

# Toward Healing & Justice

A Handbook for Survivors of Sexual Violence



FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

FIFTH EDITION – 2018



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*This handbook is dedicated to survivors of sexual violence.*

It is designed to provide general information and is not intended to give advice on specific medical, legal, or emotional situations. Every individual, every case, and every local region will have unique differences.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*If you have experienced unwanted sexual activity, we hope that the information in this booklet will help you know that you are not alone, provide you with information to help you make informed choices, and support your recovery.*

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Many people who have experienced some form of unwanted sexual activity may not think of themselves as sexual assault victims. However, sexual assault is a term that describes a wide range of unwanted sexual activities. Anyone can be a victim of sexual assault. It happens to men and women, children, teenagers, adults, and the elderly. It can happen regardless of one's race, religion, social status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. And it happens in every community in Colorado and across the nation, in urban and rural areas. This booklet will use the terms "sexual assault" and "sexual violence" interchangeably.

Through the media (television, newspapers, the internet, etc.) we hear about sexual assaults committed by strangers more than other types of sexual assault. This can be misleading. In reality, sexual assaults committed by strangers do not happen as often as sexual assaults committed by someone the victim knows.<sup>1</sup>

For example, sexual violence may happen on a date, with a partner/spouse, or with a co-worker, friend, or family member. The majority of sexual assaults occur in the home of the victim, a friend, relative, or neighbor. It doesn't matter if the two people know each other, are on a date, or are married; sexual assault can still happen.

In 2012, only an estimated 28% of all rapes or sexual assaults were reported to law enforcement.<sup>2</sup> Non-stranger sexual assaults account for 91% of sexual assault crimes against women and 51% for men.<sup>3</sup> This type of violence is often difficult to discuss. Regardless of the victim's relationship with the perpetrator, sexual assault is always a crime and only the perpetrator is responsible.

Sexual assault is an emotional shock and a trauma. Power and control were taken away from the victim. This type of trauma can cause people who are victims to experience a mixture of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts. Common feelings often include a mixture of emotions such as: shock, confusion, fear, anger, helplessness, self-blame, guilt, embarrassment, shame, numbness, and disbelief.

Everyone who is sexually assaulted deals with it differently. There is no “right way” of dealing with this crime. Do what seems right for you at the time. With support, self-understanding, and self-compassion, difficult or painful emotions will lessen over time.

Please know that whatever you did to survive the assault was the right action. No matter what the situation, no one deserves to be victimized. It was not your fault. The responsibility belongs to the person who assaulted you. That person committed an act of violence, which is a criminal offense.

### It is important to try to find people who will:

- Believe you and believe in you.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Manage whatever feelings arise in themselves and are okay with whatever feelings you share with them.
- Are willing to let you make your own decisions about next steps.

Sexual assault causes a great deal of confusion in a survivor’s life. Allow yourself the time and assistance you may need to heal. Be gentle and patient with yourself. Honor yourself by acknowledging the reality of what happened. Allow yourself to have whatever feelings may come. Use as many resources (family, friends, counselors, rape crisis programs, online support groups) as you need. You do not have to recover from this trauma alone.

Family and friends are also encouraged to read this handbook, because the impact of sexual assault affects those close to the survivor. This booklet has information and insights that can help family and friends provide the best support possible during this difficult time.

**You are a survivor, and you are not alone.**

Sadly, in the United States, about 1 in 5 women (19.1%) and 1 in 71 men (1.5%) have experienced completed or attempted rape at some point in their lives. In Colorado, approximately 20.5% of women have experienced completed or attempted rape, and approximately 17.6% of men have experienced some form of contact sexual violence.<sup>4</sup>

## YOU DID NOT CONSENT

Even if you didn't fight back or say "no," it is still sexual assault. Feeling like you had to "give in" to be physically or emotionally safe is not the same as consent. If you didn't freely say "yes," you did not consent. Sexual activity without consent is sexual assault.

If you didn't  
**freely** say  
"yes," you did  
not consent.

### **You Are Not Going Crazy, Even Though It May Feel That Way**

The thoughts and feelings you might experience after a sexual assault are related to trauma. Survivors often experience shock, guilt, fear, anxiety, and shame. Common physical reactions may include: nightmares, difficulty sleeping or wanting to sleep all the time, changes in eating, and many other reactions. Your ability to enjoy your daily life may change, even to the point

of depression and thoughts of suicide. If you experience thoughts of suicide, please call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or 1-800-799-4TTY (4889) if you are deaf or hard of hearing. Trained hotline counselors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The trauma of sexual assault might also affect your ability to feel safe in the world, trust others, or your sense of control over what happens to you. When these beliefs get tested, confusing thoughts and feelings may occur.

### **It Wasn't Because of How You Dressed or Acted**

Sexual assault is an act of violence, manipulation, and coercion by the perpetrator. People who perpetrate sexual violence exploit people's trust, good nature, and vulnerabilities and use sexual assault as a tool to take away power and control from another person, and often feel entitled to the other person's body. Anyone can be a victim of sexual violence. Victims of sexual assault are all genders and ages. Although perpetrators often try to blame the victim ("She asked for it," "He led me on," etc.), the responsibility always falls to the perpetrator and that person is always at fault.

### **You Kept Yourself Alive**

In this booklet, we will use the term survivor to acknowledge that as a victim of sexual assault, you survived. Whatever you did to stay alive or get through the situation was exactly the right thing to do. In a physically threatening situation, survival instincts take over. Even if there was no strong physical force, perpetrators often use coercion, pressure, or threats to take control. The fact is, above all, you survived. Many people submit to assault to keep from being hurt or killed, or in fear because of the relationship with the perpetrator. Over two-thirds of rape victims fearing injury or death do not resist an attack and therefore may not sustain any bruises, marks or other visible injuries.<sup>5</sup> "Freezing," or being unable to move, is a well-documented response to trauma. It is a common and valid reaction.



### **This May Have Happened Before**

If you have been sexually assaulted before, you may have an especially difficult time coping with the recent assault. The effect of a new assault can bring back problems from other experiences. Many survivors of multiple assaults feel like it is something about them that makes this happen, or that they deserve the assaults for some reason. Please try to remember that no matter how many times you have been assaulted and no matter what the perpetrator(s) may have told you, you do not deserve what happened. NO ONE deserves to be the victim of assault. Counseling can be especially helpful if you have experienced more than one sexual assault.



### *Some things that may be helpful to know:<sup>6</sup>*

These points will be discussed in greater detail in other chapters of this handbook.

- 1.** Sexual assault is a crime that reduces or eliminates the victim's power and control during intimate contact. You can begin to reclaim your power by making your own choices about how to move forward after an assault.
- 2.** A sexual assault victim advocate from a rape crisis center, a center on a college campus, or a military base can provide emotional support by being an objective listener (someone who is not directly involved in your situation who can listen without biases). This person can help you make informed choices by providing information about common reactions to the trauma of sexual violence, medical considerations, reporting options, criminal justice processes, and other legal issues. You have the right to learn this information without needing to file a police report, talk to a counselor, or see a doctor (as you will read, this may not be the case if you are under the age of 18). These are personal decisions to make as you begin to understand your feelings and options.
- 3.** You are not to blame. The person who assaulted you is responsible. You deserve to be believed and treated with respect and compassion.

- 4.** If you have concerns about injury, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and/or pregnancy, it is important to seek medical attention as soon as possible.
- 5.** If you are over 18 years of age, you can choose whether or not you report the offense or work with law enforcement. If you are under age 18 or indicate a current minor is in danger, the Department of Social Services and/or law enforcement will need to be notified of the crime.
- 6.** You may be able to get Crime Victim's Compensation to help you pay for medical care, counseling, and other expenses if you do report to police.
- 7.** If you do not participate in the criminal justice system but obtain a medical forensic examination, Colorado's Sexual Assault Victim Emergency (SAVE) Payment Program may be able to assist with costs associated in obtaining the exam.
- 8.** You have the choice to pursue prosecution of the perpetrator by making a report to the police. However, law enforcement or the District Attorney's office—not the survivor—make the final decision about whether or not to prosecute or "press charges." You can also learn about civil lawsuit options.
- 9.** It may be helpful to seek counseling to help you heal from the trauma of sexual violence. Although many survivors simply want to forget about it and move on with their lives, sometimes unsettled feelings can make it hard to move forward with your life.
- 10.** It is never too late to talk about past sexual violence and begin the healing process.





## 2. WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

*Sexual violence occurs when a person does not consent to a sexual act.*

Sexual assault includes sexual penetration or intrusion without consent, violations of personal space and safety, such as exhibitionism or “being flashed,” voyeurism or secretly being watched, obscene phone calls or text messages, nonconsensual pornography, forced undressing, and sexual harassment at work or school. Many people are unaware that these are all forms of sexual violence and are considered criminal acts. Sexual abuse takes many forms and it may or may not involve physical contact.

**Sexual assault** is both a legal term and a general term. Sexual violence involves sexual assault and other forms of unwanted sexual contact. Understanding sexual violence and criminal sexual behavior can help you understand your feelings after an assault. It can also help individuals recognize behaviors that are against the law.

### COLORADO'S SEXUAL ASSAULT LAWS

Under Colorado law, sexual assault is an act of sexual penetration or intrusion without a person’s consent. Rape is a term that people commonly use to describe acts of unwanted penetration, although the term “rape” is not a legal term in Colorado. Sexual penetration or intrusion can be vaginal, oral, or anal by any body part or object.<sup>7</sup> Under Colorado law, forms of sexual assault include rape and attempted rape by anyone, regardless of whether it’s an acquaintance, boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, stranger, or group of perpetrators.

Fondling and touching without consent are also recognized as crimes in Colorado and are called “Unlawful Sexual Contact.”<sup>8</sup> This can involve touching of the genitals, buttocks, anus, or breasts, whether it is under or on top of clothing.

Unwanted sexual contact can be intrusive, violating, and degrading. It is common to think that acts that involve penetration are the “most serious,” but

“Giving in to an act out of fear is **SUBMISSION**, not consent.”

often people feel violated, degraded, and frightened by less invasive forms of unwanted sexual contact. Trust your reactions and get the support that is most helpful to you. Regardless of the extent of the activity, if it was unwanted sexual activity it is a crime and a personal violation.

## CONSENT — WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN COLORADO?

According to Colorado law, consent means “cooperation in act or attitude pursuant to an exercise of free will and with knowledge of the nature of the act.” That means that permission is given freely and with cooperation for the activity, and that the person giving consent fully understands the nature of the act. Having a current or previous relationship with the perpetrator does not automatically equal consent. Giving in to an act out of fear is **SUBMISSION**, not consent. The fear may have been generated by intimidation or isolation, verbal or nonverbal threats, physical violence, or a weapon.

Consent is also considered absent in situations of “sexual assault on a child.” Sexual assault on a child or “statutory rape” involves subjecting a person under 15 years old to any sexual contact if the perpetrator is 4 or more years older than the victim (for example, a 14-year-old and an 18-year-old); or having sexual contact with someone under 17 years old if the perpetrator is at least 10 years older than the victim (such as a 16-year-old and a 26-year-old).<sup>9</sup>

In addition, sexual contact with anyone under the age of 18 by a person in a position of power or trust is considered sexual assault on a child. Examples include sexual contact by a teacher, coach, religious leader, doctor, parent, stepparent, or anyone responsible for the care of a child. These laws apply to minors even if they think they consented to the sexual contact.

Sexual contact between family members is incest.<sup>10</sup> The perpetrator can be any gender, a parent, stepparent, aunt or uncle, sibling, or any other family member. People of any gender can be victims of incest.<sup>11</sup>



**According to Colorado Law, situations implying a lack of consent include:<sup>12</sup>**

- The victim is physically helpless and has not consented.
- The perpetrator knows that the victim is unable to understand the consequences of his or her own behavior/actions.
- The perpetrator has in some way (through alcohol, drugs, etc.) substantially impaired the victim’s power to understand or control the situation for the purpose of causing submission.
- A person is drunk, unconscious, asleep, or otherwise unable to indicate a willingness to participate.

**Other Colorado Statutes Pertaining to Sexual Violence**

As of July 1, 2013 a person convicted of unlawful sexual contact does not have the right to be notified of the termination of parental rights and has no standing to object to the termination of parental rights for a child conceived as a result of the offense for which they are convicted. They also do not have the right to allocation of parental responsibilities, such as parenting time and decision-making responsibilities for the child, inheritance from that child, and notification of or the right to object to the adoption of a child conceived as a result of the offense.<sup>13</sup>

As of June 1, 2017, survivors of sexual violence have an avenue to break their lease for safety reasons. This requires a written letter from the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) who performed the forensic exam, or a certified Address Confidentiality Program Application Assistant. A law enforcement report can also serve as the documentation of need to initiate this process. A survivor who breaks their lease via this process has to pay one more month’s rent and any damages not related to the assault. For more information on this process reach out to your local community-based victim advocacy program. You can find an advocate near you by visiting the CCASA.org website and clicking on the “get help” tab.<sup>14</sup>



For complete Colorado legal definitions of sexual assault and other unlawful sexual behavior, see Colorado Revised Statutes, at [www.colorado.gov](http://www.colorado.gov) or contact the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault at 303-839-9999.



Although survivors often feel responsible for what occurred, it is important to know that without voluntary consent, responsibility belongs to the perpetrator. The perpetrator ignored what you wanted or did not want and is responsible.

## What Are Common Myths About Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence is committed in many situations and may occur in various relationships. There are many myths about sexual violence and assault. One myth is that sexual assault typically occurs at night, on a dark street, by a stranger. This example describes a sexual assault scenario that in reality represents a minority of situations in which sexual violence occurs. The following situations are examples of the various circumstances in which sexual violence can occur. It is not all-inclusive.

### Acquaintance Sexual Assault

Acquaintance sexual assault can include sexual assault by a date or by anyone who is known to the victim. Common examples may include a friend, neighbor, someone from a party, etc. The shock and betrayal of being assaulted by someone you know and trust can be very painful. Unfortunately, this is the most common type of sexual assault. Remember, being coerced or forced into sexual activity is sexual assault, regardless of the nature of the relationship.

Survivors of this type of sexual assault may question their ability to judge and trust others. Mutual friends and family may react with disbelief and possibly rejection, which can make a survivor feel even more alone. It is important to seek out those who can and will provide support; either family, or friends, or by finding a sexual assault services provider.

### Intimate Partner Sexual Violence

It is important to know that a long-term partnership or marriage does not give anyone permission to demand or force sexual activity. Nearly 1 in 10 women in the United States (9.4%) has been raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime, and an estimated 16.9% of women and 8.0% of men have experienced sexual violence other than rape by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.<sup>15</sup>



Sexual violence occurs when one of the spouses/partners has not given consent for a sexual act. Everyone has times when physical or sexual closeness is unwanted and, even within intimate relationships, that choice should be respected. Sexual violence in marriages or long-term relationships often occurs along with other forms of violence and abuse. It is a way for a partner to exert control or power over the other. Intimate partner violence refers to mental, physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse occurring within a family or close relationship. Intimate Partner violence is an act used to gain power and control over the partner or family member. It is a serious and often lifethreatening pattern of violence.

## Minors and Teenagers

18% of all sexual assault and rape victims are under age 10. Half of all female rape and sexual assault victims are under the age of 18 at the time they are first victimized. 93% of juvenile sexual assault victims know their perpetrator.<sup>16</sup>

It is important for teens to know that any forced sexual activity is not okay and it is against the law. If the person is an adult or much older, it may be a crime even if the teen believes it was consensual.

Teen survivors may be in a situation that makes it more difficult to tell someone about the assault. They may feel a lot of self-blame and fear of not being believed. They may also fear the reaction of friends and family. There may be a fear of consequences if the assault occurred while doing something illegal or against family or school rules. In addition, teens may fear that if they report the assault, their parents may try to limit activities and freedom. However, it is important that parents of a teen survivor make sure the teen is not hurt and is safe. Teenagers and children deserve to get medical attention and emotional support. Nobody should have to recover from an act of sexual violence alone, without concerned and supportive adult help.

If the sexual assault was committed by a friend, neighbor, family member, or someone else trusted by the family, teens are often afraid they will not be believed. It is especially important that teens and minors be able to identify even one adult in their life who will believe them, will not blame them, and who will help them to make some decisions about what to do after the assault.

## Mandatory Reporting

Survivors of all ages deserve to be believed. All survivors deserve help in dealing with the trauma. It can really help to talk to someone who is trustworthy. It is important to know that in certain cases—for example, if the incest or abuse is still occurring—certain people such as teachers, school counselors, or doctors are required to report it to police or child protective services. We have mandatory reporting laws because our society recognizes abuse should NEVER happen to any child.

If there are concerns about the possibility that a report may have to be made, the survivor or second party can talk anonymously, without giving the name of the victim or identifying information. In the back of this booklet, you will see a list of Colorado agencies. This list can help you locate an organization in your area.

## Incest

Incest survivors often feel very alone and it may be very difficult to talk about this sexual assault. Incest survivors may experience feelings of loneliness both at the time of the sexual assault and into adulthood. They often feel as if they are/were responsible for what happened. Again, it is important to remember that

only the perpetrator is responsible. Survivors can get help, even years after the abuse.

In many cases there are concerns that the truth would be very painful for other family members. However, it is important for the incest survivor to get help working through the abuse. They are not to blame for what happened.

**Men may hesitate to talk to anyone or report it to law enforcement out of fear of ridicule or that they won't be believed.**

### **Male Survivors**

Sexual contact without consent is sexual violence, regardless of gender. Men often don't think this could happen to them, but it can and does. Male children are frequently targets of sexual abuse by those in a position of power or trust. Male survivors may experience questions or confusion

about their sexuality or sexual identity. Many survivors, male as well as female, feel like their body has betrayed them by responding sexually in some way to the sexual activity. It is not unusual for there to be confusion because physical responses did not match emotional reactions during the assault. This does not mean the assault was enjoyable or that the victim was in any way responsible for what happened. An assault also does not mean the survivor's sexual identity has changed.

Men often feel extremely embarrassed by what happened and may hesitate to talk to anyone or report it to law enforcement out of fear of ridicule or that they won't be believed. Men deserve to have legal and emotional support just as do women. No one has the right to control and violate another's body.

Men may need special support. There are ways to get help, such as calling a crisis line anonymously and requesting a male advocate or counselor if that is more comfortable. Some areas may have a support group for male survivors to help with the healing process. Unfortunately this resource may not be available in all regions. See [Chapter 8: Survivor Resources](#) for more information. There are also many books written just for male survivors of sexual violence. Please see [Chapter 9: Recommended Reading List](#) for more information.

### **Alcohol and Other Drugs**

Alcohol and drugs can be used to weaken a person for a period of time and cause memory loss. Alcohol is the most common drug used with sexual assault. It is used to make someone submit to sexual advances. In addition to alcohol, other drugs can make someone vulnerable to sexual assault. These drugs may be slipped into a drink or the perpetrator may choose to assault someone who has taken drugs for fun or for other reasons.

One common myth is that if someone was drinking alcohol and then was sexually assaulted, the victim is to blame for the assault. Unfortunately some



police, medical staff, or even loved ones may still believe this myth. Remember, drinking alcohol does not give anyone the right to commit sexual assault.

While alcohol is the most common drug used by perpetrators to facilitate sexual assault, other drugs may also be used. Some drugs have no taste, color, or smell. They may easily dissolve in liquid or be in liquid form. The effects of these drugs can occur very fast. Drugs such as GHB, ketamine, and Rohypnol (roofies) are often called “date rape drugs” because they are used by perpetrators to quickly increase vulnerability to sexual assault.

According to medical professionals in Colorado, over-the-counter medications like antihistamines (allergy medicines) can be used to facilitate sexual assault. Commonly prescribed drugs like Valium, Ambien, and Xanax (anti-anxiety medication) can cause extreme sleepiness.<sup>17</sup> Perpetrators can use them to make someone more vulnerable to sexual assault.

Remember that choosing to drink alcohol or use drugs does not equal consent to have sex. Legally, a person who is drunk, unconscious, asleep, or otherwise unable to indicate willingness to participate cannot give consent to sexual activity. Therefore, any sexual activity carried out with a person in this physical state is unlawful sexual contact or sexual assault.<sup>18</sup>

When drugs and/or alcohol are involved in a sexual assault, additional concerns come up for survivors. Because memory loss may leave them wondering exactly what did and did not happen, they may have increased feelings of vulnerability and loss of control.

It is not unusual for sexual assault victims to blame themselves for what happened if they freely chose to use drugs and/or alcohol. It is important to know that drugs and alcohol do not cause rape. The rapist made a decision to assault a person who was vulnerable. In fact, Colorado law considers that a perpetrator who uses drugs to assist in sexually assaulting someone has committed a more serious criminal offense.

If there is a possibility that drugs were involved, urine or blood can be tested. Although many of these drugs will leave the body very quickly, the test could provide important evidence toward a legal case. It is important to know that some drug screens may show all drugs in the system, even ones the victim chose to take. A test may also show no signs of drugs, but the victim may still suspect drugging. The negative test may only mean the drugs left the victim’s system quickly. It is important to work through feelings that come up when a survivor suspects or knows they’ve been drugged and assaulted.

## Disabled or Elderly

Perpetrators of sexual assault tend to look for vulnerable people. Research shows that persons with a disability experience rape or sexual assault at twice the rate for persons without a disability.<sup>19</sup> Older adults and seniors can also be assaulted. Only 30% of rape/sexual assault victims age 65 or older reported

to the police.<sup>20</sup> As with other types of sexual assault, the perpetrator is typically someone known to the victim, such as a family member, caretaker, neighbor, or friend. Unfortunately, these types of assault are not rare.

A senior or an individual living with disabilities has the right to be treated with respect, as well as the right to take action and seek resources. Emotional support and other kinds of assistance may be available from local agencies that advocate for persons who are elderly and/or have disabilities. It may be helpful to ask if there is a staff member experienced in working with sexual assault issues.

### Gang Rape

Gang rape is when two or more people commit a sexual assault. This can be especially terrifying and often involves physical as well as sexual violence. As with any other sexual assault, the intention is power and control. It may also be an initiation ritual to “bond” the members of a group.

Survivors of gang rape are more likely to sustain physical injuries and may have heightened fears of retaliation or punishment if they report the sexual assault to police. It is important that they are offered resources which address both emotional and physical safety concerns.

### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, or Asexual (LGBTQQIA) Survivors

While the LGBTQQIA community is at approximately the same risk as heterosexuals of being sexually assaulted by someone they know, homophobia and transphobia put this population at a greater risk of being a victim of violence. Perpetrators may use sexual violence to “punish” and humiliate because of sexual orientation or gender identity. Male perpetrators who think they can “change” a person’s sexual orientation may also target gay and bisexual women. It may be helpful for LGBTQQIA survivors to ask for staff who understand these concerns when they contact a counselor or rape crisis advocate in their community.

### Prison Rape

Inmates in detention facilities are vulnerable to sexual assault. The trauma of a rape can be incredibly devastating to someone who already feels isolated and without power and choices. The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was passed in 2003 and the PREA standards became effective in August 2013. The main goal of this federal law is to reduce, eliminate, and prevent rape within correctional facilities. If you are a survivor of prison rape, please know that nobody deserves to be raped. You are not to blame for your victimization. It is not a part of your punishment, and you may seek medical and counseling services during and after your incarceration.

**To request support and assistance send a letter to:**

Office of the Inspector General  
PREA Administrator  
2862 South Circle Drive  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906

**You can report sexual assault, sexual abuse or sexual harassment in any of the following ways:**

- Call the Confidential DOC Tips-line at 877-362-8477 (outside DOC) or 877-362-8477-0, inside DOC or private prisons.
- Call the PREA Rape Crisis Hotline at #05 (CIPSl ine) or 800-809-2344 (outside DOC).
- Call the PREA Reporting Line at #06 (CIPSl ine).



### 3. HEALING AND RECOVERY

*I will not be a victim forever. I will always remember; but ultimately, I'll move on...soothed by the fact that my soul is strong and my spirit unbreakable.*

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#### REAL HEALING IS POSSIBLE...IT IS A PROCESS

If you have been a victim of sexual violence and/or abuse either recently or in the past, you have probably been left with many confusing thoughts or feelings about what happened. These thoughts and emotions are a typical reaction to a physically and/or psychologically traumatic event. As we are all unique individuals, so we all will heal and recover in our own unique way.

It is important to know that uncomfortable and painful thoughts and feelings that you may have experienced or are experiencing are a part of the healing process. One of the kindest and most helpful things you can do for yourself is to find a supportive person or people with whom you can just be yourself.

Asking for help is not weakness, it is actually strength; and help is available for you somewhere in your world. Please consider seeking it.

#### THE HEALING PROCESS

Survivors progress through stages of healing in different ways, which makes recovery unique for each individual. However, there are some common reactions to trauma, and to sexual assault in particular.

Right after an assault, feelings may include: confusion, anger, fear, guilt, shame, embarrassment, depression, loss of control, numbness or shock. You may have a hard time concentrating. Your thoughts may race. You may find yourself reviewing and re-living what occurred,

or asking unending questions such as “why me?” Not being able to sleep, nightmares, eating problems, and flashbacks of the assault are also common.

Physical symptoms can include soreness, muscle tension, headaches, stomach problems, tiredness, and gynecological problems. It may seem like your whole life has been disrupted and is focused on the assault, especially if you are interacting with law enforcement during the first stages of the investigation. Although these are typical reactions to trauma, they can be very upsetting. Be gentle and patient with yourself, and do whatever you need to at this time to reclaim your life and feel safer.

After a few days or weeks, you may feel as though you need to appear as if everything is fine. You may not want to talk about what happened and want to “just forget” it happened. This can serve a useful purpose for a while. It can be a way to cope, allowing you to function in your life. Unfortunately, the reality is we don’t usually really “forget.” The discomfort may appear to be gone, but can come back in unusual ways.

Some people have a hard time stopping thoughts about the assault. Feeling overwhelmed or not feeling anything at all are common following a traumatic event. Again, focusing on self-care will promote healing.

Other problems may appear that seem to be unrelated to the assault, such as alcohol/drug problems, relationship problems, or depression.

If you’re experiencing depression, you may notice that you have unusual thoughts, feelings and/or behaviors, or that you may not be acting “like yourself.” Some of these experiences may include:

- Increased alcohol and/or drug use;
- Keeping to yourself, isolating or staying away from friends and loved ones;
- Increased fears (of leaving your home or being at home alone, of people, or of certain places);
- Avoiding work or over-working;
- Increased irritability;
- Engaging in risky behaviors;
- Suicidal thoughts;
- Change in eating habits (not eating or over-eating);
- Changes in sleep habits (unable to sleep or sleeping too much); and
- Having nightmares and/or flashbacks of the sexual violence.

All of these reactions can be responses to trauma. It can be helpful to recognize that you are reacting to an abnormal and serious event (an assault).

Notice when you are not acting “like yourself” and then try to remind yourself that it may be related to what happened. Remember, you can seek out support and resources, which can assist you to take positive and helpful action. ***You do not have to deal with the pain alone.***

## Will I ever get over this? Why can't I just forget?

### Have Patience with Yourself

It can take weeks, months and even years to recover from what happened. There is no “right” timeline. Eventually, as you move through the process of healing, the assault will change from being the central focus in your life to being something painful that happened in the past.

There may be times when thoughts and feelings related to the assault return. These can be “triggered” by such events as seeing a TV show about sexual assault, seeing a person who reminds you of the perpetrator, or being near the assault location. You may have thought you were “over it” only to be faced with the challenges of re-experiencing some of the effects of the trauma.

Remember to be kind and gentle with yourself. Think about how you would like your best friend to be there for you at this time and then try to become your own best friend. Seek out helping and caring resources. Healing may be difficult, but possible.

Remember, recovery from sexual assault or violence is a process that is different for every person, and there are no hard and fast time-lines or schedules for recovery.

It is common to simply want to forget the assault and push it behind you. At times you may need to do this in order to get through your daily life. However, trying to “push it all away” and acting like “nothing happened” is a lot to expect. You have been through an experience that can shatter basic beliefs, including what you have learned about trust, safety, and our ability to control our world.

It may be helpful to know you don't have to face it all at once. You can take a middle road, allowing yourself to deal with the thoughts and feelings about what happened in small pieces, at a pace you control.

A counselor who has special training and experience working with sexual trauma can be very helpful. Many of these services are available at no cost or a low cost to survivors. You don't have to do this alone. Talking with a supportive person(s) may help you to understand and cope with the feelings and thoughts you have.

Some survivors find it helpful to share with others who have been through a similar experience. There may be a support group in your area. Check the back of this booklet for referrals for sexual assault services agencies that are in your area. Be gentle with yourself and try not to expect too much too quickly. You may not feel completely like yourself as fast as you would like, and may have times of pain and sadness.

Hopefully these feelings will become shorter and less frequent with the passage of time. You CAN heal.

## Feelings/Issues Commonly Experienced:

### **Fear(s)**

Fear that the perpetrator may return, fear for your personal safety, and fear of being alone or of being with strangers. Fears can come and go. Typically these will lessen with time.

### **Depression**

Depression is more than “sadness” or a “down” mood. Signs of depression can include sadness and despair, changes in sleep habits (either too much or not enough), changes in eating, inability to concentrate, having less energy, and not wanting to be around people. Sometimes suicidal feelings go with depression. If these should occur, please seek help. Depression during the weeks and months following sexual trauma can come and go. An experienced counselor can help you deal with depression.

### **Anxiety**

Anxiety is a very common reaction to trauma. Increased heart rate (often experienced as sensations of the heart “pounding”), difficulty breathing, extreme alertness, racing thoughts, jumpiness, shakiness, and panic are all symptoms of anxiety. The symptoms of anxiety are extremely uncomfortable and may even cause you to feel as if you are “going crazy.” If you are experiencing these reactions, you are not going crazy; you are experiencing an extreme stress reaction to a very stressful event.

*It can be helpful to create an “Emergency Kit” to use during anxious or panic-filled times.*

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## **THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR “EMERGENCY KIT”:**

- List of phone numbers of helpful people to call when you are feeling anxious, including supportive friends, family, or a therapist.
- List of healthy activities that soothe and calm you, e.g. music, a bath, a walk, spending time with a pet.
- Sayings, songs, poems, and prayers that give you strength and make you feel more calm.
- Pictures of people you love and who love you and places that are relaxing.
- A stress ball or something to play with in your hands.
- Instructions for deep breathing.

Practices such as deep relaxation, acupuncture, meditation and yoga are proven methods for reducing anxiety. Some communities have trauma-sensitive yoga classes designed to help survivors of sexual violence release tension

and stress, feel grounded and calm, and connect with others in a confidential setting.

### Flashbacks, Nightmares and Intrusive Memories:

A possible reaction to trauma is to experience intense memories or to “re-live” what happened. This reaction is related to how our bodies and minds process traumatic events. If you are “re-living” the traumatic memories, the 5 Senses\* activity may be a helpful way to come back to the present time.

*Look around the room and find:*



**5** things you see



**4** things you can touch



**3** things you can hear



**2** things you can smell



**1** things you can taste

\*Used by permission, Stephanie Covington, Ph.D., Healing Trauma: Strategies for Abused Women, 2011.

Many methods for coping with anxiety are also effective for dealing with flashbacks and intrusive memories. A counselor trained in trauma can be especially helpful.

### Deep breathing may be a helpful coping skill.

**For example:**

- 1.** Breathe in through your nose for a count of four.
- 2.** Hold your breath for a count of four.
- 3.** Breathe out through your mouth for a count of four.
- 4.** Hold your breath out for a count of four.
- 5.** Repeat until your heart slows to normal and the feeling of panic eases.

You may prefer to come up with a simple, calming phrase to repeat instead of counting.

Creating a Self-Care Chart\* may be a helpful tool to keep on hand.



## Self-Care Chart

	Alone	With Others
Daytime		
Nighttime		

\*Used by permission, Stephanie S. Covington, Ph.D., *Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women*, 2003.

## Guilt and Self-Blame

You may struggle with thinking that if you had done something differently, then the assault wouldn't have happened. You may experience a loss of trust in your judgment. ***Even if you had a lapse in judgment, you did not deserve to be victimized.***

Sexual violence is NOT a punishment for a moment of poor judgment. People who perpetrate sexual violence tend to be very manipulative and controlling, doing or saying whatever they think will help them to achieve the assault. They will try to place responsibility on their victims by saying that the victim wanted it or was in some way to blame for what happened. It is **not** your fault.

Work to get back your sense of self-trust by learning about sexual violence. It may be helpful to read about sexual assault and recovery. We have included a reading list at the end of this handbook.

## Anger

It is natural to feel anger when our ability to control what happens to us is removed. You may feel angry because of the life disruption caused by the assault. You may feel anger not only towards the perpetrator, but also towards others and yourself for "letting it happen." You may feel angry with God or another spiritual power that this was allowed to happen to you.

*You have a right to your anger. Keep in mind, anger can be destructive if you use it unskillfully or direct it towards yourself.* Try to be clear about who is responsible for the violence (the perpetrator), and if necessary seek help to gain this clarity. Perpetrators of violence and abuse are always responsible for their actions.

Try to find constructive outlets for the anger. Physical activity, sharing feelings with supportive others, art or writing can all be helpful. If you have a spiritual or religious connection, it can help to talk with a spiritual leader who knows about sexual assault. Find what will work for you to express your anger in a healthy way.

## Trust

You may feel your ability to trust people and the world has been taken. You may also wonder if you can trust yourself and your ability to judge others or assess danger. You may find yourself reacting to others with increased fear,

caution and guardedness. The re-building of trust in you and in others requires time. Remember, no one has perfect judgment or can always know how others will behave in the future.<sup>21</sup>

## Powerlessness

You may feel as though you have lost the ability to control anything in your life. You may feel victimized by the assault, by the reactions of others, and even by “the system” (medical, law enforcement, etc.). It is common (although uncomfortable) to feel out of control and unsure of yourself.

## Safety

You may wonder if you will ever feel safe. Heightened awareness and fears of danger are fairly common after an assault. Allow yourself to think of options for helping yourself feel safer. Some examples may include: having a friend stay with you for a while, changing privacy settings and passwords on social networking sites, blocking people/numbers from your cell phone and social networking sites, installing new locks for your home, installing motion detector lights, or taking a self-defense course. The ability to feel safe again can return, in time, by taking small steps.

## Sexual Intimacy

It may take a while for your normal levels of sexual desire and response to return. You may wonder if you will ever desire and enjoy sexual intimacy again. You may have fears about whether or not your partner still finds you desirable.

You may avoid sex out of fear of being “triggered” and having a flashback of the attack. Or you may use sex as a means of coping. These and other reactions are common concerns among survivors of sexual violence. Allow yourself to find your own pace for rediscovering physical intimacy. Clearly communicate your concerns and needs about sexual contact or touching with your partner. It will be helpful if your partner will follow your cues regarding physical intimacy for a while. A counselor experienced in sexual trauma recovery for couples may be helpful.

Sexual healing is important when you are single too. Exploring your beliefs and triggers with a support person, doing kind and soothing things for yourself and masturbation can be part of healing.

**No one  
deserves to  
be sexually  
assaulted.**

## *Suggestions for promoting healing in the aftermath of a sexual assault*

### **Let Go of Self-Blame**

Often people wonder “why me?” and blame themselves for an assault. These feelings often arise from a common, mistaken belief that sexual violence happens to individuals who “ask for it” in some way.

The truth is that anyone can be a victim of sexual violence. The perpetrator is responsible for the assault. Even if you feel you used poor judgment, it is critical to understand that violence should never be “punishment.”

You may be bothered by painful thoughts and emotions. Remember, these thoughts and emotions are typical reactions to a physically and/or psychologically traumatic event. Remind yourself that post-trauma reactions are common as the body, mind, and spirit recover from what happened. Give yourself time and space to work with these thoughts and feelings. With healthy and supportive coping skills, post-trauma reactions will lessen over time.

### **Work with Stress Levels**

Dealing with the emotions and the legal process following an assault can be stressful and tiring. Promote your natural healing abilities by taking especially good care of yourself: get enough rest, eat nourishing food, and engage in healthful stress-reducing activities. Self-care is extremely important.

### **Spend Time with Loved Ones and Others Who Care About You**

Be with people who love you and want to support you in healthy ways. Seek out comfortable friends, those with whom you can safely “be yourself,” even if “yourself” feels awful. Stay connected with people who care about you. Resist isolating yourself and always wanting to be alone.

It is okay to ask for help. Talking with supportive people such as friends, family, victim advocates and counseling professionals will help your recovery.

In addition, it can be especially helpful to talk with others who have been in similar situations. Agencies and counselors may offer special groups for survivors. Talking about your feelings might be difficult, but can be key to

healing, no matter how long ago the violence occurred. Many survivors find that they feel better if they have the opportunity to freely and confidentially discuss any problems or emotions they are experiencing.

If possible, avoid the overuse of alcohol or other mind-altering substances to numb post-trauma effects. It really won't make the pain go away for long, and may produce more problems than solutions. Alcohol and drugs can actually decrease sleep quality. Good quality sleep (which is different than “passing out” from alcohol or drugs) promotes healing. Our bodies and minds have

an amazing natural ability to heal. Try to accept that you will probably be experiencing some uncomfortable thoughts and feelings for a while.

Your family and friends may struggle with similar feelings as you. They may mistakenly blame you or themselves for the assault. They may believe not talking about it will make the feelings go away.

Your family and friends may struggle with similar feelings as you. They may mistakenly blame you or themselves for the assault. They may believe not talking about it will make the feelings go away.

If the person with whom you choose to talk is not supportive, seek out someone else. If the unsupportive person is a spouse/partner, family member, or close friend, education may be helpful. Sharing literature about sexual assault or inviting family members to accompany you to a counseling session may help. Invite them to read *Chapter 7, For Family and Friends*.

Often, survivors don't seek help for many years after the violence, for many valid reasons. It is never too late to heal from sexual assault. Individuals who seek help even years later can experience a lot of relief from depression, anxiety, and fears.



## 4. HEALTH AND MEDICAL CONCERNS

*You may have many health or medical concerns following a sexual assault. Although sexual assault is a violent crime, the degree of physical injury is different for every person.*

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It is common for survivors to have no visible injury from a sexual assault. However, injuries are not the only health concern. Survivors may be worried about pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

Seeking care may be your first step toward reclaiming control over your body and your life.

### CHOOSING TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL

Following a sexual assault, there are options for you to consider when seeking treatment or deciding to go to a hospital or clinic. Your safety is the most important consideration. If you choose to meet with a health care provider, you can discuss your options for care and treatment.

Some communities in Colorado have Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) who are registered nurses specially trained to provide comprehensive care for patients who have experienced sexual assault. If your community does not have a SANE program, then other healthcare personnel will conduct the exam.

The choice to have a medical forensic exam is yours. It may feel like the last thing you want to do after a sexual assault; however addressing your health care needs is important. In addition, if you desire, a medical professional may attempt to collect evidence that could assist in the investigation and prosecution of a criminal case. It is common for the medical provider to:

- Obtain a medical history as well as an event history.
- Conduct a “head to toe” physical assessment.
- Perform a genital and anal exam depending on the history of the assault.
- Collect possible evidence if you desire.
- Offer emergency pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection (STI) and HIV prevention.
- Offer available community resources.

## COLORADO REPORTING OPTIONS

Under Colorado law, if you are between the ages of 18 and 69, you have the following reporting options. Individuals outside this age range may be subject to mandatory reporting requirements. You may:

### Law Enforcement Report

- Choose to report the crime to law enforcement. In this instance, if you have not already done so, medical personnel can assist you in making the report. If evidence collection is a part of your exam, law enforcement is responsible for storage and analysis of the evidence, as well as payment for the cost of the evidence portion of the exam. If you do report the crime, you can apply for Victim Compensation funds to help pay for any other costs associated with the sexual assault. For more information on Victim Compensation, please visit [http://dcj.state.co.us/ovp/comp\\_english.htm](http://dcj.state.co.us/ovp/comp_english.htm).

### Medical Report

- Choose not to participate in a law enforcement investigation, but still seek medical care that includes evidence collection. This is referred to as the “Medical Reporting” option. If you do not wish to cooperate with law enforcement, you can still receive a medical forensic exam. Law enforcement will be notified and provided your name and contact information, but you do not have to participate in the investigation. The State of Colorado – Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) will pay for the cost of the evidence collection, as well as up to \$2000 per patient, for additional medical costs associated with receiving the medical/forensic exam and treatment following a sexual assault. Local law enforcement is responsible for storing the evidence collected for at least two years. At any time after initially deciding not to report to law enforcement under this reporting option, you can change your mind and file a law enforcement report. The hospital will directly bill DCJ for the forensic examination and associated costs. Because of both federal and Colorado law you do not have to submit any payment for your forensic

**You have the right to confidential care in the healthcare environment.**

exam, but you may be responsible for associated medical care that exceeds \$2000 per patient.

### Anonymous Report

- Choose to obtain a medical forensic exam, but at that time choose not to participate in the criminal justice system. The evidence collected is released to law enforcement without the victim's name and contact information, but with a unique tracking number. The evidence will be stored, but will not be tested, for at least 2 years by local law enforcement. At any time after initially deciding not to report to law enforcement under this reporting option, you can change your mind and file a law enforcement report. The evidence tracking number will then be used to identify the correct evidence kit for your case. This tracking number will be annotated in your medical record and provided to you before leaving the hospital. The same State of Colorado – Division of Criminal Justice payment option in the medical reporting is available for the anonymous reporting option as well.

You have the right to stop the forensic exam (or decline any part of the exam) at any time.

### AT THE HOSPITAL

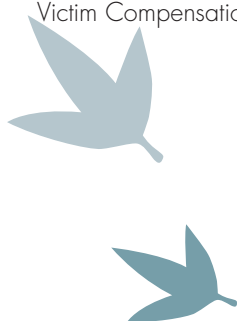
- You have a right to confidential care in the healthcare environment.
- You have a right to privacy. Your examination should occur in a private area or examination room. If this does not seem to be happening, ask that you be allowed to provide information in private.
- You may request to be attended by a female doctor/nurse and the hospital may provide this if they can accommodate the request.
- Law enforcement officers should not be in the examination room during the exam; however before or after the exam they may speak with you. They are responsible for beginning the investigation and securing the evidence after it is collected. If you do not want to talk to them about your case, you do not have to provide law enforcement with information.
- A hospital cannot refuse to treat sexual assault victims if they decline to report to law enforcement.
- You have the right to stop the forensic exam (or decline any part of the exam) at any time.
- If you receive a bill from the healthcare facility for other medical costs, you may be eligible for Crime Victim Compensation (through your county district attorney's office) or through the Sexual Assault Victim Emergency (SAVE) Payment Program. These programs may cover other medical expenses, such as tests for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, emergency contraception ("the morning after pill"), etc. Please see [Section 8: Survivor Resources](#) for referral information.

- For your comfort, you may have a friend or advocate with you. You do not have to go through this alone. You may want to ask if there are specially trained sexual assault victim advocates available through the hospital, the law enforcement agency, or a local, confidential sexual assault services agency. Their role is to provide support for you. They can help explain the process, assist you in finding helpful resources, and help you to understand your feelings.
- It is helpful to bring an extra set of clothes with you to the hospital, as the ones you are wearing may be taken as evidence. Some facilities may have extra clothing (sweat suits, underwear) available.
- Healthcare personnel should provide you with resources for follow-up care, for both medical and emotional needs.

The nurse or medical professional should evaluate the potential exposure to a sexually transmitted infection and explain courses of action available for dealing with this risk. You should be offered medication to prevent sexually transmitted infection and pregnancy. A urine or blood test for pregnancy may be done prior to the administration of any medication. Even if some time has passed, it may still be helpful to learn about your options from a medical provider.

You should be instructed to follow up in 10-14 days for a follow-up exam with your primary healthcare provider, Planned Parenthood, or the local Health Department for STI screening and evaluation for Hepatitis and HIV exposure. It is important to have the follow-up tests even if you have no symptoms. Baseline HIV testing and counseling regarding medication to prevent HIV can be obtained at the local Health Department.

If you are working with law enforcement and additional bruises or body surface injuries appear in the days following the exam, let the police know as these may provide additional evidence. Do receive additional medical treatment as necessary. Be sure to save receipts for follow-up treatment and medications as Victim Compensation may cover them.







## 5. LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE

*The Criminal Justice system's goal (which begins with the report to Law Enforcement) is to hold people accountable for their criminal activity and to punish according to the law.*

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It is important to know that reporting an assault to Law Enforcement and working with the Criminal Justice system are different from filing a lawsuit in a civil court case.

A civil court lawsuit is for the purpose of recovering monetary compensation for damages done. You may wish to explore either or both courses of action. More information about civil court lawsuits will follow in the next chapter.

### THE DECISION TO REPORT

Reporting a sexual assault to law enforcement is a very individual decision. A person's choice about whether or not to report may be affected by personal, cultural or other reasons. Reporting will require that you remember and tell the details of the assault, which can be emotionally difficult.

People choose to report for many reasons including: to regain some sense of control by taking legal action, to attempt to hold the perpetrator accountable for the assault, and/or to help to protect others by getting a sexual offender off the streets. People also choose NOT to report for many reasons including: privacy concerns, fear of law enforcement, safety concerns, fear of the perpetrator, having friends in common with the perpetrator, and/or feeling emotionally unable to move forward with an investigation at that time.



Each person's experience is unique and the decision to report is up to the individual. There is not one way that is "right" for every victim. While making your decision about reporting, it might help you to discuss your options with someone who is knowledgeable about the laws, like a victim advocate or an attorney (see [Legal Resources in Chapter 8](#)).



If you choose not to report, please still take care of yourself by receiving medical care and emotional support.



You can still get emotional support for yourself even if you choose not to speak with Law Enforcement. Phone hotlines exist so you can talk about your situation anonymously and make informed choices.

Individuals between the ages of 18 and 69 can decide whether or not to participate in the criminal justice system. Sexual assaults that involve minors or other protected persons are often reported by "mandatory reporters." Mandatory reporters include hotline advocates, doctors, teachers, counselors, and other professionals who work with youth, people with disabilities, and the elderly. They are obligated by law to report any form of abuse on children or other protected persons, including sexual assault and sexual abuse. These people must report if a young person or other protected persons has been sexually abused or assaulted to provide protection for those individuals. These reporting laws demonstrate that the safety and well-being of at risk individuals is important. These reporting laws demonstrate that the safety and well-being of young people is important.



If you are under 18 and have been, or currently are, the victim of sexual violence or abuse, you should not have to continue to live in fear of the next incident or emotional pain from previous incidents. There are people who may be able to help find a way to make the abuse stop.

## STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS (TIME LIMITS FOR REPORTING)

There are different time limits for reporting sexual assault cases. Those time limits may change, depending on whether it is a criminal, civil, or federal case. The Statute of Limitations also varies, depending on the age of the victim (and perpetrator) and if the case is a felony or a misdemeanor. The Statute of Limitations should only be interpreted by an attorney, on a case-by-case basis.

**Remember:** you don't have to go through any of these steps alone.

Many communities have confidential rape crisis centers and/or victim-witness programs connected with law enforcement agencies. You may have many other concerns and questions about what to expect, and your rights during the law

enforcement investigation and the criminal justice process. Don't be afraid to ask questions of the investigator, prosecutor, or advocate.

- Victim Advocates are trained and have experience with the criminal justice system; they can support and guide you through the process. Some advocates can offer you confidentiality, while others cannot.
- Confidentiality means what you tell someone can be kept private. It is important for you to know the extent of your right of confidentiality. Law Enforcement personnel, including Victim's Advocates from Law Enforcement agencies, cannot hold back information that you share with them that is relevant to the case, even if you wish it to remain confidential.
- Campus programs or sexual assault community programs (often called rape crisis centers) have specially trained victim advocates who DO have the ability to keep information about the sexual assault in confidence (if you are between the ages of 18 and 69).
- Many licensed mental health providers and counselors have the ability to maintain your privacy, except in the case of sexual assault or abuse against a child or minor.

## MAKING A REPORT TO THE POLICE: COMMON PROCEDURES

When you call the police to report a sexual assault an officer or detective will respond to the location of your call. The responding officer will ask for some basic information regarding the sexual assault and then a decision will be made regarding going to the hospital for a forensic evidence collection examination.

If you do not require immediate medical attention, the officer will ask you several detailed questions about the sexual assault. For example, the officer may ask you the location, what happened, a description of the person that committed the assault, etc. The officer will ask you these questions while

the details are fresh in your mind. Under both federal and Colorado law, law enforcement is not allowed to ask or require you to take a polygraph examination (a lie detector test) as a condition for moving forward with the investigation.<sup>22</sup>

After a trauma like sexual assault, it can be hard to remember everything that happened. It can be helpful to write down whatever you remember as soon as possible. You can then return back to these notes and add more details as you remember over the following days. It is not unusual to remember only bits and pieces at first, and with time, to remember more information.

Some questions the police will ask will be very personal, but a detailed account of the assault is important to the investigation. You may be asked to go step-by-step through everything that happened. It is important to give as much detail as possible, even if it seems unimportant or embarrassing. They may also ask you

to use very precise language, including proper names for body parts. This is often uncomfortable because we aren't used to saying these words, especially to someone we don't know very well. However, this can be important information.

If you were drinking or taking drugs prior to the assault, it is important to inform law enforcement. The police are not there to approve or disapprove of you, but it is important that the officer understands exactly what happened so that they know how to conduct the investigation. In Colorado, it is a crime to have sex with a person who is not able to give consent because of alcohol or drugs.

## EVIDENCE COLLECTION

You may be asked by the officer and/or a detective to help locate the scene of the crime. Then the crime scene may be sealed off and searched for evidence. Law Enforcement may need to obtain a warrant before doing any search.

Your body and clothing are valuable sources of evidence. The police will need to take the clothing you wore before, during and/or after the sexual assault as it may contain evidence such as fibers, hairs, or seminal fluid critical to the investigation. This evidence can be used to connect the suspect to the crime.

The police will keep your clothing throughout the investigation. There are new laws in Colorado regarding the return of evidence in cases where DNA evidence is obtained. You will need to check with the Law Enforcement agency or the District Attorney to find out if your property is available for

release. If you do have your property returned, it may be damaged (holes cut in it to remove an important piece containing evidence, etc.). If you choose to have your property returned, you may want to prepare for its return. Often survivors have mixed feelings when they receive their personal items. It can re-trigger memories of the assault. Sometimes your property is returned by

mail. If you would like to be notified about this or would not like your property returned, talk to a victim advocate or the law enforcement officer in charge of the case to find out how to have your wishes respected.

In addition to collecting evidence from your body and clothing, the police may take fingerprints (using a black powder that can be messy) and photographs, especially of any injuries or marks.

Evidence testing is based on your consent. Testing will not "prove" the sexual assault occurred, but can provide important information about the case. When a kit is tested by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation or another laboratory, a DNA profile of the perpetrator is developed from the swabs in the kit. The profile is then searched against a large database of convicted offender and arrestee profiles to see if this perpetrator is connected to any other crimes.

## The Follow-Up Investigation

A detective will be assigned to investigate your case. Sometimes it is necessary for the detective to re-interview you in detail about the sexual assault. Remember that the more details you are able to provide, the more information the detective can include in the investigation. The detective may also ask you for a medical release, if you went to a medical facility because of the assault.

The detective may want to photograph any visible injuries. If you do not know the perpetrator's name, you may be asked to look at several photographs of possible suspects, in either a "mug-shot" book or a "photo line-up." A police artist may assist you in doing a composite drawing of an unknown suspect.

At any time, you may contact the detective with questions regarding the investigation or with additional information you remember.

## THE ARREST

The length of time it takes to make an arrest differs with each case. An arrest may not ever be made because the police do not identify or find the perpetrator; or there may not be enough evidence to provide "probable cause" that the perpetrator committed the crime. This does not mean the police do not believe you.

If there is enough evidence and the perpetrator can be located, that person will be arrested and taken to jail. A bail amount will be set and the perpetrator may be able to post bail and get out of jail. Bail is the amount of money the perpetrator must pay to secure release. If the perpetrator (now a defendant) does not have the funds to make bail, the bail money may be paid by a bail bond company as a loan.

You have the right to contact the jail by phone or in writing and ask to be notified if the perpetrator is released. Usually, a condition of bail is that the suspect must not have any contact with the victim. If the suspect attempts to contact you, call the police immediately. You can also apply for a protection order, which prevents the perpetrator from seeing or contacting you.

There is also a Colorado Statewide resource called Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE). VINE helps crime victims obtain information about the custody status of jail inmates under supervision in the Colorado county jails that are online with the system. Victims can register with VINE to receive free, confidential, automated custody status updates on offenders. Additionally, anyone may register with VINE via [vinelink.com](http://vinelink.com) or by calling VINE at 1-888-263-8463 to receive custody updates on offenders. This service applies to county jails that have elected to participate at this time. The Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC) has not been added to VINE. Please do not depend only on VINE for your protection. Maintain other contacts with your advocate and law enforcement officers assigned to your case.

If an arrest is made, then you will become involved with another part of the legal process, the court system and the Office of the District Attorney.

### **YOUR RIGHTS AS A VICTIM:<sup>23</sup>**

- To be treated with fairness, respect and dignity and to have a swift case resolution.
- To be informed of and be present at all critical stages of the criminal justice process.
- To be present and heard in court for any bond reduction, amendment of charges, disposition, sentencing, or continuances.
- To have a safe waiting area near the courtroom.
- To confer with the District Attorney's Office before the case is resolved or goes to trial and to be informed of the outcome.
- To prepare a Victim Impact Statement and to be heard at sentencing.
- To have restitution ordered.
- To pursue a civil judgment against anyone who has committed a crime against you.
- To be informed of restorative justice options for the offender.
- To be informed of post-conviction release or modification hearings.
- To get your property back quickly when it is no longer needed for prosecution.

As the victim of a crime, you may be eligible for Crime Victim Compensation. These funds are available only for victims working with law enforcement or prosecution.

- To apply for Victim Compensation for crime-related losses such as therapy and medical expenses.
- To be free from intimidation, harassment, or abuse and informed about what steps can be taken if you are subjected to intimidation, harassment, or abuse.
- To be provided with appropriate employer intercession services regarding court appearances and meetings with criminal justice officials.
- To be notified of any change in the status or the release from custody of the accused.
- To be informed of the filing of a petition to cease sex offender registration.
- To be informed of the results of any court-ordered HIV testing.
- To prevent any party of any court proceeding from compelling testimony

regarding a victim's address, telephone number, place of employment or other locating information.

- To be informed of the availability of community resources and financial assistance.
- To be informed of the process for enforcing the Victim Rights Act.

These funds are available to assist victims of violent crimes with losses sustained as a result of the crime. Victim Compensation may pay for counseling costs, medical expenses, property damage and lost wages as a result of the crime. Contact your local Office of the District Attorney for more information and an application. A Victim Advocate can assist you in this process.



## 6. THE COURT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

*Sexual Assault, like other crimes, is viewed legally as a crime against the State rather than against the person. It is the responsibility of the Office of the District Attorney to file the charges against the suspect. For this reason, in a criminal case, you do not have to hire an attorney as you would in a civil case.*

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### OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

As a victim, you are viewed as a victim/witness to a crime committed against the State. The Office of the District Attorney (DA) makes the decision to prosecute based on the strength of the evidence and witnesses. If they decide they are not taking your case to court, it is your right to know the reason for this decision. Again, this does not mean that the DA doesn't believe you.

If the Office of the District Attorney files charges in your sexual assault case, the State provides a prosecutor (a District Attorney or Deputy/Assistant) as the lawyer in your case. You will be notified of the name of the prosecutor assigned to your case. Under the Victims' Rights Act, you have the right to meet with the prosecutor before you testify in court.

When your case is filed with the Office of the District Attorney, an advocate (often called the Victim Witness Coordinator) from the District Attorney's Victim/Witness Office should be assigned to your case. The advocate's role is to explain the legal process, and provide you support. The advocate can answer your questions, give information, ensure that your input is considered in the case, and act as your main point of contact with the prosecutor in the case.<sup>24</sup> This type of advocate is a system-based advocate, and does not have the same confidentiality as a community-based advocate. Please be aware that anything you share with a system-based advocate can be passed on to Law Enforcement or the District Attorney, and subsequently the Defense Attorney.



In most jurisdictions, cases begin with the filing of a criminal complaint. Criminal complaints are filed in County Court. The bond hearing, filing of charges and preliminary hearing are conducted in County Court. Once a preliminary hearing is conducted and a judge finds probable cause, or a defendant waives the preliminary hearing, the case goes to District Court.



## THE DEFENSE

The defense attorney is the lawyer who represents the “defendant” in court. The “defendant” is the person reported to have committed the crime, or the perpetrator. The defense attorney may want to talk with you before you testify in court. It is your

decision whether or not you speak with the defense attorney. It is strongly recommended that you tell the prosecutor about any contact you have with the defense attorney. Remember that the defense attorney will try to prove the defendant’s innocence and your words could be used in their defense. If you decide to speak with the defense attorney, you may notify the prosecutor and request that he or she be present during the interview.

## THE COURT

A court of law has specific rules, language, and protocols. Most people are not familiar with courtrooms and court procedures. Publicly discussing details of a sexual assault in a courtroom may be very difficult.

The Victim/Witness Coordinator from the District Attorney’s Victim/Witness Office can be valuable in helping you to understand the court system. You can tell that person your needs and ask any questions you have about procedures and the process. This person is there to help you with the process.

The criminal justice process may seem very difficult because of the personal and emotional needs following a sexual trauma. You will not have control of the days and times of the hearings. There may be last minute postponements (or delays) causing you to “prepare” over and over again (emotionally and mentally) for a court appearance. You may have to talk about the assault many times. You may have to see the perpetrator in the courtroom and you can’t control the verdict. This is why having supportive people who care about you during this time can be so important. See [Chapter 8: Survivor Resources](#) for referrals to support services in your area. Some survivors find that emotional healing doesn’t seem to begin until after the court process is finished.

## COURT HEARINGS

**Advisement:** Once the case moves to the District Attorney’s Office, the perpetrator will be referred to as “the defendant.” The defendant is advised of the charges on which the arrest was made and the possible penalties for the crime. If the defendant is still in jail, the judge may do this through closed-circuit television. In most cases, bail will also be set at the time of the advisement or at the filing of charges. If the defendant is able to post the bail, often with the help of a bail bondsman, they will be released pending trial.

**Preliminary Hearing:** This hearing is a “probable cause” hearing, in which the judge hears testimony and determines if there is enough evidence to take the case to trial. The defendant has a right to attend this hearing but can also waive this right. If the defendant does not attend the preliminary hearing, the case will not be immediately set for trial. If the judge determines that there is enough evidence to take the case, then the case is “bound over” for trial. [At this time, the judge should order the defendant to have an HIV test with the results released to you, if you wish.] This is the first time you may be subpoenaed (given notice that you are required to appear in court) to testify. If you receive a subpoena, call the prosecutor to arrange a meeting or phone conversation before your testimony.

**Arraignment:** During this time, the defendant will enter a plea of guilty or not guilty before the judge. This is done after the case is “bound over” for trial at the preliminary hearing in District Court.

**Pre-Trial Motions Hearing:** This is a hearing where the prosecutor and defense attorney present arguments to the judge as to what evidence or information will be used at the trial. You may or may not be asked to testify at this hearing.

**Plea Negotiations:** Many cases are settled without having to go to trial by negotiations between the prosecutor and the defense attorney. A plea bargain is when the defendant pleads guilty to the crime or a lesser crime for a lighter sentence.

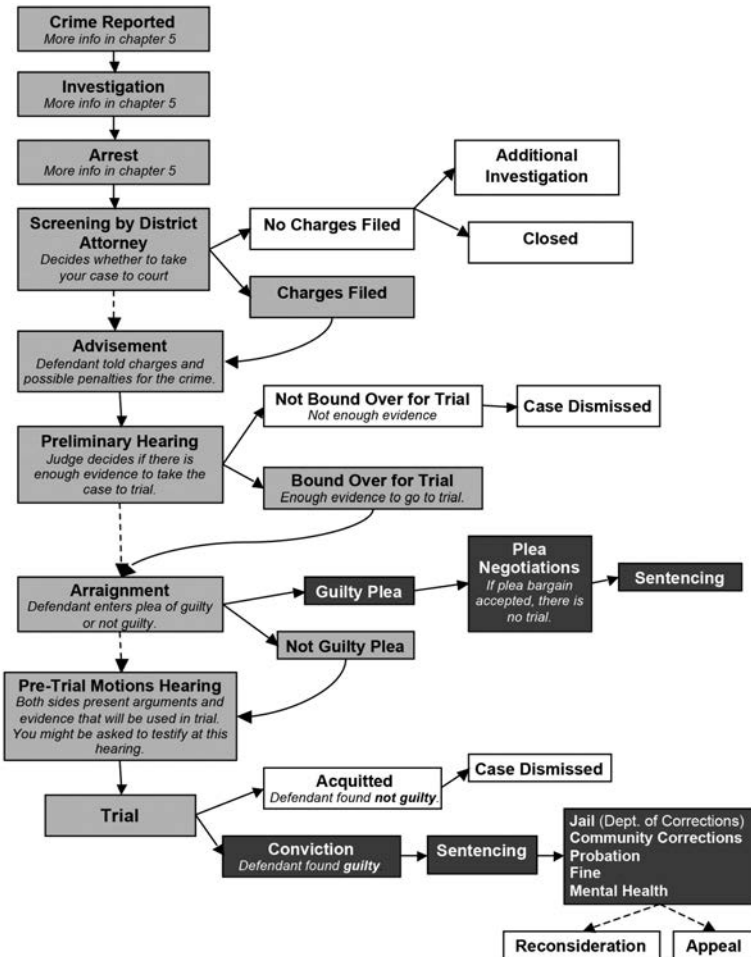
The prosecutor will discuss plea negotiations with you, and you should express your feelings about it. However, it is up to the prosecutor to decide whether to take the terms of the plea bargain to the judge. If a plea bargain is accepted, there will be no trial. Many survivors have mixed feelings about a plea agreement. You may feel relief at not having to testify and at having a quicker ending to the case. You may also feel disappointment or anger about the lesser charge.

**Trial:** The District Attorney’s office prosecutes a case by presenting witnesses and evidence to the jury. They must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant committed the crime. The jury makes the final decision (verdict) as to whether the state has proven the case beyond a reasonable doubt. If proven, the verdict will be guilty. If not proven, the verdict will be not guilty. A not guilty

verdict does not mean that you were not believed or that what happened to you was not sexual assault, but rather that the state failed to meet its burden of proof.

**Continuances:** Sometimes a hearing or the trial is “continued.” This means the hearing or trial will be set for a later date. You will be told of the new date.

**Sentencing:** If the defendant is found guilty at the trial or pleads guilty in a plea bargain, the judge will give the sentence. The Probation Office investigates the defendant’s background and makes a sentencing recommendation to the judge. You have the right to speak at sentencing or write a letter to inform the judge of the impact of the assault on you and your feelings regarding the



Adapted from “The Criminal Justice Process” flow chart in “If Someone You Know is a Victim of Assault,” Jennifer Graham author, ChildSafe, City of Fort Collins, et al.

sentence. These “Victim Impact Statements” can be important and useful, to both the court and also as a part of your healing and recovery.

### **Criminal Justice Flow Chart**

Rocky Mountain Victim Law Center (RMVlc) is a Colorado resource that may be of assistance during a criminal case. RMVlc is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides free legal representation for victims of sexual assault and other violent crimes through the criminal justice process. RMVlc assists with the enforcement of the Victim’s Rights Act and operates as independent legal counsel to protect victim’s legal rights and best interests. This can range from providing information and support to victims, to meeting with police or prosecutors to ensure that both the spirit and the letter of the law are being followed, and/or actively filing and litigating motions during the criminal case on behalf of the crime victim. If you have questions about the process or about your rights you can contact RMVlc by phone at 303-295-2001 or by email at [info@rmvictimlaw.org](mailto:info@rmvictimlaw.org).

If you have further questions about your rights under the Victim Rights Act, you can contact the Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice Office for Victims’ Programs at 303-239-5719 or <http://dcj.state.co.us/ovp>.

## **CIVIL LAWSUIT**

In addition to criminal prosecution, you can hire a private attorney to sue the perpetrator or a third party (school, organization, etc.) for personal injury in civil court. If you win this lawsuit, the perpetrator or third party will be ordered to pay money for damages caused, including medical expenses, loss of income, and pain and suffering. Punitive damages may also be ordered, to punish the perpetrator.

You may feel much more in control over a civil lawsuit. The rules and procedures are different than in criminal court. However, this type of action needs to be considered carefully. If the perpetrator or third party owns little of value and has no income, a civil suit could result in a judgment that is impossible to collect. For additional information, consulting with an attorney is recommended.<sup>25</sup>



## 7. FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

*Sexual violence can have a big impact on those who are in any type of a close relationship with a survivor. The assault can produce confusion and many emotions for loved ones. It is painful to think about someone we love being harmed in this way.*

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If someone you love has been the victim of sexual violence, there are a number of things you can do to help with the healing process. Although you may naturally tend to focus on the survivor, it is also important that you deal with your own thoughts and feelings about sexual violence so you can be supportive. You may experience intense reactions due to caring for the survivor. Just as the survivor's greatest task is self-care, you also need to find ways to take care of yourself.

To be truly supportive to the survivor, you need to respond to feelings that the assault raises for you. It is important to be willing to face your fears and prejudices about sexual violence and to have accurate information. Our culture holds a lot of myths about sexual assault that can greatly hold back the healing and recovery of both the survivor and their loved ones. Reading other parts of this booklet may help.

### HOW TO BE HELPFUL

Sometimes people believe that denial is the easiest way to deal with a crisis. You may find yourself telling your loved one, "don't worry/don't cry/don't think about it." Such reactions can make the survivor feel unheard, and denial may not be a helpful response for many reasons. Sexual violence is very stressful. To imply that it isn't or shouldn't be a difficult time is disrespectful and discounts the survivor. This attitude can create more problems than it solves. Allow your loved one to have emotional reactions.

Sometimes the most supportive thing you can do is to LISTEN. You do not have to (and probably cannot) "fix it." This can feel difficult as it is never easy to

witness the pain of a loved one. Yet being a supportive witness to that pain often helps empower the survivor. Listening and being present show that you accept and love them, even with their reactions.

It is important to recognize your limitations. If it is too much for you, seek help from someone trained in counseling survivors of sexual violence. This is not a failure on your part. The organizations listed in [Chapter 8: Survivor Resources](#) can refer you to programs that offer services for family members and loved ones.

If the survivor becomes suicidal or physically self-destructive, seek professional help immediately to keep them safe.

## WE ALL REACT DIFFERENTLY

People react differently to the assault of a loved one. Some of these reactions may be influenced by culture and society. For example, people who identify as male in some cultures may react initially with anger and a desire for revenge. While anyone may have these feelings when hearing that a loved one was sexually assaulted, certain individuals or groups may blame themselves, out of the desire to have been a “better protector,” and to defend against their own feelings of helplessness. Acting on these feelings may not be helpful to the survivor. The survivor needs you to be safe, reasonable, and supportive in taking the steps necessary to heal and recover.

Other friends and family members may have their own strong reactions of fear and vulnerability when hearing about the violence, especially if they identify with groups that are often the target of sexual assault in our society. They may consciously or subconsciously send the survivor the message to “not talk about it.” It is important to be aware of your reactions. It is also important that the survivor, as much as possible, has the power to make decisions after the assault.

The survivor may react towards you in confusing ways. They may not seem like themselves for a while. The individual you love has been deeply affected by this experience, and it will take a while for your loved one to sort through the thoughts and emotions that typically occur after an assault.

Someone who has been sexually assaulted has experienced the ultimate loss of power.

Survivors may have challenges trusting others and themselves. This struggle can impact many relationships. Reading other sections of this booklet may help you understand the trauma and aftermath of sexual victimization.

Helping your loved one regain a sense of control can be very important. It is common for survivors to struggle with making even small decisions after

an assault. Give your ideas, but allow your loved one to make decisions. Regaining a sense of control over one's life is an important step towards healing from violence. It also is important for survivors to know you trust them to make decisions.

The system is not perfect. The survivor must be the one to decide what to do.

It is especially important that the survivor makes the decision about whether or not to report the assault to law enforcement. You can provide your thoughts about this, but then you should let the survivor choose whether or not to pursue further action. Going through the law enforcement investigation and the Criminal Justice system can take a long time, be very stressful, and ultimately may not result in a conviction.

**No matter what, it wasn't their fault.**

Sexual assaults can occur under circumstances where the survivor may have been involved in activities or behaviors others may question or disapprove of (use of alcohol or drugs, going to unknown places, not locking the doors, fighting back, not fighting back, etc.). Please remember that a decision to participate in any of these behaviors is never the "cause" of a sexual assault. Violent, abusive behavior is always the responsibility of the perpetrator.

Poor judgment or risky behavior does not justify being victimized by violence, or give someone the right to rape. Often, trying to place the "cause" of the assault on something the victim did or didn't do shows our desire to pretend that we can be in total control over our lives. We like to believe that as long as we never make a poor judgment, we will always be safe.

Trying to be aware and careful may help with safety, but sexual violence is never an appropriate consequence for any behaviors or choices. The perpetrator chose to commit an act of great physical and psychological harm toward another human being in the most violating and degrading way possible. That is the responsibility of the perpetrator, and only that person needs to be held accountable.

Being the victim to or witness of violence is a significant life stressor. All large stressors require that people change and adapt so they can regain balance in their lives. The changes you see in your loved one and in your relationship may be difficult. It may seem that it takes a long time for the survivor and the people in the survivor's life to find a new, comfortable balance. Have patience and know that you and your loved one do not have to do this without guidance. You are not alone. Thousands of survivors and their families

**It may take a long time to heal.**

heal and recover from sexual violence, and there are skilled supportive services available. You will find referral sources at the back of this booklet (see [Chapter 8: Survivor Resources](#)).

## ABOUT SEXUAL INTIMACY

Being a victim of sexual violence may affect feelings about sexual intimacy for some time. Sexual contact can stir up feelings and reactions for victims, which are related to the violence.

If you are the sexual partner of the survivor, try to have patience. The survivor may desire little or no physical contact for a while or may wish to limit contact strictly to affection. Remember, the survivor lost the power to control what happened during the sexual assault. Survivors often need to regain confidence in the ability to have physical control over their bodies.

It is important to recognize the possibility of temporary change in an intimate relationship caused by the effects of the assault. This is part of the healing process following a sexual assault. Remember that although some things may change for your partner and your relationship, most survivors recover from the trauma of sexual violence and re-establish loving intimate relationships.

### Some Important Things You Can Do:

- Believe the survivor.
- Be yourself – treat the survivor as you typically do. Try to avoid being overly protective.
- Express your caring and concern for the survivor.
- Allow the survivor to have and express feelings.
- Reassure the survivor that confusing and painful feelings are common.
- Reassure the survivor that the assault is the perpetrator’s fault, not the survivor’s fault. Do not blame or judge the survivor or the survivor’s actions.
- Do not minimize the sexual violence or convey that it was not a “big deal.”
- Remember, feelings of powerlessness can be a big issue. You may provide support and guidance, but survivors should make their own decisions about how to proceed.
- Encourage, but do not force the survivor to talk. Listen in a caring way, but don’t try to “fix it.”
- Help the survivor understand the importance of getting medical attention. Gently encourage seeking help from those with expertise in sexual violence (refer to [Chapter 8: Survivor Resources](#)).



- Find healthy ways to deal with your anger, rage, and fears without further traumatizing the survivor.
- Respect the confidentiality of the survivor.
- TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. Make sure YOU have emotional support.



## 8. SURVIVOR RESOURCES

*There are many resources in Colorado for survivors and their loved ones. The national 24-hour hotlines listed below will direct you to the local resources near you.*

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These resources can help you decide what services you need and then locate agencies in your area to assist you through this difficult time.

Community-based rape crisis centers, campus, and military programs often provide crisis intervention, short and long-term counseling, and support groups. Their advocates can also often go with you to the hospital and/or court.

If you are worried about confidentiality, before you share any information, be sure to ask the agency or hotline advocate if you can speak confidentially. Different agencies have different confidentiality policies.

### **CCASA — COLORADO COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT**

1330 Fox Street, Suite 2  
Denver, CO 80204  
303-839-9999

Visit [www.ccasa.org](http://www.ccasa.org) for a list of Colorado agencies.

### **NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)**

1-800-656-HOPE

RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline. This nationwide partnership of more than 1,100 local rape treatment hotlines

provides victims of sexual assault with free, confidential services around the clock. This number will route you to the nearest rape crisis hotline based on where you are calling.

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

### **1 in 6**

“One in Six” is a national resource for male survivors of sexual assault. Their mission is to help men who have had unwanted or abusive sexual experiences in childhood live healthier, happier lives. One in Six offers a free lending library of resources to help men (and their friends and family) deal with the assault, answers to FAQs, and opportunities for men to share their stories.

[www.1in6.org](http://www.1in6.org)

### **Just Detention International (JDI)**

Just Detention International (JDI) is a health and human rights organization that seeks to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention. JDI works to hold

government officials accountable for prisoner rape, to promote public attitudes that value the health and safety of people behind bars, and to ensure that survivors of this type of violence get the help they need.

Anyone who has experienced sexual abuse in custody – including sexual harassment, sexual assault, or any form of sexual contact based on fear of further violence or other threats – is welcome to contact JDI for support and a packet of information and self-help materials.

- Prisoners can write to JDI via confidential, legal mail by addressing their letter to:  
Cynthia Totten, Attorney at Law  
CA Attorney Reg. # 199266  
3325 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 340  
Los Angeles, CA 90010
- Survivors, their loved ones, or others who are looking for ways to help can also contact JDI at:  
Just Detention International  
3325 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 340  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
(213) 384-1400  
[info@justdetention.org](mailto:info@justdetention.org)  
[www.justdetention.org](http://www.justdetention.org)

### **Rocky Mountain Victim Law Center (RMVlc)**

RMVlc is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides free legal representation for victims of sexual assault and other violent crimes through the criminal justice process. RMVlc assists with the enforcement of the Victim’s Rights Act and operates as independent legal counsel to protect victim’s legal rights and best interests. This can range from providing information and support to victims, to meeting with police or prosecutors to ensure that both the spirit and

the letter of the law are being followed, and/or actively filing and litigating motions during the criminal case on behalf of the crime victim.

303-295-2001

[info@rmvictimlaw.org](mailto:info@rmvictimlaw.org)

### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224

This hotline will link individuals to help in their area using a nationwide database that includes detailed information on domestic violence shelters, other emergency shelters, legal advocacy and assistance programs, and social service programs. If you have experienced intimate partner sexual violence, this hotline will be able to refer you to resources in your area.

[www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org)

### **Stalking Resource Center**

The Stalking Resource Center's mission is to enhance the ability of professionals, organizations, volunteers and systems to effectively respond to stalking.

1-800-FYI-CALL, M-F 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM EST, or email [gethelp@ncvc.org](mailto:gethelp@ncvc.org)

[www.ncvc.org/src](http://www.ncvc.org/src)

### **Anti-Violence Project**

The Anti-Violence Project is a network of groups that empowers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and HIV-affected communities and allies to end all forms of violence through organizing and education, and supports survivors of all forms of violence – including hate crimes, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence – through counseling and advocacy.

- National Contact Information:  
24-hour bilingual hotline, 212.714.1141  
[www.avp.org/index.php](http://www.avp.org/index.php)
- Survivors Organizing for Liberation (formerly the Colorado Anti-Violence Project):  
Client: (888) 557-4441  
Office: (303) 839-5204  
[www.solcolorado.org](http://www.solcolorado.org)

### **Safe Helpline**

Department of Defense (DoD) Safe Helpline is a crisis support service for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault. Safe Helpline provides live, one-on-one support and information to the DoD community. The service is confidential, anonymous, secure, and available worldwide. You can get help via hotline, text, group chat, or an online helpline. This organization is run through the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN).

Hotline: 877-995-5247

<https://safehelpline.org>



## 9. RECOMMENDED READING LIST

*The books on this list discuss various forms of sexual assault and abuse, and may be difficult to read. Please consider having a self-care plan prepared as you read through resources that deal with sexual abuse. Remember, it is okay to stop reading if it is too difficult or does not feel like the right time.*

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**Aranow, Vicki & Lang, Monique** (2000). *Journey to Wholeness: Healing from the Trauma of Rape*. Learning Publications; ISBN: 1556911475.

**Bass, Ellen & Davis, Laura** (2008). *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse*. 20th Anniversary Ed. William Morrow Paperbacks; ISBN: 0061284335.

**Brand, Julie A.** (2007). *A Mother's Touch: Surviving Mother-Daughter Sexual Abuse*. Trafford Publishing; ISBN: 1425105645.

**Easteal, Patricia** (2006). *Real Rape, Real Pain: Help for Women Sexually Assaulted by Male Partners*. Hybrid Publishers; ISBN: 187646234.

**Francisco, Patricia Weaver** (2000). *Telling: A Memoir of Rape and Recovery*. Cliff Street Books; ISBN: 0060930764.

**Friedman, Jaclyn & Valenti, Jessica** (2008). *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Empowerment and a World Without Rape*. Seal Press; ISBN: 1580052576.

**Gartner, Richard** (2005). *Beyond Betrayal: Taking Charge of Your Life After Boyhood Sexual Abuse*. Wiley; ISBN 0471619108.

**Graber, Ken** (1991). *Ghosts in the Bedroom: A Guide for the Partners of Incest Survivors*. HCI; ISBN: 155874116X.

**Haines, Staci** (1999). *The Survivor's Guide to Sex: How to Have an Empowered Sex Life After Child Sexual Abuse*. Cleis Press; ISBN: 1573440795.

**Lew, Mike** (2004). *Victims No Longer: The Classic Guide for Men Recovering from Sexual Child Abuse*. Harper Paperbacks; ISBN: 006053026X.

**Maltz, Wendy** (2001). *The Sexual Healing Journey*. Quil; ISBN: 0060959649.

**Matsakis, Aphrodite** (2003). *The Rape Recovery Handbook: Step-By-Step Help for Survivors of Sexual Assault*. New Harbinger Publications; ISBN: 1572243376.

**McCall, Catherine** (2009). *When the Piano Stops: A Memoir of Healing from Sexual Abuse*. Seal Press; ISBN: 1580052673.

**Pierce-Baker, Charlotte** (2000). *Surviving the Silence: Black Women's Stories of Rape*. W.W. Norton & Company; ISBN: 0393320456.

**Raine, Venable** (1999). *After Silence; Rape and My Journey Back*. Three Rivers Press; ISBN: 0060959649.

**Robinson, Lori S.** (2003). *I Will Survive: The African American Guide to Healing from Sexual Assault and Abuse*. Seal Press; ISBN: 1580050808.

**Ryerson, Marjorie** (2010). *The Journey of Healing: Wisdom from Survivors of Sexual Abuse*. Safer Society Press; ISBN: 1884444865.

**Sperlich, Mickey** (2008). *Survivor Moms: Women's Stories of Birthing, Mothering, and Healing After Sexual Abuse*. Motherbaby Press; ISBN: 1890446416.

**Stern, Jessica** (2010). *Denial: A Memoir of Terror*. Ecco; ISBN: 0061626651.

**Vanzant, Iyanla** (2000). *Yesterday I Cried*. Fireside; ISBN: 0684867486.

**Warshaw, Robin** (1994). *I Never Called It Rape: the Ms. Report on Recognizing, Fighting, and Surviving Date and Acquaintance Rape*. Harper Perennial; ISBN: 0060925728.

**Weaver Francisco, Rachel** (2000). *Telling: A Memoir of Rape and Recovery*. Harper Paperbacks; ISBN: 0060930764.

## Kids/Young Adult

**Akers, Ellery** (2009). *Sarah's Waterfall: A Healing Story About Sexual Abuse*. Safer Society; ISBN: 1884444792. (Recommended for girls ages 7-12)

**Lehman, Carolyn** (2005). *Strong at the Heart: How It Feels to Heal from Sexual Abuse*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux; ISBN: 0374372829. (Young adult reading level)

**Mather, Cynthia L.** (2004). *How Long Does It Hurt: A Guide to Recovering from Incest and Sexual Abuse for Teenagers, Their Friends, and Their Families*. Jossey-Bass; ISBN: 0787975699. (Recommended for teenagers and adults)

## Fiction

**Anderson, Laurie Halse** (2011). *Speak*. Square Fish; ISBN: 0312674392. (Recommended for teenagers and adults)

**Chobosky, Stephen** (2012). *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. MTV Books; ISBN: 1451696191. (Recommended for teenagers and adults)

**Scott, Mindi** (2012). *Live Through This*. Simon Pulse; ISBN: 1442440600. (Young adult reading level)



## 10. END NOTES AND REFERENCES

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5. National Victim Assistance Academy Textbook. 2002.
6. Information for the Survivor of Sexual Assault. Ozark Rape Crisis Center, Inc., 1999.
7. "Colorado Revised Statutes, 18-3-402: Sexual Assault."
8. "Colorado Revised Statutes, 18-3-404: Unlawful Sexual Contact."
9. "Colorado Revised Statutes, 18-3-405: Sexual Assault on a Child."
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FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

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