

# **SEXUAL ASSAULT**

## **Information and Resource Packet**

Dear Reader,

This information packet was created by the Niagara County Community College Public Safety Department to provide free and confidential intervention and advocacy assistance to sexual assault survivors. More information can be found on the web at <http://www.niagaracc.suny.edu/sexual-assault/>

This resource packet was created for several reasons: First, we hope and believe that information and education will help survivors to reach a healthy recovery. Second, we hope that people concerned about a survivor can learn to be an excellent support person by understanding more about the issue affecting their loved one. And finally, we believe the information can be helpful to those reading it for educational purposes because it deals with an issue that is important to them.

If you are a survivor of violence, you may find some comfort in the following pages. You may also read some things that are upsetting. Please remember that the Wellness Center and the YWCA Sexual Assault Hotline are available to you; please call (716) 614-6275 to make an appointment with a counselor in the Wellness Center or you may contact the YWCA of Niagara's 24 hour Sexual Assault Hotline at (716) 433-6716, text (716) 870-9726.

All of the statistics and facts in this packet are followed by their source. The information in this packet is updated on an annual basis, but please confirm any information contained herein if you are concerned about its source or its accuracy. This packet was created for informational purposes only and should not be taken as legal advice.

Readers will notice that the female pronoun "she" is used to refer to the survivor of violence in the following pages. This usage is reflective of statistics and our practice which have shown that on a college campus, the victims of sexual assault, relationship violence and stalking are overwhelmingly female. We have therefore chosen to avoid the cumbersome use of he/she, him/her, and his/hers. This does not mean that males are not victimized by these crimes, they are, but not in nearly the numbers that females are. Please note that we have devoted some sections of various information packets entirely to male survivors and we welcome male survivors to access our services.

Readers will also notice that we limit our use of the word "victim" when talking about a survivor. It is important for survivors to feel empowered and in control of their lives; labeling a survivor as a victim may cause a survivor to feel disempowered, and helpless. The term survivor implies that a person has lived through something traumatic by their own inner strength and endurance.

We hope that all readers of this information packet find it helpful and we welcome comments on its content sent to: [rannable@niagaracc.suny.edu](mailto:rannable@niagaracc.suny.edu)

Sincerely,

Ross Annable  
Chief of Public Safety

# What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is actual, attempted, or threatened sexual contact with another person without that person's consent. Consent must be informed, freely and actively given, and mutually understood. If physical force, coercion, intimidation, and/or threats are used, there is no consent. Acquaintance sexual assault is non-consensual sexual contact between people who know each other.

According to the National Institute of Justice, 90% of college rape survivors know their attacker. The perpetrator may be the survivor's best friend, lover, partner, date, family member, neighbor, teacher, employer, doctor, classmate, etc. Sexual assault is a criminal act that can be prosecuted under New York State Law, as well as under the Niagara County Community College Student Code of Conduct and Employee Discipline Procedures.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT IS UNFORTUNATELY VERY COMMON

Research has found:

- 1 in 4 – 5 women experiences rape or attempted rape while in college
- 90% of college rape survivors know their attacker
- Less than 5% of college rape survivors report their assault to the police

[From: The National Institute of Justice, 2001 (The Sexual Victimization of College Women, by Fisher et al)]

- Women are often depicted as victims of violence or as sexual objects in mainstream culture, and researchers have found that these media portrayals may influence how women are viewed and treated in society. Over 40 years of scientific investigation has led researchers to conclude that media violence significantly contributes to aggressive attitudes and behavior in society.

## REPORTING

Rapes are rarely reported. In fact, sexual assault remains the most drastically underreported crime in the U.S. In college fewer than 5% of completed or attempted rapes were reported to the police. Reporting rates are low for a variety of reasons. A survivor may be uncertain whether what happened was actually rape, especially since force in sex is widely accepted as "normal." Rapes that are perpetrated by acquaintances are often trivialized as "not so bad" because she does not fit common social understandings of rape (i.e. many people assume that rape is only committed by strangers). A survivor may think that she will not be believed or even blamed by police, courts, and friends. This is a very legitimate fear for survivors due to a general lack of accountability for perpetrators. The majority of rapes are rarely successfully prosecuted because of the prevalence of rape myths and widespread misunderstanding about the reality of sexual assault.

## Victim Services

The following is a breakdown of services that are provided to survivors of sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. Service is also available to family and friends of survivors. All services are free and all contact is strictly confidential.

### Crisis Intervention

#### **Available on campus:**

- Wellness Center, located inside the Science Building, Room C122 on the Sanborn Campus (716) 614-6275  
Please call for business hours.  
For afterhours assistance please contact Public Safety at (716) 614-6400

#### **Available off campus:**

- The YWCA of the Niagara Frontier 24 hour Rape Crisis/Domestic Violence Hotline (716) 433-6716
- Supportive, confidential, and safe environment that will support the survivors' decisions
- Telephone or walk-in short-term individual advocacy services
- Confidential accompaniment to hospital (or other health care provider) for sexual assault exam, which includes: treatment for physical injuries, evidence collection, testing for sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy testing
- Arrangements for alternate safe housing

### Legal/Judicial Advocacy (YWCA Advocate)

- Assistance with No Contact Orders (on-campus) from the Public Safety Department or Orders of Protection/Restraining Orders in Niagara County by the Niagara County Sheriff's Office
- Assistance in filing police reports and/or report to NCCC Public Safety and Vice President of Student Services Office
- YWCA advocate serves as liaison between Judicial Affairs (NCCC Student Services) /police departments and survivor
- Accompany survivors to court for both civil and criminal hearings

### Academic Advocacy

- Coordination with faculty to arrange a change in classroom sections for safety considerations

### Resources for Recovery

- Referrals to appropriate counseling resources
- Library with books and videos on healing from sexual violence

# Common Feelings of Survivors of Sexual Assault

Emotional responses of survivors will vary from individual to individual. Sexual assault can be extremely traumatic and life-changing. It's important to remember that your responses are not crazy; they are normal reactions to a traumatic situation – sexual assault. Below are some common feelings survivors of sexual assault may experience but is not necessarily an exhaustive list of feelings experienced by survivors.

## SHOCK AND NUMBNESS

This response may occur soon after a sexual assault. Survivors may experience feelings of disbelief or denial about what happened. Survivors may feel emotionally detached or drained, and at times may be unaware of what is happening around her. Other reactions to the emotional shock may include: crying uncontrollably, laughing nervously, withdrawing, or claiming to feel nothing or be “fine.” Survivors often may feel overwhelmed to the point of not knowing how to feel or what to do.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: Recognize that these feelings are normal reactions after experiencing trauma. Reassure yourself that these feelings will diminish over time. If you want company, it may be helpful to surround yourself with supportive friends or family. You may also want to think about what has helped you through a previous crisis. For example, it may help to practice breathing exercises or meditation, go for a walk, listen to music, or talk with supportive friends and family.

## DISRUPTION OF DAILY LIFE

After an assault, survivors may feel preoccupied with thoughts about the incident. It may be difficult for survivors to concentrate, attend class, or focus on school work. It can be very upsetting to have reminders of the rape when trying to reclaim your normal life. Survivors may have nightmares, trouble sleeping, appetite changes, general anxiety, or depression. For the first few weeks or months after the assault, survivors may feel as though their life has been upset and may be wondering if it will ever be the same.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: It is important to be gentle with yourself and take steps to reclaim your life. After experiencing any kind of crisis, it is important to take time to grieve, to adjust, and to reorganize your life. Recognize that you will be able to go on with your life. The Office of the Vice President for Student Services is here to help you if you find yourself struggling academically or if you think you might want some counseling resources to help you deal with the trauma.

## LOSS OF CONTROL

Survivors may feel disoriented and overwhelmed. Survivors may also feel anxious, scared, or nervous and often have a difficult time concentrating. Often, survivors feel unsure about themselves, and she may temporarily lack their usual self-confidence. Decisions that were made routinely before now may feel monumental. Survivors may feel that because of the assault she will have to change her whole lifestyle to feel safe.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: Try to make as many of your own decisions as possible. Even making small decisions can help you regain a sense of control. You may want to make some changes in your life such as re-arranging the furniture in your room, changing your look by cutting your hair, or changing your routine by exercising in the morning instead of at night. Small changes can help you feel like you are taking back

control. Counselors in the Wellness Center (C-122) can provide information about all of your options and support you to make a decision that is best for you. It is important to trust your instincts about what is right for you.

## **FEAR**

It is not uncommon for survivors to fear people and feel vulnerable even when going through the regular activities of life. She may be afraid to be alone, or afraid of being with lots of people. She may find herself not knowing who to trust. Survivors may have lost their sense of safety in their own environment, which makes them feel vulnerable and may fear that they will be assaulted again. Survivors may also be more aware of sexual innuendoes, stray looks, or whistles.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: Make any changes in your life that you need in order to feel safe. If possible, you may want to change your locks, take a self-defense class, or stay with a family member or friend. Temporarily "not trusting" is a protective device that is an emotional coping skill. Most of these fears will go away or lessen over time. You will be able to trust when you have had a chance to heal and are feeling less vulnerable. Counselors in the Wellness Center or the NCCC Campus Security Department can assist you with safety planning and support you in reclaiming a sense of security. If fear is getting in the way of your daily life, it may be also helpful to speak to a counselor. The Wellness Center provides referrals to counseling resources.

## **GUILT, SHAME, SELF-BLAME**

Most survivors feel guilty and ashamed about the assault. Survivors often question that they somehow may have "provoked" or "asked for it," or that they shouldn't have trusted the assailant, or that they should have somehow prevented the assault. Some of these feelings are the result of society's myths about rape and sexuality. Survivors will often start to doubt their ability to make good judgments or trust their own instincts. Sometimes blaming oneself helps a survivor to feel less helpless.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: It was not your fault. No one deserves to be sexually assaulted - tell yourself that many times a day. Being sexually assaulted does not make you a bad person; you did not choose to be sexually assaulted. Realize that guilt and self-blame are efforts to feel some control over the situation. Many survivors also experience blame from individuals they tell about the incident. These reactions are fueled by society's myths about sexual assault. It is important to surround yourself with supportive people. The NCCC Wellness Center will never blame you and are here to support you and your decisions. Education about the facts surrounding sexual assault may also be helpful in dispelling shame and self-blame. NCCC Wellness Center counselors have resources on recovery if you are interested in reading books about healing after rape.

## **ANGER**

Survivors may have different reasons to feel angry. Anger is an appropriate, healthy response to sexual assault. It usually means that the survivor is healing and has begun to look at the assailant's responsibility for the assault. Survivors vary greatly in how readily they feel and express anger. It may be especially difficult to express anger if a survivor has been taught that being angry is never appropriate. Anger can be vented in safe and healthy ways, or can be turned inward, where it may become sadness, pain, or depression. Please be careful to avoid unhealthy ways of coping with anger such as alcohol or drug use, cutting, or other self-destructive behavior.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: Allow yourself to be angry. You have

a right to feel angry. However, it is important to feel angry without hurting yourself or others. As part of your anger, you may find yourself more irritable at home, school, or work. Anger can be expressed physically without harming yourself or others. Some people find that physical activity (such as walking, running, biking, hitting pillows, etc.) can help release the physical tension that often accompanies anger. Writing in a journal, playing music, or singing out loud to music are also helpful and healthy ways to release anger. Reporting the sexual assault may be another way you choose to turn your anger into a positive action. Many people often find it useful to speak with other survivors. The Wellness Center can direct you to options for a survivor's support group.

## **ISOLATION**

Some rape survivors feel their experience sets them apart from others. Oftentimes, survivors might feel differently or think that others can tell that she has been sexually assaulted just by looking at her. Some survivors do not want to bother anyone with their troubles, so she does not talk about the incident or her feelings. Survivors may withdraw or distance themselves from family and friends.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: You are not alone in what you are feeling. Many people find benefit in speaking with other survivors. Reading more about the topic can also be reassuring and validating. Contact the Wellness Center (716) 614-6275 or the YWCA Sexual Assault Hotline if you are interested in resources on healing. If you are feeling alone, call a trusted friend or family member. It can make all the difference to be with someone who cares about you. If you ever want to speak with an advocate, call the YWCA Sexual Assault Hotline at (716) 433-6716.

## **ANXIETY, SHAKING, NIGHTMARES**

Survivors may experience shaking, anxiety, flashbacks, and nightmares after an attack. This can begin shortly after the attack and continue for a long period of time. Nightmares may replay the assault or include dreams of being chased, attacked, etc. Survivors often fear that they are "losing it" and may feel that they should be "over it by now".

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: These responses, as scary as they are, are normal reactions to trauma. These physical reactions are ways your emotions respond to the fear you experience. It is important to be able to discuss your nightmares and fears, particularly how they are affecting your life. Keeping a journal to write about your feelings, dreams, and worries can be a helpful tool in the recovery process.

## **TALKING ABOUT THE ATTACK VS. KEEPING THE SECRET**

Some survivors may be compelled to tell others about the attack, some feel it must be hidden from everyone or from certain people. Such risks are real, since some people may not be supportive or may not believe the survivor and blame her for what happened. It is extremely important for survivors to be able to talk about the assault, their feelings about it, and how it has changed their life.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: It's important to talk about the assault with people you trust. The assault was NOT your fault. It doesn't matter what the circumstances were that led up to the assault – if you flirted with the person, if you chose to have sex with the person before, or if you were drinking. Rather, the focus needs to be on the behavior of perpetrator. Often, people do not want to believe that sexual assault can happen to anyone, and may respond with disbelief. It's important to remember that these reactions, as painful and frustrating as they may be, do not change the fact that the sexual assault was not your fault. If you want to talk, the counselors in the Wellness Center (716)

433-6275 are knowledgeable about sexual assault and are sensitive to the needs of survivors or you may call the YWCA Hotline to schedule an appointment with a counselor.

## **CONCERN FOR THE ASSAILANT**

Some survivors express concern about what will happen to the assailant if the attack is reported or prosecuted. Others express a concern that an assailant is sick or ill and needs psychiatric care more than prison. It is human to show concern for others, especially those who are troubled, destructive, and confused. Some of these attitudes may be the result of the survivor's effort to understand what happened, particularly if there was a previous relationship. These attitudes might also be the result of the survivor's blaming themselves for the assault. If a survivor feels sorry for the assailant, she might find it difficult to express her anger and indignation for what she has suffered.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: The sexual assault was not your fault. Only the assailant is responsible for what happened. You have a right to feel and express anger. It is important to hold the assailant accountable. You can have mixed feelings - you can love/like the assailant as a person and still hate what that person did. Pushing yourself to prematurely "forgive" the assailant may force you to bury your appropriate feelings of anger and rage. Reporting the sexual assault may be one way you choose to turn your anger into a positive action. Reporting may also be the only way for the assailant to get treatment.

## **SEXUAL CONCERNS**

Survivors may experience a variety of sexual concerns after an assault. Some survivors may want no sexual contact whatsoever; others may use sex as a coping mechanism. Some people may experience some confusion about separating sex from sexual abuse. Particular sexual acts may provoke flashbacks and thus be very difficult for the survivor to engage in.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: Sexual healing takes time, go at your own pace. Be very clear with your partner about your needs and limits when it comes to any type of sexual touching or sexual contact. You have a right to refuse to be sexual until you feel ready. Tell your partner what kinds of physical or sexual intimacy feel comfortable to you. Rape is not sex. Intimate consensual lovemaking should be pleasurable for both partners. A patient, gentle, intimate partner is helpful in your healing process. If your partner would like information on how to support you, let them know that they can also speak with a counselor at the NCCC Wellness Center. A counselor with experience in sexual trauma recovery can be very helpful to your healing process, contact the NCCC Wellness Center for more information and referrals.

## **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER**

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, also known as PTSD, involves a pattern of symptoms survivors may experience after a sexual assault. Symptoms of PTSD include repeated thoughts of the assault; memories and nightmares; avoidance of thoughts, feelings, and situations related to the assault; and increased stimulation (e.g., difficulty sleeping and concentrating, jumpiness, irritability). One study that examined PTSD symptoms among women who were raped found that 94% of women experienced these symptoms during the two weeks immediately following the rape. Nine months later, about 30% of the women were still reporting this pattern of symptoms. The National Women's Study reported that almost 1/3 of all rape survivors develop PTSD sometime during their lives and 11% of rape survivors currently suffer from the disorder.

- If you are a survivor, here are some tips that may help: Treatment for PTSD typically begins



with a detailed evaluation and the development of a treatment plan that meets the unique needs of the survivor. PTSD-specific treatment is usually begun only after people have been safely removed from a crisis situation. The Wellness Center, (716-614-6275) personal counselors can assist you in finding resources to treat PTSD.

Adapted from the Sexual Violence Center of Hennepin County and  
"Coping with Sexual Assault" by Terri Spahr Nelson.

## Special Concerns for College Students

### **Are you in the same class as the person that assaulted you?**

It is very scary and distracting for many survivors to attend class with a perpetrator. Your academic career is important and we want you to feel safe attending class so that you may be successful both academically and in your healing process. If you need to make alternate arrangements in your class schedule, please contact the Office of the Vice President for Student Services. We offer academic advocacy and can work with instructors, advisors, and departments on your behalf to ensure that you feel safe.

If the perpetrator is a SUNY NCCC student and the assault occurred on campus, you have the option of making a report to Judicial Affairs (Office of the Vice President for Student Services), the NCCC Public Safety Department, Human Resource Office - Title IX Coordinator, or at the Wellness Center. Sexual assault is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and the College has the ability to discipline students who have violated the student conduct code. This is separate from the criminal process, but can result in serious consequences including expulsion or suspension. If you are interested in pursuing this option, please contact the NCCC Public Safety Department at (716) 614-6400, The Office of the Vice President for Student Services at (716) 614-6240, or the NCCC Title IX Coordinator at (716) 614-6295 for more information.

### **Are you worried about seeing the person that assaulted you on campus?**

It can be very distressing and traumatic to see the perpetrator on campus. Your safety and security is our priority. If you feel unsafe, please contact the NCCC Public Safety Department at (716) 614-6400, or the Office of the Vice President for Student Services (716) 614-6240 or the Title IX Officer at (716) 614-5951. We can help you develop a safety plan, apply for a restraining order, or seek recourse through the NCCC judicial system (Office of the Vice President for Student Services).

### **Are your grades suffering because of the assault?**

It will take some time to adjust after the assault and it is very common to have difficulties concentrating on studying or focusing on coursework. NCCC offers academic advocacy to students recovering from trauma. With your permission, the Wellness Center can contact instructors on your behalf. We also encourage students to communicate directly with their instructors in order to limit any possible misunderstandings about expectations and requirements. If you decide to take an Incomplete or arrange for alternate requirements with your instructors, you are encouraged to have a contract in writing with your instructor in order to protect yourself in case of confusion down the line.

The Wellness Center can support you in considering options that will allow you to successfully continue your academic career. Sometimes survivors decide that they need to reduce their course load or withdraw in order to be successful in the future. This is a big decision and we encourage you to speak with the Office of the Vice President for Student Services if you are considering these choices.

**Do you live in the same Residence Hall as the person that assaulted you?**

You have the right to be safe in your home. If the perpetrator lives in the same Residence Hall as you or you feel unsafe in your suite room, please contact the NCCC Public Safety Department, or the Office of the Vice President for Student Services, or the Student Village Housing Corporation (SVHC) Housing Office. If you are a student at the Resident Housing, we can work with Residence Life to arrange for safe housing. If you live off-campus and feel unsafe in your home, the NCCC Title IX Coordinator may be able to assist you with finding shelter or other temporary housing.

**Do you have concerns about the incident because you were drinking at the time?**

No one deserves to be assaulted, no matter what the situation. Law enforcement will not issue tickets for underage drinking if there is a greater crime involved, such as sexual assault. For many reasons, survivors may hesitate to come forward if she were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the assault. Many survivors worry about reporting because they may not remember everything or may blame themselves for being intoxicated. Don't let this get in the way of reporting a sexual assault. Many perpetrators use alcohol and other drugs to facilitate rape. The focus should be on the behavior of the perpetrator, not the survivor. An individual who is physically incapacitated cannot legally consent to sexual contact. It is also important to make sure that you receive appropriate medical attention. No matter what you decide to do, remember that it was not your fault.

**Are you worried about making a police report?**

Making a police report after a sexual assault can be a very difficult decision for survivors. Uncertainty about reporting the assault is common, especially if you know the perpetrator. Filing a Police report is the first step in beginning the criminal justice process. The Title IX Officer, the Wellness Center personnel, or the NCCC Public Safety Department personnel are here to assist you in making the best decision for yourself and supporting you throughout any process you chose to pursue. If you choose to make a report, the Title IX Coordinator, NCCC Public Safety Department personnel, or the Hotline advocate can meet with you and go over in detail what the process will be like and can sit with you while the report is taken. For more information on police reporting and investigations, see the legal options section.

**Are you concerned about telling your parents what happened?**

If you tell your parents will it be more or less helpful to you? This is a very difficult question for survivors. Many people find it hard to disclose to their parents, but ultimately find parents love and support helpful to their healing process. Some survivors may be concerned about hurting their parents or fear that their family may blame them for the attack. Only you can decide if and when to tell your family. The Title IX Coordinator, the Office of the Vice President for Student Services, the Wellness Center, or the NCCC Public Safety Department, can help you process this decision and discuss the risks and benefits to disclosing to your family.

**What if you have mutual friends or belong to the same groups as the assailant?**

This is a common situation since most assaults occur between acquaintances. People will likely take sides and you may find yourself distrusting friends and colleagues. Surround yourself with people who support, respect, and believe you. Trust your instincts, and take steps to ensure your personal safety and well-being. If you are experiencing harassment or feel unsafe, contact the Title IX Coordinator, the Office of the Vice President for Student Services, the Wellness Center, or the NCCC Public Safety Department.

**Do you worry about dating again?**

Surviving a sexual assault involves having your control taken away from you, and it may be difficult to regain trust. Go at your own pace. It may be helpful to start in larger social situations or go on double

dates. At first, you may want to avoid situations where you feel isolated or lacking control. When you are ready to date, don't hesitate to be clear about your sexual limits.

Adapted from "Coping with Sexual Assault" by Terri Spahr Nelson

## Medical Information & Options

Following a sexual assault, the most important thing is to get medical care as soon as possible. Seeking medical attention will allow you to receive treatment for any physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections, or possible pregnancy. Oftentimes, survivors may be unaware of internal injuries that require medical attention. It can also be reassuring to speak with a doctor or nurse about your medical concerns.

Hospital emergency rooms are the only places that provide sexual assault evidence collection exams (SAEC). If you choose to seek medical attention, a confidential sexual assault advocate from the YWCA will meet you at a prearranged location on campus and transport you to a local hospital that provides 24 hour Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners. Eastern Niagara Memorial Hospital in Lockport offers 24 hour coverage with specially trained nurses that will explain the options for having a sexual assault exam, the collection of evidence, along with 24 hours coverage for an advocate to provide you with follow-up information and referrals. You have the right to refuse services if you do not want an advocate or the collection of evidence.

### MEDICAL/EVIDENCIARY EXAMS (SAEC EXAMS)

SAEC exams are performed by trained sexual assault nurse examiners. These professionals are sensitive to the needs of survivors and specialize in collecting evidence for investigations and prosecutions. Even if you are unsure about reporting the crime, it is still helpful to go to the hospital for an exam. SAEC exams can be performed up to 96 hours after an assault, and evidence will be maintained for 1 month in case you decide to make a police report.

Medical exams are important...

- To document any injuries and to begin treatment of injuries.
- To prevent sexually transmitted diseases and to evaluate risk of pregnancy.
- To collect DNA evidence for possible prosecution if and when a suspect is caught. It is vital that evidence is collected as soon as possible, for it will be destroyed as time passes.

If you are interested in getting a SAEC exam...

- As hard as it may feel not to clean up, doing so may destroy important evidence.
- You are encouraged not to shower, bathe, douche, wash hands, brush teeth, comb hair, or use the toilet before going to the ER. Try not to change or wash clothing.
- If you do any of the above things, but are still within the 96 hour timeline, you can still go to the hospital for an exam.
- If you go home first, you may want to bring clean clothes with you to the hospital, because the clothing that you wore during the assault may be kept as evidence. However, if you go directly to the hospital, you will be provided with clothing when you leave.

What happens during a SAEC exam?

General Health

- Blood pressure, pulse, temperature and respiration rate will be taken.

- Any bruises or other injuries will be examined and noted.
- Pictures of the injuries will be taken for documentation and to corroborate force.

#### Pelvic Exam

- A speculum will be inserted in the vagina to check for injuries or abnormalities. The nurse will perform the same procedure used in ordinary gynecological examinations, but will also collect DNA evidence.

#### Other tests and collections

- Blood and urine samples will be taken to test for infections as well as pregnancy.
- Saliva tests may be taken to screen for DNA, and material under the survivor's fingernails may be gathered to collect further evidence.
- An anal/rectal sample may also be taken if necessary.

#### Medication

- After the SAEC exam, you will receive prescription antibiotics to treat any potential sexually transmitted infections.
- The morning after-pill will also be given to you (if desired).
- HIV prophylaxis (if indicated).

#### SAEC Exam Costs

- The State of New York pays for the exam regardless of insurance coverage and regardless if the survivor makes a police report. If you agree to a SAEC exam, a waiver must be signed by the survivor to allow the collection of evidence. The SAEC exam can be done at Eastern Niagara Hospital.

### IF YOU DO NOT WANT A SAEC EXAM OR HAVE MISSED THE 96 HOUR DEADLINE...

It is still important to receive medical treatment after an assault even if you do not go to the hospital for a SAEC exam. There are other places to go to receive confidential medical care.

The Niagara County Health STD Clinic can provide free and confidential STD/HIV - evaluation, laboratory testing, treatment, and health counseling. Contact the STD Clinic at (716) 278-1900 for information.

For any questions about medical procedures after a sexual assault,  
Please contact the YWCA Sexual Assault Hotline at **716-433-6716**.

# Alcohol

Alcohol and sexual assault have been inextricably linked for years. Typically, the role of alcohol has been two-fold: first, as a way to blame the survivor of an assault; and second, as an excuse or justification for the perpetrator.

While discussing the impact of alcohol on sexual assault is necessary, it is important to keep the focus on the rape, not the alcohol. Alcohol does not predispose someone to rape, nor does it cause a person to become a potential survivor of sexual assault. However, when alcohol and sexual assault are discussed, women are told to watch their alcohol intake and to be aware of their surroundings. These are important safety measures, however the responsibility falls upon a potential survivor's shoulders to avoid rape!

Alcohol can be a dangerous substance when used for the purpose of sexual assault. Date rape drugs are a prime example of how dangerous alcohol can be. While it is extremely important to educate men and women about alcohol consumption and its impact on sexual assault, it is also essential that we do not view alcohol as the sole reason for rape, it is a contributing factor.

There are risk-reducing measures to take when you plan to drink. HOWEVER – there could be a list of 100 ways to avoid sexual assault and it would not guarantee you would not be victimized. Ultimately, the responsibility for preventing rape is on the shoulders of those who commit rape! Rape is solely the fault of the perpetrator. Drunk or sober, a survivor of rape is NEVER at fault or in any way responsible. The use of alcohol in a rape situation is often used to blame the survivor and the survivor may very well feel responsible for the rape because she was drinking. However, we would like to reiterate – A SURVIVOR IS NEVER RESPONSIBLE FOR A RAPE.

Please remember that there is no sure way to prevent victimization; it is important to understand that even if someone takes many steps, some steps, or no steps to prevent sexual assault, a survivor is never to blame for being assaulted. In order to feel safer you may want to keep some of the following tips in mind:

- Be aware of how alcohol affects you and how much you can drink and still be in control. Alcohol consumption can increase your vulnerability, and there will be those who want to take advantage of that vulnerability.
- Keep an eye out for any violent behavior, some people become very aggressive and confrontational when they drink and will not take no for an answer.
- Use the buddy system. Make sure you have a network of friends to go out with and keep tabs on each other.
- Listen to your "gut feeling." Instincts are very important.
- Avoid people who don't respect your personal boundaries or make sexist jokes and comments.

These are just a few personal safety tips and risk-reducing measures you can take. However, these can still put the responsibility for avoiding rape on a survivor's shoulders, instead of focusing on the prevention of rape. Just remember: THE RAPIST IS ENTIRELY RESPONSIBLE FOR A RAPE. A SURVIVOR IS NEVER AT FAULT OR TO BLAME, REGARDLESS OF THE SITUATION! As in all crimes, the murderer, rapist, robber, child molester, etc. is responsible for the crime they have committed.

To further emphasize, compare the following scenarios.

1. When a woman has been drinking at a party and is raped, people will say she should not have been drinking, because that made her more vulnerable to the attack. In short, if you were drinking, you should have known you would be raped.
2. Mr. Smith was wearing an expensive suit when he left work late at night. He was walking to his car when he was robbed. People might say that Mr. Smith should not have been wearing such a fancy suit or driving such an expensive car since he was practically advertising that he has a lot of money. Therefore, people who look wealthy should expect to get robbed.
3. Ted was walking alone at night to get home from work and was shot and killed. People would say that Ted should have known better than to walk alone at night and should have taken the bus or found an alternate route. Therefore, people who walk alone in bad neighborhoods should expect to get shot.

In all crimes, the victim is the party that was wronged or violated. Placing blame on a theft or murder victim is ludicrous. However, women who are raped while under the influence of alcohol face the blame regularly.

Be aware of the assumptions and stereotypes surrounding this issue and combat them. Remember that while it is important to drink responsibly and take care of yourself, it is more important for men and women to be respectful of each other's bodies, wishes, and desires.

**Alcohol impacts sexual assault, but it is not the reason why it happens.**

## Drugs Used to Commit Rape

Drug-induced sexual assault can happen to anyone at any time. No matter what you do or don't do, there is always a risk. However, there are precautionary steps you can take to reduce that risk including: never leaving a beverage unattended; being alert to friends' behavior such as noticing if anyone appears disproportionately drunk in relation to the amount of alcohol she has consumed; not drinking a beverage if it tastes, looks, or smells unusual; and creating a plan with friends to protect each other in potentially dangerous situations.

If you feel dizzy, confused, or have other sudden, unexplained symptoms after drinking a beverage:

- Get to a safe place. Call someone you trust.
- Get to a hospital emergency room immediately. Rohypnol and other date rape drugs mixed with alcohol can be a fatal combination for some people.
- Try to retain a sample of the beverage for testing.
- Request a urine test to detect the presence of Rohypnol or other drugs as soon as possible. Traces of the drug can be detected up to 24 hours following ingestion. However, 24 hours is the MAXIMUM – it is unlikely that the drug will remain in the system more than 8 hours. The test is free.

# Legal Options

## MAKING A POLICE REPORT

Making a police report after a sexual assault can be a very difficult decision for survivors. It can be an especially difficult decision if you know the perpetrator. The Title IX Coordinator, the Office of the Vice President for Student Services, the Wellness Center, the NCCC Public Safety Department, or the Sexual Assault Advocate is here to assist you in making the best decision for yourself and supporting you throughout any process you choose to pursue. If you choose to make a report, The Title IX Coordinator, the Office of the Vice President for Student Services, the Wellness Center, the NCCC Public Safety Department, or the Sexual Assault Advocate can meet with you and go over in detail what the process will be like.

When making the initial report, the officer will ask you for a description of the incident. The officer will also ask you about location of the incident, who was present, and other detailed information. When taking a report, police officers are interested in showing that the assault meets the statute requirements of sexual assault as defined by New York State law. Some questions an officer may ask will probably be difficult for you to answer, especially since it can be very emotional to talk about the assault. Keep in mind that the officer's duty is to be objective and gather as many facts as possible, they are not trying to blame you when they ask questions about the assault. It may be embarrassing to tell the officer details of the attack, but it is very important to provide as much information as possible to the police.

Filing a police report is the first step in beginning the criminal justice process. The police will take an initial report, forward the case to an investigator to collect further evidence, and eventually present the case to the prosecutor. The prosecutor will then decide whether or not the case goes to trial. If the case goes to trial, as the survivor, you will be considered a witness to the crime in the case of The State of New York vs. "the perpetrator."

The Title IX Coordinator, the Office of the Vice President for Student Services, the Wellness Center, the NCCC Public Safety Department, or the Sexual Assault Advocate can assist you with the police reporting process and provide emotional support for you while the report is being taken.

## POLICE INVESTIGATION

After making the initial report, the case will then be forwarded to a police investigator. This detective will likely get in contact with you shortly after making the report to get more details about the assault. Again, it is very important to tell the investigator everything that you can remember. The detective will be your contact person while the case is being investigated. The Sexual Assault Advocate will also assist you throughout the investigation process and serve as a liaison between you and the police.

The investigation will likely include interviews not only with you, but also with witnesses and any other people who may have knowledge about the crime. The investigator will also generally interview the suspected perpetrator, although the police are limited by constitutional restrictions on interviews as well as searching or taking evidence.

If the police have not identified a suspect upon completion of the investigation, or if it appears that there is insufficient evidence to convict any suspect, the prosecutor may decline to file charges against anyone. This decision may be reached even though the police and prosecutor personally believe that the survivor was sexually assaulted by an individual - they may simply believe that they cannot convince a jury of the suspect's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Once the police forward the evidence to the prosecutor with an identified suspect, the prosecutor may charge the crime and draft a complaint, listing a summary of the events that took place and naming the criminal offenses the person is said to have committed.

## **PROSECUTION**

The court process begins when the state takes legal action against the alleged perpetrator. The prosecutor will make the decision to go forward with a case based on the evidence gathered by the police investigator. The process may take quite a while and sometimes people wait up to a year before the case is formally charged.

After a complaint or indictment is issued, the first court hearing is called an arraignment. The arraignment is a brief hearing where the charges are explained to the defendant who chooses to plead "guilty" or "not guilty." Survivors are not required to attend the arraignment. Following the arraignment, there will be a series of pre-trial motions which examine the police investigation. This may be followed by a trial. At the trial, the prosecutor will call witnesses, including the survivor, to testify in person. The prosecutor will also present the other evidence and photographs obtained by the police.

Please contact the Title IX Coordinator, the Office of the Vice President for Student Services, the Wellness Center, the NCCC Public Safety Department, or the Sexual Assault Advocate for more information on the criminal process.

## **ORDERS OF PROTECTION**

- Please speak with the Sexual Assault Advocate or the NCCC Public Safety Department for more information on obtaining a restraining order.

## **CIVIL LAW SUITS**

It is possible to file a civil lawsuit against the offender to collect for damages. It is also possible to file a lawsuit against other parties whose action or inaction contributed to the crime (for example, landlord, bar owner, etc.)

If you decide to file a civil law suit, you will need to hire a private attorney. Civil suits are very different than criminal cases. The burden of proof is less in a civil suit. The defendant cannot be sentenced to prison. There are also other differences in the statute of limitations and responsibility of payment for attorney fees. If you have questions about the risks and benefits of pursuing a civil suit, you may want to consult with an attorney.

A civil suit may be pursued whether or not there is a criminal case. The emotional impact of a civil suit may be just as stressful as a criminal trial, and it is important to have support throughout the process.



# Myths and Facts about Sexual Assault

**MYTH:** The primary motive for rape is sexual.

**FACT:** The primary motives for rape are aggression and power, not sex. Rapists have a desire to dominate, humiliate and degrade their victims. Rape is not the result of “pent up” sexual desire, as many offenders report that they do not enjoy the sex act per se during rape. In fact, most offenders have access to a consensual sexual relationship with a wife or lover.

**MYTH:** Women are sexually assaulted because they “ask for it” in some way.

**FACT:** Attempts to shift the burden of blame from the offender to the survivor by implying that “she asked for it” are common. There is nothing a person does to “deserve” a sexual assault – the way a woman dresses, her alcohol consumption, or her sexual history are used as excuses to justify the rapist’s behavior. By blaming the survivor, the attention is directed away from the offender, diminishing the offender’s responsibility for the attack. Blaming a woman for her rape because of how she acts or what she wears is like blaming a bank for being robbed because it “tempted” the thief with all that money.

**MYTH:** A woman can nearly always prevent an assault by resisting her attacker.

**FACT:** Every sexual assault is unique and the issue of resistance and submission should be evaluated individually. Resistance could deter an attack, or it could conceivably increase one’s chances of injury and perhaps result in death. The survivor needs to do whatever she feels comfortable doing to extricate herself from the situation. She should rely on her instincts, and whatever she does is correct for her. Even if she must submit, this does not imply consent, and in fact, may keep her alive.

**MYTH:** Many women falsely report rape as a means of revenge or to get attention.

**FACT:** Sexual assaults are very rarely falsely reported. The rate of “false reports” of rape (fabricated stories) is 2% to 3%, no different than other crimes. Schfran, Lynn Hecht (2012) “Writing and Reading About Rape: A Primer,” *St. John’s Law Review*, vol.66: iss.4, article 2. The general misconception of a high rate of false reports of sexual assaults may be confused with observations of low conviction rates of offenders. The much bigger issue is the low percentage of rapes that are reported to the police; less than 5% of rapes on college campuses are reported to law enforcement (National Institute of Justice, 2004).

**MYTH:** Rapists are easily identifiable by their physical appearance, actions, or words.

**FACT:** There is no standard mental or physical profile that defines a rapist. A rapist can be someone of any age, race, economic background, belief system, or culture. Although the stereotype of the deranged stranger rapist abounds in our society, stranger rapes only make up around 20% of all sexual assaults, and even then the stranger may not be a mentally disturbed person. The vast majority of rapists are people the survivor knows, people she sees in day to day life.

**MYTH:** Most sexual assaults are interracial.

**FACT:** Most sexual assaults take place between members of the same race. White survivors tend to report African-American offenders more frequently than white offenders, and African-American survivors tend to underreport assaults in general, but especially if the offender is white. African-American offenders tend to be convicted in disproportionately higher numbers based on arrest rates. The myth that African-American men rape only white women may be perpetuated by the publicity given to those assaults fitting cultural and racial stereotypes.

**MYTH:** When a woman says “no,” she might really mean “yes.”

**FACT:** This myth is common in dating situations. When a person says “no,” that person’s partner must assume she means nothing other than “no.” If a person does not explicitly consent to an act of sex, in the form of a “yes” or similar phrasing, that person has not consented. Silence on a person’s behalf must be taken as a “no” rather than consent. Rape is not just a matter of miscommunication. However, communication is vital in sexual situations.

## Myths and Facts about Male Rape

**MYTH:** Only women can be raped.

**FACT:** Men can and are sexually assaulted every day.

**MYTH:** Men who rape other men are gay.

**FACT:** Rape is not about sexual preference or desire - it is an act of power and control. The motivation of the rapist is to humiliate and brutalize another person. A survey of convicted rapists found that at least half of these men did not care about the sex of their victims; they raped both men and women. Most male rapists are either heterosexual or suffer great confusion about their sexual identity.

**MYTH:** Men who rape other men are psychotic.

**FACT:** There is no evidence to support this belief. Rape is a reflection of a society that trains men to strive to dominate and control others and to avoid the open expression and acknowledgment of feelings.

**MYTH:** Survivors of male rape must be gay.

**FACT:** Both straight and gay men can be raped: most studies report that at least half (and more often the clear majority) of survivors are exclusively heterosexual.

**MYTH:** Rape is something that doesn't happen to "real men".

**FACT:** Rape is something that can and does happen to an entire spectrum of men, regardless of physical strength or fighting prowess. Reported survivors have included a boxer and a 6'2" man weighing 200 lbs. Being raped does not mean that the survivor is weak or a "wimp." Anyone can be overpowered or taken by surprise. Size and strength is often no match for weapons, overwhelming odds or surprise attacks.

**MYTH:** Male rape only happens in prison, and is due to the lack of sexually available women.

**FACT:** The rape of men in prisons is a classic example of men using rape as a means of experiencing themselves as powerful and in control. Male rape happens much more often in society at large than we realize, but the survivors rarely tell anyone. Many rape crisis centers report that as many as 10% of their callers are male survivors.

**MYTH:** A man cannot have an erection if frightened.

**FACT:** All studies so far have found that survivors commonly do report erections and even ejaculations during even the most vicious attacks. These are uncontrollable automatic physiological responses and do not mean the survivor enjoyed the experience.

**MYTH:** Women don't rape men.

**FACT:** Women can and do rape men, although this seems much less common than rape by men. Sexual assault of a man by one or more women is just as serious as any other type of violation of any other survivor.

**MYTH:** Being raped reflects upon the survivor's manhood.

**FACT:** It is important to remember that a survivor of rape, whether male or female, was not at fault or responsible. Recovering from rape demands that we realize and combat rape myths about both male and female survivors.

**MYTH:** Men deal better with personal/physical crisis and attacks than women do, and will therefore get over a rape more quickly and without help.

**FACT:** There is growing evidence that men heal from this type of experience with greater difficulty. Men characteristically deal with this sort of trauma by trying to ignore it. This reluctance to seek therapy or support hinders recovery, and many men remain traumatized by the crime for years.

**MYTH:** There is nothing a man can do to help another man who has been victimized by rape.

**FACT:** Like the women's movement, a movement among men toward supporting and helping one another will be a giant step in beginning to effectively address the needs of male survivors. Exposing and attacking the myths and disseminating the facts about male rape are steps in this direction.

\*Information was taken from Crime Victim's Digest, April 1987

## National Sexual Assault Statistics

- An eight year study indicated that when perpetrators of rape are current or former husbands or boyfriends, the crimes go unreported to the police 77 percent of the time. When the perpetrators are friends or acquaintances, the rapes go unreported 61 percent of the time; and when the perpetrators are strangers, the rapes go unreported 54 percent of the time (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002).
- Among college students nationwide, between 20% and 25% of women reported experiencing completed or attempted rape (Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 2000)
- Approximately 1.9 million women are assaulted annually in the U.S.(National Institute of Justice, 2000 ([www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/172837.txt](http://www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/172837.txt)))
- Approximately 1 million women and 371,000 men are stalked annually in the U.S. (National Institute of Justice, 2000 ([www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/183781.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/183781.pdf)))
- 6,293,743 of women surveyed have experienced rape and/or some form of physical assault during the past 12 months.  
(National Institute of Justice, 2000 (<http://www.ncjrs.gov/txtfiles1/nij/183781.txt>))
- Nearly one-fifth of women (17.6%) reported experiencing a completed or attempted rape at some time in their lives; one in 33 men (3%) reported experiencing a completed or attempted rape at some time in their lives.  
(National Violence Against Women Survey, 2000 ([www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/172837.txt](http://www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/172837.txt)))
- Women are more likely to be survivors of sexual violence than men: 78% of the survivors of rape and sexual assault are women and 22% are men (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000).
- Most perpetrators of sexual violence are men. Among acts of sexual violence committed against women since the age of 18, 100% of rapes, 92% of physical assaults, and 97% of stalking acts were perpetrated by men. Sexual violence against men is also mainly male violence: 70% of rapes, 86% of physical assaults, and 65% of stalking acts were perpetrated by men (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000).
- Among adults who report being raped, women experienced 2.9 rapes and men experienced 1.2 rapes in the previous year (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000).
- More than half of all rapes of women (54%) occur before age 18; 22% of these rapes occur before age 12. For men, 75% of all rapes occur before age 18, and 48% occur before age 12 (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000).