

# Sexual Abuse and the Church: How You Can Help?

## BELIEVE, LISTEN, SUPPORT

Believe the victim. Listen to the survivor's story. Do not blame the survivor. Sexual violence is never the survivor's fault. It can happen to anyone regardless of age, gender, race or religion. Sexual violence can be perpetrated by anyone and is most often perpetrated by someone known to the victim.

## SERVICES AVAILABLE

The Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault has 31 rape crisis centers located across the state. Contact your local sexual assault crisis center for assistance. Information on the crisis center in your area can be accessed at **[www.icasa.org](http://www.icasa.org)**. All crisis center hotlines are available 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week.

Crisis Centers provide free and confidential counseling, and court/medical advocacy, and prevention programs.

# Spiritual Concerns

It is important to recognize that the survivor can have a range of feelings after an assault. The survivor's spiritual foundation might be shaken or transformed by the trauma. They might feel guilt or shame. They may feel they have been abandoned by God. The survivor might show anger toward God. This is not unusual.

It is most helpful to assure the survivor that the abuse is not punishment by God. Do not tell the survivor that the abuse is a test from God. It is important to remind the survivor that she/he is not responsible for the assault. The offender is always responsible for sexual violence.

It is important to support the survivor in every phase of the recovery.

---

## **FOR ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION**

For more information on sexual assault contact your local rape crisis center or visit [www.icasa.org](http://www.icasa.org).

---