

SEXUAL ASSAULT

What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual violence is any act (verbal and/or physical), which breaks a person's trust and/or safety and is sexual in nature. The term "**sexual violence**" includes: rape, date/acquaintance rape, incest, child sexual assault, ritual abuse, marital or partner rape, sexual harassment, exposure, and voyeurism. Sexual assaults are acts of violence where sex is used as the weapon.

Victims/survivors of sexual violence are forced, coerced and/or manipulated to participate in unwanted sexual activity.

Sexual assault on college and university campuses is occurring at an alarming rate. The majority of these are date/acquaintance rapes perpetrated against women by men. Alcohol and drugs as well as gendered communication may be factors in sexual assaults. Regardless, it is **NEVER** the victim/survivor's fault no matter what she wore, where she was, whether or not she fought back, or whether or not she and/or the perpetrator were drinking.

If you have been raped, you may be feeling:

- A variety of strong emotions—fear, anxiety, depression, guilt, disorientation, powerlessness, shame, shock, disbelief, embarrassment, denial, anger;
- A number of physical problems—sleep disturbances, nausea, stomach problems, change in eating habits, nightmares;
- Confused and alone, wondering if and how you should tell your family and friends;
- Even though the rape occurred a while ago, you would now like to talk to someone about what happened.

Whatever your feelings, there are support services available to help you.

What to do if you have been sexually assaulted:

- Go to a safe place as soon as you can.
- Call someone you trust to be with you, like a rape crisis counselor, friend or parent.
- Call the local or campus police or simply dial 911.
- Don't shower, bathe, or douche after the attack to preserve evidence.
- Seek care at a hospital. Take a change of clothing with you if you go.
- Preserve other physical evidence, such as clothing.
- Consider filing charges against your attacker.

What to do if you know someone who has been sexually assaulted:

If you know someone who has been a victim of rape, you may notice that the person seems to act differently—withdrawn, afraid, or unsure. You may feel angry or upset. What can you do?

- Listen. A good counselor or friend knows how to listen and not speak. Concentrate your energy and attention on their feelings, not your own.
- Try not to judge: "If I had been in your situation, I would have...." "Why did you go in there?"
- Avoid "fixing" your friend. Help your friend make a list of options, and let her or him decide what to do (even if you don't agree with it).
- Don't rush the healing process just to make yourself more comfortable. People need time to heal. Be patient.
- Encourage your friend to seek help from a counselor where the services are professional, confidential and free (i.e., UL Counseling and Testing Center, Rape Crisis Line 337 233-7273). As a loved one of a rape survivor, you may also desire counseling and advice.

If you are concerned about yourself or someone else that is presenting symptoms of sexual assault, please note that there are numerous resources for help. If you are a student of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and would like to speak to a counselor about sexual assault or any other concerns, please contact the Counseling and Testing Center at 337 482-6480. The center offers unlimited confidential sessions, free of charge to all students and university faculty/staff members.