After Sexual Assault

How Can I Help
A Guide for Friends and Family

Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault
This booklet focuses on women, the most common victims of rape. However, men can also be victims of sexual assault. The reactions, feelings and needs of sexual assault victims, whether male or female, are very similar. The information and suggestions made in this booklet are equally relevant and helpful to the friends and family of male sexual assault victims.

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From the Start …

Rape can traumatize not only the victim, but also her family and friends. One of the greatest hardships is not knowing how to help. Each woman’s reaction to being raped is individual. Her pain and her needs will be unique. This pamphlet provides guidance for those whose family member or friend has been raped.

Let the Victim Take the Lead

A rape victim has experienced a devastating loss of control over her life. She needs to be in control of her decisions – so don’t push her in any way.

A few simple rules are:

☐ If she wants to talk, listen.
☐ If you are uncomfortable listening, help her find someone who can listen.
☐ If she doesn’t want to talk, don’t force her.
☐ Let her tell you what she wants to do. Ask her, “How can I help you?”

How Can I Help

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ICASA rape crisis centers are experts in helping victims of sexual violence. Rape crisis center workers are specially trained to help victims of sexual violence. Rape crisis centers:

- Provide free and confidential services for victims, their families and friends of victims.
- Provide advocacy and counseling services.
- Answer the hotline 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week, 365-days-a-year.

A list of centers can be found in the back of this booklet or at www.icasa.org.

**It’s Not Her Fault**

Rape is always a crime. The rapist is a criminal. Don’t blame the victim. Victims don’t cause their attackers’ behavior.

**Don’t Question Her Actions**

- Don’t second-guess your friend’s behavior.
- Don’t ask her why. (Why did you go there? Why did you stay? Why did you open the door?)
- Don’t say “You should have” or “You shouldn’t have” (You should have had locks on the windows... You shouldn’t have been doing the laundry at that time of night... You should have fought... You shouldn’t have fought...).
Questioning the victim’s actions only increases her pain and self-doubt. Don’t focus on the victim’s behavior. The rapist’s behavior is the problem and should be condemned.
Face the Issue
People often tell a victim of a crisis things like: “Don’t worry,” “Don’t cry,” “Don’t think about it.” This is impossible. And it’s not helpful for someone who has been raped. Neither the crime nor its aftermath will go away by ignoring them. Telling her to deny or downplay the experience she’s just been through might suggest to her that you aren’t concerned.

Be Ready to Listen
Tell her she can discuss her experience with you. Some women need to process the experience by repeating details or talking about their feelings. Try to listen without judgement. Don’t ask specific questions. You don’t need to satisfy your curiosity about the details of the sexual assault.

Self-Care

Face Your Own Fears
There are a number of other feelings you may have that may affect your relationship with the victim.

- You may be uncomfortable thinking about rape.
- You may feel angry with the victim or the offender.
- You may feel fearful.
- You may feel guilt that you could not prevent the attack.

Pay attention to your own feelings. Talk with someone other than the victim about your feelings, so you are able to focus on the victim’s needs and concerns without judgement.
SEEK COUNSELING IF YOU NEED IT

Rape crisis counselors are aware that sexual assault hurts those who are close to the victim. Counselors can help with your questions and concerns. ICASA rape crisis centers provide free and confidential counseling to the victim’s family and friends.

WHAT MORE CAN YOU DO?

Any assistance, however small it seems to you, will show your concern and care. If you want to help your friend or relative reach out to them. Do not offer more than you can give. If you offer to help be sure to follow through. Knowing and respecting your own limitations is important. Every victim might need or want different support, from housing to daily routine to money. Here are some things you can do:

- Offer to drive her home or go with her on public transportation.
- Offer to help with routine chores.
- Help her install new locks or help her look for a new place to live.
- Consider letting her stay in your home for a while. Or offer to stay with her at her home. Make sure you’re prepared to do this commitment before offering.
- Ask if there are financial problems for her after being raped. The victim may not get paid for time lost from work. She may have to pay to move to a new home, or make other lifestyle changes that increase her living expenses. Don’t assume that an offer of financial help would seem insensitive.
Make sure that your friend knows that there are rape crisis services and other community resources she can contact for support.

Your support will be key if the rapist is caught and your friend wants to prosecute the rapist. If the prosecutor charges the rapist and the case goes to trial, there are likely to be many hearing and trial dates. At any point throughout the court process, offer to accompany her or help organize a shift of others to accompany her.

Be patient, after the crisis seems to have passed, you may want things to get back to normal. However, your friend or relative may still be adjusting. Many victims suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder. It is important that you remain supportive for however long it takes.

**Sexual Intimacy**

Rape can affect a woman’s feelings about sexuality. Some victims find that sex stirs up frightening feelings which they associate with the rape experience and are more comfortable if lovemaking is limited to holding and hugging. Other women experience no difficulty in this regard, distinguishing quickly between rape and consensual sexuality, and might welcome their partner’s desire for intimacy. However, a lover must recognize the possibility of temporary change in an intimate relationship.
**Abstinence**

If your partner does not want sexual activity, you must honor her wishes. Try to talk openly about this issue even if you have never talked openly about this subject before. As in other aspects of her recovery from rape, your partner’s needs should be of primary importance and should guide your actions.

Remember that even though some things change between you and your partner for awhile, most women recover from the trauma of rape and continue loving and full lives.

**In Conclusion …**

Remember rape is never the victim’s fault. It is important that you support and believe the victim. This is how you can help the victim the most. Remember also that there is no set timetable for recovery. Be patient. Be supportive.
ICASA Rape Crisis Centers ...  

- NORTH  
**Arlington Heights**  
Northwest CASA  
24 hrs.  888-802-8890  
[www.nwcasa.org](http://www.nwcasa.org)  
**Outreach Office: Evanston**  
Northwest CASA  
24 hrs.  888-802-8890  

**Aurora**  
Mutual Ground, Inc.  
24 hrs.  630-897-8383  
[www.mutualgroundinc.com](http://www.mutualgroundinc.com)  

- Chicago Heights  
**YWCA Metropolitan Chicago**  
South Suburban Center Sexual Violence and Support Services  
24 hrs.  708-748-5672  
[www.ywcachicago.org](http://www.ywcachicago.org)  

- DeKalb  
**Safe Passage, Inc.**  
24 hrs.  815-756-5228  
[www.safepassagedv.org](http://www.safepassagedv.org)  

- Elgin  
**Community Crisis Center**  
24 hrs.  847-697-2380  
[www.crisiscenter.org](http://www.crisiscenter.org)  

- Galena  
**Riverview Center Inc.**  
Sexual Assault Prevention & Intervention Services  
24 hrs.  888-707-8155  
[www.riverviewcenter.org](http://www.riverviewcenter.org)  
**Satellite Office: Mount Carroll**  
Riverview Center Inc.  
SAP&IS Carroll County  
24 hrs.  877-273-7772  

- Glen Ellyn Heights  
**YWCA Metropolitan Chicago**  
Patterson and McDaniel Family Center  
24 hrs.  630-971-3927  
[www.ywcachicago.org](http://www.ywcachicago.org)  

- Gurnee  
Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center  
24 hrs.  847-872-7799  
[www.zcenter.org](http://www.zcenter.org)  

- Hickory Hills  
The Pillars Community Services  
24 hrs.  708-482-9600  
[www.pillarscommunity.org](http://www.pillarscommunity.org)  
**Satellite Office: Berwyn**  
The C.A.R.E. Center  
24 hrs.  708-482-9600  

- Joliet  
Sexual Assault Service Center Guardian Angel Community Services  
24 hrs.  815-730-8984  
[www.gacsprograms.org](http://www.gacsprograms.org)  

- Kankakee  
Kankakee County Center Against Sexual Assault  
24 hrs.  815-932-3322  
[www.kc-casa.org](http://www.kc-casa.org)  
**Outreach Office: Watseka**  
Iroquois Sexual Assault Services.  
24 hrs.  815-432-0420  

- Princeton  
Freedom House, Inc.  
24 hrs.  800-474-6031  
[www.freedomhouseillinois.com](http://www.freedomhouseillinois.com)  

- Quad Cities  
Rape/Sexual Assault Counseling Program  
Family Resources, Inc.  
24 hrs.  309-797-1777  
[www.famres.org](http://www.famres.org)  

- Rockford  
Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling, Inc.  
24 hrs.  815-636-9811  
[www.rsaconline.org](http://www.rsaconline.org)  
**Satellite Office: Belvidere**  
Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling, Inc.  
24 hrs.  815-636-9811  
**Satellite Office: Rochelle**  
Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling, Inc.  
24 hrs.  815-636-9811  
**Outreach Office: Rockford**  
Prevention Office  
24 hrs.  815-636-9811  

- Sterling  
YWCA of the Sauk Valley  
24 hrs.  815-626-7277  
[www.ywca.org/saukvalley](http://www.ywca.org/saukvalley)  
**Satellite Office: Dixon**  
YWCA of the Sauk Valley  
24 hrs.  815-288-1011  

- Streator  
ADV & SAS  
24 hrs.  800-892-3375  
[www.advsas.org](http://www.advsas.org)  
**Satellite Office: Pontiac**  
ADV & SAS  
24 hrs.  800-892-3375  
**Outreach Office: Ottawa**  
ADV & SAS  
24 hrs.  800-892-3375  

- Chicago  
Chicago 24-Hour Hotline  
1-888-293-2080  

- Rape Victim Advocates  
[www.rapevictimadvocates.org](http://www.rapevictimadvocates.org)  
**Satellite Office: Chicago**  
RVA - Stroger Hospital of Cook County  
**Satellite Office: Chicago**  
Austin Community Satellite  
**Satellite Office: Chicago**  
Northside Chicago  

**Mujeres Latinas En Accion**  
[www.mujereslatinasenaccion.org](http://www.mujereslatinasenaccion.org)
ICASA Rape Crisis Centers ...

**YWCA Metropolitan Chicago**
Sexual Violence and Support Services
www.ywcachicago.org
Satellite Office: Chicago
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
Laura Parks and Mildred Francis Center
Satellite Office: Chicago
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
Englewood
Satellite Office: Chicago
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
Logan Square
Outreach Office: Chicago
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
RISE Children's Center

**CENTRAL BLOOMINGTON**
Stepping Stones Sexual Assault Services
YWCA of McLean County
24 hrs. 309-827-4005
www.ywcamclean.org

**CHARLESTON/MATTOON**
Sexual Assault Counseling & Information Service
24 hrs. 888-345-2846
www.sacis.org
Satellite Office: Robinson
Counseling & Information for Sexual Assault/Abuse
24 hrs. 866-288-4888

**DANVILLE**
Vermillion County Rape Crisis Center
24 hrs. 866-617-3224
www.vcrapecrisiscenter.org

**DECATUR**
Growing Strong Sexual Assault Center
24 hrs. 217-428-0770
www.growingstrongcenter.org

**MACOMB**
Western Illinois Regional Council/Community Action Agency Victim Services
24 hrs. 309-837-5555
www.wirpc.org/victimservices

**PEORIA**
The Center for the Prevention of Abuse
Sexual Assault Services
24 hrs. 309-691-4111 or 800-559-SAFE
www.centerforpreventionofabuse.org

**QUINCY**
Quanada Sexual Assault Program
24 hrs. 800-369-2287
www.quanada.org
Satellite Office: Pittsfield
Pike County Satellite Office
24 hrs 800-369-2287
Outreach Office: Brown County
Quanada Sexual Assault Program
24 hrs. 800-369-2287
Outreach Office: Schuyler County
Quanada Sexual Assault Program
24 hrs. 800-369-2287

**SPRINGFIELD**
Prairie Center Against Sexual Assault
24 hrs. 217-753-8081
www.prairiecasa.org
Satellite Office: Jacksonville
Prairie Center Against Sexual Assault
24 hrs. 217-753-8081

**URBANA/CHAMPAIGN**
Rape, Advocacy, Counseling and Education Services
24 hrs. 217-384-4444 or 877-236-3727
www.cu-races.org

**SOUTH BELLEVILLE**
Call For Help, Inc. Sexual Assault Victims Care Unit
24 hrs. 618-397-0975
www.callforhelpline.org
Satellite Office: East St. Louis
Call For Help, Inc. Sexual Assault Victims Care Unit
24 hrs. 618-397-0975
Satellite Office: Granite City
Call For Help, Inc., Sexual Assault Victims Care Unit
24 hrs. 618-397-0975

**CARBONDALE**
Rape Crisis Services of The Women's Center, Inc.
24 hrs. 618-529-2324 or 800-334-2094
www.thewomensctr.org
Satellite Office: Marion
Rape Crisis Services of The Women's Center, Inc.
24 hrs. 800-334-2094
Outreach Office: Northeast Carbondale
Rape Crisis Services of The Women's Center, Inc.
24 hrs. 800-334-2094

**VANDALIA**
Sexual Assault and Family Emergencies
24 hrs. 800-625-1414
www.safecrisiscenter.org
Satellite Office: Centralia
Sexual Assault and Family Emergencies
24 hrs. 800-625-1414
Outreach Office: Effingham
Sexual Assault and Family Emergencies
24 hrs. 800-625-1414
FOR SERVICES AND INFORMATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY CONCERNING SEXUAL ASSAULT OR SEXUAL ABUSE, CONTACT:

100 N. 16th Street
Springfield, IL., 62703
(217) 753-4117   www.icasa.org