

SEXUAL ASSAULT

CAMROSE POLICE SERVICE

Trauma and Crime Support Services (TCSS)

780-672-4570

WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

You may have been sexually assaulted if:

- ❖ You did not agree to engage in any form of sexual activity including kissing, touching, or intercourse. Force could include physical force, coercion, manipulation, pressure, or harassment.
- ❖ You were unable to agree to sexual activities as you were unable to understand, communicate, or agree to such activities (i.e. intoxicated, unconscious).
- ❖ You were forced to have sex with someone who has control or custody of yourself.
- ❖ You are male, female, non-binary, trans, gay, lesbian, rich, poor, urban or rural dwelling, working in an office, or as a sex trade worker. Anyone can be sexually assaulted.

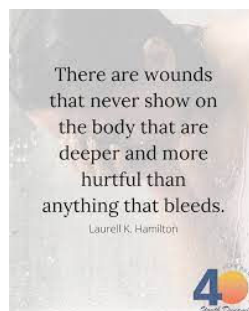
ANYONE WHO DOES NOT GIVE CONSENT FOR A SEXUAL ACTIVITY IS SEXUALLY ASSAULTED.

Sexual assault is defined as any non-consensual activity of a sexual nature. It can range from touching or kissing to intercourse (anal or vaginal). Sexual assault is not about love or sexual interest—it is an abuse of power.

If you feel you have been sexually assaulted:

Always consider your health and safety first:

- ❖ Find a safe place to be. A hospital or police station is a good option.
- ❖ Even if you do not feel you have any injuries, go to a clinic or emergency room for a check-up. You may have injuries you cannot see; have been exposed to sedating or illegal drugs; may have been infected with a sexually transmitted disease; or have an unwanted pregnancy.
- ❖ Tell the medical staff what happened. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO REPORT TO THE POLICE TO HAVE EVIDENCE COLLECTED AT THIS TIME.**



Sexual Assault Under the Criminal Code of Canada

271 Sexual assault: any activity that violates a person's sexual integrity. Kissing, touching up to forced intercourse with no to minor injuries.

272 Sexual assault with a weapon or threats of causing bodily harm or threats to harm a third party (i.e. a child).

273 Aggravated sexual assault: sexual assault resulting in wounding, maiming, disfiguring, or endangering the life of the victim.

Consent

Consent consists of several factors that add up to a person agreeing to sexual activity.

The first factor is age.

The age of consent in Canada is:

Under the age of 12 – no consent, in any situation

Age 12-13 years – consent if partner is less than 2 years older

Age 14-15 – consent if the partner is less than 5 years older

Age 16 – consent if “enthusiastic” (see below)

No one of any age can give consent if the person is in a position of trust, authority; or the person is dependent on the person for care or the activity is exploitive of a younger person. Also, no one of any age can give consent if they are unable for any reason to give consent due to mental, emotional or physical state.

Enthusiastic Consent

Consent is voluntary. The person must give consent under their own free will without coercion or threats to themselves or others. You must give consent voluntarily with genuine willingness.

What is **coercion**? Coercion is the act of pressuring or badgering a person to engage in an activity, in this case a sexual activity. It can involve using comments such as “You’re a tease.” Or “This is your duty.” It can involve repeated emotional manipulation or threats to end the relationship, to “out” you to others, or threats of harm. It can also involve using physical size or strength to push the sexual activity onto the person.

Consent is not written in stone. You are allowed to change your mind whenever you want. If “yes” becomes “no,” then the activity is no longer consensual. The initiating partner should be aware of nonverbal as well as verbal indications that consent has been withdrawn. If a person becomes unconscious, consent ends.

Consent must be informed and honest. In order to be consensual, the activity must be agreed upon with full understanding of the consequences of the act and the understanding of the nature of the act. Therefore, intoxicated to the point of not understanding, or being unconscious, or being mentally unable to understand what is happening prevents people from giving consent.

Consent must be given every time and for every new activity. If the activity is changed than the person must be asked if consent continues. Saying yes to “kissing” is not consent for intercourse. The person must be expressing interest and engagement in the sexual activity. Silence is not consent! Being married or in a long-term relationship does not mean consent at all times for all things.

Consent is ongoing. Consent can be considered a conversation where partners continually check in to see if the other person remains engaged and agreeable to sex. If the person’s verbal or non-verbal responses change such as “no” being spoken, or physical actions such as pushing or shrinking back-consent has ended.

IF CONSENT IS NOT CLEAR, IT IS UP TO THE INITIATING PARTNER TO CLARIFY CONSENT.

Remember FRIES (Adapted from Planned Parenthood)

Freely Given -no pressure, no force, no tricks

Reversible – it’s okay for “yes” to become “no”

Informed – you understand and know what you’re agreeing to

Enthusiastic – you are genuinely willing to engage

Specific – “yes” to one activity is not yes to all activities



Myths about Sexual Assault

Myth: Victims of Sexual assault are responsible for the assault.

It is a common belief in our society that “good boys or girls” are not sexually assaulted. “Victim blaming” makes you feel like what you wore, where you went, what you drank, or what you did resulted in the assault. **YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE.** Sexual assault is a choice made by another person to commit a crime. **IT WAS SOMONE ELSE’S CHOICE.**

Myth: Sexual assault is a violent use of force.

Coercion and intoxication are the most common methods used to pressure another person into a sexual act.

Myth: People recover from sexual assault easily.

Sexual assault is an act of control over another person which violates their sense of self and safety. Sexual assault can change a person's perception of themselves and the world. It can lead to not only physical injuries but mental and emotional ones too. It often takes a long time for the person to heal from the assault.

Myth: Sexual assault is committed by sick or deviant strangers in dark, isolated places.

Data shows that most assailants live "normal, functional lives. 80% of offenders are known to the victim (2002) and 62% of sexual assaults occur in someone's home (2002).

Myth: The victim does not really mean "no."

Society may believe women should be "submissive" and portray a certain "good girl" attitude by saying "no" when they mean "yes." Or that a man is always "up for it." However, this belief denies a person the right to make decision about what happens to their body and life. Everyone has a right to say "no" to anything that makes them uncomfortable or have no interest in doing.

Myth: At some point a person "owes" someone sex.

Some people believe if they spend money on someone (a date); or a person is aroused by someone; or if the person has engaged in sex with them in the past this gives them a right to sex with someone. No one is given universal access to your body even if they are your spouse or partner. Each sexual act, each time, in each place requires consent. If consent is not given, it is sexual assault.

Myth: A partner (spouse) cannot sexually assault a partner (spouse).

Bonds of marriage or common-law do not give a person overriding consent for any or all sexual activity. Anyone has the right to say "no" to any sexual activity, at any time, to anyone.

Myth: If the victim does not remember the act, then they have no credibility in claiming sexual assault.

Not remembering details and timelines does not mean you are lying. When faced with a trauma like sexual assault your mind may go into a "freeze" mode to protect itself. The brain will lay down memories in a way to protect you after the event.

Myth: There must be physical injuries and sexual assault kit completed in order for there to be an investigation.

A person can report a sexual assault at any time after the event. While physical evidence will strengthen the case, any reported sexual assault will be investigated.

NO
DOES NOT MEAN
"CONVINCE ME"

The Next Steps

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU REMOVED YOUR CONTROL. YOU NOW HAVE THE CONTROL of WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

Sexual assault may make you feel many things—embarrassment, guilt, shame, or anger for example. You may be in pain-emotionally, mentally, and physically. These feelings may make coming forward to seek help or report the event difficult.

If you are hurt or in danger call 911.

You do not have to report to the police but you should tell someone you trust. Also, write down any details you remember. You should seek medical assistance even if you don't see any injuries. Be aware trauma will affect how you remember details and timelines. There is no time limit to the reporting of sexual abuse and you may change your mind about charges.

You can call TCSS or a Sexual Assault Center to talk to someone about what happened to you. These agencies will support you with counselling and options going forward.

You can have a Sexual Assault Examination Kit completed even if you have showered (most valuable up to 1-week post-assault). You can have this completed even if you are unsure if you are going to report to the police.

Bag your clothing and accessories until you decide if you want to report the assault.

If you report to the police, someone will take a statement from you. They may take pictures of any visible injuries. You can have a support person with you during the interview and stop the interview at any time.

You have the right to review your statement.

Sexual Assault Examination

- ❖ A Sexual Assault Examination (SAE) is completed at a hospital, not a family physician's office. It is completed by a trained professional who know what evidence is needed and how to collect it.
- ❖ You have three options when you attend a hospital after a sexual assault.
 - You can get medical care and not have the SAE completed.
 - You can have the SAE completed but not report to the police, and have the results stored until you decide what to do.
 - You can have the SAE completed and report the assault to the police for investigation.
- ❖ The SAE is used to collect biological evidence such as bodily fluids, blood, hair, or skin transfer. The evidence is collected using swabs and blood samples.
- ❖ The kit is most valuable if collected within a week of the assault.
- ❖ The collection of this evidence is voluntary and you can stop the procedure at any time.
- ❖ Even if you do not have this kit completed, the assault can be investigated by the police.

Laying Charges

After the police complete their investigation the decision is made as to whether charges can be laid. Charges are not always laid. This does not mean the police did not believe you. The Crown must decide if there is enough evidence to convict beyond a reasonable doubt. If new evidence comes forward, charges may be laid at any time.

Sexual Assault and Men

Sexual assault against men is often not talked about as statistically more women are sexually assaulted and more women report. But, men are sexually assaulted, even if rarely reported.

Reasons for not reporting male sexual assault is rooted in society's myths which minimize the seriousness of the crime and shame the survivor from reporting the crime. These myths also affect how the man deals with the aftermath of the assault and how they see themselves. These men are often treated very differently as they try to heal and face difficulties in finding help.

Myth: *Only gay men are sexually assaulted and only gay men sexually assault other men.*

These myths are driven by homophobic and transphobic attitudes about sexual violence. Any man can be sexually assaulted. Statistically, however gay men are at a higher risk.

Most men who sexually assault other men identify as heterosexual as per data collected by police reported sexual assaults.

Myth: *Men cannot be sexually assaulted by women.*

Studies show that women use the same threats, verbal aggression, intoxication to sexually assault men. Also, normal physiological responses to stimulation such as an erection or ejaculation does not mean consent was given.



AFTER CARE

Experiencing a sexual assault can have lasting emotional, physical, psychological and social impacts. You may not feel "normal" for many days, weeks, or months. **Remember:**

- ❖ Not everyone experiences a trauma in the same way. Do not punish yourself if "you do not get over it" as fast as others.
- ❖ You are not alone and what happened is NOT your fault.
- ❖ Get help and expect a process not an event in getting well.

1. **Open up** about what happened to you. Find someone you trust, a support group, or a counselor to talk to about what happened. Silence reinforces your victimhood and shame. Talking can set you free.
2. **Cope with the feelings of guilt and shame.** You can tell yourself you are not to blame but you may still struggle with feelings of guilt and shame. The guilt is your attacker's only. They made the choice to assault you.

3. **Prepare for flashbacks** and upsetting memories which may interfere with your day to day life. Your nervous system may remain on high alert and you may experience heightened reactions with certain dates, places, people, smells or sounds. Pay attention to your body's clues and emotions and learn to self soothe and remember it is a flashback not real.
4. **Reconnect to your body and feelings.** You may feel numb or try to avoid any associations with the trauma. Don't avoid feeling and find a place to release the feelings (exercise, drumming, walking, dancing, meditation, yoga).
5. **Stay connected to others.** Try to enjoy the company of others, give of your time, join a club to connect with others.
6. **Nurture yourself.** Eat well, exercise, get plenty of sleep. Avoid media consumption and the news. Avoid alcohol and drugs.

RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE 911

CAMROSE POLICE SERVICE 780-672-4444

CPS Trauma and Crime Support Services 780-672-4570

ALBERTA ONE LINE FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE (TEXT OR CALL)

1-866-403-8000

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITIES AGAINST ABUSE (ACAA): Provides counselling and support for persons experiencing sexual abuse or child sexual abuse in rural areas. There is no cost to the service.

1-866-807-3558

Sexual Assault Center of Edmonton: Provides counselling and support for persons experiencing any type of sexual violence including historical sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. Group or individual counselling is available. No fee.

1-780-423-4121