

What is Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is when someone, without your consent, touches or penetrates you sexually. Touching, such as rubbing a breast, vagina, penis or buttocks, even if it is through clothing, is called "sexual contact." Intercourse, oral sex or insertion of an object or body part into the vagina or anus is called "sexual penetration." Sexual contact or penetration occurs if the offender touches or penetrates your body, or if you have to touch or penetrate the offender's body.

Another sexual assault crime occurs when a person has sexual contact or penetration with you while you are incapacitated because of drugs, medication or alcohol and, therefore, unable to give your consent.

You are not to blame for the sexual assault. Sexual assault is NEVER the victim's fault.

Facts About Sexual Assault

- ▶ You are not alone. In 2007 there were 248,300 sexual assault or about 1 every 2 minutes.
- ▶ It doesn't matter how old you are, where you live, or your cultural background - you can be a victim of sexual assault. Sexual assault victims are both male and female, of all ages and from all walks of life.
- ▶ Don't be confused if the offender is "respected" or well liked in your community. If the person had sexual contact or penetration with you without your permission, it was a crime. Sexual offenders may be from any class, culture, profession or educational level.
- ▶ Nothing you did and nothing about the way you looked makes you responsible for what happened to you. The motive for sexual assault is the need to feel powerful and in control. It is a myth that sexual assault occurs because of uncontrollable sexual urges or a lack of sexual opportunities. Studies have shown that most offenders have a consenting sexual partner, and are often married.

- ▶ You can be sexually assaulted by a friend, a date, a spouse, or a stranger. Approximately 80% of sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows.

How You May Feel

People react differently in times of crisis. You may find it helpful to review the following in case you are having, or develop, these symptoms at a later date. Realize if you do that the symptoms are most likely a result of the sexual assault. Common reactions to a sexual assault (some times immediate – sometimes delayed):

Psychological:

- ▶ Guilt, shame and embarrassment
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Anger
- ▶ Helplessness
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Fear and anxiety
- ▶ Self-blame for the assault
- ▶ Nightmares or flashbacks
- ▶ Feeling you are no longer in control of your life
- ▶ Not wanting to talk about the sexual assault
- ▶ Denial - pretending it didn't happen

Physical:

- ▶ Changes in appetite
- ▶ Sleeping difficulties
- ▶ Stress-related illness
- ▶ Alcohol/drug dependence

Social:

- ▶ Isolation and withdrawal
- ▶ Difficulty trusting
- ▶ Interpersonal conflicts
- ▶ Decline in academic or work performance

It is important to talk about the sexual assault and your feelings. Advocates are available throughout Alaska at sexual assault and domestic violence programs to help you through difficult times and to assist in your recovery process. To find a program

nearest you is provided at the end of this brochure.

Safety Planning

You may want to use some or all of these ways to protect yourself and to feel more secure:

Personal Security:

- ▶ Change your daily schedule and the route you take to work, school and stores.
- ▶ Remove residential address and telephone number from checks.
- ▶ Get an unlisted and unpublished telephone number and an answering machine to screen calls.
- ▶ Choose carefully who gets personal information about you, such as your home address and phone number.

Home Security:

- ▶ Change or improve locks on doors and windows, and keep them locked.
- ▶ Use window bars, poles to wedge against doors, or an alarm system.
- ▶ Replace wooden doors with metal doors.
- ▶ Keep a light on all the time.
- ▶ Install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to your home.
- ▶ Get a smoke detector and fire extinguisher.
- ▶ Tell neighbors you trust to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from your home.
- ▶ Identify visitors before opening doors.
- ▶ If you have a telephone, ask that a friend call you at least once a day.
- ▶ Keep your purse and vehicle key in a place where you can get them so you can leave quickly.

Car Security:

- ▶ Keep the doors locked at all times.
- ▶ Park your car in well-lit, public areas.
- ▶ Get gas cap and hood locks.
- ▶ When traveling, plan ahead and know where you can get help, such as police stations.

- ▶ Be alert. If you feel threatened, drive to a police or fire station, or a busy shopping center.
- ▶ Try not to travel alone.
- ▶ Get a cell-phone so you can make emergency calls at any time. Keep emergency phone numbers with you.

Workplace Security:

- ▶ Walk with another person when leaving work.

Protective Order

If you were penetrated, or the offender is related to you or has lived with you, get a protective order from the court, and report any violations of the order to the police.

- ▶ Have someone stay with you if you live alone, or go stay with family, friends, or at a sexual assault program shelter.

V.I.N.E. System (to check jail custody status)

V.I.N.E. stands for Victim Information and Notification Everyday. VINE is a free, anonymous, computer-based service that offers prisoner custody status information:

- ▶ You may call from any touch-tone phone, any time, to find out if an offender is in jail.
- ▶ You may register so the system will call you if the offender's custody status changes by being released, transferred, or escaping.

The telephone number for VINE to check the offender's custody status or to register for notification is 1-800-247-9763 then follow the prompts.

Violent Crimes Compensation

The State of Alaska has a Violent Crimes Compensation Board, which can provide compensation to victims who have been physically or emotionally injured in a violent crime. Such compensation might include medical care for your

injuries, crime victim related-counseling, wages lost by you due to injuries, and more. You can find out how to apply by contacting the Board at:

Violent Crimes Compensation Board
1-907-465-3040 or 1-800-764-3040
www.doa.alaska.gov/vccb

Office of Victims' Rights

The State of Alaska's Office of Victims Rights (OVR) provides legal help to victims of crimes obtain the legal rights they are guaranteed under Alaska's Constitution and various Alaska state statutes with regard to their contacts with law enforcement and prosecuting agencies in this state. The office is staffed by attorneys and available at no cost to victims. For more information please contact:

The Alaska Office of Victims' Rights
Main Phone: (907) 754-3460
Toll Free in Alaska: 1-844-754-3460
Fax: (907) 754-3469
www.ovr.akleg.gov

Resources

Police – Fire – Medical Emergency: **CALL 911**

For a sexual assault program in your area:

Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault - **Main Phone: 907-586-3650** or visit: www.andvsa.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline at **1-800-656-HOPE (4673)** or visit: www.rainn.org/get-help/national-sexual-assault-hotline

If you are in need of an interpreter please let the district attorney's office know. One will be provided at no cost to you.

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Information on Sexual Assault

Alaska Department of Law
Victim Witness
Assistance Program