

Responding to Sexual Assault

A GUIDE FOR SSU STUDENTS
AND THEIR SUPPORTERS



Important On Campus Phone Numbers:

Crisis Advocate
707-664-2153

SSU Police Services
707-664-4444

Campus Safety Escorts (Police Services)
707-664-4444

Student Health Center
707-664-2921

Counseling & Psychological Services
707-664-2153

Joyce Suzuki, Managing Director of Employee Relations and Compliance (Title IX Coordinator)
707-664-4470

Sonoma State University will not tolerate sexual assault in any form, including acquaintance rape. Where there is probable cause to believe that a student, faculty, or staff member has violated the University's regulations prohibiting sexual assault, and with the consent of the victim, the University will actively pursue disciplinary action through its own channels as well as appropriate legal channels. Even if criminal justice authorities choose not to prosecute, the University can pursue disciplinary action.

For more information please refer to Sonoma State University's Sexual Assault Policy:

<http://www.sonoma.edu/crvd/sexassault.html>

Material in this guidebook adapted and modified from the web pages of California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA).



Table of Contents

Understanding Sexual Assault

What is sexual assault?	4
What is consent?	5
Sexual assault can affect many lives in many different ways	5
Sexual assaults occur in many different situations	5

Support Is Available

What to do if you've been assaulted	6
---	---

Common Reactions to Sexual Assault

Additional concerns for college student survivors	10
---	----

Sexual Assault Survivor Rights

12

Taking Care of Yourself

13

Preventing Sexual Violence

14

Supporting Survivors of Sexual Assault

18

Helpful responses	18
-------------------------	----

Unhelpful responses	19
---------------------------	----

Debunking The Sexual Assault Myths

20

More Information & Support

22



UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault affects not only the victim, but also touches family, friends, service providers, and the fabric of our society. Chances are you are reading this because you or someone you care about has been sexually assaulted. This booklet is for any SSU student who has ever been the victim of sexual assault. It is also a useful resource for family and friends to learn more about supporting those they care about.

What is Sexual Assault?

When most of us hear the words sexual assault, we think of rape. However, rape is not the only type of sexual assault. These words can be used interchangeably, but they are defined differently by law. Sexual assaults generally include any type of sexual conduct or sexual contact that is not consensual and is forced, coerced or when the victim could not give consent (see “What is Consent?” for more information).

Sexual assault occurs anytime a person is forced into a sexual act. However, force is not just physical violence. Force can happen in many different ways, such as: verbal threats, overpowering the person, using a weapon, drugging the person, abusing their authority, or taking advantage of someone or their situation.

These different types of force can happen in any relationship. It can happen with friends, family, co-workers, or an intimate partner. It can also happen between doctors and patients, students and teachers, clergy and parishioners, parents and their children and between strangers. However, most sexual assaults occur between people who know each other – often by someone the victim trusted.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The majority of sexual assaults among college students are by someone known to the victim and someone the victim trusted. In addition, alcohol and drugs are involved in most sexual assaults of University students – often when the victim is too intoxicated to make a reasonable decision about sex (e.g. the victim is in a black out).



Keep in Mind

- ◆ Sexual assault is any sexual contact without consent and may include touching of intimate body areas, intercourse or penetration.
- ◆ A violation of a person's physical and emotional well-being.
- ◆ A crime prosecutable under California law.
- ◆ An act of power and control.
- ◆ Sexual assault is NOT an expression of love, passion, or sexual desire.

What is Consent?

- ◆ Cooperation in act and attitude. The person must say yes with words and actions. In California, the absence of "no" is not consent.
- ◆ Exercise of free will. Consent must be given without coercion or force.
- ◆ Knowledge of what is happening. If someone is under the influence of alcohol or drugs to the extent they cannot make decisions, they CANNOT give consent. If someone is asleep or unconscious, they CANNOT give consent.
- ◆ Once consensual sexual activity starts, consent CAN still be withdrawn at any point in the process.
- ◆ Submission because of fear is NOT consent.

Sexual Assault Can Affect Many Lives in Many Different Ways

Sexual assault 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, sexual assault is a personal violation.

Sexual Assaults Occur In Many Different Situations

No matter what the situation or circumstance, it is never the victim's fault that the assault occurred. For example: If you were 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 give anyone the right to violate you. However, many sexual assault victims do blame themselves for different reasons. It is important to remember, just like any other crime, the offender is responsible and to blame. The victim did not cause this to happen. No one is sexually assaulted because of how they looked or acted.



SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

What to Do If You've Been Assaulted

If you are a victim of sexual assault, you have many options and resources available to you. Most importantly, know that what happened is not your fault.

- Get to a safe place as soon as possible. Your immediate safety is first.
 - Call a friend or family member; someone you trust, for support.
 - Call the Police. Call 911 from anywhere on campus or 707-664-4444 to report crimes to SSU Police at any time. SSU Police are open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. They are located in Verdote Village. Reporting the assault to the police is a matter of choice – it's all up to you!
- ⇒ Filing a Police report does not require you to seek prosecution unless you choose to.
- ⇒ SSU Police will also help facilitate contact with the appropriate law enforcement agency if the crime occurred off campus.
- ⇒ You can choose how much you want to cooperate with law enforcement throughout the entire process. See "Reasons to report the assault to the police."
- ⇒ If you are undecided about pressing charges, please consider having a special forensic medical examination done to collect evidence (evidence should be collected within 72 hours) and receive the medical attention you deserve. These kinds of exams are only done at specially certified facility in each local area. The Crisis Advocate and Police can assist you in arranging for a forensic sexual assault exam at the proper location. Preserve evidence for this kind of exam. Avoid showering, bathing, or trying to clean things up until evidence has been collected.
- ⇒ If you are undecided about going to the police right away, write down everything you can remember about what happened and save it in case you change your mind later.



⇒ If you wish to or are undecided about pressing charges, preserve as much evidence as possible by following these guidelines:

DO NOT bathe

DO NOT brush your teeth, smoke, eat or drink

DO NOT change your clothes (do take a change of clothes with you if you decide go to the hospital)

NO NOT erase voicemails, emails, texts or other types of communication between you and your attacker.

- **GET IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION.** Get confidential medical care & support from licensed medical professionals as soon as possible. This can be before, after, or while still uncertain about contacting Police or getting an evidentiary forensic sexual assault exam.

⇒ You may have internal and/or external injuries requiring medical care.

⇒ It is best to explore options for the evaluation and treatment of sexually transmitted infections/disease (STI/STD) and/or pregnancy prevention.

⇒ Emergency contraception is available. Following unprotected intercourse, women wishing to reduce the risk of pregnancy should go to the Student Health Center, another medical provider, or participating California pharmacy as soon as possible & within 72 hours. (Taking Emergency Contraceptive Pills may help prevent pregnancy if taken up to 5 days after unprotected intercourse, but ASAP is more effective) Get more information at 707 664-2921 or <http://ec.princeton.edu/>

- Contact the SSU Crisis Advocate at 707-664-2153 for confidential support. This Crisis Advocate will explain options, provide assistance, advocacy, and information about the numerous on and off campus support resources available.



SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

Reasons to report the assault to the police:

- Reporting within 72 hours of the assault will allow for valuable evidence to be collected. Should your case be prosecuted, this increases the chances of apprehending the suspect and successfully prosecuting.

- Reporting is empowering; it gives survivors a chance to discuss what has happened. Reporting gives survivors back some of their personal control.

- Reporting the crime will ensure that medical expenses, including a forensic medical exam and costs for emergency care, may be paid by public compensation funds.

- Reporting and prosecuting are essential to sexual assault prevention and the protection of other potential victims by stopping or deterring repeat offenders.

- Reporting attests to the fact that sexual assault really happens and that this crime will not be suffered in silence.

- Reporting can help support the case of a survivor who had previously reported a crime committed by your own attacker. The information you provide might be just enough to help them close their case and get justice.

For on-campus support:

⇒ Contact the Crisis Advocate at 707-664-2153.

⇒ Call Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 707-664-2153 to speak confidentially to a psychologist or stop by Stevenson Hall # 1088.

⇒ Visit the Student Health Center or call 707-664-2921 to speak to a nurse or doctor.

⇒ Contact Police Services by calling 707-664-4444.



COMMON REACTIONS TO SEXUAL ASSAULT

An experience of sexual violence is a traumatic event and each person responds to trauma differently. A survivor of sexual violence may experience confusing emotions in response to what happened or, may find that she/he/ really doesn't feel anything at all. It is important to remember that there is no "right" way to respond. Reactions to an assault may cover a wide range of physical and emotional symptoms, even some that may not seem to result directly from the attack. Learning to recognize these responses will help you gain control of them. You may experience these symptoms immediately or later in your life, or you may never experience any of them. Every survivor responds differently. The following is only a partial list of some common survivors' reactions to sexual violence:

- ◆ **Emotional Shock:** I feel so numb. Why am I so calm? Why can't I cry?
- ◆ **Disbelief:** Did it really happen? Why me? Maybe I just made it up.
- ◆ **Embarrassment:** What will people think? I can't tell my family or friends.
- ◆ **Shame:** I feel so dirty, like there is something wrong with me. I want to wash my hands or shower all the time.
- ◆ **Guilt:** I feel as if it's my fault, or I did something to make this happen.
- ◆ **Depression:** How am I going to get through this semester? I'm so tired. I feel so helpless. Maybe I'd be better off dead.
- ◆ **Powerlessness:** Will I ever feel in control again?
- ◆ **Disorientation:** I don't even know what day it is, or what class I'm supposed to be in. I can't remember my appointments. I keep forgetting things.
- ◆ **Triggers:** I keep having flashbacks. I'm still re-living it. I see his/her face all the time. Every time I see/hear _____, I feel like it's happening all over again.
- ◆ **Denial:** It wasn't really a "rape."
- ◆ **Fear:** I'm scared of everything. What if I'm pregnant? Could I get an STI, or even AIDS? How can I ever feel safe again? Do people realize there's anything wrong? I can't sleep because I know I'll have nightmares. I'm afraid I'm going crazy. I'm afraid to go outside. I'm afraid to be alone.
- ◆ **Anxiety:** I'm having panic attacks. I can't breathe! I just can't stop shaking. I can't sit still in class anymore. I feel overwhelmed.
- ◆ **Anger:** I want to kill the person who attacked me! How could my friends not notice I was being taken to another room?
- ◆ **Physical Stress:** My stomach (or head or back) aches all the time. I feel jittery and never feel like eating.



ADDITIONAL CONCERNS FOR COLLEGE STUDENT SURVIVORS

What if I see the person who assaulted me on campus or what if we are in a class together?

Chances are, if you are both on the same campus, you probably will see them again. Remember, you did nothing wrong and you have every right to be there. Walk with your head held high - without any shame or embarrassment. They are the only one that should be afraid to see you. If you see them, go on with your business. Only you can decide if it's safe for you to talk to them, but be prepared that they may not give you the response you need. If it is uncomfortable to be in the same class, there are options you can pursue, please contact the Crisis Advocate at 707-664-2153.

We have mutual friends and belong to the same groups. Some people believe them and some believe me. Others try to be in the middle:

This is common because acquaintance sexual assault often involves two people who have come to know each other (often through friends or social groups.) People will take sides. Usually, those who were closer to the perpetrator before will remain aligned with them. Likewise, your true friends will support you. For those who try to remain 'neutral' it can cause greater conflict because you may wonder if they believe you. Surround yourself with people who support, respect, and believe you. Trust your instincts about staying in the same social groups with the person who sexually assaulted you. It is your choice. Remember, you did nothing wrong - they did.

I'm not sure I'm ready to start dating again. I don't know if I can trust other people to not move too fast or try to hurt me in the same way:

Many survivors have this concern. They trusted their instincts and the person who hurt them. They never expected it to happen and now they wonder if it can happen again. Take your time with dating. Start in social situations with others and slowly move toward other situations that feel safe and comfortable. For example, go on double dates or daytime dates to public places. At first, you may want to avoid situations where you will feel isolated or with little control (e.g. a person's bedroom). Spend several outings with someone before you move to more secluded, intimate settings. Then, when you're ready, be clear about your sexual limits before the date and reinforce those limits on the date.



ADDITIONAL CONCERNS FOR COLLEGE STUDENT SURVIVORS

I was drunk at the time of the assault. I don't even remember everything that happened. I'm worried about reporting since I was drinking alcohol underage.

The majority of acquaintance sexual assaults involve alcohol or other drugs. Even if you were under the influence, you did not deserve to be sexually assaulted. Most law enforcement and school authorities do not penalize victims for making a report. At SSU, you will not be penalized for underage drinking when a sexual assault has occurred. This should not get in the way of reporting a sexual assault.

Ever since this happened, it's been hard for me to go to classes. I'm worried I might fail or ruin my GPA:

It will take some time to get back to your routine and to be able to focus on your studies again. SSU offers assistance by contacting professors of students who are experiencing a crisis (without disclosing the reason for your absences or missed assignments). This can be arranged through the Crisis Advocate (707-664-2153). While you might want to notify your professors on your own, the decision to do so is up to you and you have the power to control what you would like to share. If you have missed several classes, you may want to consider a medical leave or withdraw for the term to avoid failing the classes. Please contact the Crisis Advocate (707-664-2153) for more information.

I'm not sure if I should tell my parents. I'll be going home soon for break and they will know I'm not the same:

If you tell your parents, will it be more helpful for you? Many sexual assault survivors find it hard to say the words, but they are grateful to have their parents love and support after they have told them. Others are concerned that it will hurt their parents, or they won't understand. Only you can decide if it will be better for you if they know. It may be helpful to talk with a counselor at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS 707-664-2153) about your concerns to help you with this important decision.



SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVOR RIGHTS

Sexual assault victims of campus-related sexual assault have legal rights granted by the Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights and California Education Code §67380-67385.7.

It is important to acknowledge that victims can become survivors. Part of this process is for victims/survivors to make every attempt to take control of their lives again. In order to do this, they must be certain that they are receiving the care and information to which they are entitled. By exercising their rights they are, in effect, taking charge again.

As A Survivor, You Have the Right to:

- ◆ Be believed.
- ◆ Seek and receive help.
- ◆ Courteous, efficient treatment.
- ◆ Be treated with dignity and respect, without prejudice against race, class, ability, lifestyle, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or occupation.
- ◆ Accurate information, presented in a way that you understand.
- ◆ Ask questions.
- ◆ Make your own decisions.
- ◆ Change your mind.
- ◆ Be considered a rape victim/survivor regardless of the rapist's relationship to you.
- ◆ Have a sexual assault counselor/victim advocate accompany you to medical, law enforcement and legal proceedings. (penal code 679.04).
- ◆ Have the assistance of campus personnel in obtaining and securing evidence.
- ◆ Receive current information on campus and community resources.
- ◆ Be informed of the options available through the college and legal systems.
- ◆ Be considered as credible as a person reporting any other crime.
- ◆ Be given the choice to prosecute or not to prosecute.
- ◆ Be asked only those questions which are relevant to law enforcement investigation or medical treatment.
- ◆ Be informed of the status and outcome of any student or employee disciplinary proceedings or appeal.
- ◆ Have feasible class schedule adjustments (without academic or financial penalty) as necessary to minimize the alleged assailant or those associated with the alleged assailant.



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

The aftermath of sexual violence can be emotional and difficult. It is important during this tumultuous time to make space to care for yourself. As a survivor, self-care is a key part of the healing process. Listen to your emotions, intuition, and instincts, and do not feel pressured to do anything beyond your comfort zone.

The following list includes a variety of suggestions for how survivors can take care of themselves. Many of these steps can be part of effective self-care for supporters of survivors, as well. Make a special effort to ensure that whatever you do to take care of yourself is done at your own pace and in agreement with your own unique needs.

- ◆ Identify people you trust to validate your feelings and affirm your strengths. Friends, family, or counselors can make a big difference in the healing process.
- ◆ Choose when, where, and with whom to talk about the violence, and set limits by only disclosing information that feels safe for you to reveal.
- ◆ Use stress reduction techniques, such as exercise (jogging, aerobics, walking) or relaxation (yoga, massage, music, hot baths, prayer and/or meditation).
- ◆ Try to maintain a balanced diet and sleep cycle as much as possible; avoid overusing stimulants like caffeine, sugar, and nicotine.
- ◆ Discover your playfulness and creativity. These can be helpful parts of the healing process. Find time for play or take part in a creative activity like piano, painting, gardening, handicrafts, etc..
- ◆ Allow yourself "time outs." Give yourself permission to take quiet moments to reflect, relax and rejuvenate-especially during times you feel stressed or unsafe.
- ◆ Reading can be a relaxing, healing activity. Try to find short periods of uninterrupted leisure reading time.
- ◆ Consider writing or keeping a journal as a way of expressing thoughts and feelings.



PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

When we think about alternatives to vulnerability, we must be careful not to assume that there is always something a person "could have done" to prevent an assault. This is blaming the victim. When a person is sexually assaulted, it is the assaulter who is to blame.

In addition, sexual assaults, including those committed by acquaintances, may be violent and unexpected. This means that even when a person is able to assert what s/he wants, there is no guarantee that his/her feelings will be respected.

There are no formulas that can guarantee our safety from sexual assault. In a situation that is becoming coercive or violent, the moment is often too confusing to plan an escape, and people react in various ways. Some will fight back. Others will not fight back for any number of reasons such as fear, self-blame, or not wanting to hurt someone who may be a close friend. While fighting and giving up are both extreme reactions, it is important to realize that any reaction is legitimate. Again, the burden of responsibility must be on the attacker, not the victim.

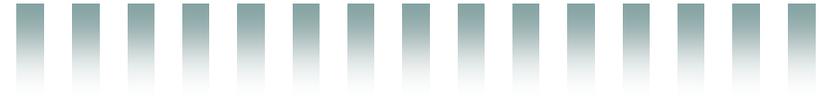
Remember that date rape is a crime. It is never acceptable to use force in sexual situations, no matter what the circumstances.



PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Be Aware

- ◆ Be an active partner in a relationship. Arranging where to meet, what to do, and when to be intimate should all be shared decisions.
- ◆ Listen carefully. Take the time to hear what the other person is saying. If you feel s/he is not being direct or is giving you a "mixed message," ask for a clarification.
- ◆ Know your sexual intentions and limits. You have the right to say "No" to any unwanted sexual contact. If you are uncertain about what you want, ask the person to respect your feelings.
- ◆ Communicate your limits firmly and directly. If you say "No," say it like you mean it. Don't give mixed messages. Back up your words with a firm tone of voice and clear body language.
- ◆ Don't assume that your date will automatically know how you feel, or will eventually "get the message" without your having to tell him or her.
- ◆ Don't fall for the common stereotype that when a person says "No" it really means "Yes." "No" means "No." If someone says "No" to sexual contact, believe it and stop.
- ◆ Remember that some people think drinking heavily, dressing provocatively, or going to a person's room indicates a willingness to have sex. Be especially careful to communicate your limits and intentions clearly in such situations.
- ◆ Be aware that having sex with someone who is mentally or physically incapable of giving consent is rape. If you have sex with someone who is drugged, intoxicated, passed out, incapable of saying "No," or unaware of what is happening, you may be guilty of sexual assault.
- ◆ Don't make assumptions about a person's behavior. Don't automatically assume that someone wants to have sex just because s/he drinks heavily, dresses provocatively, or agrees to go to your room. Don't assume that just because the other person has had sex with you previously s/he is willing to have sex with you again. Also don't assume that just because the person consents to kissing or other sexual intimacies s/he is willing to have sexual intercourse.



PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

CONTINUED

- ◆ Listen to your gut feelings. If you feel uncomfortable or think you may be at risk, leave the situation immediately and go to a safe place.
- ◆ Be especially careful in group situations. Be prepared to resist pressure from friends to participate in violent or criminal acts.
- ◆ Attend large parties with friends you can trust. Agree to "look out" for one another. Try to leave with a group, rather than alone or with someone you don't know very well.
- ◆ Don't be afraid to "make waves" if you feel threatened. If you feel you are being pressured or coerced into sexual activity against your will, don't hesitate to state your feelings and get out of the situation. Better a few minutes of social awkwardness or embarrassment than the trauma of sexual assault.

Be Active

- ◆ Request a safety escort. Safety of community members is a priority of Sonoma State University Police Services. Police Services offers safety escorts to individuals who request safety assistance as they walk to and from on-campus locations during hours of darkness. Escorts may be available during daytime hours upon special request. The safety escort service is provided by trained Police Services employees. Escort Services are free to our community members and can be arranged by calling Police Services at (707) 664-4444.
- ◆ Get involved if you believe someone is at risk. If you see a person in trouble at a party or a friend using force or pressuring another person, don't be afraid to intervene. You may save someone from the trauma of sexual assault and your friend from the ordeal of criminal prosecution.
- ◆ Confront others' rape jokes and remarks; explain to others why these jokes are not funny and the harm they can cause.
- ◆ Educate others about what rape really is. Help them clear up any misconceptions they might have.
- ◆ Ask someone who you don't recognize what they are doing in your dorm or residence, or who it is they are looking for.
- ◆ Confront potential sexual assault scenes. When you see someone verbally harassing another person, stand by to see if s/he the person being harassed needs help. If someone is hitting or holding a person against his or her will, call Police Services at (707-664-4444).

PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE CONTINUED

- ◆ Confront other people's harassment--verbal or physical. Harassment is not experienced as flattery, but as a threat.
- ◆ Educate others about what rape really is. Help them to clear up any misconceptions they might have.
- ◆ Ask someone who you don't recognize what they are doing in your dorm or residence, or who it is they are looking for.
- ◆ Confront potential rape scenes. When you see someone verbally harassing another person, stand by to see if s/he the person being harassed needs help. If someone is hitting or holding a person against his or her will, call Police Services at (707-664-4444).
- ◆ When walking in groups or even alone be conscious as you approach another person. Be aware of how afraid that person might feel, and give him or her space on the street if possible.
- ◆ Be supportive of a person's actions to control their own lives and make their own decisions. Don't be afraid to express these ideas.
- ◆ If someone you know has expressed violent feelings or demonstrated violent behavior in a particular relationship, try to help him or her find an appropriate person with whom to talk (such as a the Crisis Advocate, RLC, Counselor at CAPS, etc.).

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Your help is important to the survivor of sexual assault. It is natural for the survivor to feel a tremendous loss of power and control over life. You can emphasize that just surviving is an accomplishment, and whatever they did to survive was the right thing. It shows strength.

Helpful Responses:

- ◆ Believe the survivor
- ◆ Listen without judging; or interrupting
- ◆ Let them know the assault(s) was not their fault;
- ◆ Encourage the survivor to talk about the assault(s) with Crisis Advocate (707-664-2153), mental health professional or someone they trust.
- ◆ Let them know they did what was necessary to prevent further harm;
- ◆ Encourage the sexual assault victim to seek medical attention;
- ◆ Let them know they do not have to manage this crisis alone.
- ◆ Respect the language the student uses to identify what's happened.
- ◆ Understand that individuals from different cultural backgrounds may express or experience their reactions to an assault in different ways.
- ◆ Allow for tears and expression of feelings.
- ◆ Validate the student's experiences or reactions.
- ◆ Acknowledge courage and discomfort.
- ◆ Remind the survivor that they are not at fault.
- ◆ Help the student identify safe individuals within his/her existing support system.
- ◆ Ask what you can do to be supportive.
- ◆ Provide resources and options (See the "More Information & Support" section at the end of this Guidebook).



SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Unhelpful Responses:

- ◆ Asking “why” questions or other questions that might imply blame. (i.e. “Why didn’t you yell,” or “What were you doing there?”)
- ◆ Blaming or judging the student’s actions. (i.e. “You shouldn’t have had so much to drink”)
- ◆ Dismissing the student’s feelings or minimizing his/her experience. (i.e. “You should just forget about it”)
- ◆ Trying to “fix” the problem. (i.e. pressuring them to report and/or telling them what to do)

Above all, do no harm. Sometimes, when individuals feel overwhelmed by just having heard someone’s story, people feel “pressured” to do something. When this occurs, oftentimes people unintentionally say things that could be hurtful. You don’t have to say anything.

How to make a referral:

An important part of being helpful to a survivor of sexual assault is providing information about options and resources. You may do this by helping the student get connected with Crisis Advocate (707-664-2153).

Examples of ways to help refer a victim of sexual assault are provided below:

- ◆ I am here to listen and support you, but it would also be helpful for you to talk to someone who has specialized knowledge in this area.
- ◆ There are places that you can go anonymously to get information or support.
- ◆ Even if you don’t know what you want to do right now, it can be helpful to talk to someone about your options.
I would be happy to go with you to talk to someone (Crisis Advocate – Stevenson Hall #1088).
- ◆ What would make it feel safe for you to go talk to someone?



DEBUNKING THE SEXUAL ASSAULT MYTHS

There are many widely accepted myths surrounding sexual assault and why it happens. These myths represent attitudes and beliefs that are prejudicial, stereotyped, and false. Their existence makes it difficult for victims to seek services and for perpetrators to be justifiably punished. Generally, these myths fall into three categories: blaming the victim, excusing the perpetrator or justifying the rape. Let’s clear up some of these myths.

- ◆ **Myth #1:** *The motivating force behind sexual assaults is sexual desire.*

This is false. Sexual assaults have nothing to do with sexual attraction. They are about power and control, humiliation, and degradation. Sexual violence is what is used to achieve these goals. Rapists target people they believe to be vulnerable. Victims of sexual violence range from babies to elderly women and can be male or female.

- ◆ **Myth #2:** *Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers, outside at night.*

Sexual assaults may be portrayed this way in movies or television shows, but in reality this is not accurate and does not describe the typical rape. In 86% of all rapes, the victim knows the offender. Perpetrators can be boyfriends, friends, relatives, neighbors, or other acquaintances. Almost half of all rapes (42%) occur in the victim’s own home.

- ◆ **Myth #3:** *If someone is really sexually assaulted, there will be signs of physical trauma on their body.*

Psychological strategies (intimidation, pressuring, threats, lying, and/or manipulation) are the most common techniques used by perpetrators, not physical violence. Perpetrators usually do not use physical force until psychological strategies fail.

- ◆ **Myth #4:** *Perpetrators cannot stop themselves once they become aroused.*

It is completely untrue that someone can become so carried away that they are not able to control his/her actions. Anyone can stop, if they care about or respect the other person. It is an insult to assume that someone has no self-control.



DEBUNKING THE SEXUAL ASSAULT MYTHS

- ◆ **Myth #5:** *You can tell simply from another person's actions or way of dressing that she or he wants to have sex with you.*

Never assume what someone wants according to his/her appearance. An attractive person does not compel someone to "attack" him/her. Just because someone feels attracted to another person does not mean they have to act on it and have the right to physically violate someone.

- ◆ **Myth #6:** *Some people ask to be raped or sexually assaulted and are at fault for whatever happens.*

People may make poor judgments but no one ever DESERVES to be a victim of sexual assault. Rape has nothing to do with circumstances, the victim's reputation or the victim's appearance.

- ◆ **Myth #7:** *Women make up accusations of sexual assault against men to get revenge.*

False reporting of sexual assaults is not different from any other crime. Less than 2% of rapes are false reports. In fact, rape is tremendously underreported.

- ◆ **Myth #8:** *People who committed sexual assaults are severely disturbed men.*

Perpetrators may test higher on aggression and their tendency to use violence. But generally, perpetrators test "normal" on psychological testing.

Don't let societal myths and stereotypes influence the way you respond to victims and perpetrators of sexual violence. All sexual violence is wrong and inexcusable and should be treated that way. Support and understanding can help victims become survivors.



MORE INFORMATION & SUPPORT

Verity – Sonoma County Rape Crisis Counseling and Support (Formerly UASA)

Providing walk-in crisis counseling, accompaniment and advocacy, individual therapy, support groups and prevention education.

24 Hour Crisis Line: (707) 5457273

Phone: (707) 545-7270

835 Piner Road, Suite D

Santa Rosa, CA. 95403-2063

<http://ourverity.org/>

YWCA Sonoma County

Domestic Violence support groups, therapeutic and legal services, family advocacy, community education and local safe house.

24 Hour Crisis Line: (707) 546-1234

Phone: (707) 546-9922

P.O. Box 3506

Santa Rosa, CA 95402

www.ywca.org/sonomacounty

California Coalition Against Sexual Assault

CALCASA is a statewide coalition of rape crisis centers committed to ending sexual violence and has a California Rape Crisis Center Directory.

<http://calcasa.org/>

Sonoma County Men Evolving Nonviolently

Men Evolving Non-Violently (M.E.N.) M.E.N. is a program that offers services to help men who have decided they want to change their abusive or unproductive behavior.

The hotline offers confidential support to callers in crisis and provides resource information to men and their family members.

24 Hour Hotline: 707-528-2MEN (2636)

<http://www.sonomacountymen.org/>



MORE INFORMATION & SUPPORT

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

The nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization. RAINN operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1.800.656.HOPE and carries out programs to prevent sexual assault, help victims and ensure that rapists are brought to justice. Inside, you'll find statistics, counseling resources, prevention tips, news and more.

<http://www.rainn.org/>

Domestic Violence National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

The National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (NCDSV) designs, provides, and customizes training and consultation, influences policy, promotes collaboration and enhances diversity with the goal of ending domestic and sexual violence.

<http://www.ncdsv.org/>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center serves as the nation's principle information and resource center regarding all aspects of sexual violence. It provides a comprehensive collection and distribution center for information, statistics, and resources related to sexual violence. The NSVRC works to address the causes and impact of sexual violence through collaboration, prevention efforts and the distribution of resources.

877.739.3895 Toll Free

<http://www.nsvrc.org/>

The Network/La Red

The Network/La Red has become a national resource and model for battered women's programs, batterer intervention programs, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender organizations beginning to address battering in lesbian, bisexual women's, and transgender relationships.

<http://tnlr.org/>

Male Survivor

Male Survivor is committed to preventing, healing, and eliminating all forms of sexual victimization of boys and men through support, treatment, research, education, advocacy, and activism.

<http://www.malesurvivor.org/>

Sonoma State University
 Office of the Crisis Advocate
 1801 East Cotati Avenue
 Stevenson Hall # 1088
 Rohnert Park, CA. 94928-3609
 707-664-2153

<http://www.sonoma.edu/counselingctr/>

Click on the "Crisis Advocacy" Tab