



Toward Healing & Justice:

A Handout for Survivors of Sexual Violence

Important Information & Referrals Now That Your Kit is Being Tested

> You've recently had a conversation about new developments in your case. We are very sorry this crime happened to you and there hasn't been resolution. Whenever there are changes, a lot of new and old feelings may come up—even if the assault may have been a long time ago. This handout is intended to provide helpful information during this time.

There may be times when thoughts and feelings related to the assault return. You may have even 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. It is common to simply want to forget the assault and push it behind you. At times you may need to do this to get through daily life. However, trying to “push it away” and acting like “nothing happened” is a lot to expect. You have been through an experience that can shatter what we have learned about trust and safety.

You may be having many different feelings after this news. It is very likely that hidden emotions may reemerge with the new developments on your case. Feelings may include:

- **Relief** - To know that your evidence kit was tested. You may feel validated, believed, and supported for the first time in a long time.
- **Anger** - At the criminal justice system for taking so long and not testing the evidence kit sooner, at the person responsible, and at the idea that this ordeal will never be over. You have a right to your anger and it is a natural feeling. We hope you are able to find healthy ways to express your anger.
- **Shock** - To hear the details again. You may be transported back to the time the assault occurred.
- **Fear** - Being afraid to allow yourself to believe in justice and then be disappointed again if the case remains inactive or is not resolved with the offender being held accountable.
- **Indifference or disbelief** - You may feel nothing at all and also may feel that this news doesn't matter.
- **Guilt** - This may resurface with “What if I had” questions or “I should have” thoughts. While self-blame is a common reaction to sexual assault, please know that you did nothing wrong and made the right choices for you in the moments you had to make decisions.
- **Anxiety** - About your safety and what the future holds

Here are some helpful things to do in moving forward:

- Identify your support system. Because both new and old feelings may arise, it's helpful to be able to talk about how you are feeling. Your support system may include: an advocate and/or a counselor from a rape crisis center (see the information on the other side), friends, family, and faith community.

Asking for help is not weakness, it is actually a strength.

Help is available for you somewhere in your world. Please consider seeking it.

- Pay extra attention to your health and take care of yourself by getting regular exercise, eating well, and getting plenty of rest. These things may help reduce your stress and anxiety.

> Resources

You have advocacy resources available, through both law enforcement and community-based organizations, like rape crisis centers or domestic violence & sexual assault programs. Law enforcement agencies can provide victim advocates, who act as agents of the police departments to provide advocacy, crisis intervention, and referral information. Community-based advocates and their organizations can provide long-term support and advocacy for clients who have needs related to sexual assault.

An important difference between community-based advocates and law enforcement victim advocates is that community-based advocates are confidential. This means anything a victim says to a law enforcement victim advocate is not legally confidential, but community-based advocates are able to provide services confidentially.

Community-based organizations can include crisis hotlines, case management, support groups, and counseling services. To find resources near you, visit www.ccasa.org.

It is common to have a lot of questions right now. You may wonder: *What Happens Now? Do I tell those close to me? Will there be a new investigation? If there is a new investigation, do I have a choice about whether or not be involved?* All of your questions are important and valid. Write them down as they come to you, and know that there are helping professionals available to help discuss and answer your questions. We have provided space below to write down the contact information for both your detective and victim advocate(s).

Important Information & Referrals Now That Your Kit is Being Tested

> Case Number

> Detective Name

Phone Number

Email

**> Law Enforcement
Victim Advocate Name**

Phone Number

Email

**> Name of Advocate from
a Community Program**

Phone Number

Email

> Additional Information:
