



If Someone You Know Is Sexually Assaulted

- About 40% of victims tell no one about their assault. If a friend has been sexually assaulted and turns to you for support, the most important thing you can do is listen. Don't worry about what to say. Your friend trusts you and that's what is important. During the assault, all sense of power and control may have been taken away from them. Support your friend in reclaiming control.
- Encourage them to talk about what happened and how they feel. Show them you care.
- Tell them it was not their fault. No matter where they were, what they were wearing, how they were perceived, or how much they had to drink—no one deserves or asks to be sexually assaulted. They are not responsible for someone else's criminal behaviour.
- Refer them to one of the resources in this Guide to help them figure out their options. They do not have to press charges to get help or to receive confidential service.
- If the attack occurred recently, attend to any immediate medical needs. Caution them not to take a shower or douche if they have not yet done so. Remind them to save the clothes they were wearing.
- Get help yourself. You may need to talk to someone about your feelings. The resources listed in this Guide are available for you, too.

Community Resources

Crisis Line

250-754-4447

Crisis Pregnancy Centre of Nanaimo Society

250-716-1633

Nanaimo Regional General Hospital

1200 Dufferin Crescent

250-754-2141

Police Services

303 Prideaux Street

Emergency: 9-1-1

Non-emergency: 250-754-2345

Victim Services: 250-755-3146

Haven Society

(Child, youth, and adult survivors of sexual/abuse/assault/criminal harassment/relationship, or dating abuse/assault)

24 Hr. Crisis Line: 250-756-0616

Administration: 250-754-0764

Community Victims Services

250-741-0550

Institutional Resources

Counselling Services

(For students only)

Student Services

Building 200, 3rd floor

250-740-6416

fgiworld

(For employees only)

Toll free: 1-800-268-5211

www.fgiworld.com

Human Rights Office

Building 200, Room 223

250-740-6430

humanrights@viu.ca

PREVENT
RESPOND
REPORT



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Sexual Assault

- Know the Facts
- How to Respond

A Guide to Sexual
Assault at Vancouver
Island University

For More Information

Human Rights Advisor
Building 200, Room 223
Nanaimo Campus
250-740-6430
humanrights@viu.ca

Visit Our Website

www.viu.ca/humanrights

Know the Facts

Sexual Assault

Assault is the intentional use of force against another person without consent. A sexual assault may include someone kissing, touching, or having sexual intercourse with you without your consent. That someone can be your lover, partner, employer, co-worker, friend, acquaintance, instructor, or a stranger.

Both women and men can be sexually assaulted. Of adult women in Canada, 39% will likely be sexually assaulted at some point in their lives. Studies indicate that four out of five undergraduate women experience at least one incident of sexual or physical violence in a dating relationship.

Males are also assaulted, both as children and as adults, with some experts estimating that 1 in 10 men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. A sexual assault can happen to anyone, regardless of age, sex, or sexual orientation.

Common Misconceptions

Myth: Sexual assault is a crime of passion.

Fact: Sexual assault is a crime acted out in a sexual way. Power and control are the motives of this crime.

Myth: Sexual assault is a crime committed by perverts or strangers.

Fact: Most offenders appear normal and are known to the victim – 89% of victims in BC knew their assailants.

Myth: Only young, attractive women are sexually assaulted.

Fact: Women and men of every shape, size, age, ability, and sexual orientation have been sexually assaulted.

Myth: A sexual offence committed by a partner, lover, sibling, or parent is not a crime.

Fact: Any person, regardless of the relationship to the victim, can be charged for committing a sexual assault.

Myth: Sexual assaults only occur at night, in dark isolated places.

Fact: A significant number occur in a home (victim’s home, 15%; assailant’s home, 11%) or in a vehicle (11%); many occur during daylight hours.

Myth: People who are assaulted ‘ask for it’, either by the way they dress or by their lifestyle.

Fact: Studies of offenders have shown most assaults are planned, and the victim’s dress or lifestyle usually has nothing to do with the offender’s actions. However, hate crimes can involve the sexual assault of individuals who are perceived to be gay or lesbian. There is also evidence that women with disabilities and/or women of colour are at higher risk of being sexually assaulted than other women.

Acquaintance Sexual Assault

Acquaintance sexual assault is any non-consensual sexual behaviour between adults who know each other. Sexual assault may be imposed through verbal coercion, intimidation, physical restraint, or threats. It does not have to be violent or result in physical injury to qualify as sexual assault. The relationship could be casual, platonic, dating, professional, academic, or familial. Without consent, sexual behaviour is not romance; it is a sexual assault. Sexual assault by an acquaintance is no less traumatic than sexual assault by a stranger. This type of assault occurs more frequently among college-age students than any other group.

Those who commit acquaintance sexual assault often don’t believe they have done anything wrong. Many times victims don’t seek help or tell anyone about the assault and deal with the trauma and psychological effects without any support. Acquaintance sexual assault remains largely hidden because few people identify it as a crime, punishable by law.

Alcohol & Drugs

There is evidence that alcohol and drugs play a large role in acquaintance sexual assault. Alcohol and drug use is commonly found in dating and social activities, as it can make socializing, dancing, flirting, and being sexually active easier. They also lower inhibitions, cloud judgment, and make clear communication more difficult.

Be aware that the use of drugs and alcohol compromises your ability to make decisions and may put you at risk of committing an assault or of being assaulted. Additional risks are a group of drugs, commonly called “date rape drugs” that are odorless and colourless and, when mixed with alcohol, are undetectable causing blackouts and loss of memory. Be aware that the use of these drugs has been reported among post-secondary students in Canada.

What We Can Do

- Be clear and assertive about what you want and don’t want.
- Know that alcohol and drugs are often related to acquaintance sexual assault and that you are responsible for your actions, whether or not you are sober.
- If you think you are in a dangerous situation or that you are being pressured, you are probably right. Leave immediately and get help.
- Take care of each other. If you have reason to suspect a friend is at risk, take steps to protect them. Some embarrassment is worth preventing a lot of pain and suffering to everyone involved.
- Listen to and respect what individuals are saying. It is never okay to force sex on someone. If you are getting a double message from someone, speak up and clarify the message.
- Separate desire from action. Sexual excitement does not justify forced or coerced sex. Desires may be beyond your control but you can control your actions.

How to Respond

If You Are Assaulted

Sexual assault in any form is considered an act of aggression and violence. Anyone can become a victim of sexual assault. It is recommended you not ignore what happened to you but deal with the assault in the ways that you can. The following are some suggestions:

- Get to a safe place.
- Call 9-1-1 if emergency medical or police assistance is needed.

- Consider going to the hospital for immediate medical attention. With your consent, any injuries will be treated; you will be tested for sexually transmitted diseases, women will be tested for pregnancy, and medical evidence of the assault will be collected.
- Do not bathe, change clothes, or douche as this destroys evidence you may need should you choose to report the assault to the police.
- Consider reporting the assault to the police. Believe in yourself. What happened to you was wrong. You are not to blame for the assault.
- Find someone you trust to talk to. Call a friend, a parent, the sexual assault crisis line, a Vancouver Island University Counsellor (for students), or an EAP Counsellor (for employees). Choose someone who will respect your decisions. Call the Human Rights Advisor if you wish to file an internal complaint.
- Write down the details of what has happened to you. As difficult as it may seem, this has two purposes. First, it may help to let go of some of your feelings. Second, it may help you if, at a later date, you decide to report the assault to the police. Write down any details about the assault that you can remember. You can include the name and description of the attacker (if you know it), where the assault happened, what time it was, the kind of car and the license plate (if there was one), and anything else you can recall. Remember, you may not choose to press charges, but it is very helpful to have this information if you do.
- Give yourself time to heal. Recovery from sexual assault is different for everyone.
- Consider counselling. Sometimes talking can be the most important step to healing.

Remember ...

Reach out for help. You are not to blame for what happened and should not have to face the effects alone.

Resources are listed in this Guide and available on our website.

www.viu.ca/humanrights