



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTIONALLIANCE

Our Mission

The Action Alliance is a diverse group of individuals and organizations that believe that ALL people have the right to a life free of violence.

We recognize that sexual and domestic violence are linked to other forms of oppression, which disproportionately affect women, children and other marginalized people, harming individuals, families and societies as a whole.

We will use our diverse and collective voice to create a Virginia free from sexual and domestic violence—inspiring others to join and support values of equality, respect and shared power.

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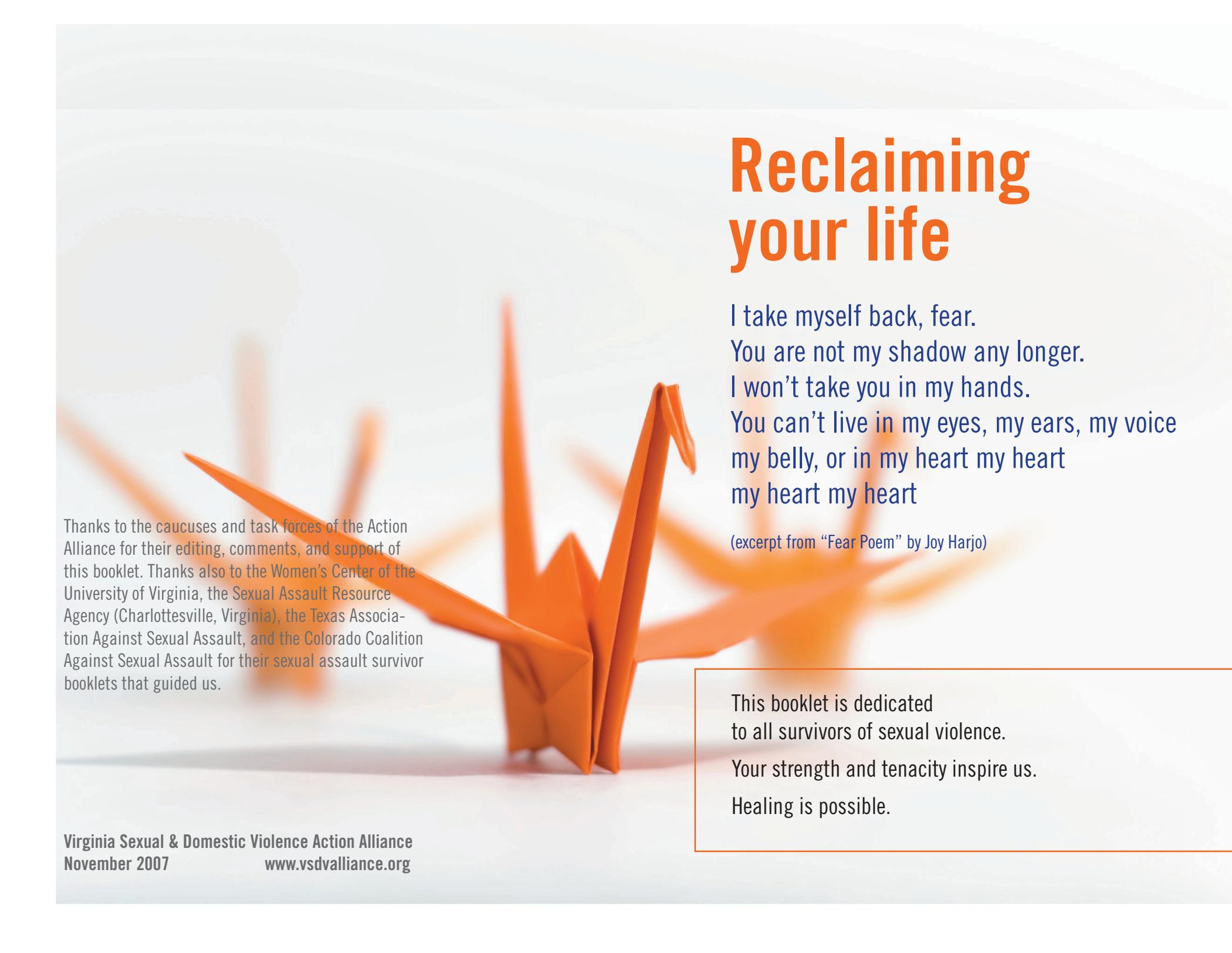
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Reclaiming your life

Support and healing
after sexual assault



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTIONALLIANCE



Reclaiming your life

I take myself back, fear.
You are not my shadow any longer.
I won't take you in my hands.
You can't live in my eyes, my ears, my voice
my belly, or in my heart my heart
my heart my heart

(excerpt from "Fear Poem" by Joy Harjo)

Thanks to the caucuses and task forces of the Action Alliance for their editing, comments, and support of this booklet. Thanks also to the Women's Center of the University of Virginia, the Sexual Assault Resource Agency (Charlottesville, Virginia), the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, and the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault for their sexual assault survivor booklets that guided us.

This booklet is dedicated
to all survivors of sexual violence.
Your strength and tenacity inspire us.
Healing is possible.

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Some things you should know as a survivor...

You are not alone

Unfortunately, many people in Virginia have experienced sexual violence or know someone who has been sexually violated. Sexual violence is a crime that touches all of us in some way. As many as 1 in 4 women and 1 in 8 men in Virginia have been victims of sexual assault.* There are many services available to help you make it through this difficult time. Many of those services are talked about in this booklet. Please take some time and look through it to find information that might be helpful to you right now, and take it with you to look through at your own pace.

It was not your fault

It doesn't matter where you were. It doesn't matter what you did. It doesn't matter who it was. No one has the right to violate you. The person who did this to you made a decision and you are not responsible for their behavior. Others may try to blame you, but it is important to remember that this was not your fault.

You can get support

Support is an important part of the healing process. It is important that you have people around you that you trust and can rely on. They may be friends, family members or others in your life who are caring and supportive of you. It may be difficult to talk about what happened with your friends and family. Support does not always mean that you have to talk about what happened. It means that the people in your life give you the space and time to take care of yourself—whatever that means for you—and listen to you when and if you want to talk.

**Virginia Department of Health, April 2003*

Reclaiming your life: support and healing after sexual violence
Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Healing is possible

Everybody responds differently to sexual violence. You may be having feelings and thoughts about something that happened years ago or recently. Please know that it is normal for you to feel what you are feeling right now. These feelings may go away in a short while or you may feel the effects for a long time. Sometimes it may feel like these feelings will never go away. You may feel very overwhelmed, but in time, these feelings will fade and you will start to feel better. Healing from sexual assault is a process that takes time.

Sexual Assault Crisis Centers can help

All localities in Virginia are served by a Sexual Assault Crisis Center. These Centers exist for the support of victims and their friends and families. Crisis centers have staff and volunteers that take care of people who have been sexually assaulted. They can help you 24 hours a day. You may need help with going to the hospital, talking to the police, going to court or receiving emergency shelter. Staff also offer counseling, support groups and educational services. It does not matter if you were hurt recently or were hurt as a child...crisis centers are available to help you.



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About sexual violence

Sexual assault is the most under-reported crime in the United States. Most sexual assaults are never reported to the police. Anyone can be sexually assaulted. It happens to all people of all races and cultures and abilities. It happens to same sex couples. In a survey done by the Virginia Department of Health, most adults who are survivors of sexual assault were younger than 18 when they were first assaulted.*

A definition

Sexual assault is any type of sexual contact that you do not want. There are many different kinds of sexual violence.

Examples include:

- Sexual harassment
- Unwanted touching or fondling
- Forcing someone to perform sex acts
- Rape (or penetration)

Other sexual crimes include:

- Someone secretly watching you bathe or dress (voyeurism);
- Child pornography and exploitation;
- Sexual exploitation, such as someone forcing you to do sexual acts that you don't want to do or giving you to another person as a slave;
- Someone exposing him or herself to you, making you watch them perform sexual acts;
- "Dirty" phone calls.

**Virginia Department of Health, April 2003*

A word about coercion...

There are many ways unwanted sexual contact can happen. Sometimes physical force is used. Sometimes threats or intimidation are used instead of physical force. Sometimes a person uses their authority or position to force or coerce sexual activity.

When a person is made to do something she or he does not want to do, it is called "coercion". Many types of sexual violence involve coercion.

About sexual violence

Specific concerns

I was assaulted by someone I know (acquaintance)

People often think that only a stranger can sexually assault you, but most victims are attacked by someone they know (an acquaintance.) This can be someone you are dating, a neighbor, a family member or a friend.

If someone you know hurt you, you probably feel shocked and betrayed, especially if you trusted the person. Often when you've been hurt by someone you know, it is hard to feel safe and not be afraid of being hurt again. You may be having difficulty trusting others and wonder if you can ever trust again. You may feel confused and wonder what you could have done to stop the assault. You may be so afraid that no one will believe that you have kept the assault a secret and feel isolated because no one knows why you are hurting so much.

Remember that the responsibility for sexual assault lies with the person who assaulted you (perpetrator). Nothing you did or did not do, said or did not say, or wore, "made" that person assault you.

Often, friends and family can help and support you as you recover from an assault. However, sometimes friends and family may not know how to support you after an assault. If your friends or family know the person who hurt you, it may be hard for them to believe the person would hurt you. They may be pressuring you to forgive or blame you for what happened. You may be angry and feel betrayed by the family and friends who are not supporting you. If it is hard to talk to your friends or family about the assault, find others who will believe you and support you. For the phone number to your local sexual assault crisis center, see the Appendix at the end of this booklet. Remember that the responsibility for sexual assault lies with the perpetrator. Nothing you did made it happen

No one deserves to be sexually assaulted. No one.

I was assaulted by my intimate partner (spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend)

Sexual violence happens in all types of relationships. It happens in married couples, in unmarried couples, in same sex couples. Examples of sexual violence by an intimate partner may include:

- Making you do sexual things that you don't want to do
- Hitting or strangling you during sex
- Forcing you to make up after a fight by having sex, even when you don't want to
- Forcing you to have unprotected sex

Sexual violence in a relationship is often part of a larger pattern of abuse. When your partner abuses you, it is called "domestic violence". Domestic violence may include: calling you names, making you feel you can't do anything right, pushing or hitting you, taking your money, hurting your children, or hurting your pets. In Virginia, it is against the law for your partner to force you to have sex. It is as serious a crime as it is for a stranger to sexually assault you. There are legal options for you. See page 35 for more information.

If you live with a person who hurts your body or your feelings, things are not likely to get better. You may be in danger of more violence. If you think this may be happening to you, please call your local sexual and/or domestic violence program to discuss safety options.

You deserve a partner who helps you feel safe and supported. People in your community can give you support. Your local sexual assault crisis center and domestic violence program can support you and talk to you about your options. See the resources at the end of this booklet for places to call in your community.

Remember, no one has the right to force you to do anything sexually that you do not want to do.

About sexual violence

Specific concerns (continued)

I was sexually abused as a child

If you were sexually abused as a child, you are not alone. 1 in 4 women and 1 in 5 men in Virginia were sexually abused as children.* Sexual abuse can happen to children in any family, any neighborhood, or any school. Usually the abusers are adults. Often they are family members.

You may have been touched or forced to perform sexual acts.
You may have been forced to look at sexual parts or movies.
You may have been watched or photographed in a sexual way.
You may have been told that you were only good for sex. These are all types of sexual abuse, and all sexual abuse harms children.

Even though the abuse may have stopped long ago, the trauma does not end when the abuse stops. You may have “flashbacks” about the abuse, which make you feel you are re-living the abuse. You may be “triggered” into a flashback by a smell, a voice, a word, or a feeling. You may remember only pieces of your childhood because your mind tried to bury the memories to protect you from the effects of the abuse. You may have difficulty sleeping because of nightmares or have difficulty concentrating because you can not stop thinking about the abuse. You may feel anxious a lot and easily startled or scared. These are all very common reactions and your body’s way of reminding you that you were hurt and it is time to take care of yourself and find a safe place to heal.

As a survivor, you may still suffer effects that get in the way of how you live and work day to day. Please know that healing is possible. You can do it. Most sexual assault crisis centers offer support groups for adults who have been sexually abused as children. Many crisis centers can work with you one-on-one to help you heal from the abuse. It takes commitment and time, but there are people who can help and support you.

**Childhood Sexual Assault Victimization in Virginia, Center for Injury and Violence Prevention, Virginia Department of Health, August 2004.*

I was sexually harassed

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual pressure. It also includes unwelcome sexual comments or touching. There is a difference between flirting and harassment. Flirting is wanted, feels good, and is legal. Harassment is unwanted, feels bad, and is not legal. Flirting is mutual, or returned. Harassment is not returned. Flirting uses words and actions that are respectful. Harassment makes a person feel embarrassed and ashamed.

Here are some examples of sexual harassment:

- Spreading sexual rumors;
- Forcing someone to go on a date, even after she or he said “no”;
- Commenting on a person’s sexuality;
- Touching or “accidentally” rubbing against a person, after that person says “stop”;
- Commenting on a person’s body or clothing;
- Showing a person sexual pictures;
- Telling sexual jokes;
- Using authority to make a person do something sexual;
- Making promotions, increasing salary, giving work assignments or other job benefits based on whether you will perform certain sexual acts.

Sexual harassment at work or at school is against the law. If you are sexually harassed, you can:

- 1) Tell someone. Keep telling until someone believes you.
- 2) Let the harasser know you don’t like what she or he is doing. If you don’t want to talk to the person, you can write a letter.
- 3) Review your company or school’s sexual harassment policies.
- 4) Write down what happened in detail. Keep this information in case you want to make a report.
- 5) Report it to a person in charge at your school or workplace.

Harassers will tell you to “lighten up” and say you just can’t take a joke. If you have told a harasser to stop, and she/he does not stop, it is not a joke. It is harassment. Remember, you have the right to be treated with respect. Anyone who does not respect your words or feelings does not respect you.

About sexual violence

Specific concerns (continued)

I was drugged and assaulted (drug facilitated sexual violence)

Sometimes an abuser will give alcohol or other drugs to a person before assaulting her or him. The abuser's goal is to make it hard for the victim to say "no". Assaulting a person after drugging her/him is called "drug facilitated sexual assault."

Alcohol is the drug most often used before an assault. It may be used alone, or with other over the counter medications, such as benedryl. It also may be used with other drugs, such as:

- Rohypnol ("Roofies", "Mind Eraser", "Roaches", "Forget Pill")
- GHB ("Liquid X", "Grievous Bodily Harm", "Cherry Meth", "Georgia Home Boy")
- Ketamine ("Special K", "Vitamin K", "New Ecstasy", "Super K")

If you were drugged and assaulted, you may remember drinking, but not remember what happened afterward. You may think that you were assaulted, but not be able to remember any or all of the assault.

If you think you were drugged and assaulted, tell a doctor or police officer. Ask to have an exam to collect evidence. If you choose to report and you think you may have been drugged, it is important that you let the doctor and the police know any drugs that you were taking yourself. This is important so they know what to find in your urine and blood, and helps them identify the drugs that were given without your consent. Ask to have a sample of your urine tested for drugs. If possible, find the cup or glass you used, and give it to the police to test for drugs. You may also request that they test your blood for the presence of drugs. This is called a toxicology screening.

In Virginia, drug facilitated sexual assault is against the law. If someone has sex with a person who is passed out or cannot give consent, it is sexual assault.

I was assaulted by a family member (incest)

Sexual contact between family members is incest. It can be one of the most difficult types of sexual assault to talk about. The perpetrator can be male or female, a parent, stepparent, aunt or uncle, brother or sister, or any other family member. Both males and females can be victims of incest. It can happen in any family.

If you are a survivor of incest, you may have felt very alone when the abuse was happening. The person who assaulted you may have threatened to hurt your family if you told anyone. You may have been made to feel that you were responsible for what happened. You may have been confused because you liked spending time with the abuser, but didn't like what happened to you. You also may have been confused as a child because your body may have felt good during the abuse, but the rest of you was scared.

Please know that you are not to blame for the abuse. The adult who assaulted you is responsible for the abuse, and for betraying your trust. You deserve to be believed and supported. It can help to find someone to talk to about what happened. If the incest is still happening and you are still a child, certain people that you ask for help (such as teachers, school counselors, or doctors) may be required to report the abuse to the police or child protective services. The report is made in order to make sure that you are safe from the perpetrator.

About sexual violence

Specific concerns (continued)

I was assaulted by more than one person (gang rape)

When two or more people commit a sexual assault on one person, it is called “gang rape”. This can be especially terrifying and often involves physical as well as sexual violence. As with any other sexual assault, the purpose is to intimidate and dominate. It may also be part of a ritual to “bond” the members of the group. For instance, as part of an initiation, someone may have to have sex with another gang member or another person being initiated; this often has to happen in front of others so there is proof.



I was assaulted as part of cult activity (ritual sexual abuse)

Ritual sexual abuse is sexual contact by a person or a group as part of a cult or ritual activity. The violence may include sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse. Survivors may have been forced to have sexual contact or assault another victim. Like gang rape, its purpose is to build unity in the group. Often, the sexual violence continues for an extended period of time and is part of a complex pattern of behaviors and activities. There may be a very real fear of harm for “telling” about the abuse. There are resources and people available to help.

Sexual violence can happen to anyone

Persons with Disabilities

Sexual violence against people who have a physical, mental health, and/or cognitive disability is very common. If this happened or is happening to you, it is likely that the person who hurt you is someone you know. It may be someone who is supposed to help you. It may be someone who has control over your money or your care. If you count on this person for care and they have the power to make decisions for you, you may feel hopeless about getting help. No matter who the person is, you have a right to tell the police and to ask for help. There are people who care and want to help you. You have a right to visit a doctor or nurse. You have a right to be treated with respect.

If you seek help from someone who works with people who have disabilities, you may want to ask if she or he knows about surviving sexual violence. If you seek help from a sexual assault crisis center, you may want to ask for someone who knows about helping people with disabilities. The agencies may not have staff who know about both issues. You have a right to ask someone to help you as a person with a disability and a victim of sexual violence.

If you are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, you can bring someone with you to interpret or you can ask for a sign-language interpreter. You can also ask for a CART reporter or assistive listening device.

If you or someone you know is Blind or not able to see or read easily, you may call the Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-838-8238 (v/tty) and ask for this booklet on audiotape or in large-print.

Male Survivors

We are taught to see sexual assault as a crime against women, not men. You may have thought sexual assault could never happen to you because you are male. The truth is, sexual assault also happens to boys and men.

Sexual assault is harmful to all victims, whether male or female. You have survived a traumatic event, and will feel emotions that many other survivors of sexual violence feel. You may feel guilty, depressed, angry, ashamed, helpless, and/or afraid. You may experience a decrease or increase in sexual activity or have an addiction to alcohol or drugs. As a male, you may have special concerns too:

If the assault happened recently:

- You may be afraid to see a doctor and tell what happened.
- You may be afraid to report the crime because you think no one will believe you.
- You may be concerned or question your sexuality, whether you identify as gay or straight.

If you were abused as a child:

- You may be concerned or question your sexuality, whether you identify as gay or straight.
- You may feel isolated and alone.
- You may fear that you will hurt someone else because you were hurt.
- You may feel a lost power, control, or confidence in yourself as a man.

Please understand that sexual assault is a crime of violence and power. It is not a crime of lust or passion. Sometimes a male may have an erection during an assault. This is a physical response, and does not mean you wanted the assault to happen.

Most boys and men are assaulted by other men. If you are heterosexual (“straight”) and your attacker was male, it does not mean you are gay. If you are gay, you did not cause this to happen. No one ever “asks” to be assaulted.

As a male, you may need special support. You can ask for a male counselor on the crisis hotline. You can ask for an older or male nurse in the emergency room. You can ask if a support group of male survivors exists in your area. Please seek help and support.

Sexual violence can happen to anyone

College students on campus

If you are a college student and were sexually assaulted on campus, you are unfortunately not alone.

The National College Women Sexual Victimization Study* found in their sample that the rate of completed and attempted rapes was 35 per every 1,000 female students. The researchers suggest that based on this rate, college campuses having 10,000 female students could theoretically have as many as 350 incidents of rape during the academic year.

As a student, you may have some concerns specific to your experience. You may have been drinking or using drugs before the assault. (Remember, you are not responsible for the assault, no matter how much you drank or how high you were). Your friends may be friends with the assailant, and may feel that supporting you means they are “taking sides”. You may want to report the crime, but might also be worried that doing so would “ruin” the assailant’s life. You may not want to have to see the perpetrator on a daily basis and think that you have to transfer or quit school. You may be afraid of failing because you can not get to class or can’t concentrate on your studies.

You may not want other people to know about the assault. Remember that you have the right to make choices about what steps you take next. You also have the right to be supported in those choices. If your friends are unwilling or unable to support you in your choices, find someone who will support you. Read on for some ideas.

**Fisher, S., Cullen, F., Turner, M., 2000. The Sexual Victimization of College Women. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.*

Finding support:

Many colleges have policies regarding sexual assault on campus. Your college may have any of the following:

- **Sexual assault response team:** Teams are usually on-call, and may be contacted by calling the student counseling center, campus police, or a resident staff member. Response teams are particularly knowledgeable about campus resources for sexual assault, including disciplinary options if the perpetrator is a student.
- **Resident staff:** As part of their training, resident staff members may have received information on supporting and offering resources to students who have been sexually assaulted. If you are concerned about confidentiality, check on their confidentiality policy.
- **Student counseling center:** You may have access to campus counseling services, which are generally free to students. Ask to speak to a counselor who is particularly experienced in helping students heal from sexual assault and/or trauma.
- **Dean of Students:** If you have difficulty concentrating or fulfilling your academic obligations, the Dean of Students may be able to talk to your instructors about postponing exams or deadlines for papers.
- **Local sexual assault crisis center:** You are also eligible to use the services of the community sexual assault crisis center. The crisis center offers individual counseling, support groups, and legal advocacy to help you navigate the legal system. They can also accompany you to the hospital or student health center and provide support and information directly following an assault. All services are free and confidential. See the Appendix at the end of this booklet to find the crisis center nearest you.

Sexual violence can happen to anyone

College students (continued)

Health concerns:

As a student, you may have access to a student health center at no cost or reduced cost. Because the services offered at student health centers vary widely, you may want to ask the following questions at the center before seeking help after a sexual assault:

- Do they have someone on call who can help you 24 hours a day?
- Will you be able to be examined by/speak to a health care provider who has been trained to help sexual assault survivors?
- Will someone at the student health center be able to collect evidence, if you choose to do so? (see page 33 for more information on the Physical Evidence Recovery Kit, or “PERK”)
- Will they provide you with emergency contraception (“morning after pill”), if you ask for it?

If your health center is not able to provide you with the services listed above, you may want to consider going to the hospital or other medical service provider. If you are referred or go to a local hospital or other service provider, find out what their policies are on notifying the school’s administration or your parents about the assault.

Holding the perpetrator responsible

If you were assaulted by a college student, you have the option of reporting the crime to the local police. If your college has a disciplinary policy that includes sexual assault, you also have the option of reporting the assault to college administrators. Colleges have a wide variety of disciplinary policies in place for students who have been found responsible for committing a sexual assault. These options include:

- A formal hearing by a body of college representatives (faculty, administrators, students), which may result in sanctions, such as a reprimand, suspension or expulsion.
- Mediation, in which you and the assailant discuss each of your perspectives on the incident (guided by a professional mediator), and come to a written agreement to which both must adhere.
- Structured meeting, in which you are able to confront your assailant and describe how the assault affected you.

Each college has different policies regarding sexual assault. Contact your campus sexual assault program or the local sexual assault crisis center to find out which options are available on your campus.

If you were sexually assaulted as a child or high school student

As a young adult, you may have been sexually abused as a child or during high school. It is not uncommon for feelings about these past experiences to surface when you go away to college and/or leave home. Even though the abuse may not be happening now, the trauma does not end when the abuse stops. You may have “flashbacks” about the abuse, which make you feel you are re-living the abuse. You may be “triggered” into a flashback by a smell, a voice, a word, or a feeling. You may remember only pieces of your childhood because your mind tried to bury the memories to protect you from the effects of the abuse. You may have difficulty sleeping because of nightmares or have difficulty concentrating because you can not stop thinking about the abuse. You may feel anxious a lot and easily startled or scared. These are all very common reactions and are your body’s way of reminding you that you were hurt and it is time to take care of yourself and find a safe place to heal.

Sexual violence can happen to anyone

College students (continued)

Remember you can ask for support to cope with feelings about past sexual violence from many of the same people and/or places mentioned above, such as Resident Staff, Student Counseling Services, or the local Sexual Assault Crisis Center.



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Undocumented residents

You may not be a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S. If you have been sexually assaulted, you still have rights:

- You have a right to medical help.
- You have a right to report the crime to the police.
- If you do not want to talk to the police, you have a right to say nothing.
- Any medical information you give a doctor or nurse is confidential. It cannot be given to anyone (including police) without your permission.
- Hospital staff cannot ask you if you are a citizen. They cannot report you to United States Immigration and Customs Services.
- If you go to court and need an interpreter in court, you have a right to an interpreter.

Some hospitals call the police when someone says they have been sexually assaulted. The hospital might call the police even if you do not want to speak to them. You have a right to say you do not want to talk to the police.

If you were assaulted by your husband, you cannot be deported, no matter what he says. The Violence Against Women Act protects you against abuse. It is important to have an immigration lawyer. Contact your Domestic Violence Program or the Virginia Poverty Law Center at 1-800-868-8752, extension 16. For more information about this (see the Appendix at the end of this booklet for the number to your local sexual assault crisis center).

Virginia pays for some medical expenses for crime victims. This is called "Crime Victim Compensation". If you want Virginia to pay for your medical expenses, you must talk to the police. You must also give them a passport or other proof that you are a citizen of another country.

If you have entered the U.S. against your will, you may receive protection from the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. Call a Sexual Assault Crisis Center or Domestic Violence Program.

If you want to speak to a victim advocate using your own language, call the Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-838-8238 (v/tty) and ask for an interpreter.

Reclaiming your life: support and healing after sexual violence
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Sexual violence can happen to anyone

People who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer

People who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer are at risk of sexual violence just as much as anyone else and are sometimes at more risk. The person who hurt you may be someone you know, your partner, or a stranger.

They may have assaulted you because of your sexual orientation (homophobia) or their assumptions about you. The person who hurt you might have the same sexual orientation and/or gender identity as you, or they might have a different one.

You have the right to be treated in a supportive way. If you don't find someone at first who can support you as you heal, please keep looking until you do. There are people who can help you and support you. You deserve it.

EVEF Anti-Violence Project at Equality Virginia

Working to address and end violence within and against the LGBTQ community.

www.equalityvirginia.org/avp

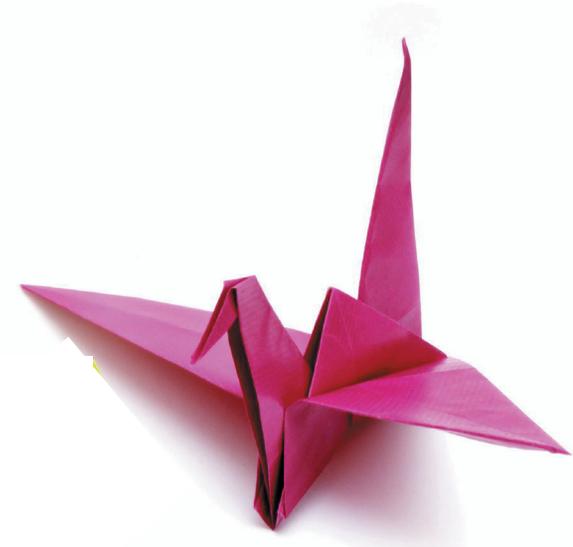
804-643-4816

People who identify as transgender or gender queer

People who identify as transgender or gender queer are at risk of sexual violence just as much as anyone else and are sometimes at more risk. The person who hurt you may be someone you know, your partner, or a stranger. They may have assaulted you because of your gender identity

(transphobia), your sexual orientation (homophobia), or their assumptions about you. The person who hurt you might have the same gender identity and/or sexual orientation as you, or they might have a different one.

You have the right to be treated in a supportive way. If you don't find someone at first who can support you as you heal, please keep looking until you do. There are people who can help you and support you. You deserve it.



Sexual violence can happen to anyone

Incarcerated persons

Sexual assault happens in jails and prisons, to men, women and juveniles. One study of four Midwestern states found that about one in five male inmates reported being sexually assaulted while in jail. About one in ten male inmates reported that they had been raped.*

Rates for women vary greatly. In one facility, 27 percent of women reported a forced sexual incident. Another facility reported that seven percent of women were sexually abused.** Female inmates are most likely to be abused by male staff members.

If you were assaulted in jail or prison, you may have been assaulted by a guard or inmate(s). You may have been beaten during the assault. You may have become someone's "sexual slave" in order to survive.

It may be hard for you to get support after an assault. You may be incarcerated far from your family or other supportive people. You may have been denied medical treatment after the assault. You may not be able to use the phone to call a crisis hotline. You may fear further harm if you tell anyone about the assault.

Any kind of forced sexual activity is a crime, no matter who commits it. In Virginia, it is illegal for a prison or jail staff member to have a sexual relationship with an inmate, even if there is no force or threats.

For help or support, you have options:

- You may write a letter of complaint and file it with the jail or prison;
- You may write directly to the warden or the Director of the Department of Corrections;
- You may contact a/your lawyer;
- You may file a criminal complaint with the Commonwealth's Attorney;
- You may call a sexual assault hotline and ask for help (see Appendix at the end of this booklet);
- You may write a letter to the local sexual assault crisis center and ask for help;
- You may visit Stop Prisoner Rape at www.spr.org for resources or more information

You are the only one who can decide what options feel safe to you. You may want to start with some lower-risk options, and then choose other options later. Whether you are incarcerated or not, you deserve safety and support.

* *Cindy Struckman-Johnson & David Struckman-Johnson, Sexual Coercion Rates in Seven Midwestern Prisons for Men, 80. The Prison Journal 379 (2000).*

** *Cindy Struckman-Johnson & David Struckman-Johnson, Summary of Sexual Coercion Data. Address at "Not Part of the Penalty: Ending Prisoner Rape". (October 19, 2001). In Sexual Coercion Rates in Seven Midwestern Prisons for Men, 80. The Prison Journal 379 (2000).*

Intimate partners

(See page 6 for specific concerns if you were assaulted by your intimate partner)

If you were sexually assaulted by your partner, you may be able to seek a Protective Order. A partner is someone with whom you have lived in the past 12 months or you have a child in common. You can be married or have been married.

A Protective Order is a legal order that tells your partner to stop hurting you and to stay away from you. Child custody arrangements can also be included in the Protective Order.

A Protective Order is a "civil option", which means your partner will not be charged with a crime if you get a Protective Order. But, your partner may be charged with a crime if he or she violates the order.

For more information on Protective Orders and other legal options, call your local domestic violence program or sexual assault crisis center. Ask to speak to a court advocate. You can find hotline numbers at the end of this booklet.

Sexual violence can happen to anyone

Teen Survivors

You may have been sexually abused by an adult when you were a young child or even now, as a teenager. You may have been sexually assaulted by an acquaintance, friend, boy/girlfriend, an adult that you know (teacher, neighbor, family member), or stranger. You are not alone. Many teens experience physical and/or sexual violence.

You may have a range of feelings...fear, shame, anger... You may be worried how your parents will react. You might worry that they will be angry with you. You might worry they will try to limit your freedom in order to protect you. You might worry that your family or friends might try to hurt or “get back at” the perpetrator.

If you were assaulted by someone you know, you may worry that your family or friends won't believe you or will even blame you. If you were assaulted when breaking a school rule or house rule, you might worry that you will get in trouble.

Please know that any sexual activity that is forced on you is a crime. You did not deserve to be assaulted. Even if you knew the person who hurt you. Even if you were doing something that many define as risky, such as hanging out with people you don't know, being out late after curfew, or hitchhiking. Even if you were doing something illegal, like drinking or taking drugs. No matter what you were doing, you did not deserve to be assaulted.

If the abuse happened in the past, it is not uncommon for feelings about these past experiences to come up after the abuse has ended. Even though the abuse may not be happening now, the trauma does not end when the abuse stops. You may have “flashbacks” about the abuse, which make you feel you are re-living the abuse. You may be “triggered” into a flashback by a smell, a voice, a word, or

a feeling. You may not remember much about being a child because your mind tried to bury the memories to protect you from the effects of the abuse. You may have difficulty sleeping because of nightmares or have difficulty concentrating because you cannot stop thinking about the abuse. You may feel anxious a lot and easily startled or scared.

These are all very common reactions and is your body's way of reminding you that you were hurt. It is time to take care of yourself and find a safe place to heal.

You are not alone. One in four women and one in eight men have been a victim of sexual assault in Virginia. Most of them were younger than 18 when they were assaulted.

It is important that you find someone who believes you and supports you. Talking to someone you trust can help you feel better. If you are worried about privacy, you can call the hotline of your local sexual assault crisis center and not give your name. You can ask about how they can help, and how they keep things confidential. Please know that certain professionals are required by law to report child sexual abuse. This reporting is done in order to make sure children are kept safe from abuse. If you are concerned about this, talk to an adult and find out how they can help you.

It is important that you get medical attention. You may have medical needs that you cannot feel yet. You can ask someone from the sexual assault crisis center to go with you to the health center, if you want support.

Remember, you are not to blame for what happened. There are people who will believe you. There are people who can help.

Sexual violence can happen to anyone

Elder and dependent adults

People of any age can be sexually assaulted. People who depend on others for daily care are especially at risk for sexual abuse. Sexual abuse of elders is not often reported. Physical abuse, financial abuse and verbal abuse are also very common. A care provider, acquaintance, or family member can commit abuse.

As a survivor of abuse, you may wonder if you should tell your children or other family members about the assault. You may fear that you will be harmed further or put in a nursing home if you report the abuse. It may take you longer to recover from physical injuries. You may be concerned about how you will stay safe in the future. You may feel uncomfortable talking about sexual activity, even if it is forced and unwanted.

If you have not reported the abuse, find someone you trust and tell her/him about it. Please know that certain professionals are required by law to report elder sexual abuse. This reporting is done in order to make sure vulnerable adults are kept safe from abuse. If you are concerned about reporting the abuse, call a sexual assault crisis center (see “Appendix” at the end of the booklet). You can ask if a report needs to be made.

A sexual assault crisis center can offer support and counseling. Staff can also help family and friends deal with their own feelings and learn how to support you.

Remember, you have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. You have the right to say “no” to any sexual contact that you do not want. You have the right to seek help. You have the right to feel safe.

Military personnel

The United States military has its own laws, social customs and policies. If you are in the military, and have been sexually assaulted, you probably have concerns specific to the military.

You may be concerned about privacy due to the military’s mandatory reporting policies. You may be worried that your commander or peers will think less of you if you report an assault. If the perpetrator is in your unit, you may worry that your peers will question your loyalty to your unit if you report the assault. You may be worried that this will hurt your career in the military. You may be worried that you will not be believed.

You may have to serve with the person who assaulted you. You may have to see him/her on a daily basis. The perpetrator may even have authority over you, so you may be forced to salute him or her. You may be worried that Military Police are not trained correctly to investigate sexual assault.

These are issues that sexual assault survivors in the military often consider when deciding to report the crime. You can also seek help and support from civilian sexual assault crisis centers.

All information given to staff at a civilian sexual assault crisis center is confidential. Services are free. Many of them are familiar with the policies of the local military base. They can tell you where to get additional help on base. It might be helpful for you to talk first with staff at a civilian sexual assault crisis center. They can tell you about your options for help in civilian agencies and in the military.

Your rights

Your rights as a person...

As a human being, you have a right to determine what happens to your body. When someone is sexually assaulted, this very basic right has been violated. You have the right to decide when, where, with whom, and how you have sexual contact. After an assault, it is important to remember that you still have this right. You have the right to agree to or refuse medical treatment or help from others.

As a crime victim...

Virginia law provides certain rights to victims of crime under the Virginia Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act.

The rights you may be eligible for include:

- A separate waiting area during court proceedings, where you can have privacy.
- Someone to help you with decisions about financial assistance, restitution and victims' compensation.
- Help if an employer penalizes you for appearing in court.
- Advance notice from the Commonwealth's Attorney's office of all court proceedings.
- Notice of releases, transfers, escapes or changes of name of a prisoner (you must request this in writing).
- The option of preparing a Victim Impact Statement that describes how the crime affected you.
- The right to remain in the courtroom during the trial, or other court proceedings, unless you are a material witness.
- The option to request that your telephone number and address will not be disclosed, except when necessary for the trial.
- An interpreter in court if you need one.

- The option to request a closed preliminary hearing if the crime is a sexual offense.
- (If you are fourteen or younger), the option of requesting that a two-way closed-circuit television be used to take your testimony.



Health and medical concerns

Choosing to go to the hospital...

You have the right to choose whether to go to the hospital. It is important that you seek medical attention regardless of whether or not you want to report the crime because you may have injuries of which you are unaware. Medical attention is also important so that you can be tested for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections that may have resulted from the assault. This is important because there may be a “quiet infection”, meaning that you may not notice any symptoms.

A word about pregnancy...

Although the statistics for pregnancy resulting from a sexual assault are relatively low (4.7% as reported in a Centers for Disease Control Sexual Violence Fact Sheet), it is still an important consideration. If you are concerned about possible pregnancy, you may ask a health care provider or Forensic Nurse Examiner about emergency contraceptives.

Emergency contraception is not related to abortion or “the abortion pill”. Instead, it helps make it less likely that you may become pregnant as the result of the assault. If it is not offered to you, you can ask about it and where you can get it. It only works if taken within 72 hours of the assault—so it is important to ask about it as soon as possible.

What about sexually transmitted infections?

You may be screened for some sexually transmitted infections as part of the exam you receive at the hospital. However, those tests will not reveal infections that are transmitted during the sexual assault you just experienced. Therefore, it is important that you ask about what you have been tested for and when and where follow-up testing should be done.

You may be given something called a “prophylactic antibiotic”. This is an antibiotic that may help prevent a sexually transmitted infection. Remember to ask what this antibiotic will prevent when it is being given to you.

What if I was drunk or high?

It is considered a sexual assault if the person took advantage of the fact that you were intoxicated in order to have sexual contact with you, even if you became intoxicated willingly. It is a crime to have sex with someone who cannot knowingly agree (give consent) to a sexual act or who is physically unable to provide consent. Some people plan to get others to go past their limits in order to assault them. If you feel that someone pushed you to drink more than you wanted, tell the person examining you so they can note it in the record.

What if I think I was drugged?

If you think you may have been under the influence of a drug, ask to have your blood and urine screened as well. Some drugs used to facilitate an assault are only detectable in the blood or urine for a very short time—usually only 12 to 72 hours. It is important that you tell your examiner/medical professional if you suspect that you have been drugged. If you have had any black-outs or memory losses of the assault, it is important to let your examiner know. It is also important to let the examiner/medical professional know if you used any drugs voluntarily and if so, what drugs and how much. This helps the professional know what drugs and how much to expect to find in your system.

Health and medical concerns

What to expect at the hospital

If you choose to go to the hospital, medical professionals will examine you and collect evidence for a case. They will have a box that is filled with small white envelopes. This is called a Physical Evidence Recovery Kit (PERK). The evidence that is collected by doing a PERK can be very valuable to a case when it goes to court. However, it can be difficult and feel very unsettling or uncomfortable to you. You can ask for a victim advocate from a sexual assault crisis center to be with you during the exam. An advocate can help explain what is happening and support you.

Some hospitals have Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) or Forensic Nurse Examiners (FNEs) who are trained to collect evidence in sexual assault cases. The SANE or FNE will explain what they are doing as they do their exam. You have the right to stop the exam at any time you want. If your hospital does not have a SANE or FNE, the PERK will probably be done by an emergency room physician.

The Exam

The following are the different steps in gathering the information needed to complete a PERK.

- **Interview/History:** used to identify medical needs and gather information about what happened to you. There will be many questions that ask you to talk about the details of what happened. Although this may be difficult, it is important information for the investigation and can help the medical staff know where to look for injuries.

- **Physical Exam:** The exam will look at your body from “head-to-toe” in order to identify and document injuries. The SANE or FNE will write down and draw pictures of the injuries that they see. Sometimes they may also take

pictures of injuries. Although some law enforcement personnel believe they need to be present in the room during an exam, this is NOT true.

- **Evidence Collection:** Most of the time this is done at the same time as the physical exam. Each area of the body is looked at carefully for evidence such as body fluids, bruises, tears, hair, etc. The SANE or FNE may have special tools that they use to see this evidence when it cannot be seen by the naked eye. They may take blood, skin and hair samples, body fluids, clothing or other pieces of evidence. It is important to know that your clothing may be taken as evidence and they will not be returned to you. Many sexual assault crisis centers or hospitals provide clothing for you to wear home. If you changed clothes after the assault and do not have the clothing you were wearing with you, store it in a paper bag to be turned over to SANE or law enforcement.

- **Discharge Process:** This part of the exam includes oral and written information for you about things that you may be concerned about like sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, sexual assault services, mental health services, and other related things that you may need to know.



Reporting to law enforcement

If you decide to report

- In Virginia, there is no statute of limitations on sexual assault crimes. This means that it is possible to report a sexual assault no matter how many years have passed. As with all crimes, it is important to consider that the more time that has passed means the less evidence that may be available for collection to prosecute a case.

- Although much has been done in Virginia to eliminate the need for repeating your story, you may be asked to talk about what happened to you several times and in detail to the police, the Commonwealth's Attorney, to a jury or judge or others. In some areas of the Commonwealth, these professionals coordinate their interviews and you may only be asked to tell your story once.

- You may be asked to undergo an exam called a "Physical Evidence Recovery Kit" (PERK) which is done at a hospital or medical center. In some communities the exam will be done by a trained forensic nurse. This means that evidence will be collected from your body and your clothing and other items that may have been with you during the assault. This exam is explained more thoroughly on page 33.

- Remember that law enforcement officers' priority is to serve and protect citizens. To do so, they sometimes must ask very difficult questions to ensure that they are covering all possible aspects of a crime and not accusing someone falsely. This means that sometimes they may appear to not believe you. Try to remember that even though it feels that way, it is part of their job to make sure that they have enough evidence to pursue a case.

- If you don't know or don't remember the answer to any of their questions, it is important that you don't try to guess. It is okay to say that you don't recall or you don't know. Then, if you remember something later, you can call the investigator.

- Remember that you may have someone, like an advocate, friend, or family member, present to support you through these interviews. Advocates are trained in helping sexual assault victims and experienced in going through medical and justice systems. Their goal is to support you and provide you with the

information you need to make the process as easy as possible. Advocates are not a part of the investigation team.

- In some areas of Virginia, it is possible to make a report to law enforcement without pursuing prosecution. This can be called "third party reporting" or "blind reporting". Third party reporting means someone else provides a report of what happened to you to the police, but does not release your name. Blind reporting is when you make the report yourself. Law enforcement will take all of the information about the assault and record it unofficially. This allows law enforcement to have information about the perpetrator and the specifics of the crime that may help track and identify a perpetrator in another case, but law enforcement will not investigate the assault and therefore you will not participate in the criminal justice process.

- Law enforcement personnel are required by law to provide you with a list of your specific rights as a crime victim. The list should include a telephone number where you can receive further information and assistance. If you are not given this list, you can ask for one.

To report or not

If you are over 18 years of age, the decision to report what has happened to you to the police is completely up to you. This decision is not always an easy one to make and there are a couple of things to consider. The process of reporting a sexual assault can be a difficult experience, but may also be a productive part of the healing process that brings closure and accountability to the person who hurt you. Remember, the decision to report is up to you. You have the right to refuse any treatment or stop any process at any time. And again, you can contact a sexual assault crisis center or victim/witness program and ask an advocate to assist you during the process.

Reporting to law enforcement

The Investigation Process

If you decide to report a sexual assault, an investigation of the crime that was committed against you will begin.

Initial Law Enforcement Interview

The crime should be reported to the police department or sheriff's office in the locality in which the crime happened. Once you report, an officer or deputy will be sent to where you are, or you may be asked to come to the station. The officer will ask you many questions to get a general idea about what kind of crime occurred, details about the assault and what happened before, during and after the assault. The officer will want to know if you know the person who assaulted you and she/he will ask you to remember as many details about the person who assaulted you as you can.

It is important to remember to give as much information as you can remember. If the details are not clear, it is better to say that you don't remember than to guess.

Investigator's Interview

An investigator (sometimes called a "detective") will contact you at some point. The investigator may come to your location after you've finished the initial interview above or he/she may schedule an appointment with you at a later time. You are allowed to request and have an advocate with you during the interview.

The investigator will ask you to tell, in detail, about what happened to you again. She/he may ask you the same questions multiple times or in many different ways. Some of the questions that she/he will ask might be embarrassing or confusing. It is important to tell the investigator everything that you remember about what happened to

you—even if you think it's not important.

If you aren't sure who the person is that assaulted you, you may be asked to look at a row of people or photographs of people who look like the person you describe. Sometimes, the investigator may bring in someone to draw a picture from your description, called a "composite", in order to help identify the person who assaulted you.

After the investigator gathers all of the information needed and determines a crime has occurred, he/she will file charges with the Commonwealth's Attorney who will make a decision about whether or not to prosecute the case.

A Word About Polygraphs

Polygraphs are also known as "lie detector tests". The polygraph measures changes in your body as you respond to questions, such as your heartbeat, breathing, and blood pressure.

If a law enforcement officer asks you to take a polygraph, you have the right to refuse. The investigator is not allowed by law to make you take a polygraph in order to start or continue an investigation. If you have questions about a polygraph, talk with a sexual assault crisis center advocate.

The court system

The court system can be a difficult thing to figure out. The way things are done can be extremely confusing. Sometimes it may feel like the court system is more concerned with protecting the person who hurt you than they are about what happened to you. It is important to remember that those feelings are normal and valid and that United States laws require the criminal justice system to treat everyone as innocent until proven guilty.

Preliminary Hearing

Once the information that you gave to the investigator has been given to the Commonwealth's Attorney's office, she/he will review the investigator's report. The Commonwealth Attorney (or Assistant Commonwealth Attorney) will decide if there is enough evidence to go forward with a case. If she/he chooses to go forward, she/he will schedule a preliminary hearing. Anyone who is charged with a crime and is held in jail is entitled to a preliminary hearing within 10 days of their arrest. If they are released on bond or bail, then they are entitled to a preliminary hearing within 30 days.

At the preliminary hearing, the Commonwealth's Attorney will present the evidence to a judge. The judge will decide whether or not there is enough evidence to prove that a crime probably occurred. This is called "probable cause". If the judge decides that there is probable cause, a trial date will be set. If the judge does not find that there is enough evidence to support "probable cause", the case may be dismissed. This does not mean that what happened to you was not serious. It just means that the court needed more evidence than the investigator or Commonwealth's Attorney were able to provide.

Arraignment

In the meantime, the person who hurt you will have to go to an "arraignment". An arraignment is when someone who is charged with a crime goes to court and is told by a judge with what crime he or she is being charged. This is also the time that some people who cannot afford a lawyer will be appointed one. The person charged will be asked if they want to plead "guilty" or "not guilty". Most of the time, he/she will plead "not guilty". If the person is still in jail, this is done within 48 hours of arrest.

The Trial

Who is involved?

Commonwealth's Attorney (sometimes called "prosecutor") is the lawyer who is elected by people in the community to represent the Commonwealth of Virginia in criminal cases. Other lawyers in the Commonwealth's Attorney's office are called Assistant Commonwealth's Attorneys.

Defendant is the person who is charged with a crime.

Defense Attorney is the lawyer who is hired or appointed to represent the person charged with committing a crime.

Judge or Jury: In criminal cases, the defendant gets to choose whether or not they want to have their case heard by a group of twelve people from their community ("jury trial") or by a judge ("bench trial"). Most defendants choose to have their case heard by a jury of their peers.

Sexual Assault Victim Advocate is a trained person who works or volunteers for a sexual assault crisis center. Advocates provide emotional support, counseling, and

The court system

other services specifically to victims of sexual violence. These services are confidential and the advocate cannot release information about you without your written consent, unless subpoenaed.

Subpoena is a request from the court for information (e.g. written files, case notes, tapes of interviews, etc) or for someone to appear in court to testify as a witness. If your counseling records are subpoenaed and you do not want them released, ask the counselor to try to quash (stop) the subpoena or to ask the judge to review the information “in camera” (in private) to determine if there is any information that is relevant to the case and needs to be turned over to the defense attorney.

Victim/Witness Advocate is a person whose job is to assist victims and witnesses of crime by providing support, information about the court process, and assist with filing for victim’s compensation. Most Victim/Witness Advocate offices are located in the Commonwealth Attorney’s office and work very closely with the prosecutor. These services are NOT confidential.

Witness—Although what has happened to you is a very personal violation, in our legal system, sexual assault is considered a crime against the state. This means that for the sake of the trial, the “victim” is the Commonwealth of Virginia and you are considered a witness. Witnesses testify in court about what they saw, heard or know about the crime.

What happens during the trial?

When the trial date arrives, it can be a very difficult day. You may be asked to leave the courtroom so that other witnesses will not be able to hear your testimony. There is often a waiting room where you can stay during the trial that is separate from everyone else so that you do not have to sit with other witnesses who may be friends or family members of the person who assaulted you. A sexual assault victim advocate can sit in this room with you to provide support.

Once the trial begins, the Commonwealth’s Attorney and the defense attorney will make opening statements. Opening statements are a brief summary that tells the jury what happened from each attorney’s perspective and what evidence each person will present.

After opening statements, the Commonwealth’s Attorney will begin to call witnesses to the stand. When you are called, you will be asked to tell about what happened to you again, and in detail. First the Commonwealth’s Attorney will ask you questions. Then, the Defense Attorney will ask you questions. The defense attorney is representing the person who hurt you and may ask questions that seem hurtful or are embarrassing. Remember to be calm and respond politely, but firmly and clearly. Here are a couple of helpful tips to remember when you are testifying:

- You do not have to look at the person who assaulted you after you are asked to identify him/her for the court.
- Listen carefully to the questions you are being asked and answer honestly. Take time to think about your answer if you need to. If you don’t understand the question, it is okay to ask for it to be repeated or asked in a different way. If you do not remember, it is okay to say “I don’t know”. Never guess as this could be harmful to your case.

The court system

- When you give your answer, speak as clearly as you can and only answer the question that is asked. It is important that you stop once you've answered the question so that you are not giving other information which may not be needed. If it is a "yes or no" question, only answer yes or no.
- If an objection is made by one of the attorneys while you are talking, it is important that you stop and wait for the judge to instruct you what to do next.

After all of the witnesses have testified, the Attorneys will give their closing statements. This is the time when they summarize what happened during the crime and the evidence they have presented. If it is a jury trial, the jury will receive instructions from the judge and go to a separate room to discuss the evidence and make a decision. If it is a bench trial, the judge may leave the courtroom, will review all the evidence and make a decision. Either way, this can take a few moments, or a few days.

When the jury returns with a decision, everyone is called back into the courtroom including the witnesses. You can ask the Commonwealth's Attorney's office to let you know when a decision is reached. The jury will find the defendant either guilty or not guilty. If a defendant is found to be guilty, a sentencing date will be scheduled by the judge. It is also possible to have a "hung jury." This means the jury could not agree. The prosecutor then needs to decide if h/she will retry the case with a new jury. If the prosecutor does retry the case, you will need to go through the whole trial again.

If the defendant is found not guilty or there is a hung jury,

it is important to remember that this does not mean the crime did not occur. It means that there was not enough evidence presented to the jury that convinced them that a crime occurred "beyond a reasonable doubt". Beyond a reasonable doubt means that each member of the jury must be convinced that he/she is certain that a crime occurred and the person on trial committed this crime. This is a very difficult thing to achieve. Some sexual assault cases do not return guilty verdicts because often the only witnesses are the victim and the person who assaulted them. Our criminal justice system is simply not set up to believe the word of one person over another unless there is a lot of other evidence.

Sentencing

Sentencing is a separate court hearing where the judge decides what punishment a person who has been convicted of a crime will receive. During sentencing the judge will take into consideration the law, the recommendation from the jury and the Victim Impact Statement.

A Victim Impact Statement can either be told in person by the victim of a crime or can be a written document that is given or read to the judge. The Victim Impact Statement lets the judge know what effect the sexual assault has had on the life of the victim. A sexual assault victim advocate or Victim/Witness advocate can help you prepare your Victim Impact Statement. Some things that you may want to talk about in your statement are how the assault affected you emotionally, physically, financially, or in other areas of your life.

The healing process

If you have been assaulted, it is normal to notice changes in your mood, your emotions, your actions or your body. Sometimes these changes happen very quickly and others may happen over time. Sometimes they will come and go. There a number of feelings that you may be experiencing like:

- Shock
- Disbelief
- Overwhelmed
- Trouble concentrating or remembering
- Scared
- Numb
- Angry
- Sad
- Tired
- Out of control

Or many others.

You may experience something called Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) or Rape Trauma. PTS can include physical and emotional symptoms.

The assault can be repeatedly re-experienced in one or more of the following ways:

- Images of the event appear without warning;
- Disturbing dreams;
- Feeling like the assault is happening again (hallucinations, flashbacks, dissociation);
- Physically feeling like the assault is occurring (smells, tastes, visions, touch);

Dissociation may also be experienced:

- Numbing, detachment, lack of emotional responses
- “Being in a daze”
- Amnesia
- Lack of awareness of surroundings

Other physical symptoms include:

- Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep
- Irritability, outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hypervigilance
- Exaggerated startle response
- Loss of memory
- Difficulty in processing thoughts

We all heal differently

There is no “right” way to feel or react to sexual assault. Everyone reacts differently. The important thing is that you give yourself space and time to heal. It may take a long time to feel normal again or like healing is actually happening. Remember to be patient with yourself.



Helping yourself heal

Seek support

Surround yourself with people you care about and who care about you—like friends and family. You may also want to consider joining a support group or counseling at your local sexual assault crisis center or through a private therapist.

Have fun

Stress can build up quickly. Try doing something that you enjoy or exercising to help relieve the stress.

Write

Sometimes writing your thoughts and feelings down can help. Putting things down on paper, whether it be recording a dream or making a list, can help you explore your feelings and release them from your mind.

Connect with your spirituality

Look for ways to tap into your spiritual self—regardless of your religion or background. Pray and/or meditate.

Take a reality check

Sometimes it is important that we are the most honest with ourselves. When you are feeling emotional, try to think about what is really going on. For example, if you see something on TV that reminds you of what happened and you become scared, try to remind yourself that you are safe at home watching TV.

Find your routine

Sometimes having a set pattern of doing things or doing something you do every day helps you to feel better. Think of things that you do everyday like showering, eating, yoga, calling someone special, or watching TV.

Be present

Try to focus on what is going on in the here and now. Think about what you are doing in the moment. Focus on sounds, smells and sights around you.

Visualize

Try looking at something that is special to you and visit a comforting place in your imagination to take your mind off things for a moment.

Breathe

Take in air deeply and slowly. Let it out the same way. Repeat this until you are feeling more calm and settled.

Relax

Take a bath or do something that helps you return to the present.

Let music soothe you

Listen to a favorite song or sing something that makes you feel good.

Adapted from the Sexual Assault Resource Agency's booklet for sexual assault survivors.

For family & friends

Sexual assault not only affects the person who was assaulted. It also affects people close to her or him.

It is hard to know that someone you care about has been hurt, especially in such a personal way. If someone you love has been assaulted, you may react in many different ways. You may experience feelings that are like the survivor's feelings. You may wonder if the survivor could have prevented the assault. You may want to "protect" the survivor by making decisions for her or him.

You may also feel:

- A desire for revenge
- Guilt that you did not prevent the assault
- A rationalization that the assault "wasn't that bad"
- A desire to "fix it" and then move on

All of these feelings are normal. In order to support your loved one, it is important that you deal with your own reactions to the assault. By reading this booklet, you are taking an important step to help your loved one. You are learning more about sexual assault and the healing process.

How to help:

- Accept her/his feelings.
- Believe and reassure her or him.
- Remind her/him that no one deserves to be sexually assaulted.
- Listen without judging or trying to "fix it".
- Remember that it is important for the survivor to make her/his own decisions.
- Encourage her/him to call a Sexual Assault Crisis Center for support.
- Take care of yourself. Call a Sexual Assault Crisis Center to talk about your own feelings.

- Learn more about sexual assault, healing, and how you can help (see page 45 or "Recommended Reading" on page 53 for more information).

- Remember that your supportive reaction is important to helping the survivor recover.

For Intimate Partners

You may respond to the assault with shock and disbelief. You may need some time to accept what has happened. It is normal to want to take away the pain your partner is feeling. Remember that pain is one way a person copes with trauma. It may take months or years to work through completely, but your partner can feel better eventually. Your support and patience helps the healing process.

About Sexual Intimacy

In sexual assault, sex is used as a weapon. Therefore, a survivor will likely feel differently about sexual intimacy after the assault. Sexual contact can stir up the survivor's memories or feelings about the assault. As an intimate partner, try to be patient and understanding. The survivor may want little or no physical contact for a while. Or she/he may want to limit contact to what feels safe. She/he may have flashbacks during sexual intimacy. Your relationship may be different for a while. Remember that this change is probably temporary. Most survivors heal from the trauma of sexual assault and have loving intimate relationships.

Sex offender treatment/ sex offender management

A word of caution

It is important to note that the vast majority of sexual assaults are committed by family members and acquaintances. Because most sex offenses are never reported, most sex offenders live undetected in the community. Sex offender registries and community notification procedures are of limited use because only a fraction of sex offenders are ever convicted and therefore are on the registry. Most perpetrators are not on the registry.

Sex offender treatment

For those sex offenders who have been reported and convicted, some sex offender treatment programs can contribute to community safety. Most treatment involves group or individual therapy and education. Those who comply with treatment rules are less likely to re-offend than those who reject treatment, but no studies to date have found treatment procedures that stop most offenders from re-offending. Virginia has approximately 20 certified sex offender treatment providers.

Sex offender registration

All states have sex offender registration laws, which are intended to prevent offenders from committing future crimes, and provide law enforcement with an additional investigative tool. In Virginia, people convicted of certain sex offenses must register with the Virginia State Police, which maintains the Virginia Sex Offender Registry. The registry is broken down into two categories:

1. offenses for which registration is required (this list is not available online to the public)
2. sexually violent offenses (this list is available online on

the Public Notification Database at <http://sex-offender.vsp.virginia.gov/sor/index.htm>

Failure to follow registration policies results in a Class One Misdemeanor (up to 1 year imprisonment and/or fine up to \$2,500) for Sex Offenders or a Class Six Felony (up to 5 years imprisonment and/or fine up to \$2,500) for Violent Sex Offenders.

Recommended reading

After Silence: Rape and My Journey Back, Nancy Venable Raine, 1999

Allies in Healing: When the Person You Love was Sexually Abused as a Child, A Support Book for Partners, Laura Davis, 1991

Confronting Rape and Sexual Assault, Mary Odem and Jody Clay Warner, 1997

Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, 1988

Healing the Incest Wound: Adult Survivors in Therapy, Christine Courtois, 1996

I Will Survive: African-American Guide to Healing from Sexual Assault and Abuse, Lori Robinson and Julia Boyd, 2003

I Never Told Anyone, Ellen Bass and Louise Thornton, 1983

Male on Male Rape: Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame, Michael Scarce, 2001

Memory, Trauma Treatment and the Law, Daniel Brown, Alan Schelfin and D. Corydon Hammond, 1998

Recovering from Rape - 2nd Edition, Linda Ledray, 1995

Secret Survivors, Sue Blume, 1998

Sexual Assault: The Victims, the Perpetrators and the Criminal Justice System, Frances Reddington and Betsy Wright Kreisel, 2004

Sexual Healing Journey, Wendy Maltz, 1992

Telling: A Memoir of Rape and Recovery, Patricia Weaver-Fransisco, 1999

Trauma and Recovery, Judith Herman, MD, 1992

Victims No Longer: Men Recovering from Incest and Other Sexual Child Abuse (revised and updated), Mike Lew, 2004

Wounded Boys, Heroic Men: A Man's Guide to Recovering from Child Abuse, Daniel Jay Sonkin, 1998



Resources

Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline

24 hour statewide hotline for support, information, and referrals to community programs.

1-800-838-8238 (v/tty)

Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

www.vsdvalliance.org

Action Alliance Library: www.svresources.org

Choose Respect

Helping adolescents form healthy relationships to prevent dating abuse before it starts.

www.chooserespect.org

FaithTrust Institute

Works with faith communities to combat abuse and violence in families, religious communities, and across society, including sexual abuse.

www.faithtrustinstitute.org

Family Violence Prevention Fund

Works to prevent violence within the home and in the community, and to help those whose lives are devastated by violence.

www.endabuse.org

HumanTrafficking.com

The online resource and activism center to combat trafficking in women and children – featuring the world's largest searchable database on sex trafficking.

www.humantrafficking.com

The Virginia Anti-Violence Project at Equality Virginia

Working to address and end violence within and against the LGBTQ community.

www.equalityvirginia.org

804-643-4816

National Organization on Male Sexual Victimization

Committed to preventing, healing, and eliminating all forms of sexual victimization of boys and men through support, treatment, research, education, advocacy, and activism.

www.malesurvivor.org

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

Information and resource center regarding all aspects of sexual violence. Works to address the causes and impact of sexual violence through collaboration, prevention efforts and the distribution of resources.

www.nsvrc.org

RAINN National Sexual Assault Online Hotline

A free, confidential, secure service that provides live help over the RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network) website.

www.rainn.org

Sidran, Inc.

Helping people understand, recover from, and treat trauma and dissociation.

www.sidran.org

Stop It Now!

Offers adults tools they can use to prevent sexual abuse - before there's a victim to heal or an offender to punish.

www.stopitnow.com

Stop Prisoner Rape

Seeks to end sexual violence committed against men, women, and children in all forms of detention.

www.spr.org

Survivor Project

Dedicated to addressing the needs of intersex and trans survivors of domestic and sexual violence through action, education and expanding access to resources.

www.survivorproject.org

Virginia Sex Offender Registry (Virginia State Police)

<http://sex-offender.vsp.state.va.us/Static/Search.htm>

Sexual Assault Crisis Centers in Virginia

What is a Sexual Assault Crisis Center?

A Sexual Assault Crisis Center will support you and give you options, so you can decide what to do next. Helpers at Crisis Centers:

- talk to you on a 24-hour hotline
- support you at the hospital
- go with you to report the crime
- offer counseling
- go to court with you

You may call them 24 hours a day. It does not matter if you were hurt recently or were hurt as a child...crisis centers are available to help.

Accomack Co.	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors
Albemarle Co.	Sexual Assault Resource Agency
Alexandria	Sexual Assault Response and Awareness
Allegheny Co.	Safehome Systems
Amelia Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.
Amherst Co.	Sexual Assault Response Crisis Line
Appomattox Co.	Sexual Assault Response Crisis Line
Arlington Co.	Doorways for Women and Families
Augusta Co.	New Directions Center, Inc.
Bath Co.	Safehome Systems
Bedford Co.	Sexual Assault Response Crisis Line
Bland Co.	Family Resource Center, Inc.
Botetourt Co.	SA Response & Awareness Blue Ridge Comm Svcs
Bristol	Crisis Center, Sexual Assault Services
Brunswick Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.
Buchanan Co.	Family Crisis Support Services
	People, Inc.'s Domestic Violence Program

Newport News	757-825-2591
Charlottesville	434-977-7273
Alexandria	703-838-4911
Covington	877-393-3672
Farmville	888-819-2926
Lynchburg	888-947-7273
Lynchburg	888-947-7273
Arlington	703-237-0881
Staunton	800-564-2836
Covington	877-393-3672
Lynchburg	888-947-7273
Wytheville	800-613-6145
Roanoke	540-981-9352
Bristol	888-540-4662
Farmville	888-819-2926
Norton	877-348-3416
Abingdon	877-697-9444

Sexual Assault Crisis Centers in Virginia (cont'd)

Buckingham Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Buena Vista	Project Horizon	Lexington	540-463-2594
Campbell Co.	Sexual Assault Response Crisis Line	Lynchburg	888-947-7273
Caroline Co.	Rappahannock Council Against Sexual Assault	Fredericksburg	540-371-1666
Carroll Co.	Family Resource Center, Inc.	Wytheville	800-613-6145
Charles City Co.	Avalon: A Center For Women And Children	Williamsburg	757-258-5051
	Laurel Shelter, Inc. - SA Crisis Center	Gloucester	804-694-5890
	Project Hope at Quin Rivers	Quinton	877-966-4357
Charlotte Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Charlottesville	Sexual Assault Resource Agency	Charlottesville	434-977-7273
Chesapeake	Response: Sexual Assault Support Services	Norfolk	757-622-4300
Clarke Co.	Shelter For Abused Women	Winchester	540-667-6466
Clifton Forge	Safehome Systems	Covington	877-393-3672
Covington	Safehome Systems	Covington	877-393-3672
Culpeper	Services to Abused Families (SAFE)	Culpeper	540-825-8876
Craig Co.	SA Response & Awareness Blue Ridge Comm Svs	Roanoke	540-987-9352
Cumberland Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Danville	Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline	Statewide	800-838-8238
Dickenson Co.	Family Crisis Support Services	Norton	877-348-3416
Dinwiddie Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Essex Co.	Haven Shelter and Services, Inc.	Warsaw	800-224-2836
Fairfax	Fairfax County Victim Assistance Network	Alexandria	703-360-7273
Fairfax Co.	Fairfax County Victim Assistance Network	Alexandria	703-360-7273
Falls Church	Fairfax County Victim Assistance Network	Alexandria	703-360-7273
Farmville	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Fauquier Co.	Services to Abused Families (SAFE)	Culpeper	540-825-8876
Floyd Co.	Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley	Radford	800-788-1123

Sexual Assault Crisis Centers in Virginia (cont'd)

Fluvanna Co.	Sexual Assault Resource Agency	Charlottesville	434-977-7273
Franklin	Response: Sexual Assault Support Services	Norfolk	757-622-4300
	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
Frederick Co.	Shelter For Abused Women	Winchester	540-667-6466
Fredericksburg	Rappahannock Council Against Sexual Assault	Fredericksburg	540-371-1666
Front Royal	Oasis Program	Front Royal	540-635-9062
Galax	Family Resource Center, Inc.	Wytheville	800-613-6145
Giles Co.	Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley	Radford	800-788-1123
Gloucester Co.	Avalon: A Center For Women And Children	Williamsburg	757-258-5051
	Laurel Shelter, Inc. - Sexual Assault Crisis Center	Gloucester	804-694-5890
	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
Grayson Co.	Family Resource Center, Inc.	Wytheville	800-613-6145
Greene Co.	Sexual Assault Resource Agency	Charlottesville	434-977-7273
Halifax	Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline	Statewide	800-838-8238
Halifax Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Hampton	Avalon: A Center For Women And Children	Williamsburg	757-258-5051
	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
Hanover Co.	Hanover SAFE Place	Ashland	804-752-2702
Harrisonburg	The Collins Center	Harrisonburg	540-434-2272
Highland Co.	New Directions Center, Inc.	Staunton	800-564-2836
Hopewell	The James House	Hopewell	804-458-2840
Isle of Wight Co.	Response: Sexual Assault Support Services	Norfolk	757-622-4300
	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
James City Co.	Avalon: A Center For Women And Children	Williamsburg	757-258-5051
King and Queen	Project Hope at Quin Rivers	Quinton	877-966-4357
King George Co.	Rappahannock Council Against Sexual Assault	Fredericksburg	540-371-1666
King William Co.	Project Hope at Quin Rivers	Quinton	877-966-4357

Sexual Assault Crisis Centers in Virginia (cont'd)

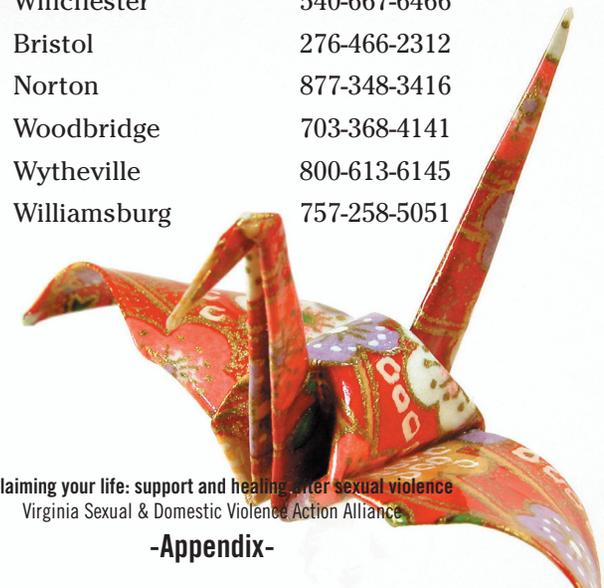
Lancaster Co.	Haven Shelter and Services, Inc.	Warsaw	800-224-2836
Lee Co.	Crisis Center, Sexual Assault Services	Bristol	276-466-2312
	Family Crisis Support Services	Norton	877-348-3416
Leesburg	LAWS	Leesburg	703-777-6552
Lexington	Project Horizon	Lexington	540-463-2594
Loudoun Co.	LAWS	Leesburg	703-777-6552
Louisa Co.	Sexual Assault Resource Agency	Charlottesville	434-977-7273
Lunenburg Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Lynchburg	Sexual Assault Response Crisis Line	Lynchburg	888-947-7273
Madison Co.	Services to Abused Families (SAFE)	Culpeper	540-825-8876
Manassas	Sexual Assault Victim's Advocacy Services	Woodbridge	703-368-4141
Manassas Park	Sexual Assault Victim's Advocacy Services	Woodbridge	703-368-4141
Mathews Co.	Laurel Shelter, Inc. - Sexual Assault Crisis Center	Gloucester	804-694-5890
	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
Mecklenburg Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Middlesex Co.	Laurel Shelter, Inc. - Sexual Assault Crisis Center	Gloucester	804-694-5890
Montgomery Co.	Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley	Radford	800-788-1123
Nelson Co.	Sexual Assault Resource Agency	Charlottesville	434-977-7273
New Kent Co.	Avalon: A Center For Women And Children	Williamsburg	757-258-5051
	Laurel Shelter, Inc. - Sexual Assault Crisis Center	Gloucester	804-694-5890
	Project Hope at Quin Rivers	Quinton	877-966-4357
Newport News	Avalon: A Center For Women And Children	Williamsburg	757-258-5051
	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
Norfolk	Response: Sexual Assault Support Services	Norfolk	757-622-4300
Northampton Co.	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
Northumberland	Haven Shelter and Services, Inc.	Warsaw	800-224-2836
Norton	Family Crisis Support Services	Norton	877-348-3416

Sexual Assault Crisis Centers in Virginia (cont'd)

Nottoway	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Onancock	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
Page Co.	The Collins Center	Harrisonburg	540-434-2272
Pittsylvania Co.	Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline	Statewide	800-838-8238
Poquoson	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
Portsmouth	Response: Sexual Assault Support Services	Norfolk	757-622-4300
Powhatan Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Prince Edward Co.	Southside Center for Violence Prevention, Inc.	Farmville	888-819-2926
Prince William Co.	Sexual Assault Victim's Advocacy Services	Woodbridge	703-368-4141
Pulaski Co.	Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley	Radford	800-788-1123
Radford	Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley	Radford	800-788-1123
Rappahannock Co.	Services to Abused Families (SAFE)	Culpeper	540-825-8876
Richmond	YWCA Women's Advocacy Program	Richmond	804-643-0888
Richmond Co.	Haven Shelter and Services, Inc.	Warsaw	800-224-2839
Roanoke	Sexual Assault Response & Awareness	Roanoke	540-981-9352
Roanoke Co.	Sexual Assault Response & Awareness	Roanoke	540-981-9352
Rockbridge Co.	Project Horizon	Lexington	540-463-2594
Rockingham Co.	The Collins Center	Harrisonburg	540-434-2272
Russell Co.	Family Crisis Services	North Tazewell	866-713-8327
	Family Crisis Support Services	Norton	877-348-3416
Salem	Sexual Assault Response & Awareness	Roanoke	540-981-9352
Scott Co.	Crisis Center, Sexual Assault Services	Bristol	276-466-2312
	Family Crisis Support Services	Norton	877-348-3416
Shenandoah Co.	Response, Sexual Assault Services	Woodstock	540-459-5161
Smithfield	The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Newport News	757-825-2591
Smyth Co.	Family Resource Center, Inc.	Wytheville	800-613-6145
South Boston	Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline	Statewide	800-838-8238

Sexual Assault Crisis Centers in Virginia (cont'd)

Southampton Co.	Response: Sexual Assault Support Services The Center for Sexual Assault Survivors	Norfolk	757-622-4300
Spotsylvania Co.	Rappahannock Council Against Sexual Assault	Newport News	757-825-2591
Stafford Co.	Rappahannock Council Against Sexual Assault	Fredericksburg	540-371-1666
Staunton	New Directions Center, Inc.	Fredericksburg	540-371-1666
Sterling	LAWS	Staunton	800-564-2836
Suffolk	Response: Sexual Assault Support Services	Leesburg	703-777-6552
Tazewell Co.	Family Crisis Services	Norfolk	757-622-4300
Vinton	Sexual Assault Response & Awareness	North Tazewell	866-713-8327
Virginia Beach	Response: Sexual Assault Support Services	Roanoke	540-981-9352
Warren Co.	Oasis Program	Norfolk	757-622-4300
Warrenton	SAVVI Crisis Center	Front Royal	540-635-9062
Washington Co.	Crisis Center, Sexual Assault Services	Warrenton	888-547-2884
Waynesboro	New Directions Center, Inc.	Bristol	276-466-2312
Westmoreland Co.	Haven Shelter and Services, Inc.	Staunton	877-348-3416
Williamsburg	Avalon: A Center For Women And Children	Warsaw	800-224-2836
Winchester	Shelter For Abused Women	Williamsburg	757-258-5051
Wise Co.	Crisis Center, Sexual Assault Services Family Crisis Support Services	Winchester	540-667-6466
Woodbridge	Sexual Assault Victim's Advocacy Services	Bristol	276-466-2312
Wythe Co.	Family Resource Center, Inc.	Norton	877-348-3416
York Co.	Avalon: A Center For Women And Children	Woodbridge	703-368-4141
		Wytheville	800-613-6145
		Williamsburg	757-258-5051



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Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline

Crisis intervention,
information,
support,
and
referrals to community programs
and resources.

For survivors of sexual and/or domestic violence,
family and friends,
and professionals working to respond
to sexual and domestic violence.

