



INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND THEIR FAMILIES

Help is available for all victims of crime



OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES
Focusing on a brighter future

INTRODUCTION

The State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, Office of Victim Services (OVS) developed this booklet to provide information to victims/survivors of sexual assault and their family and friends on common reactions to sexual assault, what to expect at the health care facility, and where to get help. Although you may not want to read the entire booklet now, you may find the information helpful in the future.

This booklet refers to laws in the Connecticut General Statutes that were in effect on the date of this publication. OVS has a Crime Victims Guide to the Adult Criminal Court that you may also find helpful. This guide helps victims/survivors understand the adult criminal court system and the rights of crime victims in Connecticut. You may find this guide at www.jud.ct.gov/Publications/VS048.pdf.

*If you have questions about the information in this booklet, you may call a sexual assault counselor/advocate in a town near you (see pages 18-20) or call the OVS Helpline at **1-800-822-8428**.*

The State of Connecticut Judicial Branch is not responsible for any information that is not included in this booklet and does not guarantee the accuracy of the included information. This booklet does not contain legal advice, but has general information and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice.

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Section 1

ADULT AND CHILD VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

The trauma caused by sexual assault often results in emotional stress that may be long lasting. Each person reacts differently to stress. There is no right or wrong way to react. It may be helpful for you to know some of the most common responses sexual assault victims/survivors have experienced.

IMPACT AND REACTIONS TO A SEXUAL ASSAULT

During a sexual assault, a victim/survivor may feel powerless or terrified of being seriously injured or killed. Fears about personal safety are a very common response to a sexual assault.

The first reactions that many sexual assault victims/survivors experience are shock, disbelief, or fear. You may:

- Feel very upset or calm and in control;
- Feel numb or dazed, withdrawn or distant from other people;
- Not be sure of who to tell or what to do;
- Not be sure of how you feel;
- Want to forget about what happened.

Many victims/survivors experience intense emotions. Some victims/survivors have physical symptoms. There may be times when your thoughts and feelings are focused on the assault.

You may:

- Feel angry; other times you may feel anxious or depressed;
- Be unable to sleep or you may have unwanted memories, flashbacks, or nightmares;
- Experience changes in your eating habits;

Section 1 (CONTINUED)

ADULT AND CHILD VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

You may (CONTINUED):

- Be afraid to be left alone or you may want to be left alone;
- Avoid other people or situations that remind you of the assault;
- Have trouble concentrating or making decisions;
- Experience a change in your relationship with your partner;
- Feel the need to change your job, where you live, or daily routine to attempt to regain a sense of control and safety.

Many victims/survivors know the person who assaulted them. A victim/survivor may feel vulnerable long after the assault, even if the offender is charged and prosecuted.

Because of myths about sexual assault, many victims/survivors feel shame, self-blame, and guilt. Many victims/survivors also feel devalued or humiliated. Sometimes these feelings are a reaction to being forced by the offender to take part in the crime. These feelings may also be reinforced by the reactions of others, who may criticize a victim's/survivor's behavior. The offender is always responsible for the sexual assault. It is never the victim's/survivor's fault.

HEALING AND RECOVERY

Healing from a sexual assault is a process that is different for each victim/survivor. It may help to talk to a sexual assault counselor/advocate who has experience in helping victims/survivors.

Sexual assault crisis centers have sexual assault counselors/advocates that can offer a safe and private place to talk about your feelings, your concerns about the assault, and offer information and support. A sexual assault counselor/advocate will not judge you or make decisions for you.

CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT/ABUSE

Children who are sexually assaulted or abused may have the same feelings and emotional pain as adults. It's hard to predict how a child will react. Some children may seem very upset, while other children may show very little reaction. Children may experience sudden or unexplained changes in behavior, such as:

- Bed or pant wetting;
- Problems in school;
- Sexual play with friends or toys;
- Low self-esteem;
- Inability to sleep;
- Withdrawal from people;
- Change in bathroom habits;
- Fussiness;
- Increased quietness;
- Depression;
- Anxiety;
- Risk taking or destructive behavior;
- Obsessively good behavior;
- Anger or aggression;
- Loss of appetite;
- Nightmares;
- Development of new fears, such as fear of going to bed, the dark, and being alone.

Section 1 (CONTINUED)

ADULT AND CHILD VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

Comforting a child who has been sexually assaulted or abused can be very difficult. Getting help is most important. Sexual assault crisis centers have sexual assault counselors/advocates specially trained to help children and non-offending parents. They can also help you work with the police, the health care facility, and the legal system.

Some other ways to help your child are to:

- Reassure your child that she or he is safe;
- Let your child know that what happened was not her or his fault;
- Reassure your child that the assault did not happen because she or he did something wrong;
- Give care and love;
- Let your child talk about the assault or abuse if she or he wants. Ask a counselor how you can help your child talk about her or his worries, questions, or fears;
- Reassure your child that she or he is not permanently hurt;
- Avoid showing anger around your child. Your child may confuse your anger at the offender as anger at her or him;
- Help your child return to her or his normal routine as quickly as possible;
- Avoid using the phrase, “I can’t believe this.” Although this is a common parental response, children may think that their story is not believable.

Many professionals must report child sexual assault or abuse to the police and to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The police or a DCF employee may also ask to talk to you and your child.

Section 2

HOW TO HELP A LOVED ONE, FRIEND, OR CO-WORKER

Although there is no “right” way to respond to a victim/survivor, if you are a loved one, friend, or co-worker you can:

- Remind the victim/survivor that the assault was not her or his fault;
- Be supportive without overreacting. Victims/survivors may be sensitive to the reaction of others;
- Be aware that some sexual assault victims/survivors do not want to be touched;
- Try not to be awkward or to show pity. The sexual assault is only one part of a person’s life; it should not overshadow everything else;
- If asked, help the victim/survivor to make decisions, such as who to tell, whether to report the assault to the police, where to stay, without making the decisions for the victim/survivor. It is important for the victim/survivor to regain control over her or his life;
- Support the victim’s/survivor’s decisions even if they may be different from what you would choose;
- Show interest, but do not pry;
- Be helpful and supportive without being overly protective or attentive. Victims/survivors often want to be near others to feel safe and to keep busy, but they may not want to be the center of attention;
- Be understanding. Sometimes victims/survivors may be angry and take out their feelings on loved ones.

Often family, friends, and co-workers want to help but aren’t sure how. It’s okay to tell them what you need or do not need. You may also want to share the information in this booklet with them.

Section 3

MEDICAL CARE

Because of the violent and invasive nature of sexual assault, it is important for you to receive medical treatment, even if you are not sure about reporting the assault to the police.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I GO TO A HEALTH CARE FACILITY?

You will be examined and treated for injuries and offered antibiotics for sexually transmitted infections (STI). Women and teenaged girls, who are concerned about becoming pregnant will be offered emergency contraception.

With your permission, a sexual assault forensic medical exam and evidence collection may be done by a nurse or a doctor.

In Connecticut, a sexual assault forensic medical exam and evidence collection can

be done up to 120 hours (5 days) after the assault. If you agree to have the exam and evidence collection done, the nurse or doctor will collect samples of evidence from your body.

Any physical evidence that is found or not found during the sexual assault forensic medical exam and evidence collection does not prove that you have or have not been sexually assaulted. The exam and evidence collection may help the police in the investigation of the crime and the state's criminal case, if criminal charges are filed in court.

You have a right to receive emergency contraceptives at any licensed health care facility [Section 19a-112e (b) (3)].

SHOULD I HAVE EVIDENCE COLLECTED IF I AM NOT SURE ABOUT REPORTING TO THE POLICE?

Reporting the sexual assault to the police is your choice, but you may not be ready to make that decision. To protect evidence from being lost or from deteriorating, it's important to have the evidence collected as soon as possible after a sexual assault. This will give you more time to decide if you are going to report the sexual assault to the police.

If you decide not to report, the evidence collected is sent to the Connecticut Forensic Science Laboratory (Lab) with a control number and not your name (anonymously). The Lab will hold the evidence for at least 5 years to give you time to decide if you will report the sexual assault to the police. It's important for you to know that under state law there may be a time limit for the crime to be prosecuted, generally 5 years; however, the time limit may not apply or may be waived in certain circumstances. A sexual assault counselor/advocate can give you more information.

If you think you may want to have a sexual assault forensic medical exam and evidence collection done, please do not:

- Shower or bathe;
- Drink or eat;
- Brush your teeth or use mouth wash;
- Urinate, douche; or
- Change your clothes. If you must change your clothes, please put them in a paper bag and bring them with you to the health care facility.

Even if you did any of the above, you can still have an exam done.

Section 3 (CONTINUED)

MEDICAL CARE

FOLLOW-UP MEDICAL CARE

At the health care facility, you may be tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy. These tests will only tell if you were pregnant or had an STI before the sexual assault. Even if you were given medication to treat possible STIs and

pregnancy, it is very important that you be tested again in 2 weeks by a health care provider.

You have the right to use your available paid sick leave for medical care and counseling, to get services from a victim services provider, to relocate, or to take part in any civil or criminal hearings because of the assault, if you are a service worker and your employer has 50 or more employees [Section 31-57t (3)]. A list of jobs under the title of service worker can be found in Section 31-57r (7).

The discharge instructions form given to you when you leave the health care facility has important information, such as what tests were done and the medications and treatments ordered. Bring that document with you to any follow-up medical appointments.

HIV TESTING

Although statistics show that the risk of being infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) from a one-time sexual assault is low, many victims/survivors

who have been sexually assaulted are concerned about getting HIV. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

At the health care facility, a medical provider should give you information on HIV risks, testing, and treatment choices. A test given shortly after the assault will only tell if you had HIV before the sexual assault. It may take up to 6 months for a test to show if you have HIV.

Whether the sexual assault happened recently or in the past, you should talk to a health care professional for advice on testing choices. A sexual assault counselor/advocate can also offer support, information, and refer you to testing sites where you can get free or low cost, anonymous HIV testing and counseling.

WHO PAYS FOR THE SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAM AND EVIDENCE COLLECTION?

You do not pay for the sexual assault forensic medical exam and evidence collection. The health care facility will bill OVS for this cost, which includes the emergency room and physician charges, and the cost to test for and any medications given to prevent pregnancy and STIs.

The health care facility may bill you or your insurance company for other medical costs not related to the sexual assault forensic medical exam and evidence collection, such as x-rays or stitches.

It is against state law for a victim/survivor to receive a bill for the sexual assault forensic medical exam and evidence collection [Section 19a-112a (e)].

OVS has a Victim Compensation Program that may help pay for these and other treatment costs, follow-up medical care, counseling, and lost wages. If you would like more information about the Victim Compensation Program, please call **1-888-286-7347** or **860-263-2761**.

Section 4

REPORTING TO THE POLICE

Many victims/survivors of sexual assault choose to report the crime to the police and take part in the criminal justice process.

Connecticut state law doesn't require an adult sexual assault victim/survivor to report the sexual assault to the police. If you choose to report, it's helpful to report the sexual assault to the police as soon as possible. In many cases, the ability to arrest and prosecute the offender depends on prompt reporting. The health care facility staff or a sexual assault counselor/advocate can call the police for you or you may call the police yourself.

During your meeting with the police, you will be asked to tell them in your own words (statement) what happened to you, including a description of the offender, where the sexual assault happened, and any other information about the crime.

You have the right to ask for the arrest of the offender, to ask for an order of protection from the court, and to apply for a restraining order from the court to prevent further injury. A sexual assault advocate or an OVS victim services advocate can explain these orders [Section 46b-15, 46b-38c].

Tell the police about any items that might have been touched during the assault, such as clothing, because they may be used as evidence in the criminal investigation.

If you had a sexual assault forensic medical exam and evidence collection done at a health care facility, give the police the control number listed on the discharge instruction sheet the health care facility gave you at the end of the exam.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE OFFENDER IS ARRESTED?

If the offender (defendant) is arrested, someone from the state's attorney's office (a prosecutor or an investigator) may contact you. You may also be contacted by an OVS victim services advocate who is there to help you during the criminal case. A sexual assault counselor/advocate can also support and help you through the criminal case.

You have the right to not be asked or required to take a lie detector test by a police officer, prosecutor, or investigator [Section 54-86j].

CRIME VICTIMS GUIDE TO THE ADULT CRIMINAL COURT

OVS has a Crime Victims Guide to the Adult Criminal Court to help crime victims and their family members understand the:

- Adult criminal court system;
- Rights of crime victims in Connecticut;
- Resources available to help them.

You may find this guide on the Connecticut Judicial Branch Web site at www.jud.ct.gov/Publications/VS048.pdf or by contacting the OVS Helpline at 1-800-822-8428 or email OVS@jud.ct.gov.

WHAT IF THE OFFENDER IS A JUVENILE?

A case that involves a juvenile defendant (someone under the age of 18) is usually heard in the juvenile court, not in the criminal court where the cases of adult defendants are heard. While juvenile cases are like adult cases, there are also many differences.

Section 4 (CONTINUED)

REPORTING TO THE POLICE

WHAT IF THE OFFENDER IS A JUVENILE? (CONTINUED)

The following information will help you better understand juvenile court:

- Juvenile cases are handled in the court that serves the juvenile's town of residence, which may not be the same town where the sexual assault happened.
- Certain serious cases involving juveniles over the age of 14 may be transferred to the criminal court, where the juvenile will be prosecuted and, if convicted, sentenced as an adult.
- Juvenile cases are confidential. Court hearings and court records are closed to the public and the media, such as newspapers and television.
- Victims/survivors of juvenile offenders have certain rights, including the right to be at or be represented at the hearings involving the case, to learn the identity of the juvenile, the status, and the outcome of the case. You can't give this information to anyone else without permission from the judge.
- Juveniles may be sentenced to a term in jail or prison. They may be required to live in a detention facility for juvenile defendants.
- People who were found guilty of committing a crime when they were a juvenile may petition the court to have their juvenile records erased after a period of time, if they don't commit more crimes.

For more information about juvenile court or about your rights as a victim/survivor of a juvenile offender, contact the juvenile court prosecutor or the juvenile probation officer assigned to the case. For a listing of juvenile probation offices and juvenile courts go to www.jud.ct.gov/directories.htm.

Section 5

ORDERS OF PROTECTION

Orders of protection may be issued by the criminal and civil courts and other agencies to protect you, your family members, and pets from harm or threats of harm by another person. This section includes information about Civil Protection Orders and Civil Restraining Orders. For more information about other court orders of protection, please see the Crime Victims Guide to the Adult Criminal Court at www.jud.ct.gov/Publications/VS048.pdf, call a sexual assault counselor/advocate in a town near you (see pages 18-20), or call the OVS Helpline at **1-800-822-8428**.

CIVIL PROTECTION ORDER [Section 46b-16a]

You may file an application in the Civil Court for a civil protection order if you are a victim of sexual abuse, sexual assault, or stalking, and the offender is not related to you, a household member, or a current or former partner and you have not been given or are eligible for any other court order of protection. OVS has victim services advocates at courthouses throughout the state available to help you with the civil protection order process.

You have the right to request that your location information (for example home and work addresses) for a civil protection order be kept confidential [Section 46b-16a (b)].

CIVIL RESTRAINING ORDER [Sections 46b-15 and 46b-38a]

You may file an application with the Family Division of the Civil Court for a civil restraining order to stop your spouse or former spouse, parent, child, parent of your child, a person related to you by blood or marriage, a person who lives or lived with you,

Section 5 (CONTINUED)

ORDERS OF PROTECTION

CIVIL RESTRAINING ORDER [Sections 46b-15 and 46b-38a]

(CONTINUED)

a person you have or recently had a dating relationship with, or a caretaker who is providing you shelter in his or her home, if you are 60 years of age or older from physically hurting you, threatening to hurt you physically, and from being stalked by that person.

You must go to a court hearing to get a restraining order. If you, your minor children, or pets are in immediate and present physical danger, you may request a temporary (ex parte) restraining order by checking the Request for Ex Parte (Immediate) Relief box on the civil restraining order application.

The hearing will be held within 2 weeks from the date the temporary restraining order was issued. At the hearing, you will explain to the judge why you need a restraining order. If the judge issues a restraining order, the order will be in effect for one year, unless the judge orders a different length of time.

Victims of family violence, risk of injury to a child, sexual assault or stalking have the right to keep their address confidential for safety concerns by applying to the Safe at Home Confidential Address Program [Section 54-240a]. This program provides a free substitute mailing address so that your home address is kept private. For more information, call a sexual assault counselor/advocate in a town near you (see pages 18-20).

Section 6

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS OF CRIME VICTIMS

As a crime victim, you have certain rights under the constitution of Connecticut, article first, § 8b.

You have the right to:

- Be treated with fairness and respect throughout the criminal justice process;
- Have the case completed in a timely manner following arrest of the accused, provided no rights of the accused are violated;
- Be reasonably protected from the accused throughout the criminal justice process;
- Be told of court dates;
- Attend the trial and all other court proceedings that the victim has a right to attend (*arraignment, pre-trial, and sentencing*) unless you are testifying, in which case the court may decide that you can't attend the trial until after you are done testifying;
- Tell the prosecutor how the crime has affected you and to get information about the criminal case;
- Have the chance to agree or disagree with any plea agreement between the accused and the prosecutor and to make a statement to the court before the court decides if it will accept the agreement;
- Make a statement to the court at sentencing;
- Request restitution for expenses or property lost or damaged because of the crime; and
- Get information about the arrest, conviction, sentence, imprisonment, and release of the accused.

Section 7

WHERE TO GET HELP AND INFORMATION

CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE (formerly CONNSACS)

24-hour Hotlines:

1-888-999-5545 (English)

1-888-568-8332 (Spanish)

Office: 860-282-9881

Email: info@endsexualviolencect.org

www.endsexualviolencect.org

The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence has 9 member programs in Connecticut, which offer free, confidential services to victims/survivors of sexual assault, including 24-hour hotlines, crisis intervention and short-term counseling, information and referrals, victim advocacy, and support groups.

ALLIANCE MEMBER PROGRAMS

The Center for Family Justice
(Bridgeport)

Hotline: 203-333-2233

Office: 203-334-6154

centerforfamilyjustice.org

Women's Center of Greater Danbury

Hotline: 203-731-5204

Office: 203-731-5200

wcogd.org

Women and Families Center

(Meriden/Middletown/New Haven)

Hotline: 203-235-4444

Office: 203-235-9297 (Meriden)

Office: 860-344-1474 (Middletown)

Office: 203-389-5010 (New Haven)

womenfamilies.org

Rape Crisis Center of Milford

Hotline: 203-878-1212

Office: 203-874-8712

www.rapecrisiscenterofmilford.org

YWCA New Britain, Sexual Assault Crisis Service

(New Britain/Hartford)

Hotline: 860-223-1787 (New Britain)

Office: 860-225-4681 (New Britain)

Hotline: 860-547-1022 (Hartford)

www.ywcanb.org/sexual-assault-crisis-services

The Rowan Center

(Stamford)

Hotline: 860-329-2929

Office: 203-348-9346

therowancenter.org

Section 7 (CONTINUED)

WHERE TO GET HELP AND INFORMATION

ALLIANCE MEMBER PROGRAMS (CONTINUED)

Susan B. Anthony Project

(Torrington)

Hotline: 860-482-7133

Office: 860-489-3798

sbaproject.org

Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury

Hotline: 203-753-3613

Office: 203-575-0388

www.safehavengw.org

Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut

(Willimantic/New London)

Hotline: 860-456-2789 (Willimantic)

Office: 860-456-3595 (Willimantic)

Hotline: 860-437-7766 (New London)

Office: 860-442-0604 (New London)

www.saccecc.org

OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES

Victim Services Helpline: 1-800-822-8428

Email: ovs@jud.ct.gov

Victim Compensation: 1-888-286-7347 or 860-263-2761

Email: ovscompensation@jud.ct.gov

Office: 860-263-2760

www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim

The State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, Office of Victim Services (OVS) offers information, services, and financial help to victims/survivors of violent crime and their families including:

- Financial help for eligible expenses because of the crime, such as medical, counseling, dental, and lost wages.
- Court-based help that includes advocacy during court cases and information on crime victims' rights.
- Helpline for information on crime victims' rights and referrals to resources.
- Notification programs that offer information to victims/survivors and other eligible persons about an offender's status in the criminal justice system, changes in an inmate's status, including requests for changes to his or her registration with the Sex Offender Registry, and when an order of protection is issued, changed, or ends.
- Sexual assault forensic examiners to provide compassionate forensic examination and evidence collection services to victims/survivors of sexual assault that go to a participating health care facility.

Section 7 (CONTINUED)

WHERE TO GET HELP AND INFORMATION

CONNECTICUT STATEWIDE AUTOMATED VICTIM INFORMATION AND NOTIFICATION (CT SAVIN)

24-hour Services: 1-877-846-3428

www.jud.ct.gov (click on the CT SAVIN button)

CT SAVIN provides confidential notification in English, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish on adult criminal court cases for an offender, changes to an offender's custody status with the Department of Correction, and when a court order of protection is issued, changed, or ends.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION (DOC) VICTIM SERVICES UNIT

Office: 1-888-869-7057

www.ct.gov/doc

Victims/survivors and other eligible persons may register with the DOC Victim Services Unit to request notification when an inmate is released, escapes, or scheduled for a sentence review or parole hearing. Registrations and notifications are confidential.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Child Abuse and Neglect Careline

24-hour Careline: 1-800-842-2288

www.ct.gov/DCF

The Child Abuse and Neglect Careline is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week to take calls from people with questions, concerns, and reports of child abuse and neglect.

UNITED WAY OF CONNECTICUT

24-hour Helpline: 211

www.211ct.org

2-1-1 is a program of the United Way of Connecticut. Dial 2-1-1 anywhere in Connecticut and callers will speak with a contact specialist who will help locate programs and services in the caller's area. 2-1-1 is available 24-hours per day, 7 days per week.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD OF CONNECTICUT

Statewide: 1-800-230-7526

Administrative Office: 203-865-5158

www.plannedparenthood.org

Planned Parenthood of Connecticut has 14 health centers across the state that offer affordable, high quality health care for women and men.

CONNECTICUT COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

CT Safe Connect: 1-888-774-2900

Office: 860-282-7899

www.ctcadv.org

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence has 18 member programs in Connecticut, which offer confidential, free services to victims/survivors of domestic violence, including CT Safe Connect, emergency shelter, safety planning, court-based advocacy, information, and referrals.

Section 7 (CONTINUED)

WHERE TO GET HELP AND INFORMATION

OFFICE OF THE VICTIM ADVOCATE

Services: 1-888-771-3126

Office: 860-550-6632

Email: ova.info@ct.gov

www.ct.gov/ova

The Office of the Victim Advocate offers services to crime victims/survivors who believe their rights have been or are being violated or who believe that services available to crime victims/survivors in Connecticut are being denied or are not being provided.

ADA NOTICE

The Judicial Branch of the State of Connecticut complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need a reasonable accommodation, in accordance with the ADA, call OVS at 1-800-822-8428.



Office of Victim Services
State of Connecticut Judicial Branch
www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim JDP-VS-30 Rev. 7/21