



Sexual Assault - FAQs

How is sexual assault defined?

Sexual assault is any unwanted, non-consensual sexual contact against any individual by another using manipulation, pressure, tricks, coercion or physical force. It is any act a person is forced to perform or receive that includes touching of the genitals or breasts. This includes rape, sodomy, touching or oral sex where the victim is unwilling or unable to give verbal consent, including being under 17 years old, intoxicated, drugged or unconscious.

If I've been assaulted, do I have to tell the police?

No. You can decide whether to tell the police. As a victim of sexual assault, you have rights. You can decide whether to tell the police. If you do, you have the right to ask for a male or female officer to report the assault to. You can also choose whether to have evidence collected and to have someone with you in the examination room if you allow a forensic examination to be made.

How big an issue is sexual assault in Texas?

More than 17,800 incidences of sexual assault were reported to police in Texas during 2012 and more than 18,700 individuals were recorded by police as victims of sexual assault during this period. It is likely that these figures do not represent the true scale of sexual assault since many assaults are not reported to law enforcement.

What should someone who has been sexually assaulted do?

The advice below is intended as an immediate response to an assault. Over time, victims of sexual assault may need additional support and help to move past their experience. Regardless of the timing, please call us, in confidence and for free, on 281-342-HELP (4357).

- Get to a safe place.
- Do not shower, bathe, wash your hands, brush your teeth, use the toilet or clean up in any way. You could destroy evidence. If you have already done any of these things, evidence may still be present for collection.
- Do not change or destroy clothing. Your clothes are evidence.
- If the assault occurred in your home, do not rearrange and/or clean up anything. You could destroy evidence.
- Get medical attention as soon as possible. Evidence should be collected when you get to the hospital.
- Contact a friend or family member you trust or call the local rape crisis center hotline. You can reach us, in confidence and for free, 24 hours a day on 281-342-HELP (4357).
- Most of all, know that this is not your fault!

How can I support a friend who has been assaulted?

There are many ways that you can help a friend or family member who has been raped or sexually assaulted:

- Listen. Be there. Be patient. Don't be judgmental.
- Remember, it will take your loved one some time to deal with the crime and speak about the events.
- Help to empower your loved one. Rape and sexual assault are crimes that take away an individual's power. It is important not to compound this experience by putting pressure on your loved one to do things that he or she is not ready to do yet.
- If you are dealing with an issue involving your child, create a safe place by talking with him/her directly.
- If your loved one is considering suicide, follow-up with them on a regular basis.
- Encourage your loved one to report the rape or sexual assault to law enforcement.
- If the survivor is willing to accept support, assist them in contacting the right authorities. (i.e. local law enforcement, campus security, hospital)
- Encourage him or her to contact one of the hotlines. The Fort Bend County Women's Center takes calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 281-342-4357. If a client decides to seek medical attention at the hospital, an advocate is summoned and serves to support and provide informational supplements to both the survivor and their family.
- Typically, clients have ninety-six hours to have a S.A.N.E. (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) examination performed after a sexual assault has occurred. Do not be fooled by the myths regarding bathing after a sexual assault - evidence can still be collected.

Are men ever sexually assaulted?

Yes. Men can be and are sexually assaulted. The belief that men are always in control is false. There is also the stigma regarding male to male sexual contact, which leads heterosexual male survivors to deny being sexually assaulted. Male sexual assault is very common; 1 in 6 men become victims.