

SA/DVCC Care Package



WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL
Healthcare | REVOLUTIONIZED

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Sexual Violence

Legal Definitions

Currently, the law defines sexual assault as any form of sexual activity with another person without their consent.

THE NEW LAW RECOGNIZES THAT:

- > All unwanted sexual acts are assaults (penetration does not have to occur);
- > Anyone can be sexually assaulted regardless of gender identity;
- > A husband can be charged with sexually assaulting his wife;
- > Previous sexual history and character of the complainant cannot be routinely examined in the open courtroom.

Consent is the voluntary agreement of a person to engage in sexual activity. Consent is a clearly understood agreement between two adults. It is important to remember that consent is an active choice. The law says that a child is not in a position to give consent.

Similarly, the law says that someone who is under the influence of medication, drugs and/or alcohol is not in a position to give consent.

However, a person is NOT excused for sexually violating another while under the influence of alcohol, drugs and/or medication. A person who sexually violates another while under any influence is 100 per cent responsible for their actions.

THERE IS NO CONSENT WHEN:

- > A person expresses by words, gestures, conduct or any other means, a lack of agreement to engage in sexual activity;
- > A person having consented to engage in consensual activity, expresses a lack of agreement to continue in the activity;
- > One person submits to sexual activity because the accused threatens or uses force;

- > One person submits to sexual activity because the accused threatens or uses force against a third person;
- > Lies are used to obtain consensual sexual activity;
- > A third party says yes for someone;
- > A person engages in sexual activity because an accused has abused a position of trust, power and authority;
- > The accused is a blood relative;
- > One person is under 14 and the other more than two years older;
- > Both people are under 14 with less than two years between them, but the older person is in a position of trust or dependency (e.g. a babysitter);
- > One person is 14, 15, 16, 17 and the older person is in a position of trust or authority.

ACCORDING TO THE LAW, THERE ARE THREE LEVELS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CHARGES, WHICH INCREASE IN SEVERITY:

1. A person may be charged with sexual assault if:
 - > you were forced to kiss, fondle or have sexual intercourse, or if they kissed, touched or used objects in a sexual way without your consent (no sign of physical injury or abuse)
2. A person may be charged with sexual assault with a weapon, sexual assault while threatening bodily harm to a third party or sexual assault causing bodily harm if:
 - > they used or threatened to use a weapon (real or imitation);
 - > they threatened to harm someone else, for instance your child;
 - > they physically hurt you;
 - > they were with another person or other people who also sexually assaulted you.
3. A person may be charged with aggravated sexual assault if:
 - > you were wounded, crippled, disfigured or brutally beaten;
 - > your life was endangered.

(From: The Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre – Public Education and Action Kit)

Reporting to the Police

Some people know immediately whether they wish to report to the police or not. Some are not sure what they want to do. You may need additional information before you make this important decision.

Do not allow anyone to pressure you to decide about legal matters before you are ready. You must give yourself enough time to make the decision that is right for you.

At the Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care Centre, you have the option to store forensic evidence for one year (if you wish to have a Sexual Assault Evidence Kit completed). This is to give you the time you need to make this decision. If you decide to release the evidence kit to the police, there are nurses available to assist with this.

Remember that nothing is done without your consent; you make the decisions.

Caring For Yourself

How You May Be Feeling

If you have experienced sexual violence/sexual assault/intimate partner violence, you may be surprised by your emotional reactions. You may have a range of emotional reactions or be surprised by how calm you feel. There is no right or wrong way to feel; the emotions you are experiencing are the right ones for you.

You may feel that what has happened to you is your fault. Please know that this is not the case, you do not hold any blame in this occurrence. You did not make this happen or deserve this.

It is hard to think clearly when you have been subjected to trauma. You may find yourself doing things you would not expect yourself to do. This can be a confusing and overwhelming time. It takes time and energy to heal after you have been assaulted; you may not feel better right away. Be patient with yourself and give yourself the time you need to figure out how this experience has affected you.

You may find yourself experiencing a range of physical and emotional reactions, including:

- > A feeling of being lost, alone or out of touch
- > A feeling that no one understands what you have experienced or are currently experiencing
- > Feeling confused or the inability to think clearly
- > A change in eating habits and/or nausea
- > Fatigue that may be sudden or sporadic
- > Changes in your sleeping patterns
- > Headaches and tension
- > A feeling of grief and loss
- > Reliving the experience in the form of thoughts and/or flashbacks
- > A change in the way you feel about intimacy

- > A feeling of discomfort when close to or touched by others
- > An inability to trust others
- > Feelings of fear, such as a fear of being alone or going out at night
- > A feeling of being nervous or anxious

It is important to understand the emotions you are feeling are part of the healing process. These reactions can help you understand how the experience has affected you. Taking the time to understand these reactions is an important part of the recovery process. It is important to take care of yourself, to seek out support, and to get answers to any questions you may still have after reading this information.

There are also 24-hour crisis support lines offered in various languages that you can call if you need immediate or after-hours support.

Adapted from: *Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres*

How to Improve Your Sleep

THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS MAY HELP IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP:

1. Exercise during the day, preferably in the late afternoon before dinner. Aerobic exercise (20 minutes or more) is better, but 45 minutes to an hour of brisk walking is helpful.
2. Try to keep a consistent schedule of when you go to sleep and wake up, even if you are tired in the morning.
3. Do not try to make yourself sleep. If you are not able to fall asleep after 20-30 minutes in bed, try to engage in a relaxing activity. Return to bed when you are sleepy.
4. Avoid heavy meals before bedtime or going to bed hungry (a small snack before bedtime may be helpful).
5. Avoid drinking alcohol before bedtime.
6. Have quiet time during the last hour or two of the day. Avoid vigorous physical or mental activity during this time.
7. Reduce caffeine and nicotine consumption as much as possible. If you must have caffeine, have it early in the day.
8. Develop a sleep ritual before bedtime. This is an activity or routine you do every night before you get into bed.
9. Try to avoid napping during the day.
10. Do not let yourself be afraid of not sleeping. Work on accepting the nights when you are unable to sleep. The less you fight, resist or fear sleeplessness the more likely it will be to go away.
11. Talk about feelings, emotions and thoughts with a support person. They can be a friend, family member or counsellor. Getting more emotional support and expressing your feelings can help improve your sleep.

Be gentle with yourself. Remember that everyone's healing journey looks different and it is important to try these suggestions at a pace that works best for you.

Strategies to Help Manage Flashbacks, Intense Anxiety, and/or Panic

1. Find a calm and quiet space.
2. Breathe deep breaths through your nose. This increases the air flow to your lungs and helps to reduce your heart rate and panic reaction. Exhale through your mouth.
3. Do not try to control or fight your reactions. Accept them and let them pass, reminding yourself the panic is not dangerous and will pass.

The following suggestions are referred to as “grounding techniques”:

1. Confide in someone and, if you feel comfortable, tell them how you feel.
2. Move around or engage in physical activity.
3. Focus on simple objects around you. Some people find it helpful to go through a sequence identifying **five things they can see, five things they can hear and five things they can smell**, and repeat the process until the panic subsides.
4. Touch the floor and physical objects around you. These actions can help ground you when you’re experiencing intense emotions. Try planting your feet on the floor and remind yourself of the current time and date. Breathe slowly and regularly through your nose to prevent hyperventilating.
5. Use positive self-talk along with slow breathing.
6. Ask yourself, “What is the most supportive thing I could do for myself right now?”

Try different strategies when you feel nervous, anxious or upset. Over time, you’ll start to learn what strategies work best for you.

A Word to Friends and Family

After a friend, family member or partner has been sexually assaulted, they may experience strong and conflicting emotions, some of which you may also experience. You may find yourself feeling:

- > angry at what has happened to your loved one;
- > helplessness and confusion as to how you can be of help to them;
- > sadness and grief;
- > discomfort in your relationship with your loved one;
- > upset and frustrated with the changes in your relationship with the assaulted person.

It is important that you know that after a person has been sexually assaulted, they may experience overwhelming emotional and physical reactions. Here are some suggestions as to how you can be supportive:

- > listen to them without judgment;
- > support their decisions;
- > help them find the resources and support they may need;
- > recognize your feelings separate from theirs;
- > realize your own limitations, take time out for self care;
- > avoid asking “why” questions and reinforce the fact that the sexual assault was not their fault;
- > be patient with them;
- > acknowledge and validate whatever they are feeling and their need to express those feelings, avoid telling them how you think they should be reacting.

(Adapted from: *Sexual Assault: Information for Families* by Victoria Women’s Sexual Assault Centre and *Caring for a Friend or Family Member Following Sexual Assault* by Sexual Assault Program, Women’s Health Care Centre, Peterborough Regional Health Centre)

Important Numbers

24-Hour Access and Resources

Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centre (SADVCC) at Women’s College Hospital 416-323-6040

Our office is open Monday to Friday 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
A nurse is available 24 hours/day for emergency visits.

Toronto Rape Crisis Centre 416-597-8808

Provides 24/7 crisis counselling over the phone. Counsellors also answer emails. Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Open to all genders. Online chat feature available.
crisis@trccmwar.ca

Assaulted Women’s Help Line 416-863-0511

Provides 24/7 crisis counselling over the phone to women in 154 languages. AWHL is the access point for violence against women shelters. Use of a TTY line also available for deaf women.
www.awhl.org

Bay Centre for Birth Control 416-351-3700

Femaide 1-877-336-2433

Provides 24/7 over-the-phone crisis counselling for French-speaking women.
www.femaide.ca

Distress Centre 416-408-4357

Provides 24/7 over-the-phone counselling for people in emotional distress or suicide prevention.

Gerstein Centre 416-929-5200

Provides crisis support for adults living in Toronto with mental health problems. Open to all genders.
www.gersteincentre.org

Police (Emergency).....911

Police (Non-emergency) 416-808-2222

Victim Support Line **416-314-2447**

Can connect you with the Victim Witness Assistance Program nearest you.

To Access a Shelter **416-397-5637**

Emergency Welfare **416-392-8623**

If you are not on welfare, you are entitled to emergency assistance if your health or welfare is in danger. You can get two weeks worth of assistance before your regular application is processed and without going through the usual hoops.

Wen-do Women's Self Defence **416-929-3636**

A 15-hour course that covers a wide variety of physical and verbal self-defence techniques and awareness and avoidance of threatening situations, and discussions on violence against women. Classes are taught by women, for women and girls.

www.wendo.ca

Barbra Schlifer Clinic **416-323-9149**

Provides counselling, legal information, interpreters and referral services for women who have been physically or sexually abused.

www.schliferclinic.com

Rent-Geared-To-Income Subsidy **416-338-8888**

(Application Support Centre) **or 416-338-4766** (Central Intake)

Provides one-stop housing solutions for people looking for affordable housing in Toronto. Priority is given to those who are currently dealing with domestic violence.

www.housingconnections.ca (**City of Toronto website**)

Your Choice **www.yourchoice.to**

Resource guide created by Toronto Police Services that provides information on sexual assault investigations, possible outcomes and the criminal court process.

Ontario Provincial Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence

Navigation Line **1-855-NAV-SADV (628-7238)**

www.sadvtreatmentcentres.ca

Victim Services Program of Toronto **416-808-7066**

www.victimservicesutoronto.com

Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse Line **1-866-887-0015**
A 24/7 multilingual support service for male survivors of sexual abuse, both recent and historical.

Talk4Healing **1-855-554-4325**
We offer 24/7 help, support and resources for Indigenous women, by Indigenous women, all across Ontario.
www.beendigen.com

TransLifeline **1-877-330-6366**
Trans Lifeline is a peer support and crisis hotline non-profit organization serving transgender people by offering phone support and microgrants.
www.translifeline.org

KidsHelpPhone **1-800-668-6868**
Kids Help Phone is Canada’s only 24/7 e-mental health service offering free, confidential support to young people in English and French.
www.kidshelpphone.ca

Human Trafficking Hotline **1-833-900-1010**
The Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline is a confidential, multilingual service, operating 24/7 to connect victims and survivors with social services, law enforcement, and emergency services, as well as receive tips from the public.
www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca

Ganawishkadawe Centre for Wise Practices in Indigenous Health
Ganawishkadawe—The Heart of the Fire is The Centre for Wise Practices in Indigenous Health (GCWP-IH) is situated within Women’s College Hospital and is a place for education, clinical care and Indigenous scholarship where we are committed to the health and well-being of all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals, families, and communities across the territories.
indigenoushealth.womenscollegehospital.ca



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