

FOR MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT,
CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CENTER:



FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

**COLORADO COALITION
AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT
(CCASA)**

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THE CONNECTION: ALCOHOL, DRUGS, & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The use of alcohol to facilitate sexual assault is unfortunately very common. In addition to alcohol, there are other drugs that can be used to make someone vulnerable to a sexual assault. Perpetrators may assault someone who has chosen to drink alcohol and/or take other drugs, or the perpetrator may slip drugs into a drink. **The perpetrator is always responsible for the crime; never the victim.**

While alcohol is the most common drug used to perpetrate sexual violence, other drugs may also be used. Some drugs have no taste, color, or smell. They may also easily dissolve in liquid or be in liquid form. Some over-the-counter medications and commonly prescribed drugs can also cause extreme sleepiness and make someone more vulnerable to this crime.

WHAT happened?

Alcohol, Drugs & Sexual Violence

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WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

Sexual assault is **any**
unwanted sexual experience.*

It is most often inflicted upon victims
through the use of force, threats,
manipulation or coercion.

To consent to sexual activity, both parties
must be fully conscious and have clearly
communicated what they would like to do.

Consent cannot be given if a person is
unconscious, asleep, or unable to actively
participate due to drugs or alcohol.ⁱ

WHAT IF I CHOSE TO DRINK ALCOHOL OR DO DRUGS?

Drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault can occur when someone has chosen to drink and/or do drugs, and it can also occur when a perpetrator gives a victim drugs and/or alcohol without consent. Choosing to drink or use drugs does not give another person permission to hurt you.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT HAPPENED

Drugs and alcohol, combined with the trauma of an unwanted sexual experience, can cause anxiety, memory loss and/or confusion about what happened. For many people, this uncertainty is scary and difficult. Be gentle with yourself and think about reaching out for support.

- **If this has happened to you, you are not alone.** A study found that 62% of sexual assaults were drug-facilitated.ⁱⁱ At least 50% of college student sexual assaults are associated with alcohol use.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Perpetrators often take advantage of normal social settings where alcohol and drugs are being used in order to create vulnerability and commit this crime.
- Perpetrators often pose as “the rescuer” or “the helper.”
- Most sexual assaults are committed by someone the person knows.^{iv} The perpetrator could be a date, neighbor, partner, acquaintance, stranger, or a trusted friend. In these cases, it is common to feel confused and betrayed.

YOUR OPTIONS

TRUST YOURSELF

It is hard to know what to do about something when you can't fully remember what happened. Trust what your instincts are telling you and seek support.

CONSIDER MEDICAL ATTENTION

Whether you are ill, physically injured, or physically feel okay, consider getting medical attention. Medical care can include preventative treatment for sexually transmitted infections and address pregnancy concerns. If evidence is collected, Colorado has resources that can help with the financial costs.

If you consent, your blood and/or urine may be tested to see if drugs were used as part of the sexual assault. It is important to know that these substances can leave the body very quickly. Even if you get a negative test result, drugs may still have been used. Regardless of the outcome of testing, you deserve to be believed and supported during this difficult time. An advocate at a local rape crisis center can explain those resources.

KNOW YOUR REPORTING OPTIONS

If you are an adult, you have the right to make your own decision about participation in a law enforcement investigation. You can seek medical care, but then decide at a later time if you want to work with law enforcement.

SEEK SUPPORT

Finding a counselor and an advocate who specialize in sexual violence can also help with healing. There may be free or low cost support groups available in your area. Many survivors report feeling better when talking with a trained professional and/or other people who have been through a similar experience.

* This is a broad definition. Legal definitions may vary.

NOTES

ⁱ Colorado Revised Statute 18-3-404

ⁱⁱ http://harfordmedlegal.typepad.com/forensics_talk/2006/08/almost_62_of_se.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Alcohol and Sexual Assault: <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh25-1/43-51.pdf>

^{iv} <https://www.rainn.org/get-information/statistics/sexual-assault-offenders>