

IF YOU WERE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

If you are a survivor of sexual assault you may be facing many different feelings from fear, guilt, anger, confusion, sadness, shock and outrage. All of your feelings are valid. You did not deserve this and it is not your fault. You have many options and resources available to help you. Below are some options for you to consider.

Your Immediate Safety

If you have recently been assaulted, your safety must come first. Please call 911 or your Campus Police if you are in immediate danger. Also, seek medical care if you are injured. The Campus Police, Judicial Affairs Office or Student Affairs Office can help you with a safety plan if the offender is someone who lives close to you, works with you, or who is in any of your classes.

Who to Contact

There are many places to turn to for help. Most campuses offer assistance for survivors of sexual assault through the Student Counseling Center, Student Health Center, Women's Center, Student Affairs Office, Campus Police, and other campus departments. Many college campuses also have advocates who provide confidential, free services for students who are sexually assaulted. An advocate can share with you the campus and community resources available to you and provide information about your rights and options while helping you understand and think through various courses of action.

If you do not want to receive services on your campus, you can get in touch with resources in the community. Most rape crisis centers offer FREE services. You can contact RAINN, a national victim assistance organization at 1-800-656-HOPE and they will connect you to a rape crisis center in your area. If you want

to remain anonymous, you can call a hotline and talk with a counselor without giving your name. A call to a hotline is anonymous as long as you do not tell the counselor or advocate your name or your phone number.

Emotional Support

Whether the assault occurred today or a long time ago, it's never too late to get help. Survivors of sexual assault are often confused about what to do next. You may be afraid to call or tell someone because you are worried they won't believe you or you are ashamed, embarrassed of what people may think of you or feel responsible. If you have been sexually assaulted it is important to remember that it is not your fault and that you have the right to receive assistance from people who will believe you and help you in your recovery.

You do not have to go through this alone. Tell someone. Contact a friend or family member that you trust. Having someone there to listen to whatever you're ready or willing to share is extremely important in the recovery process. For professional and confidential help and support, contact your campus Counseling Center, Student Health Center, Women's Center or Community Rape Crisis Center. Any of these departments or organizations can get you in touch with an advocate. Joining a support group is also an option. Sometimes talking with someone who has had a similar experience can be both helpful and comforting.

Take care of yourself and follow your own lead. As a survivor of sexual assault it's important to do whatever makes you feel most comfortable and do all you can to make yourself feel whole again. This will take time. Healing from sexual assault is a journey. Give yourself the time you need.

Medical Care

Get medical attention whether you choose to report the incident to the police or not, even if you feel that you

have not been seriously injured. A medical exam can determine the risks of STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and/ or pregnancy and medical professionals can provide information on ways to deal with these risks.

Specialized medical care services may be available on your campus in the Student Health Center or in the community at a hospital or a specialized clinic. Many campus Student Health Centers do not provide sexual assault examinations, but they will refer you to an appropriate resource.

To preserve forensic evidence, ask the hospital to conduct a rape kit exam. If you suspect you may have been drugged, ask that a urine sample be collected. The sample will need to be analyzed later on by a forensic lab. To preserve evidence, do not change clothes, bathe, brush your teeth, or comb your hair. Physical evidence should be collected within 72 hours of the assault, and only at a certified medical facility.

Seeking medical attention for your personal safety by no means commits you to taking legal action it simply protects you no matter what choices you make.

Legal Options

For a survivor, this can sometimes be the scariest part. You do have rights and legal options and there are resources available to help you through this process.

If you choose to pursue campus charges you can report the assault to campus officials and disciplinary action will be enforced by the college or university. If you choose to pursue criminal charges you can report the assault to the police to begin to pursue criminal charges against the assailant.

For additional information about your options and to help you understand the process, you can talk with a campus advocate, a counselor, or an attorney. You can also contact a hotline or a rape crisis center on campus or in the community.