

If you are a victim of sexual violence...

- ▶ Talk to someone you trust.
- ▶ Reach out for help. Remember you are not alone. It is not your fault.
- ▶ Go to a safe place. Call 911.
- ▶ Preserve any evidence. Don't shower, bathe, wash, douche, change clothes or go to the bathroom until you have been examined medically. Doing so may alter valuable evidence that could be used if the case is prosecuted.
- ▶ Go to a hospital emergency room for assistance and treatment. Ask if your community has a rape crisis center advocate who can be with you to provide support and information.
- ▶ Have a forensic medical exam to preserve evidence. You may choose to report the crime to law enforcement. If you are 18 years of age or older, you may choose NOT to report the crime and involve law enforcement at this time. If you choose not to report the crime, the evidence can be collected and stored as a non-reported case for 24 months at Marshall University Forensic Science Center. Medical personnel will know how to activate this process. A rape crisis center advocate can explain how to later initiate an investigation if you decide to do so.
- ▶ Whether or not you report the sexual assault to law enforcement, you should still protect your health. It is best to be treated for sexually transmitted diseases within the first 72 hours after being assaulted. Consult your health care provider for information about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- ▶ Get support. Rape crisis centers can provide referral information and confidential services.

"No" is never wrong. It's your right.

CALL US.

SOMEONE IS WAITING TO LISTEN AND TO HELP.

For more information contact the rape crisis center in your area.

CONTACT Huntington Rape Crisis Counseling
Huntington
866-399-7273

Family Refuge Center
Lewisburg
304-645-6334

HOPE, Inc.
Fairmont
304-367-1100

Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center
Morgantown
304-292-5100

REACH Family Counseling Connection
Charleston
304-340-3676

Sexual Assault Help Center
Wheeling
304-234-8519

Shenandoah Women's Center
Martinsburg
304-263-8292

Women's Aid In Crisis
Elkins
1-800-339-1185

Women's Resource Center
Beckley
1-888-825-7836

Or
The National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-656-HOPE



West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services, Inc.
www.fris.org

Non-Stranger Sexual Assault

Definitions

Ways to Reduce Your Risk

Your Right to Say "No"



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What is forced sexual contact?

Force is not always physical. Often the perpetrator uses a threat or tries to intimidate you. Some examples of this type of force are:

- threatening to harm you, a friend or family member; implying that something even worse will happen if you don't give in.
- having sex with you when you are too drunk or high to say "no."
- not taking "no" for an answer.
- saying things such as, *"If you don't, I'll hurt myself."*

The right to say "no."

You always have the right to say "no" to sexual activity, even if:

- you have been drinking or taking drugs.
- you are wearing sexy clothes.
- you agreed to go to a secluded place.
- you agreed at first and then changed your mind.
- you have had sex together before.
- your date has spent a lot of money on you.
- you think your date will get mad.
- you have been going out for a long time.

If you decide you do not want to have sex, you have the right to say "no." Your body belongs to you and you alone.

How to say "no."

If someone is pressuring you to have sex when you don't want to, you can say "no" with words and actions.

- Say "no" clearly and forcefully.
- Move away from the person.
- Make an excuse to get out of the room—*"I have to go to the bathroom."*—then leave or call for help.
- Fight back if you feel you can.
- Yell loudly for help. Don't be afraid to yell "rape!"
- Get away as soon as you can.

Sexual assault is NEVER a victim's fault no matter what they wore, where they were, whether or not they fought back or whether or not they were drinking. Perpetrators are 100% responsible for their own actions. Sexual assault is violence when sex is used as a weapon.

What is non-stranger sexual assault?

Non-stranger sexual assault, including rape, occurs when someone known to the victim forces, coerces and/or manipulates participation in unwanted sexual activity. The vast majority of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim. The perpetrator can be a friend, family member, neighbor or a co-worker. It can happen when someone you are dating forces you to have sex. It can happen on a first date or when you have been going out for a long time.

Although sexual assault is used in general to talk about all nonconsensual sexual contact, West Virginia's laws differentiate between sexual abuse and sexual assault. Sexual abuse occurs when a person subjects another person to sexual contact without their consent, and that lack of consent is due to physical force, threat or intimidation.

Sexual assault is vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a person's body without consent, by any part of another person's body or may an object. The lack of consent is due to force, physical helplessness (which could include being drunk or drugged) or being mentally incapacitated. West Virginia law specifically states that anyone under the age of sixteen is incapable of giving consent if the perpetrator is at least three to four years older.

Sexual abuse and sexual assault are serious crimes, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a stranger or is known to the victim.

How are victims targeted?

Sexual assault is a crime that is typically planned and premeditated. Victims are often selected based on the perpetrator's perception that he/she will be able to successfully sexually assault a particular individual, that the victim will not report or, if they do report, they may not be believed.

West Virginia Laws

Although sexual assault is never the victim's fault, these tips may potentially reduce your risk of victimization.

- ▶ Trust your instincts. If you don't feel comfortable in a situation, leave.
- ▶ Do not feel sexually 'obligated' regardless of the money spent by your date.
- ▶ Be cautious inviting someone you don't know well into your home or going to their home.
- ▶ Consider the potential consequences of mixing sexual decisions with drugs and alcohol.
- ▶ When going out with someone new, go out with a group or meet in a public place.
- ▶ Get and open your own drink and never leave it unattended.
- ▶ Pay attention to comments intended to pressure you into sexual contact, like "If you loved me, you would . . ."
- ▶ Avoid individuals who don't respect you, ignore personal boundaries, make you feel guilty, accuse you of being "uptight" or are sexist, jealous or possessive.
- ▶ Think about what you really want before you get into a sexual situation. Clearly and assertively communicate your feelings.

Sometimes family, friends, law enforcement and others unfairly blame the victim when a sexual assault occurs.

"Why did you leave with someone you didn't know that well?"

"Why didn't you pay attention to your surroundings?"

"What were you thinking, getting that drunk?"

"Why didn't you fight back?"

But the responsibility for what happened lies with the perpetrator.

More appropriate questions put the responsibility for what happened on the perpetrator:

"Why did the perpetrator commit the assault?"

"What opportunities existed for bystanders (friends, families, teachers, classmates, witnesses, etc.) to intervene before the perpetrator's behavior became sexually abusive?"