



Adult Sexual Assault

Sexual Assault is a serious crime for which there is no excuse. It can happen to anyone. Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.

The NSW Police Force is committed to providing a professional, sensitive and prompt response to all sexual assault reports. Looking after the victim is the highest priority in sexual assault investigations.

WHAT IS ADULT SEXUAL ASSAULT?

Sexual Assault is a general term used to describe a broad range of sexual crimes committed against a person. These crimes include sexual intercourse without consent, indecent assault, act of indecency and aggravated sexual assault. Sexual Assault is a crime of violence. It aims to humiliate and degrade the victim and can occur within marriage. It can be a frightening experience that may have long term effects. These effects occur regardless of a person's age, gender, status, culture, ability or sexuality. Although women are primarily the victims of sexual assault, men can also be victims.

Sexual Assault is a crime where the great majority of victims know the person who assaulted them.

In the period after a sexual assault victims may experience a wide range of feelings including:

- fear
- numbness
- panic
- shame
- embarrassment
- guilt
- loss of control
- distress
- anxiety
- disbelief
- anger
- loneliness
- irritability
- powerlessness
- vulnerability
- confusion

It is a normal reaction to experience these feelings.

WHY A VICTIM SHOULD REPORT SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim. When a victim reports sexual assault to police they will be offered access to a NSW Health sexual assault counsellor. With the victim's consent, police will contact one of these services on their behalf and arrange transport there if the matter is urgent. These services provide free and confidential counselling. If the sexual assault was recent

and the victim agrees, the counsellor will arrange for a forensic medical examination. This examination will gather evidence for court if the victim decides to go on with criminal action.

If the local sexual assault service is not available, police will, if the victim agrees, phone the NSW Rape Crisis Service so the victim can speak privately with a counsellor. If victims wish to contact Rape Crisis themselves, they can call 1800 424 017, or through their online service at www.nswrapecrisis.com.au. This service is available 24/7.

It is never too late to report a sexual assault.. Some victims choose to report immediately after the assault happens, others may report days, months and even years later.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF A REPORT IS MADE TO POLICE?

A specially trained detective will be the officer in charge responsible for carrying out the investigation. He or she will be involved throughout the investigation and court proceedings.

When reporting a sexual assault the victim will be asked by the criminal investigator to make a statement. This is done in a private area at the station. This will involve remembering the assault in clear detail and being open and honest about these details. We know it is not easy for victims to tell certain details and that it can be embarrassing, but it is important to tell us everything. If some details are left out, this can badly affect the case in the future.

Victims are allowed to have a support person with them while making their statement, but this person cannot join in the interview. A victim of sexual assault has a right to a copy of their statement and, if asked for, it will be provided for them. A victim's preference of speaking with a female or male officer will be met wherever possible.

Police, Fire, Ambulance

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In an emergency

Crime Stoppers

1800 333 000

Report crime anonymously

Police Assistance Line

131 444

For non emergencies





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When a victim of sexual assault has an outstanding warrant, police officers will consider the seriousness of the offences for the warrant. Generally, they will firstly deal with the sexual assault and consider the warrant later.

Police will keep strict confidentiality during the investigation of any sexual assault matter and during any court proceedings.

Family and friends **may** also be interviewed and asked to give evidence in court. The procedure from reporting to court can take an extended period of time and can be very difficult for victims but there are support services which can help. The Witness Assistance Service provides information, referral and support for victims of violent crime. They can help to reduce the trauma of going to court.

HOW CAN POLICE HELP?

Anyone can talk to police about reporting a sexual assault. When victims report a sexual assault, police officers will be respectful, non judgemental, supportive and understanding. Even if a victim does not want any further action to be taken, by reporting the sexual assault this helps the police to record the crime which may assist with future investigations.

Generally, no action will be taken to investigate the sexual assault without the permission of the victim. However, some times it may be in the interest of the general public to proceed with the investigation.

The welfare and safety of victims is the main concern to police and strict confidentiality will be kept at all times. Police officers will provide victims with relevant information on a range of issues including counselling, forensic and medical services, victim compensation and criminal proceedings.

Police may also make an application on behalf of a victim for an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO), to protect them from future threats and/or violence. An AVO is a court order that bans a person from doing certain things, like ringing the victim up or coming to their house or workplace.

Across the state we have officers who are specially trained in dealing with victims of sexual assault. Most adult sexual assault investigations will be carried out by local detectives. The Child Protection & Sex Crime Squad will provide a specialist investigative response to some sexual assault matters, including difficult or serial sexual assaults.

If there is enough evidence police investigate the sexual assault and the Director of Public Prosecutions prosecutes offenders. This service is free for the victim.

CHARTER OF VICTIMS RIGHTS

Victims of crime in New South Wales have a Charter to protect and promote their rights. The Charter includes the rights of victims to:

- Be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect
- Information about, and access to, welfare, health and counselling services
- Privacy and protection
- Information about the criminal justice system.

If a victim thinks a government agency has not helped them under the Charter, they can contact the Victims of Crime Bureau for help.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- **NSW Rape Crisis Centre** **1800 424 017**
www.nswrapecrisis.com.au
- **Victims of Crime Bureau – Victims Support Line** **1800 633 063**
Victim Services website: www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/voc
- **Sexual Assault Services**
Contact via your local hospital or go to www.health.nsw.gov.au/services and type in 'sexual assault' then press Search
- **Indigenous Contact Line** **1800 639 784**
- **Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre** **1800 686 587**
- **Telephone Interpreter Service** **13 14 50**
- **Immigrant Women's Speakout** **9635 8022**
www.speakout.org.au
- **Criminal Justice Support Network** **1300 665 908**
(for people with an intellectual disability)

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