

### *If you decide to notify the police...*

- Taking the matter through the court system is a difficult choice to make. Help is available 24-hours/day through law enforcement and local Advocates.
- Most acts of sexual violence are criminal. If you report to police, they may be able to arrest the perpetrator. Then the State's Attorney will decide whether or not to prosecute the case.
- You may have the right to a protection order through family court to keep the person who violated you at a distance.
- If you have any questions about calling the police or getting a protection order, call Vermont's hotline for information.
- You have rights as the victim of a serious crime. An Advocate can help you understand and exercise your rights.

*For help, call Vermont's 24 hour hotline:  
1-800-489-7273*

### *Where can I find support?*

Help is available through the programs of the  
*Vermont Network Against  
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault*

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*We offer free:*

- Confidential 24 hour crisis hotline.
- Help accessing medical services.
- Access to emergency shelter.
- Referrals and help sorting out options.
- Emotional support & support groups.
- Help with legal issues.

*Call Vermont's 24 hour hotline:*

**1-800-489-7273**

*(confidential to anonymous callers)*

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*Other Important Numbers:*

**Deaf Victim Advocacy Services TTY  
Support Line: 1-800-303-DVAS (3827)**

**SafeSpace Support Line: 1-866-869-7341**  
(toll free number for LGBTQQ survivors of violence)

**Adult Protective Services: 1-800-564-1612**  
(For seniors and people with disabilities)

**Call Vermont's 24 hour  
Toll Free Hotline to be  
connected to the nearest  
Sexual Violence  
Program:**

**1-800-489-7273**

**OR**

**Contact your local  
program directly:**

Produced by the Vermont Network Against  
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault  
PO Box 405, Montpelier, VT 05601  
(802) 223-1302; [www.vtnetwork.org](http://www.vtnetwork.org)



*Sexual Violence  
Can Happen To  
Anyone...*

*You are not alone.*

## *Sexual violence can happen to anyone.*

- Sexual violence is any unwanted sexual attention or contact.
- Sexual violence occurs if you are forced, pressured, coerced or manipulated into sexual activity that you do not want.
- Sexual violence can occur at any time and can be perpetrated by anybody, including a stranger, an acquaintance, a family member, a friend, or an intimate partner.
- Sexual violence can happen to people with disabilities, older people, teens, and people of any income level, race, class, ability, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Sexual violence can be rape, forced sexual activity, sexual assault, sexual abuse of children, sexual harassment, stalking, sexual intimidation, or ritualized abuse.

*If you have been sexually violated...  
You are not alone.  
Help is available to you.*

## *It is not your fault.*

**No matter how a person dresses, talks, or socializes, or the relationship between the individuals, sexual violence is *never* the victim's fault.**

- All survivors react in their own way and in their own time, even long after the crime. Take your time and find support.
- Sometimes survivors feel overwhelmed by their emotions as though they are "going crazy." Whatever feelings occur are a natural reaction to a crisis situation, and are okay.
- Common responses to sexual violence may include: anxiety, shame, nightmares, lack of trust in yourself or others, difficulty concentrating, fear, feeling unclean, helplessness, depression, flashbacks, disinterest in sex, guilt, mood swings, numbness, social withdrawal, loneliness, anger, self-blame.

## *If you have been violated you may want to...*

- Go to a safe place and call a friend.
- Contact Vermont's hotline to help find local resources, support, and answer questions about possible next steps.
- Seek medical attention at the Emergency Room. A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) can check for injuries that may not be obvious, and can provide immediate treatment against pregnancy and STIs including HIV/AIDS.
- Consider notifying the Police.
- The hospital can also collect evidence that may be on your clothes and body. Going immediately after an assault will help provide the best evidence against the assailant. Also, try not to eat, drink, smoke, shower, urinate, douche, brush your teeth, comb your hair, or change your clothes before going. If you do change, bring your clothes in a *paper* bag.

## *If you decide to seek medical attention...*

- You can request a SANE nurse in the ER who is trained to respond to sexual assault.
- The exam can be confidential if you are 18 or over. *Always* ask about confidentiality.
- The exam is free, and you may be eligible for Victim Compensation for any expenses which may occur. An Advocate can help.
- Evidence may be collected up to 72 hours after an assault and can be held for up to 6 months while you decide whether or not to report to law enforcement.
- There are many details and rights you should know about. You can call an Advocate to be with you at the hospital, or request one once you arrive to help you.

*Sexual violence is about power and control. Sexual violence is motivated by the intent to dominate, humiliate and harm. It is NOT motivated by sexual desire. All unwanted sexual activity is a violation of trust that can erode a person's feeling of safety.*