillmore Center
Pillars Community Health
24 hrs. 708-482-9600

Chicago Heights*

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
South Suburban Center
24 hrs. 888-293-2080

DeKalb

Safe Passage, Inc.
24 hrs. 815-756-5228
www.safepassagedv.org

Dixon*

YWCA of the Sauk Valley
24 hrs. 815-288-1011

Elgin

Community Crisis Center
24 hrs. 847-697-2380
www.crisiscenter.org

Freeport

VOICES of Stephenson County
24 hrs. 815-232-7200
www.voicesofsc.org

Galena

Riverview Center
24 hrs. 888-707-8155
www.riverviewcenter.org

Gurnee

Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center
24 hrs. 847-872-7799
www.zcenter.org

Hickory Hills

Pillars Community Health
24 hrs. 708-482-9600
www.pillarscommunityhealth.org

Joliet

Sexual Assault Service Center
Guardian Angel Community
Services
24 hrs. 815-730-8984
www.gacsprograms.org

Kankakee

Clove Alliance
24 hrs. 815-932-3322
www.clovealliance.org

Kewanee*

Freedom House
24 hrs. 800-474-6031

LaGrange*

Constance Morris House
Pillars Community Health
24 hrs. 708-482-9600

McHenry*

Northwest CASA
Care Center of McHenry County
24 hrs. 800-892-8900

Morris*

Sexual Assault Service Center
24 hrs. 815-730-8984

Mount Carroll*

Riverview Center
24 hrs. 815-244-7772

Oregon*

Rockford Sexual Assault
Counseling, Inc.
24 hrs. 815-636-9811

Ottawa*

Safe Journeys
24 hrs. 800-892-3375

Peru*

Safe Journeys
24 hrs. 800-892-3375

Plainfield*

Sexual Assault Service Center
24 hrs. 815-730-8984

Pontiac*

Safe Journeys
24 hrs. 800-892-3375

Princeton

Freedom House
24 hrs. 800-474-6031
www.freedomhouseillinois.org

Quad Cities

Family Resources, Inc.
24 hrs. 309-797-1777
www.famres.org

Rockford

Rockford Sexual Assault
Counseling, Inc.
24 hrs. 815-636-9811
www.rockfordsexualassaultcounseling.org

Skokie*

Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center
24 hrs. 847-872-7799

Sterling

YWCA of the Sauk Valley
24 hrs. 815-626-7277
www.ywsauk.org

Streator

Safe Journeys
24 hrs. 800-892-3375
www.safejourneysillinois.org

Watseka*

Clove Alliance
24 hrs. 815-932-3322

○ CHICAGO

Chicago 24-Hour Hotline

1-888-293-2080

Resilience

www.ourresilience.org
• Stroger Hospital*
• Austin*
• Northside*

Mujeres Latinas En Acción

www.mujereslatinosenaccion.org
• North Riverside*
• South Chicago*

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago

www.ywcachicago.org
• Cynthia B. Lafuente Center*
• Parks and Francis Center*
• Roseland Center*
• Medical District Center*

RAPE CRISIS SERVICES IN ILLINOIS ...

○ CENTRAL

Bloomington

Stepping Stones
Sexual Assault Services
YWCA McLean County
24 hrs. 309-556-7000
www.ywcamclean.org

Charleston/Mattoon

Prevail Illinois
24 hrs. 888-345-2846
www.prevailil.org

Cuba*

WIRC/CAA Victim Services
24 hrs. 309-837-5555

Danville

Survivor Resource Center
24 hrs. 866-617-3224
www.survivorresourcecenter.org

Decatur

Growing Strong Sexual
Assault Center
24 hrs. 217-428-0770
www.growingstrongcenter.org

Galesburg*

WIRC/CAA Victim Services
Knox County
24 hrs. 309-837-5555

Jacksonville*

Prairie Center Against
Sexual Assault
24 hrs. 217-753-8081

Macomb

Western Illinois Regional
Council/Community Action Agency
Victim Services
24 hrs. 309-837-5555
www.wirpc.org/victim-services

Mt. Sterling*

Quanada
24 hrs. 800-369-2287

Paris*

Survivor Resource Center
24 hrs. 866-617-3224

Peoria

Center for Prevention of Abuse
Sexual Assault Services
24 hrs. 309-691-4111 or
800-559-SAFE
www.centerforpreventionofabuse.org

○ PITTSFIELD*

Quanada Pike County
24 hrs. 800-369-2287

Quincy

Quanada
Sexual Assault Program
24 hrs. 800-369-2287
www.quanada.org

Rushville*

Quanada Schuyler County
24 hrs. 800-369-2287

Springfield

Prairie Center Against
Sexual Assault
24 hrs. 217-753-8081
www.prairiecasa.org

Taylorville*

Prairie Center Against
Sexual Assault
24 hrs. 217-753-8081

Urbana/Champaign

Rape, Advocacy, Counseling and
Education Services
24 hrs. 217-384-4444
www.cu-races.org

○ SOUTH

Alton*

Metro East Every Survivor Counts
24 hrs. 618-397-0975

Belleville

Metro East Every Survivor Counts
24 hrs. 618-397-0975
www.metroeasteverysurvivorcounts.org/

Carbondale

Survivor Empowerment Center
24 hrs. 618-529-2324 or
800-334-2094
www.empoweringsurvivors.org

Centralia*

Sexual Assault and
Family Emergencies
24 hrs. 800-625-1414

Effingham*

Sexual Assault and
Family Emergencies
24 hrs. 800-625-1414

Marion*

Survivor Empowerment Center
24 hrs. 800-334-2094

Mt. Vernon*

Sexual Assault and
Family Emergencies
24 hrs. 800-625-1414

Olney*

Counseling & Information
for Sexual Assault/Abuse
24 hrs. 866-288-4888

Robinson*

Prevail Illinois
24 hrs. 866-288-4888

Vandalia

Sexual Assault and
Family Emergencies
24 hrs. 800-625-1414
www.safecrisiscenter.org

*Designates satellite and
outreach offices of main centers.

AFTER SEXUAL ASSAULT

**FOR SERVICES AND INFORMATION IN YOUR
COMMUNITY, CONTACT:**



**100 N. 16th Street
Springfield, IL., 62703
(217) 753-4117 www.icasa.org**