

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Under the Victims’ Rights and Restitution Act, you are entitled to be treated with fairness and with respect for your dignity and privacy. You are also entitled to receive certain rights and services, including:

- Reasonable protection from the perpetrator and his or her associates.
- Information on available financial assistance and where you can receive emergency medical and social services, counseling, treatment and other support services.
- Information on the status of the investigation and the arrest or filing of charges against a suspected offender.
- Return of any property held as evidence as soon as it is no longer needed for evidence in the case.

In addition to the rights and services described above, the Survivors’ Bill of Rights Act (18 USC 3772) provides the following rights:

- To have a sexual assault evidence collection kit completed as part of a medical/forensic exam at no cost to you.
- To be notified in writing before the kit is destroyed.
- To request that the kit be preserved.
- To be informed of important results from the sexual assault forensic examination.

If someone is charged and indicted with the crime, you may have additional rights related to the prosecution and any sentencing and incarceration of the individual. The prosecutor’s office will inform you of those rights.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP:

Resources, Web-links, and Phone Numbers

*Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network*  
RAINN, offers prevention programs and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE (1-800-656-4673) and a confidential online chat. The RAINN website can be located at [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org).

*National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence*  
This 24-hour hotline for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, confidential service offers crisis intervention and support, message service and referrals. National Domestic Violence hotline (1-800-799-SAFE) or the National Sexual Assault hotline Internet at (1-800-656-HOPE). [www.ncdsv.org](http://www.ncdsv.org).

*Polaris Project*  
Polaris project works directly with victims, host tip and crisis hotlines and offers solutions to victims of human trafficking. National Human Trafficking Hotline, 1 (888) 373-7888. [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org). TEXT “BE FREE” 233733

*VictimConnect*  
Resource Center is a referral helpline where crime victims can learn about their rights and options confidentially and compassionately. A program of the National Center for Victims of Crime, it combines: a traditional telephone-based helpline: 855-4-VICTIM (855-484-2846), an innovative online chat: [www.chat.victimsofcrime.org](http://www.chat.victimsofcrime.org) and a web-based information and service referrals: [www.VictimConnect.org](http://www.VictimConnect.org).

*National Suicide Hotline Prevention Line*  
This a United States–based suicide prevention network of 161 crisis centers that provides a 24/7, toll-free hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. After dialing 1-800-273-TALK, the caller is routed to their nearest crisis center to receive immediate counseling and local mental health referrals.

*Men Can Stop Rape*  
Men Can Stop Rape is the leading national organization mobilizing boys and young men to prevent all forms of physical and sexual violence, especially violence against women. Contact Men Can Stop Rape by calling 202-265-6530 or log on at [www.mencanstoprape.org](http://www.mencanstoprape.org).

YOUR FBI VICTIM SPECIALIST

The FBI Victim Specialist assigned to your case is there to make sure you have information and support to help you get through this process. She or he will explain the criminal justice process, listen to your concerns, help you find counseling and other forms of assistance, and keep you updated on the status of the case. The Victim Specialist works for the FBI but is not an Agent. Instead, the Victim Specialist is often someone with a social work or counseling degree and experience working with young people and adults who have been victims of violent crime.

The Victim Specialist works as part of a team with the FBI Agent and employees from the U.S. Attorney’s Office. While most of the discussions that you have with your Victim Specialist are confidential, there may be times when the Victim Specialist will need to share information you provide with other team members. If you have questions about limited confidentiality, you may contact your Victim Specialist for clarification. Generally, the Victim Specialist and the Agent will make every effort to protect your privacy.

IMPORTANT FBI CONTACTS

FBI Victim Specialist: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

FBI Special Agent: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Victim Services Division  
J. Edgar Hoover Building  
935 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington D.C. 20535  
(202) 324-3000  
[www.fbi.gov/resources/victim-services](http://www.fbi.gov/resources/victim-services)

*The opinions, findings and conclusions expressed in this brochure are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.*

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U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
*Victim Services Division*



Navigating  
the Impact of  
Sexual Assault

## WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

**Sexual assault** is unwanted sexual activity, force, threats, coercion or taking advantage of someone who may not give consent. The term sexual assault can apply to different types of behavior: rape, touching, fondling of genitals, and indecent exposure. When the victim is young, sexual assault may also be called sexual abuse. Sex trafficking is when someone is forced by another person or persons to perform sexual acts on other people for money, drugs, or favors. Sextortion usually involves sexual exploitation and threats and occurs mostly online. Sextortion is sexual exploitation that occurs primarily online and in which non-physical forms of coercion are utilized, such as blackmail, to acquire sexual content (photos/videos) of the victim, obtain money from the victim or engage in sex with the victim.

## WHO CAN BECOME A VICTIM OF A SEX CRIME?

Sexual assault can be a one-time occurrence or it can continue over a period of time. Anyone can be a victim of a sex crime at any age of their lives. Sexual assault can occur at the hands of relatives, close friends, acquaintances, domestic partners, trusted professionals, or strangers.

Perpetrators target victims for a variety of reasons but often out of a desire to exercise power and control over another person. It's important for victims to understand that sexual assault is never their fault. Sexual assault is something that happens to people: it is not who they are. Victims of sexual assault are survivors who can heal and move forward with hope and purpose.

## IMPACT OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault can impact victims differently. It is not uncommon to experience a wide range of emotions. Survivors may feel:

- Angry, sad, lonely, depressed
- Nervous, confused, or fearful
- Badly about themselves and their bodies
- Anxious all the time
- Guilty, even though the assault was not their fault
- Unable to concentrate or enjoy activities they took pleasure in before the assault

## SEXUAL ASSAULT and OTHER CRIMES

Sexual assault is often a component of domestic violence and human trafficking crimes. Human trafficking, especially sex trafficking, often involves the same dynamics of power and control present in patterns of domestic violence and sexual assault. For example, intimidation and isolation are typical for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and can complicate cases of human sex trafficking. Intimate partner relationships (to include pimp/trafficker) may include physical abuse as a way to control and coerce victims. Sexual assault, domestic violence and human trafficking victims have many of the same needs, such as physical and emotional safety.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

**Interviews:** After reporting you have been sexually assaulted, you will be interviewed by a local law enforcement officer or an FBI agent.

**Information and Support:** You will be put in contact with an FBI Victim Specialist assigned to your case. The Victim Specialist is there to make sure you have information and support to help you get through this ordeal. She or he will explain the criminal justice process, listen to your concerns, help you find counseling and other forms of assistance, and keep you updated on the status of the case. The Victim Specialist works for the FBI but is not an Agent. The Victim Specialist is usually someone with a social work or counseling degree and experience in working with people who have been victims of violent crime.

The Victim Specialist works as part of a team with the FBI Agent and the employees from the U.S. Attorney's Office. While most of the discussions you have with your Victim Specialist are confidential, there may be times when the Victim Specialist will need to share information you provide with other team members, especially if the information is directly related to the investigation. Generally, the Victim Specialist and Agent will make every effort to protect your privacy. If you have questions about limited confidentiality you can ask your Victim Specialist for clarification.

**Medical exam:** In many cases, it is helpful to have a sexual assault forensic exam, sometimes called a "rape kit." During this exam, someone specially trained to perform this exam, such as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), will collect DNA evidence that can help identify the perpetrator. You do not have to agree to a forensic exam to receive treatment, but doing so may strengthen the case against the perpetrator if you decide to immediately report the crime or in the future. Most perpetrators of sexual assault will victimize many people over time, often using the same pattern of behavior. Collection of DNA and other evidence can help link the perpetrator to other crimes and other victims. To insure physical wellness, the exam may be a good time to discuss any concerns you may have about STD's, HIV infection or pregnancy.

**Court appearances:** If your case goes to court, you may be asked to testify. The attorney handling your case as well as the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) Victim Witness Coordinator can help you to prepare for what is to be expected in court.