

COPING with SEXUAL ASSAULT

Introduction

Chances are, you are reading this because you or someone you care about has been raped. This booklet is for any adult with visual impairments who has ever been the victim of sexual assault. It is also a good resource for family members, friends, partners or spouses to learn more about supporting their loved one through this difficult time. To begin, here are a few important facts about sexual assault that may be helpful to know.

■ **Sexual assault can affect many lives in different ways.**

Rape is a crime that hurts people from all kinds of backgrounds and abilities. Victims of sexual assault include: men and women; old and young; rich and poor; heterosexuals and homosexuals; persons with disabilities; persons from all racial or ethnic backgrounds; and persons who are homeless or in hospitals, institutions, or prisons. *No matter what your background or situation, rape is a personal violation.*

***You do not
have to deal
with this alone.***

■ **Sexual assaults occur in many different situations.**

Yet, it is never the victim's fault that the assault happened. You may choose to leave your window open on a summer night, go for a walk alone, get drunk at a party, go home with someone you just met, or say no to your spouse, partner or date about sex. None of these actions gives anyone the right to violate you. However, many rape victims do blame themselves for different reasons. It is important to remember, just like any other crime, the offender is responsible and to blame. *You did not cause this to happen by anything you did or said.*

■ **Everyone deserves to have support after a sexual assault.**

You do not have to deal with this alone. There are many different resources available to help.

This booklet offers general information about some of the medical, emotional, and legal issues. This information will be

You did not cause this to happen by anything you did or said.

useful whether you were recently assaulted or if you were assaulted a long time ago. Since services and laws vary from state to state, you may want to check with an agency in your area for more information.

■ **Survivors of sexual assault should be treated with respect when seeking help.**

You have a right to be informed about your choices in medical care, the court system, your legal rights, and counseling options. With this information, you will be able to make the decisions that are best for you and your future.

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For persons with visual impairments

Coping after a sexual assault can be difficult for anyone. However, for persons with visual impairments, there may be additional concerns. Some of these issues may have an impact on emotional and physical recovery. There may be challenges in getting services or barriers with the criminal justice system. Some service providers may not be as informed about working with persons with visual impairments.

These kinds of issues are probably familiar to you if you have a visual impairment. The obstacles may be

You deserve to have treatment and assistance available to you after the sexual assault.

an added stress as you try to get medical, legal or counseling assistance. Keep in mind, just like any other crime victim, you deserve to have treatment and assistance available to you after the sexual assault.

This booklet was written to help victims of sexual assault after the trauma. It has useful information about the medical, legal and emotional aspects of healing for anyone who has been sexually assaulted. More importantly, this booklet has specific information for rape victims with visual impairments. As you read through this booklet, remember, you do not have to deal with this alone. There are many resources available to assist you, some of which are listed in the back of this guide.

Getting assistance under the Americans With Disabilities Act

The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) applies to most public and private agencies. This includes hospitals, police departments, courts and counseling centers. These agencies should be able to assist with additional accommodations to help you get the services you might need.

Although the ADA offers protections to persons with disabilities, some agencies may not be fully familiar with the law. Additionally, some agency personnel may not have experience working with persons with disabilities. You might be the first rape victim with visual impairments who has sought assistance at their agency. The following suggestions might be helpful to you when seeking services.

- Tell the agency representative specifically what type of assistance you need (e.g., transportation or materials in Braille or large print, if available).

- Ask if they have anyone on staff who has experience working with persons with disabilities, particularly with visual impairments.
- Know what your rights are under the ADA.
- If your needs are not being met in accordance with ADA, remind them of your needs and rights under ADA. If you are unable to get services as a result of your visual impairment, enlist the assistance of an advocate, or speak with the agency director. You can also report the agency for non-compliance.
- If needed, contact your local independent living center to further assist you.
- Seek additional support or assistance from a Rape Crisis Program or a Rape Crisis Helpline. They are experienced in assisting sexual assault survivors.

***Tell the agency
representative exactly
what you need.***

Understanding sexual assault and sexual violence

When most of us hear the words sexual assault, we think of rape. However, rape is not the only type of sexual assault. There are many different kinds of sexual violence. Even minor forms of sexual violence, such as obscene phone calls, can be distressing. An attempted sexual assault can also be very frightening.

Sexual assault occurs any time a person is forced into a sexual act. However, force does not always include physical violence. Force can happen in different ways, such as: verbal threats, overpowering the person, using a weapon, drugging someone, abusing authority or taking advantage of someone or their situation. For example, a person who passes out from drugs or alcohol or is under anesthesia cannot consent to sex. Likewise, someone who

Force can happen in any type of relationship.

does not mentally understand sex cannot give consent. Taking advantage of someone's vulnerability uses another kind of force. These different types of force can happen in any type of relationship. It can happen with friends, acquaintances, family, co-workers, and intimate partners (including spouses and gay or lesbian couples). It can also happen between doctors and patients, students and teachers, clergy and parishioners, parents and their children and it can happen between strangers.

Sexual assaults include any type of sexual conduct or sexual contact that is nonconsensual, forced or coerced. Sexual conduct can be oral, vaginal or anal penetration, even if only slightly entering the body. Sexual contact is usually sexual touching, such as: grabbing the breasts or touching the penis. Other offenses happen when the personal space or safety of an individual are violated (e.g., obscene phone calls, being stalked, or pornography without your consent).

Most people do not realize that there are many different kinds of sexual violence. They may not know that rape can happen to anyone in any relationship. But it does. The following list shows some of the types of sexual violence that do happen.

The different types of sexual violence

■ Invasions of space and privacy

Stalking (targeting, watching and constantly following someone's activities).

Voyeurism (watching someone as they undress, have sex or use the bathroom).

Flashing (exposing one's genitals in public to shock or surprise the victim).

Masturbating in public (to shock or surprise the victim).

Sexual jokes, degrading sexual remarks, sexual name calling or labeling.

Obscene phone calls, e-mail messages or faxes.

■ Other unwanted sexual or physical contact

Grabbing or touching the breasts, vagina, penis or buttocks over the clothes or brushing or rubbing against another person with his or her genitals.

■ Unwanted sexual touching without penetration

Touching breasts, vagina, penis or rectum with an object or with a part of the body.

■ **Rape**

Forced or coerced oral, anal or vaginal penetration with an object or body part.

■ **Ritual abuse**

Any abusive behavior by an individual or a group as a part of a cult or ritual activity. This may include any type of sexual assault or other types of violence.

■ **Sexual mutilation**

Cutting, burning, piercing or any injury to the breasts, vagina, penis or rectum.

■ **Murder**

Death involving any type of sexual violation, such as rape.

*There are many
different types of
sexual offenses.*

Emotional concerns and reactions after the crisis

Most sexual assault victims experience a range of emotions after their assault. These are some of the feelings and reactions that rape victims may experience. You might have some of these feelings or other responses to the sexual assault.

(This section has been adapted from materials previously published by the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and the Assault Crisis Center of Ypsilanti, Michigan.)

■ **Shock and numbness:** This response may occur immediately after a sexual assault. It can include feelings of disbelief or denial about what happened. It may seem like your body is shutting down or withdrawing. You may be emotionally detached or drained. At times, life may not seem real. You may be going through

the motions, but are unaware of all that is happening. For example, you may know that people are talking, but you do not fully hear what they are saying. Other reactions to the emotional shock may include: crying uncontrollably, laughing nervously, withdrawing or claiming to feel nothing or to be "fine." *You may be so overwhelmed that you do not know how to feel or what to do.*

What might help: Understand that these are normal reactions right after a trauma. Reassure yourself that these feelings will diminish. It may be helpful to ask a friend or loved to be with you if you want company. You may want to think about what has helped you through a previous crisis and try that. For example, you may want to talk to a friend, pray, have people around you or get away to a peaceful place that feels safe to you.

■ **Disruption of daily life:** During the first few weeks or months after the rape, you may feel preoccupied with thoughts about the assault. It might be hard for you to concentrate. You might find yourself thinking about the sexual assault when you don't want to think about it.

It can be upsetting to have reminders of the rape when you are trying to “get on with your life.” You may have nightmares, trouble sleeping, appetite changes, general anxiety or depression. For the first few weeks and sometimes months after the assault, it can seem as if your life has been thrown off course. You might wonder if it will ever be the same again.

What might help: Although these are normal reactions, they can be very distressing. Be gentle with yourself and do whatever you need to do to try to reclaim your life. For

example, it is okay if you need to sleep in a room other than your bedroom (especially if you were raped in your

bed). You may want to make some small changes in your life, such as: buying new bed linens or changing your routine by going a different way to work. These small changes can help you to feel that you are taking back control. You will be able to go on with your life. *It is common after any kind of crisis to need time to grieve, to adjust and to reorganize your life.* The initial disruptions

Be gentle with yourself and do whatever you need to do to try to reclaim your life.

will soon go away. Then you can go on with your routines and your life. However, if the disruptions in your life continue, it may be useful to go to a counselor to help you to cope with the effects of the trauma.

■ Loss of control: It can seem like your whole world has just been turned upside down or that you will never have your life back again. Your thoughts may be racing and overwhelming. You might feel anxious, jittery, or scared and not sure what to do. It can be difficult to focus or concentrate. Even minor decisions, like what to have for lunch, may be difficult to make.

Even making small decisions can help you regain a sense of control.

What might help: Try to make as many of your own decisions as possible. Even small decisions can help you regain a sense of control. Ask or get information that might help you to make a decision. With big decisions, such as filing a police report, make a list of pros and cons of how it might impact you. Talk to a trusted friend. Seek out professional resources such as counseling or legal advice if needed. Trust your instincts to do what is right for you.

■ **Fear:** It is not uncommon for rape victims to experience fear after an assault. For example, you might fear that the rapist will return or fear for your physical safety. You may have a fear of being alone, or a fear of people or situations that may remind you of the assault. These fears can come and go and can also range from a mild, uncomfortable feeling to an anxiety producing panic. *Most of these fears will go away or lessen over time.*

What might help: Make any changes in your life that you need in order to feel safe. For example, change your locks, take a self-defense class, or stay with a friend or a family member. If you want or need company, ask people that you trust to stay with you — day or night. If your fear gets in the way of your daily life, it might be useful to seek the help of a professional counselor.

Most of these fears will go away or lessen over time.

■ **Guilt and self-blame:** You may have some thoughts that you could have or should have done something differently to avoid or to prevent the assault. You might start to doubt

your ability to make good judgments or to trust your own instincts.

What might help: Remind yourself that you did not cause this to happen. Realize that guilt and self-blame are efforts to feel some control over the situation. Some survivors think that if they avoid similar situations, it will not happen again. Think about how you might do things differently in the future as a way to feel safer, not as a way to blame yourself about the rape. *It can be helpful to read more about recovering from rape to know that you are not alone.* (For more resources, refer to the reading list at the end of this booklet.)

■ **Anger:** You have many different reasons to feel angry. You might be angry toward the perpetrator, the police, your family, the medical staff, your counselor or toward yourself. If you think about getting back or getting even with the person who did this, it does not mean you are a bad or violent person. However, it is important that you do not act on those thoughts. You might also feel angry at society because you no longer feel safe or trusting. If you are religious or spiritual, you may be angry that your faith did not protect you or you might question why God allowed this to happen.

What might help: Allow yourself to be angry. You have every right to feel angry. It is a natural and common reaction to sexual assault. You may be more irritable or short tempered at home or at work for awhile. This is a part of your anger. Some people find physical activity (exercise, walking, jogging) can help release the physical tension that often goes along with anger. Playing music or singing out loud to music can also be helpful and healthy ways to let go of anger. It could also help to talk to other rape survivors who understand these feelings. Consider joining a rape survivors support group. If you are religious or are struggling with questions about your faith, you can seek out a spiritual leader (e.g., priest, minister, rabbi) who is familiar with victimization issues and can guide you through your questions. *Find what works best for you to express your anger in a healthy manner that will not hurt you or anyone else.*

■ **Isolation:** Some rape victims feel their experience sets them apart from others. You might feel differently or think that others can tell that you have been sexually assaulted just by looking at you. Some survivors do not want

to bother anyone with their troubles, so they don't talk about it. You might withdraw or distance yourself from friends and family at a time when you need them most.

Consider joining a rape survivors support group.

What might help: Remind yourself that you are not alone in what you are feeling. It might be reassuring to speak with others who have also been sexually assaulted. Most rape crisis centers have individual counseling and support groups available. Reading more on the topic can also be reassuring and validating. If you are feeling alone, call someone to go out, even if just for a walk. It can help to get away from your home for awhile. *It can make all the difference to be with someone who cares about you.*

■ **Sexual intimacy concerns:** It is normal to have a wide range of reactions and feelings when it comes to sex. For example, you might wonder if you will ever want or enjoy sex again. You may need reassurance that you are still attractive to your partner after the rape. You might use sex as a way of coping, or, you might fear that having sex will remind you of the

assault. These are common concerns and reactions for many sexual assault survivors.

What might help: Go at your own pace, in small steps and only when you are ready to resume sex. *Be very clear with your partner about your needs and limits when it comes to any type of sexual touching or sexual contact.* He/she may not know how to respond to you. Your partner may need reassurance that it is okay to touch you. If there is something you do not want to do because it reminds you of the assault, tell your partner. Let your partner know that the situation causes your anxiety, not him/her. Tell your partner what kinds of physical or sexual intimacy feels comfortable to you. It might be helpful if your partner follows your lead for awhile.

Your interest in sex after the rape can vary. You may have a need to know that you are still desirable after the assault, or, you might have less interest toward any kind of sexual or physical contact for some time. A therapist with experience in sexual trauma recovery can be very helpful for couples who are having difficulty adjusting after a

sexual assault. Rape crisis counselors can also be a very good resource for spouses and partners.

■ **Vulnerability and mistrust:** You might feel like your trust and safety have been taken away. You may wonder who you can trust or if you will ever feel safe again. This can lead to suspicion, guardedness and caution around others. You might also question your own judgment, especially if you were sexually assaulted by someone you trusted. People who are visually impaired often feel more vulnerable because they cannot see who is approaching them. This may have been a concern for you even before the assault.

What might help: Try to trust your instincts about what you need and with whom you want to share what happened. Turn to friends and family who have been dependable in the past. Select people who are not judgmental and are good listeners. Take your time rebuilding trust in other relationships. If something feels uncomfortable, you do not have to pursue it. *Know that there are many people who do care about you and are trustworthy.* Can you think of some of those people in your life right now?

There are many steps that rape survivors with visual impairments can take to feel safe again. You may have to try several options to find out what helps you to feel less vulnerable. Although everyone has different needs, here are a few suggestions that might help.

- It might be helpful to have someone stay with you for awhile during the day and night, especially if you live alone.
- Don't hesitate to call the police (or 911) if you sense danger or an intruder.
- Keep your doors locked, even during the daytime.
- When someone comes to your door, do not unlock the door until you know for certain who they are.
- If possible, install an intercom or an alarm system in your home.
- Have motion detector lights installed outside your outside doors.
- Take a self-defense course to increase your ability to protect yourself.
- Have or train a guard dog to alert you to potential dangers.

- If you are getting disturbing or harassing phone calls, use caller ID to allow others to identify who is calling you or let your answering machine record the message. Give the tape or any other information to the police.
- Call on a friend or loved one if you need additional reassurance.
- Seek counseling or assistance from a support group for rape victims or call a 24-hour crisis line for extra support during especially difficult times.
- Continue to reassure yourself that you will feel safe again.

Medical concerns

General information about getting medical care

It is important to get medical care after a sexual assault. General aches, pains and distress (both physical and emotional) are normal after a trauma. However, you may not be aware of an underlying problem that needs medical treatment. It can also be reassuring to have a doctor or nurse tell you there are no other injuries.

Medical treatment after a sexual assault is especially stressful if you are not able to see what is happening during the exam. You might want to ask the doctor and nurse to explain each procedure before they begin, to know what to expect and what parts of your body they will be touching for the exam.

Tell the medical providers exactly what you need to reduce your stress or anxiety. For example, if you have a guide dog, do you want your dog to be in the room with you during the exam? It is important to ask questions if you have any. You can also refuse any parts of the exam at any time.

There are many places to get medical care after a sexual assault. A hospital emergency department is often the first choice if the rape has just occurred. *An emergency department is one of the few places that provides the evidence collection examination. This exam is very important if you want to file criminal charges.* However, going to an emergency department does not mean you have to make a police report. You deserve to have medical care whether you choose to make a police report or not.

You can refuse any parts of the exam at any time.

If you do not want to go to the hospital, there are other places where you can get confidential, medical care. You could go to a private physician, a public health clinic. If you are eligible, you could also go to an Indian Health Service or a

University Health Service. Some of these facilities will provide care at a reduced fee if you do not have insurance. It is best to call first to find out if they provide treatment after a sexual assault and if you need an appointment. *It is in your best interest to go to a facility experienced in treating rape trauma.*

Concerns regarding pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections

In addition to treating physical injuries, there are other reasons to seek medical care after a sexual assault. There are lab tests for sexually transmitted diseases/infections (STDs and HIV/AIDS) and pregnancy which should be completed. *It is very important to be tested.* At your initial exam, you may be tested for many different sexually transmitted diseases. The lab tests which are done at your initial exam after the assault will tell whether you were pregnant or had an STD before the rape.

The health care provider will give you information about follow-up lab tests. These follow-up tests will tell if you became pregnant or infect-

ed with an STD from the assault. *It is important to have the follow-up tests, even if you have no symptoms.* Some STDs are potentially life-threatening and may not have early symptoms. It is also a good idea to be tested even if your sexual assault was awhile ago. Follow-up HIV tests are generally not recommended until three to six months after the assault. For more information about HIV or other STD testing after a sexual assault, contact a rape crisis program, family planning clinic (e.g., Planned Parenthood) or your physician. Some student health centers and community health centers also offer HIV testing and information.

In addition to lab tests, some medical facilities have preventive (prophylactic) care to prevent an STD or medication to stop a developing pregnancy. A standard antibiotic is usually given as a preventative measure for some STDs. The medication to stop a developing pregnancy (the morning-after pill) is controversial and is not always given routinely. Both of these treatments are up to you. However, using the morning-after pill may not be agreeable

Decisions about your medical care are up to you.

with your religious beliefs or with those of the treating physician. For survivors whose faith opposes the morning-after pill, you may want to seek counsel from your religious leader. If this issue is an important concern for you, ask about these treatment options before you receive medical care.

Religious beliefs are only one aspect when considering the morning-after pill. There are health concerns too. It takes two to three weeks after the assault to know for sure if you are pregnant. However, the morning-after pill must be taken within 72 hours after the sexual assault. This pill is a very high dose of estrogen that will start the menstrual cycle to stop a developing pregnancy. The doctor or nurse can answer more questions about this treatment. Also, a rape crisis counselor, physician or family planning clinic can provide you with more information about your options, including a pregnancy termination pill (RU486) which can be prescribed up to 49 days after your last menstrual period.

Decisions about your medical care are up to you. No one can make you have any treatment that you do not want. Even if your wishes are

against the doctor's advice, it is still your choice. For example, if you choose to have the rape evidence collection exam, you can refuse any part of the exam. The medical staff should explain to you the possible benefits and consequences if you decide not to accept a certain treatment that is offered to you. Ask the medical provider any questions if you are unsure or do not understand something.

Alcohol and other drugs in sexual assault

Alcohol or other drugs are involved in many sexual assaults. However, even if you were drinking or using other drugs, you did not deserve to be raped. You are not to blame for what happened. *No one has the right to sexually violate you at any time.* Rape is a felony level crime, regardless of whether or not you were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. You still have the option to report the sexual assault to the police. However, be prepared for questions about alcohol or other drug use to be part of the case.

Alcohol and other drugs can impair judgment. Drinking or taking drugs can also lead to a

blackout or passing out. Therefore, using alcohol or other drugs puts you at greater risk and makes you more vulnerable to sexual offenders. However, it does not mean that you wanted to have sex or deserved to be raped. In fact, offenders often look for this opportunity to sexually victimize someone.

Some sexual offenders try to make their victims have less control by putting alcohol or other drugs in their drinks. Drugging someone in order to have sex is also considered rape, and may have higher legal penalties. Sexual assault with "date-rape drugs" has been getting more public attention lately. However, alcohol has been used to sedate and violate potential victims for years. Alcohol and other drugs make anyone more vulnerable to assault.

Rape is a felony level crime, regardless of whether or not you were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

"Date-rape drugs"

Sexual offenders use many different drugs to impair their victims in order to rape them. The drugs are often put in the person's drink. These drugs can be added to alcohol, soft drinks, water or other drinks. Drugs like Benadryl are put in food (such as brownies) to cover up the taste. However, many of these drugs are tasteless and odorless. You may not know you have been drugged until you feel very drowsy or overly intoxicated. This can happen within minutes after ingesting the drug. You may black out or pass out. *You may not remember anything that happened while you were under the influence of these drugs.*

Two drugs that are commonly used are Rohypnol and GHB. Rohypnol, often referred to as "roofies," is a strong tranquilizer. It is used by prescription in other countries, but is not legal for use in the United States. GHB or Gamma-Hydroxybutyrate is in liquid form. It was originally developed as an anesthetic. GHB goes by many names on the street such as "G," "Grievous Bodily Harm," "Easy Lay," etc. There are many other drugs that are used to sedate

victims. Another one which is used is Ketamine, an animal anesthetic. Ketamine, also in liquid form, is called "Special K," Vitamin K" or "Bump." The effects of any of these drugs may last several hours depending on the amount given and if alcohol was also used. When used with alcohol, they can cause a very serious or deadly combination.

If you suspect you were given a drug in your drink or food, you can find out by having a lab test at a local hospital. You can also request information from a rape crisis program or police department. The sooner you are tested, the better. Many of these drugs can only be found 12-72 hours after ingestion. The lab results might also include any other drugs you voluntarily took. If you want to press charges, these test results may become part of the evidence.

Symptoms that may indicate you were drugged may include:

- suddenly and unexpectedly becoming very drowsy;
- feeling very agitated, jittery or nervous for no known reason;
- experiencing hallucinations (feeling or hearing things that are not there);

- suddenly getting sick or vomiting soon after having a drink;
 - experiencing a memory loss for several hours;
 - waking up and not remembering what happened hours earlier.
-

The last symptom is also associated with high levels of intoxication. If you were drinking a lot, you could have “blacked out” and not remember what happened. If you do think you were drugged, counseling at a rape crisis center may be helpful. The emotional effects of rape after being drugged can be just as distressing as any other type of sexual assault. You don’t have to keep this to yourself.

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Legal concerns and the criminal justice process

The following section offers some general information about the criminal justice system. However, since state laws and the procedures of individual courts and police departments vary, it is best to check with your nearest rape crisis center, victim-witness program or police department for information about your community.

Your decision to report the crime

Sexual assault of any kind is a serious crime in all states, U.S. territories and tribal lands. Rape and many other types of sexual assault (such as using drugs or alcohol to impair the victim) are considered felony crimes. Yet, most sexual assaults are not reported to the police and many sexual offenders will rape again. Although this might be a factor in your

decision about reporting the assault, it may not be your only consideration.

The decision to make a police report can be one of the most difficult decisions you will make in the aftermath of the rape. Uncertainty about reporting the rape is common among survivors, especially if you know or are related to the offender. If the offender is your spouse, partner or family member, you might feel pressure not to report the crime because of your relationship. This can also be true for victims who are raped by an acquaintance, a "friend" or a co-worker. You might wonder if reporting the sexual assault will cause problems in your relationship. You may not want to hurt the person who raped you by making the assault public with a police report. You could be afraid of what might happen if you do report the rape. For example, you may be worried about the trial or the publicity of a court case. You might be afraid of the person who did this to you and how they will react.

If you were assaulted by a stranger, you might be worried about identifying the perpetrator. This may add to your feelings of insecurity, helplessness and vulnerability. Although physical identification can be more difficult, it

is not impossible. There are other ways that you can identify the perpetrator, such as voice identification, or, you might have noticed other traits about the offender, such as scars or mannerisms. You might remember other factors that are very important to identifying and prosecuting the rapist. It is important to talk to the detective about any concerns or questions you have about your disability as it relates to the case.

If you do choose to report the rape, you will be thought of as a witness to the crime and you will probably have to testify in the case if it goes to court. Some victims find this process helpful in their recovery, especially if the rapist is found guilty. However, there is the possibility that your offender will not be caught or go to trial.

The criminal justice process begins when you file a police report. The police will investigate the crime and present the case to the prosecutor. It is the prosecutor's decision if the case goes to trial. Although you can make a police report at any time (years later in some states) prosecution is more likely when the crime is reported right away. This greatly increases the chances of finding and convicting the rapist.

The police interview and investigation

When you first talk with the police, you will be asked to give a brief account of what happened. You may also be asked to give a description of the offender. The police officer will prepare a summary of your statement and have you sign it. DO NOT sign any documents unless you have read them thoroughly. If you are unable to read a printed document, ask an advocate, trusted friend, family member or a lawyer to read the document to you. If you fully agree with the statement, sign the document. *If you have any objections or corrections to the statement, ensure they are noted on the document before you sign anything.* The statement must be accurate to the best of your memory, as it may be used later in court. You can have a copy of the report if you want it.

In the first few days after you make the report, a detective will meet with you to get more details. It is important for the investigation that you tell everything you remember. Some of the details may be embarrassing, but the detective needs to know everything about the assault. This information can be very helpful in

prosecuting the rapist. You might not remember everything right away, but tell the detective if you recall new information.

The detective is your contact person while the case is being investigated. Get the detective's name and phone number in case you have questions or concerns.

The investigation could involve many different aspects depending on the case. Some of these procedures are described in the following pages.

Evidence collection (rape kit exam)

Evidence collection is one of the most important parts of the investigation. There are many different types of evidence. Evidence may include: the clothes you wore at the time of the assault, your bed sheets, or other items at the crime scene. However, the most important evidence could come from the medical evidence collection exam. This evidence is collected during a precise exam performed by a nurse or physician.

The rape evidence exam is very different from a general medical exam. The evidence exam

(often called the “rape kit exam”) is actually a legal procedure for collecting evidence. Medical professionals who perform this exam must be prepared to testify in the case. Some hospitals and a few university health clinics have nurses who are specially trained as Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners to do this exam. At other hospitals, the emergency doctor on staff will do the exam.

Most clinics and private doctors do not have the “rape kit” or the specialized training to collect this evidence. This is why it is important to go to a hospital as soon as possible after a rape so that the evidence

Even if you are unsure about reporting the crime, it might be useful to go to the hospital for the evidence collection exam.

can be collected (even if you are undecided about making a police report). Many hospitals will collect evidence up to 48 hours after a rape. Some hospitals will keep the evidence for months in case the victim decides to make a police report. Even if you are unsure about reporting the crime, it may be useful to go to the hospital for the evidence collection exam.

It may still be possible to make a police report even weeks, months or years after the assault. Waiting until later means that there may not be any physical evidence. Also, a long delay in reporting may make the investigation or the prosecution harder. However, since rapists often repeat the same patterns with other victims, your police report and testimony could strengthen another case with the same offender.

Polygraph and voice stress tests

Only a few states still allow police to use the polygraph or voice stress analyzer tests (often called lie detector tests) with rape victims. Even in those states, the tests can only be used with the victim's consent. If these tests are still legal with rape victims in your state, the detective may ask you to take one as an investigative technique to gather more information. This does not mean that the detective thinks you are lying. However, it may feel that way if you are asked to take the test. Victims of other crimes are generally not asked to take these tests.

Some law enforcement departments use the polygraph test as a way to build the victim's

credibility. If the victim agrees to the polygraph, it gives law enforcement more leverage to get the accused to take the polygraph or to make a statement. Especially in acquaintance rape cases, this can strengthen the case investigation.

However, you do not have to take the polygraph or the voice stress analyzer if you do not want to do it. The results of these tests are not allowed in court. They are often not accurate, especially with rape victims, because of the physical and mental effects of the trauma. The decision to take either of these tests is up to you. It may be helpful to ask the detective some questions about what to expect. You can also ask how your decision may effect the investigation. Whatever your decision, it should in no way limit or stop the investigation. If it does, you may want to report your concerns to the internal affairs division of the law enforcement department.

The court process

The court process begins when the state takes legal action against the alleged perpetrator. The prosecutor or district attorney (depending on your community) will make this decision based on the detective's investigation. If the prosecutor determines there is not enough evidence for a possible prosecution, the case will not go to trial. This can be very hard to understand and it can feel like a setback. However, the prosecutor must believe there is enough evidence to get a guilty verdict in court. If it is not a strong case, the prosecution's decision not to proceed will save you from the ordeal of a trial. *If the case is accepted for prosecution, there will be many steps before the trial.* **Although the criminal justice process varies from state to state, the following offers a brief overview of what to expect.**

The arraignment

This first step usually happens within one or two days after the accused is arrested. The arraignment is a brief hearing before a judge. The charges are explained to the defendant (the person who is accused of the crime). Usually, the defendant will respond to the charges by pleading guilty or not guilty. If there is a not guilty plea, the defendant is kept in jail to wait for trial or bail is set for release until trial. Generally, you do not have to go to the arraignment. However, you are allowed to be present if you want to be there.

The preliminary hearing

The preliminary hearing is the first hearing in which an overview of the case is presented to a judge in an open court room. All concerned parties are usually present except a jury. This hearing is for the judge to determine "probable cause" (to decide if there is reason to believe a crime did occur and if the defendant may have committed the crime). If the judge finds probable cause, the case will go on to the next step,

the grand jury. If there is no probable cause, the case is dismissed. In some states, the preliminary hearing comes before the arraignment or the case may go directly to the grand jury. In other states, there are no preliminary or grand jury hearings for sexual assault cases.

The grand jury hearing

The grand jury is a private hearing. It is held before a jury and the prosecutor. The witnesses are called one at a time to give their sworn testimony. They will also answer questions from the jury. The defendant is not present. After hearing from the witnesses, the grand jury has three choices: if the case should proceed to trial; if the charges should be dropped; or if the charges should be reduced and the case sent back to a lower court. Very rarely, a grand jury may ask for additional testimony. Like the preliminary hearing, the grand jury must determine if there is reason to believe a crime did occur and if the accused could have committed the crime.

The trial

A trial may not take place until months after the assault. The scheduling of the trial depends on many factors. Some of the delays could depend on: when the perpetrator was arrested, when the grand jury hearing was scheduled, if the judge ordered a psychiatric evaluation of the defendant, and the number of continuances (delays) requested by the prosecutor or defense attorney.

The trial is usually in an open courtroom. This means that the public can attend. However, witnesses must stay outside the courtroom unless they are testifying. The defendant is present in the courtroom at all times. The judge, the jury (if one is requested), the defense attorney and the prosecutor are also in the courtroom during the entire trial. The decision to have a jury is up to the accused.

In general, rape trials last only one or two days. Some may last several days, depending on the number of victims, witnesses and the evidence. During the trial you will be asked to tell what happened. You will be questioned by the

prosecutor and the defense attorney (the defendant's lawyer). In many states, the defense attorney is prohibited by law from asking you questions about your past sexual experiences unless it directly relates to the case. These laws are called rape shield laws. You might want to ask the prosecutor about the law and if it applies to your case. If you have any other questions about the courtroom or the trial, ask the prosecutor during your pretrial meeting. You can also call the prosecutor's office at any time.

Many communities have rape crisis or victim-witness advocates available to help. The advocates can assist you through the criminal justice system from start to finish. You may want to ask the detective or the prosecutor if advocates are available. Their services are offered at no cost and can be very helpful to crime victims

After all of the evidence has been presented, the judge or jury will consider a guilty or not guilty verdict. If the verdict is guilty, the sentence will likely be set at a later date. In some cases, the judge will order a pre-sentencing investigation of the offender. This could include a psychiatric evaluation or a review of the offender's criminal record. This can take up to 90 days after the trial.

The sentencing hearing

You are entitled to be notified and to be present during the sentencing hearing. This hearing is usually short. The judge will hear comments from the defense attorney, the offender, and sometimes from the offender's family. *You or your representative should also be allowed to give comments if you want to. You may have already given the prosecutor or the judge a victim impact statement. This is a statement in your own words about how this crime has affected you and your family.* The judge will consider all of this information and the law when sentencing the perpetrator. The sentence can include prison, probation or court ordered treatment. If the sentence is prison, the offender will be sent away immediately.

In many states, the defense attorney is prohibited by law from asking you questions about your past sexual experiences unless it directly relates to the case.

After the trial

You might feel you are at a turning point in your life after the trial. This might be especially true if you felt justice was served. However, if the defendant is found not guilty and set free, this can be a very difficult time for you. The offender could choose to appeal the guilty verdict and ask for a new trial. This can also be hard to accept. Whatever happens, counseling during and after the trial can be very helpful. Counseling can help you to move on with your life and help you to cope with the effects of the trauma.

If there is an appeal of the verdict, you have the right to be notified. Additionally, some offenders will request an early release after they have served only a few months in prison. You also have the right to know about any action pertaining to the parole or the release of the prisoner. Notify your prosecutor in writing if you want to be informed of any requests for probation, appeals, early release or parole review boards. *You have the right to be present or to have an advocate present at any of these proceedings.*

Other legal and criminal justice concerns

You may have many other concerns or questions about what to expect and what your rights are during the criminal justice proceedings. Some of these are addressed below. *If in doubt, ask for an advocate or ask your detective or prosecutor.* In most states, you have a legal right to know what to expect from the criminal justice system.

Accompaniment and support

You don't have to go through any of these steps alone. Many communities have a rape crisis or a victim-witness program. They can support and guide you through the process. Rape crisis counselors can also help you cope with the many aspects of the trauma and the after effects. The rape crisis counselors/advocates are trained to work with crime victims. They are familiar with the medical, emotional and legal aspects of rape. If you want, they can be with you during the

medical exam or during your interview with the police. They can also accompany you to the courtroom (although they cannot be in the grand jury room with you). Some state laws guarantee you the right to have a support person with you at all times during the criminal justice process, other states do not specify this as a right for crime victims. If you want the additional support of an advocate, a family member or friend at any time, just ask. You can also request that a female officer or detective take your report if one is available.

Some state laws guarantee you the right to have a support person with you at all times during the criminal justice process...

Bond and harassment

After the arrest, most defendants can choose to post bond. Posting bond lets the defendant stay out of jail until the trial. The bond is usually a large sum of money that is held to make sure the defendant shows up at trial. When out on bail, the defendant is not allowed to contact or harass you in any way. If the defendant or his family tries to contact you after the arrest, you

should report it to the detective right away. Harassing a witness is a crime. You do not have to endure any harassment from the defendant or the defendant's family after making a police report.

Requesting an HIV test of the perpetrator

In some states, the court can order a sexual assault suspect to be tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. You may be able to request that the defendant be tested and get the results from the prosecutor's office. Regardless of the perpetrator's test results, you should still be tested for HIV after the assault and follow up with any other testing that is recommended. You do not have to wait until a conviction to get an HIV test at a facility that provides confidential or anonymous testing.

Plea bargaining

The defendant may plead guilty on a lesser charge to avoid going to trial. The plea bargain and the terms are usually discussed between the defense attorney and the prosecutor. You might be asked what you think about the plea

bargain. However, it is up to the prosecutor to decide whether to take the terms of the plea bargain to the judge. *Tell the prosecutor if you want to be consulted on any plea bargaining.* If a plea bargain is accepted, there will be no trial.

Testifying in court

Before you have to testify in court, you will receive a subpoena (an order to appear in court). Do not ignore the subpoena. Your role as a witness is very important to the case. Here are a few suggestions to prepare you for being a witness.

Before the trial:

- If you have questions or if you want to visit the courtroom before testifying, contact the prosecutor assigned to the case.
- If you are worried about forgetting any of the information you reported, ask for a copy of the statement you made to the police. Review it ahead of time.
- If you want an advocate to be with you at the trial or at any of the hearings, contact the rape crisis program, victim-witness program or prosecutor's office.

At the trial:

- It might be helpful to have other support persons (family members or friends) with you while you wait to testify. This is up to you.
- Try to get there early to give yourself extra time and to avoid additional stress.
- When your name is called to enter the court to testify, take a calming breath.
- Speak up clearly, especially if there is no microphone at the witness stand.
- Always tell the truth to the best of your recollection.
- If you don't understand a question, tell the attorney before trying to answer.
- Pause when there is an objection and wait for the judge's response.
- Only answer the specific question you have been asked and do not elaborate.
- Be ready for delays and postponements. Delays are common in most cases.

Civil law suits

It is possible to file a civil lawsuit against the offender to try to collect for damages. You can also file a lawsuit against another party whose

actions or inactions contributed to the crime (e.g., landlord, bar or restaurant owner or others).

If you decide to file a lawsuit, you will need to hire your own lawyer. This trial is separate from the criminal trial. A civil suit can occur even if there was no criminal case.

It is important to know that civil suits and criminal cases are very different. The burden of proof is less in a civil suit. The defendant cannot be sentenced to prison in civil cases. There are other differences as well. For example, if you are in a civil suit, you will need to pay for your attorney's services. Usually the attorney is paid a percentage of the financial award, if there is one. The statute of limitations (time limits) for filing a civil suit are also different than in a criminal case. You should ask a lawyer about these time limits.

If the criminal case is still going on when you are thinking about filing a civil lawsuit, you should first ask the prosecutor how it may impact or interfere with the criminal case. It is also important to remember that the emotional impact of a civil trial can be just as stressful as a criminal case. You might want to get additional support during this process from a rape crisis program.

Victims' rights

As a victim of crime, you have certain legal rights when you receive care or go through the criminal justice system. You may want to check with your state attorney general's office or a victim-witness program to find out more about your rights as a victim of crime.

Here are the rights that some states have for crime victims:

- The right to receive information about the investigation and the case status.
- The right to have an advocate or support person present during all interviews, hearings and exams (except in the grand jury hearing) or to appoint a representative if your presence is not required.
- The right to be notified of any and all hearings, including pretrial, parole and early release.

- The right to refuse a polygraph or voice stress test.
- The right to notification regarding an offender's arrest or release.
- The right to be free of harassment or intimidation.
- The right to participate meaningfully in the criminal justice process, to talk with the prosecution and to provide a victim impact statement.
- The right to compensation for economic losses resulting from the crime (e.g., medical or counseling expenses).

In addition to your legal rights, rape victims deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect as any other victim of crime.

(The following is from the YWCA Rape Crisis Program of Summit County, Ohio and is used here with their permission.)

Rights of dignity for survivors of rape and sexual assault:

- To be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of race, age, sex or class or sexual orientation, disability or religion.

- To be treated with as much credibility as victims of other crimes.
- To be treated with gentleness and sensitivity.
- To obtain support during and after all proceedings.
- To be made aware of all options available, legally and medically.
- To react to the crime in their own style, whether or not it fits with the reactions expected by the community (or others).
- To recover from the victimization at their own pace and not one imposed by society (or others).

In addition to your legal rights, rape victims deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect as any other victim of crime.

If it has been awhile since the sexual assault

Information for survivors and their family members

Whether it has been weeks, months or years since the sexual assault, recovery issues can be similar among rape survivors. Likewise, if your loved ones know about the assault, it has probably affected them too. It can be difficult for the people who care about you to know that you are hurting. Remember, your healing and recovery should be at your own pace. Trust your instincts about what is best for you. If it becomes too difficult or the reactions don't go away, you may want to consider going to a counselor. Counseling or a support group can help you (and your loved ones) learn ways to cope and move forward.

The following section provides a summary of some of the common concerns that rape survivors may have in their recovery. Some people experience reactions right after the trauma, whereas others may not have reactions until much later, if at all. Although some of these concerns were addressed earlier in the booklet, they are also important if you are coping with a sexual assault that happened awhile ago.

Emotional recovery and other common concerns

■ **Physical concerns:** Your body could respond to the continued emotional stress with physical symptoms. You might have sleeping difficulties, headaches, stomach distress, or other illnesses. Changes in sleeping patterns are one of the most common after-effects of trauma. These reactions generally do not last long. However, some survivors do have continued nightmares or other physical symptoms. If these physical symptoms don't go away, you should seek medical attention.

■ **Psychological/emotional concerns:** The psychological (mental) impact of a sexual assault can have short term or long term effects. Initial reactions might include: shock, disbelief or confusion. After days or maybe a few weeks, most rape victims make efforts to get on with their lives. Your body and your mind are trying to recover from the crisis as soon as possible. However, some symptoms come back weeks or months later. These responses might include: mood swings, irritability, crying spells, depressed mood or difficulty making decisions. This delayed response is not uncommon among rape survivors.

Remember, your healing and recovery should be at your own pace.

One of the ways that your mind takes care of you is to allow you to move on with life (job, family, household). Yet, while you are trying to “move on” you might come across some reminders of the trauma (situations, smells, familiar sounds). *These “triggers” can remind you of the rape and can cause you to experience some emotional distress. This can happen even if the assault was months or years ago. This is a*

common reaction for survivors of rape or other trauma. The extent of the distress can vary from a mild, uncomfortable memory, a flashback, or a physical reaction of anxiety or panic. A common example is the one-year anniversary date of the assault. This can be a painful reminder of the trauma. Some people will experience only mild distress when reminded of the rape. Others may have more distressing responses to the triggers. Most rape survivors will learn how to recognize and cope with their “triggers” over time.

■ **Long-term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder:** Some rape victims experience more distress after a trauma — sometimes months or years later. Their responses could include: preoccupation with the trauma; unwanted, intrusive, thoughts or feelings about the trauma; flashbacks; repeated nightmares; efforts to avoid any reminder of the trauma; continued sleeping difficulties; difficulty concentrating; thinking that their future will be cut short; or feeling numb or detached. These are also some of the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD can affect people who have experienced a life-threatening trauma, such as rape or war. Some rape survivors may develop a

shorter form of PTSD — Acute Stress Disorder. *Counseling or medication from a mental health professional can help in treating these issues.*

■ **Depression:** Another common emotional response to rape trauma is depression. Depression can be experienced in many ways. It can be mild and short term or the depression may last longer with thoughts about suicide. Some of the symptoms of depression include: sadness, tearfulness, decreased motivation, sleeping disturbances, changes in appetite, decreased socialization, withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, decreased sexual desire and decreased energy. Some people also experience thoughts about suicide when their depression is more severe. If you have a depression that does not go away or if you have thoughts about suicide, please contact a mental health professional for a consultation, counseling or possibly medication. Good mental health care can make all the difference in your life.

■ **Relationship and sexual concerns:** A sexual assault may affect your relationships with friends, family and other loved ones. Although the rape happened to you, it can also impact the people around you. They might have differ-

ent ideas of how you should respond or when you should be “over it.” You could suggest that they read this booklet so they can better understand what you are going through. Rape crisis counselors can also be of assistance to your loved ones too.

Your intimate and sexual relations may also be different after the assault. You may need time before you are ready to have sex again. Or you may not want to do certain types of sexual activity because it reminds you of the rape. Most importantly, trust your instincts about what is right for you in your recovery.

■ **Safety and trust concerns:** Many sexual assault survivors have concerns about safety or trust after an assault. The rape was an unexpected event that upset the balance of your life. You probably felt vulnerable with little, if any, control over what happened. You may have feared for your life if your attacker threatened you or your family. You might question your own instincts about trusting people, especially if your offender was an

Most importantly, trust your instincts about what is right for you in your recovery.

acquaintance. *Regaining a sense of safety, trusting your instincts and feeling in control of your life are all important aspects of healing and recovering from rape.* Only you can determine what you need to do to feel safe in your own home and in your life. In time, you will feel safe again.

Concerns about family and friends

If your family and friends know about the sexual assault, they might be having a difficult time too. They want to help and support you, but may not know what to do. Sometimes, friends and loved ones have different ideas about when and how you should recover.

It may be important to let your family and friends know what you are going through. For example, most sexual assault survivors experience a range of reactions and emotions including numbness, shock, fear or irritability. It is very normal to feel and remember different things on different days. For instance, one day you might want to avoid anything that reminds you of the trauma. Then, on another day you might need to talk about the assault. One day you might feel sad and withdraw from your usual activities. Then, the next

day you might feel energized or angry. You might feel you are on an emotional roller coaster at times. However, your feelings will calm down and you can feel happy again. Your ups and downs are a normal part of dealing with the rape. It can be easier for your family or friends to support you if they know what to expect.

Be prepared for your family and friends to react in different ways. Some loved ones could try to tell you what you should do. They might try to take charge for you. Some may tell you to try to forget what happened and move on with your life. Others might blame you in some way. Or, they might be angry with the person who hurt you and want to get back at the perpetrator.

Other loved ones may not know what to say, so they may avoid talking about it

Your ups and downs are a normal part of dealing with the rape.

or avoid you. You might have to tell your family and friends exactly what you need and want from them.

It can be hard to talk to family and friends about such a violating experience. You may feel embarrassed or ashamed. You do not have to

tell them the details of what happened if you do not want to tell them. It's okay if you do not feel comfortable talking to family and friends about the sexual assault. Trust your instincts. Talking with a rape crisis counselor may be another option for you or your family and friends. ***Most importantly, take the time you need to think about your choices. Then you can decide what is best for you and your future.***

Where to go for help, more information and additional support

Whether it's been days, months or years since your sexual assault, you do not have to deal with this alone. There are many resources available if you need more information, have a question or want to pursue counseling. Most larger communities have rape crisis programs. These programs often have free 24-hour crisis counseling. They may also give support at the hospital, police department or courtroom. Some prosecutor's offices and court programs also have victim-witness advocates. They are available to assist you with the criminal justice process. If you are a college student, most universities have a counseling service with staff who are knowledgeable about the special issues of sexual assault among college students.

*If you have other special needs or concerns, call your local rape crisis program or the RAINN line for more specific information. **The RAINN line (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network)** is*

a national resource that connects callers to the nearest rape crisis center in their area. The toll-free number is 1-800-656-HOPE (4673); the web page is <http://www.rainn.org>.

Other available services for rape survivors include: confidential 24-hour crisis lines, local community mental health centers, or therapists in private practice who work with rape survivors. The choice of whom to call and when to call is up to you.

Many rape survivors do not get assistance immediately after the rape. Some will rely on a friend or family member for help. Other women and men have found that the support of a rape crisis counselor can be very helpful. Wherever you are, support is available if you need it. *It is never too late to get help. It can make all the difference in your recovery.*

If you cannot find a resource in your area, the following national and state agencies may be able to link you to a program in or near your community. You do not have to give your name or address to get help from any of these resources. You can contact them in privacy and at a time that is best for you. ***The next step is up to you.***

National resources

Contact these agencies for general information about sexual assault or domestic violence or to find a crisis helpline or counseling program nearest to you.

- **National Center for Victims of Crime:** 1-800-FYI-CALL; TTY 1-800-211-7996. Internet web page: <http://www.ncvc.org>
- **National Crime Victim Bar Association** (attorneys in civil cases): 1-703-276-0960. Internet web page: <http://www.victimbar.org>
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-SAFE (7233); TDD 1-800-787-3224. Internet web page: <http://www.ndvh.org>
- **National Sexual Violence Resource Center:** 1-877-739-3895. Internet web page: <http://www.nsvrc.org>
- **Office of Justice Programs, Violence Against Women Office:** Internet web page: <http://www.ojp.nsdoj.gov/vawo/>
- **RAINN line (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network):** 1-800-656-HOPE (4673). Internet web page: <http://www.rainn.org>
- **Service Dogs for Victims:** Internet page: <http://www.dogsaver.org/sdva.index.htm>

- **Women with Disabilities Resource Center:**
1-800-994-9662; 1-888-220-5446 TTY. Internet
web page:
<http://www.4woman.gov/wwd/visual.htm>

***U.S. Territories and States: Crime
Victims' Compensation Programs***

Call for information about receiving economic compensation for losses resulting from the crime. Costs which may be reimbursed depending on your state's program include: medical bills; counseling bills; transportation and mileage expenses to court, medical or therapy appointments; time missed from work; daycare expenses in order to go to court; physical therapy; prescriptions and numerous other expenses. State compensation programs are funded by fines from convicted offenders through court costs. These benefits are available to sexual assault victims who have reported the crime to law enforcement. (Requirements and benefits do vary from state to state.)

***U.S. Territories and States:
Sexual Assault Coalitions***

Call for information about state laws, local resources and links to community rape crisis programs. *Please note, these numbers do change over time. If the number has changed since publication, check with directory assistance.*

State Coalition	Victims' Compensation	Toll-free Victims' Compensation
Alabama		
334-264-0123	334-242-4007	800-541-9388
Alaska		
907-586-3650	907-465-3040	800-764-3040
Arizona		
602-258-1195	602-230-0252	no toll-free
Arkansas		
501-661-7975	501-682-1323	800-448-3014
California		
916-446-2520	916-323-3432	800-777-9229
Colorado		
303-861-7033	303-239-4402	888-282-1080
Connecticut		
860-282-9881	860-747-4501	888-286-7347
Delaware		
302-761-9800	302-995-8383	800-464-4357

Where to Go for Help, Information and Support

State Coalition	Victims' Compensation	Toll-free Victims' Compensation
Florida		
850-297-2000	850-414-3300	800-226-6667
Georgia		
404-659-6482	404-559-4949	800-546-3346
Hawaii		
808-733-9038	808-587-1143	no toll-free
Idaho		
208-384-0419	208-334-6070	800-950-2110
Illinois		
217-753-4117	312-814-2581	800-228-3368
Indiana		
317-568-4001	317-232-7103	800-353-1484
Iowa		
515-244-7424	515-281-5044	800-373-5044
Kansas		
785-232-9784	785-296-2359	no toll-free
Kentucky		
502-226-2704	502-573-2290	800-469-2120
Louisiana		
504-747-8815	225-925-7748	888-6victim
Maine		
207-626-0034	207-624-7882	800-903-7882
Maryland		
410-974-4507	410-339-5000	888-679-9347

Coping with Sexual Assault

State Coalition	Victims' Compensation	Toll-free Victims' Compensation
Massachusetts		
617-248-0922	617-727-2200, x2908	no toll-free
Michigan		
517-347-7000	517-373-7373	no toll-free
Minnesota		
612-313-2797	651-282-6256	888-622-8799
Mississippi		
601-987-9011	601-359-6766	800-829-6766
Missouri		
573-636-8776	573-526-6006	800-347-6881
Montana		
406-443-7794	406-444-3653	800-498-6455
Nebraska		
402-476-6256	402-471-2828	800-944-6282
Nevada		
775-687-6944	702-486-2740	Las Vegas
	775-688-2900	Reno
New Hampshire		
603-224-8893	603-271-1284	800-300-4500
New Jersey		
609-584-8107	973-648-2107	800-242-0804
New Mexico		
505-883-8020	505-841-9432	800-306-6262
New York		
212-577-7777	718-923-4325	800-579-9541

Where to Go for Help, Information and Support

State Coalition	Victims' Compensation	Toll-free Victims' Compensation
North Carolina		
919-676-7611	919-733-7974	800-826-6200
North Dakota		
701-255-6240	701-328-6195	800-445-2322
Ohio		
614-268-3322	614-466-6480	800-582-2877
Oklahoma		
405-848-1815	405-264-5006	800-745-6098
Oregon		
503-365-9644	503-378-5348	victims call collect
Pennsylvania		
800-692-7445	717-783-5153	800-233-2339
Puerto Rico		
787-756-0910	787-724-0794	no toll-free
Rhode Island		
401-421-4100	401-222-2287	no toll-free
South Carolina		
803-256-2900	803-734-1900	800-220-5370
South Dakota		
605-964-7233	605-773-6317	800-696-9476
Tennessee		
615-386-9406	615-741-2734	no toll-free
Texas		
512-474-8165	510-936-1200	800-983-9933

Coping with Sexual Assault

State Coalition	Victims' Compensation	Toll-free Victims' Compensation
Utah		
801-322-1500	801-238-2360	no toll-free
Vermont		
802-223-1302	802-241-1250	800-750-1213
	800-241-1258 TTY	800-845-4874 TTD
Virgin Islands		
340-773-9272	340-774-1166, x4104	no toll-free
Virginia		
804-979-9002	804-378-3434	800-552-4007
Washington		
360-754-7583	360-902-5355	800-762-3716
Washington D.C.		
202-232-0789	202-879-4216	no toll-free
West Virginia		
304-366-9500	304-347-4850	877-562-6878
Wisconsin		
608-257-1516	608-266-6470	800-446-6564
Wyoming		
307-235-2814	307-777-7200	888-996-8816

Note: These numbers could change over time. Check with directory assistance if the number has changed.

Definitions of common terms

- **Advocate/advocacy:** An advocate provides support and assistance to victims and their family, with regard to the welfare and rights of the victim.

- **Arraignment:** A brief hearing before a judge when the accused is advised of the legal charges and must respond as guilty, not guilty or no contest.

- **Bail:** The judge determines an amount of money that the accused can pay instead of waiting in jail before trial. The money is returned if the accused appears in court.

- **Crime Victims' Compensation Program:** Programs offered in most states to help crime victims receive reimbursement for medical, counseling, funeral and other

expenses or economic losses related to the crime. Applications for compensation must be filed in the victim's state and must meet certain eligibility requirements.

- **Defendant:** The person who is accused of the crime and is facing prosecution.

- **District attorney, state's attorney or prosecutor:** An attorney (and a public official) who is designated to represent and prosecute the criminal case in a court of law.

- **Felony:** Crimes of a more serious nature with higher penalties.

- **Grand jury:** A small jury of men and women who hear the complaints, accusations and prosecution's evidence in criminal cases and decide whether there is sufficient evidence for the accused to go to trial.

- **Misdemeanor:** Crimes of a less serious charge than a felony, usually resulting in minor penalties.

- **Polygraph/voice stress tests:** Tests which are sometimes administered to the accused

or the victim by law enforcement as an investigative tool to reportedly measure a person's truthfulness in response to specific questions. The tests, which are voluntary and inadmissible in court, measure changes in physical responses, such as: breathing, blood pressure, heart rate and sweating.

- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** A psychological diagnosis to describe a set of specific anxiety-related symptoms that may occur after someone has experienced a traumatic event.

- **Rape crisis program:** Usually a non-profit organization that offers specialized services to sexual assault victims and their family members, including: 24-hour helplines, crisis counseling, support groups, assistance regarding options in the aftermath of the crime and accompaniment to the hospital, police department or court if the victim chooses to press charges.

- **Rape kit exam:** The medical procedures usually performed at a hospital specifically for the purpose of collecting legal evidence for a possible prosecution. The rape kit is

the standard procedures, equipment and lab tests used for evidence collection.

- **Rape shield laws:** Laws that protect sexual assault victims during the trial by prohibiting the disclosure or questioning about sexual history unless it specifically relates to the case. Rape shield laws differ from state to state.

- **Rape Trauma Syndrome:** A medical term used to describe a common response pattern of many sexual assault victims following the trauma.

- **Subpoena:** A written order (often by a judge, prosecutor or another attorney) notifying you of your legal obligation to appear to testify or present evidence at a specific date and location. Ignoring a subpoena can result in legal charges.

- **Victim impact statement:** A written or oral statement from crime victims or their family indicating the emotional, physical, financial effects of the crime on their life.

☛ **Victim-Witness Program:** These programs are often run by the city, county or federal prosecutor offices or by independent, non-profit agencies. Their roles are to support and assist crime victims through the criminal justice system and to be of assistance for the prosecution of the case. Services may also include accompaniment to court and assistance with crime victim's compensation applications.

Further resources in Braille and cassette

I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women,
edited by Ellen Bass: BR06161.

Rights and Respect: What You Need to Know,
by Kathryn Gay: BR 10656.

Secret Scars: A Guide for Survivors, by
Cynthia Tower: RC 29366.

Taking Back My Life, by Nan Ziegenmeyer: RC
35796.

Voices of Rape, by Janet Bode: BR 08833.

If you would like to read more information on sexual assault in an alternative format (i.e.; Braille or cassette), contact your local talking-book library. You may contact the National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped at (202) 707-5100 to sign up for these services. The library has several books available that may be of assistance to rape survivors.

Additional resources:

Chain, Chain, Change: For Black Women Dealing with Physical and Emotional Abuse, by E. White (1985).

Getting Free: A Handbook for Women in Abusive Relationships, by G. NiCarthy (1984).

I Never Called it Rape, by R. Warshaw (1988).

If He Is Raped: A Guidebook for Partners, Spouses and Friends, by A. McEvoy and J. Brookings (1999).

If She Is Raped: A Book for Husbands, Fathers and Male Friends, by A. McEvoy and J. Brookings (1999).

If You Are Raped, by K.M. Johnson (1985).

Male on Male Rape: The Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame, by M. Scarce (1997).

Mejor Sola Que Mal Acompañada: Para la Mujer Golpeada / For Latina Women in an Abusive Relationship, by M. Zambrano (1985).

Rape in Marriage, by D. Russell (1982).

Recovery: How to Survive a Sexual Assault: for Women, Men, Teenagers and Their Friends and Families, by H. Benedict and S. Brison (1994).

Sexual Healing Journey, The: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse, by W. Maltz (1981).

Victims No Longer, by M. Lew (1994).

Acknowledgments

A special thanks to the following organizations that shared their expertise and materials in developing this booklet:

☞ National Organizations

National Alliance of Sexual Assault Coalitions
National Center for Victims of Crime
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Sexual Violence Resource Center
National Training Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

☞ State Coalitions

Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence
Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Jane Doe, Inc., Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault
and Domestic Violence
Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition
New York Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault
Texas Association Against Sexual Assault
Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault
Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs

☞ Local Programs

Ann Arbor Mayor's Task Force on Increasing Safety for Women, MI
Assault Crisis Center of Ypsilanti, MI
Assault Victim Services, San Angelo, TX
Aurora Healthcare, Milwaukee, WI
Family Violence & Sexual Assault Prevention Center, Corpus Christi, TX
HODAC's Victim Resource Center, Warner Robins, GA
Santa Monica Rape Treatment Center, Santa Monica, CA
YWCA of New Orleans, LA
YWCA Rape Crisis Center of Akron, OH
YWCA of South Chicago, IL