

SEXUAL ASSAULT INFORMATION FOR ADULT SURVIVORS

WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

Sexual assault is defined in several ways. Generally, sexual assault is any unwanted, non-consensual sexual contact against any individual by another. It often includes acts involving manipulation, physical force or coercion. Sexual assault is never the victim's fault.

THE EFFECTS

As a survivor of sexual assault, you may feel one or more of the following emotional reactions:

- You may believe you allowed the sexual assault to happen
- You may feel guilty because you think you did not do enough to fight off your attacker
- You may feel angry and take it out on those you love
- You may feel afraid that your attacker will come back
- You may feel ashamed of what has happened to you
- You may feel unclean, even after bathing

These feelings may change your behavior:

- You may not be able to sleep or you may have terrible nightmares
- You may find your eating habits changing
- You may not want to be left alone, or you may want to be left alone
- You may not be able to resume your normal sexual relationship with the one you love
- You may have trouble concentrating and making decisions

Each of us copes with crisis in our own unique way. It's okay to react in whatever way you are reacting. It's okay to cry. It's also okay not to cry. Remember, you are having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.

REPORTING THE ASSAULT AND EVIDENCE COLLECTION

Do I have to report the assault?

It is up to you to decide what is right for you. Whether you make a report or not, you are eligible to receive the free and confidential services of your local sexual assault program. If you are not sure about reporting the assault, the local program can give you more information about the reporting process to help you make that decision.

If you go to the hospital to receive medical attention after being sexually assaulted, you should know that the hospital is required to report the crime to law enforcement officials. If you do not want to make a report, you may tell the responding officer at that time and still receive the medical treatment you need.

Why should I report the sexual assault?

After the sexual assault you may be embarrassed or scared; feeling this way is completely normal. These feelings may prevent you from wanting to report the assault right away. However, there are benefits to reporting the assault as soon as you can, such as receiving a sexual assault exam and being eligible for crime victim's compensation.



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What happens if I choose to make a report?

A law enforcement officer will take your statement and ask you questions about what happened. This starts the investigation process. The police will also refer you to a sexual assault program for assistance.

If I make a report, will the offender be arrested?

If a suspect can be identified, the police will submit your statement and a report of the offense to the District or County Attorney, who makes the determination if an arrest warrant will be issued. Once the suspect is arrested, the prosecutor's office will file formal charges as soon as possible. After the arrest, the suspect may be released from jail on bond. If the grand jury indicts the suspect, the case will be set for trial. For more information on the legal system in your area, contact the detective assigned to your case, the prosecutor's office, or your local sexual assault program. If you receive threats of further harm after the sexual assault, you may ask a judge for a protective order for yourself and other members of your family or household. The protective order will be in effect for two years, and violation of the order is a Class A misdemeanor.

Do I need medical attention?

It is very important to seek immediate medical care following a sexual assault to get treatment for any injuries you may have. Not all injuries from the sexual assault will be instantly apparent. You can also ask the nurse or doctor about the possibility of pregnancy or contracting sexually transmitted diseases as a result of the sexual assault, and receive appropriate care.

Is a sexual assault exam the same as medical treatment?

A sexual assault examination is not medical treatment, but rather a part of the criminal investigation. A sexual assault exam is performed by medical personnel to collect and preserve evidence following a sexual assault. This is important because certain types of evidence that may be present immediately after the attack will disappear as time passes. Getting a sexual assault exam as soon as you can will increase the chances of collecting this evidence. Your immediate medical needs and referrals for follow-up care will also be addressed at the time of your visit to the hospital.

THE PROCESS OF HEALING

Healing from a sexual assault is personal and varies from survivor to survivor. Sometimes the first reactions are shock, disbelief and fear. You may respond with crying, shaking and agitation or with a calm and controlled outward appearance. You may not be able to continue your everyday activities, including eating and sleeping. You may feel the need to change your address, job or lifestyle in order to gain a sense of security.

Healing is not always a steady process. You may experience ups and downs after the sexual assault. You may start blaming yourself for sliding backward or for not getting over it as quickly as you or others think you should. Be patient with yourself. These feelings are normal. Everyone progresses through the process of healing at her or his own pace.

Your local sexual assault program can provide you with support and advocacy during the healing process. These programs provide free and confidential services to survivors of sexual assault all across Texas. Sexual assault programs can help by providing an advocate to go with you to the emergency room after the sexual assault and to any appointments related to the assault. These include appointments with law enforcement, the court system and medical facilities. Many sexual assault programs also offer counseling and support groups and run 24-hour crisis hotlines whose staff and volunteers are trained and prepared to listen and support you.

Family and friends in your immediate support system may also experience some of the same feelings you are having. It is important that they also participate in the healing process by talking about their feelings and fears with someone knowledgeable about sexual assault. They are also eligible to receive services from your local sexual assault program.

PHONE NUMBERS TO REMEMBER

Hospital name: _____

Hospital address: _____

Hospital phone #: _____

Sexual Assault Medical Examiner/SANE: _____

Law Enforcement Agency: _____

Case #: _____

Law Enforcement phone #: _____

Call (800) 656-HOPE (4677) to find the sexual assault program closest to you.

CONTACT INFORMATION

CRIME VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION

The Crime Victim Services Division consists of four sections: the Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services Program, the Grant and Contract Management Section, the Statewide Automated Victim Notification Program and the Crime Victims' Compensation Program.

BUY US MAIL

Sexual Assault Prevention & Crisis Services

P.O. Box 12548 MC 011-1
Austin, Texas 78711-2548

BY TELEPHONE

(800) 983-9933 Statewide
(512) 936-1270 in Austin
(512) 936-1650 Fax

ON THE INTERNET

www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/sapcs.shtml

CRIME VICTIMS' COMPENSATION

If you are a victim of sexual assault, you may be eligible for reimbursement of certain out-of-pocket expenses related to the crime. Please check our Web site or call for information and an application form.

BUY US MAIL

Office of the Attorney General
P.O. Box 12198
Austin, Texas 78711-2198

BY TELEPHONE

(800) 983-9933 Statewide
(512) 936-1200 in Austin
(512) 936-1800 Fax

ON THE INTERNET

www.oag.state.tx.us