



Healing from Sexual Assault

Where there is breath, there is life.
Where there is life, there is hope.



Table of Contents

- 4** Introduction
- 5** What is Sexual Assault?
- 6** Why does this happen?
- 8** Sexual Assault in Unhealthy or Abusive Relationships
- 9** Specific Communities
- 14** *Your* Response to Sexual Assault
- 16** Towards Healing
- 20** Physical Healing
- 24** Emotional/Mental Healing
- 29** Legal Information and Options
- 36** For Families and Friends
- 38** Why Does This Happen in Our Communities?
- 40** Idaho Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs
Help-line Numbers
- 42** National and Idaho Helplines
- 43** Resources for Specific Communities

Introduction

None of us ever deserve to be harmed. The responsibility for sexual assault is with the person who chose to harm someone else.

Sexual assault is a traumatic experience that interrupts our lives and affects our relationships with other people, the wellness of every aspect of our being (emotional, mental, spiritual and physical), and our work and home life. After a sexual assault, it is normal to be confused about what to do and to feel like life is out of control. Surviving sexual assault does not make us any less worthy, strong, or powerful, even if things feel overwhelming. It is common to blame ourselves and to question what we could have done differently, but we do not need to question our actions. **If you were sexually assaulted, it is not your fault.**

If you are unsure what to do or need support, this booklet can help you understand why you may be feeling the way you are and can be a resource to help you feel more in control. It is important to realize that everyone responds differently to harm and trauma and that recovery is often a confusing and slow process. Be patient with yourself. Remember that healing takes time.

Remember to breathe – where there is life there is hope.

What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault includes any touching or contact of a sexual nature that we did not want or was done without our affirmative consent. Affirmative consent is knowingly, voluntarily, and mutually deciding to engage in sexual activity. We can give consent by words or actions, as long as our words or actions give our clear permission and willingness to engage in sexual activity.

Sexual assault occurs any time a person uses force, coercion, pressure and/or manipulation for any unwanted sexual activity. No one is ever entitled to sexual contact with us. If we are in a relationship with someone or they hold a position of power over us, they still do not have the right to any sexual contact without our consent. We cannot be forced to say yes – this is not consent.

Sexual assault includes a range of behaviors, which may take the form of unwanted kissing or touching (groping, fondling), sexual behavior beyond what we wanted or consented to, allowing other people to watch without our permission, recording sexual activity without our permission, and rape. Many acts of violence violate criminal laws, and all forms of sexual assault are unacceptable, even if someone does not use physical force.

Those of us who have been marginalized based on our race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and immigration or refugee status experience sexual assault at higher rates.

Why does this happen?

It is common to not immediately realize that what happened was a sexual assault. Days, weeks, even years after it happened, many of us come to name our experience as an assault or violence. Coming to this realization later does not make what happened less true or less impactful.

It is also common to wonder why you were sexually assaulted. We may wonder about our own actions – could we have done something differently that would have prevented this. While we can sometimes blame ourselves, **sexual assault is never our fault**. Nothing we did caused the sexual assault. Whatever we did to survive was the right thing to do.

Many of us who have been sexually assaulted experienced “freezing” and being unable to move or speak. “Freezing” is never our fault, and it does not mean that we wanted or consented to anything. It is simply a reaction which takes place in our brain – it is part of the flight, fight, or freeze response, and it serves a biological purpose. Many in our society may blame us for not “fighting back” or “trying to escape.” They don’t realize we may “freeze” to protect ourselves from scary or traumatic experiences.

Sexual assault often happens because the person committing the violence wants to feel powerful, in control and feel they have a right to get what they want by any means necessary, including sexually assaulting someone else. They may or may not be consciously aware about this need for power and dominance.

Often, the people who commit sexual assaults hold positions of power, privilege and dominance in society and receive messages, from the time they are very young, that they have a right to take what they want if it is not given to them. For example, the majority of people who commit sexual assault in the United States are cis-white-male and over 30 years old. These are all identities in our country that are provided many unearned privileges.

While this is a very intimate, personal experience we can also remember that there are systems of violence that are creating the conditions to be set up against people who are sexually assaulted, and that support the sexual assault happening in the first place. Sexual assault is never your fault.

Sexual Assault in Unhealthy or Abusive Relationships

Being in a relationship, whether casual or committed, doesn't change what types of behaviors are violent and/or criminal. Sexual assault is committed in our intimate relationships, casual dating, during hookups or in our family relationships. In fact, sexual assault and rape are most often committed by people we know, including our intimate partners, even family members. Any violence in a relationship is harmful and unacceptable, whether it is emotional, physical, or sexual.

Healthy relationships are built on consent and communication. Consent is a continuous process. This means that we can decide what we want for ourselves and our bodies at any time, for any reason, period. If we are forced or pressured into a sexual act without our freely given consent, this is violence and sexual assault.

We deserve to feel safe and valued in any of our relationships. If you find yourself in an abusive relationship you are not alone and there are people and groups who can support you. For more information and to find out ways to heal and gain independence and control, read our other booklet about unhealthy or abusive relationships.

Specific Communities

Many of us experience discrimination and unfair treatment based on our identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or ability. If we identify with one or more of these communities, we may experience additional, very real and valid fears and concerns about seeking help following a sexual assault. We may want to seek out friends or a trusted person in our network or community who shares our identity who can help us find safer and more helpful resources. There is a resources section at the end of this brochure for national hotlines and organizations committed to supporting all of who we are.

LGBTQ or Gender Nonconforming

Those of us who identify as LGBTQ or gender nonconforming may be afraid of "being outed" by the person who assaulted us if we are not out to everyone. We may also understandably fear that seeking help will make us a target of harassment or bullying. The person who assaulted us may exploit these fears to keep us from getting help. And if our family, co-workers, school, or community does not value our sexual orientation and/or gender identity, it can be a barrier to turn to them for support.

So, What Should I Do? You may want to reach out to LGBTQ-friendly organizations, locally or nationally, or student clubs like an LGBTQ Center

or GSA, to find out about LGBTQ-specific resources. You may also find a supportive counselor, colleague, or community leader who can help you find resources that will be helpful.

Communities of Color or Indigenous Communities

Those of us who identify as a person of color may also be impacted by racism and our country's history of systemic discrimination and oppression (such as slavery of the Black community, genocide of Indigenous communities, and incarceration / deportation in immigrant communities). White superiority can cause us additional harm in healing from an assault. We may fear seeking help because we may have been discounted, dismissed, disparaged, and, most often, ignored. We may experience an increased impact following a sexual assault because of the ways our society devalues our bodies as people of color, and Indigenous people.

So, What Should I Do? You may understandably fear reaching out for help from the criminal justice system or other systems because of historic and ongoing oppression and harm to your community by those systems. Individuals and leaders in your community who can relate to your experience may be able to better support you and find resources that will be helpful to you.

Individuals with Undocumented Status or DACA Recipients

If we don't have a current U.S. lawful immigration status or are a DACA recipient, we may not report the abuse to authorities or seek help in fear of being deported. We may also fear telling a school staff member or other community member because your information may lead to an investigation that might cause the person who assaulted you to be deported as well.

So, What Should I Do? Heightened immigration enforcement policies have justifiably increased fear in contacting law enforcement. If this is a concern for you, contact an immigration attorney, or someone who is licensed to better understand the implications of your status when looking to get help in healing from a sexual assault. You may also connect to a trusted community or family member who will support you in navigating systems that may not feel safe for you to do on your own. For information on low or no cost legal resources in Idaho, please see the resources page at the end of this booklet.

Muslim Communities

Those of us who are Muslim may feel additional shame, guilt, or self-blame from misinterpretation of our belief systems or the discrimination our communities experience. These may cause us anxiety about the future or decisions about marriage and family. Our religious communities can be supportive and may also struggle to show up for us in helpful ways. Some of us have experienced compassion, and, unfortunately, shaming from our communities.

So, What Should I Do? You do not deserve to endure the emotions of shame, guilt, and self-blame. Try to find someone in your community who will be able to support you, and help your family and community understand that there are a number of Islamic principles that are supportive of survivors. There are also online resources developed by the Muslim community that may help you hold your religious beliefs as a pathway to healing.

People with Disabilities

If we have a physical, mental, cognitive or intellectual disability, we may use assistive devices or depend on others to meet some or many of our basic needs. If we were assaulted by our personal care providers, our daily needs or assistive devices may be used against us as a coercive tactic to control us or stop us from seeking help. We may feel shame for trusting the person who assaulted us. We may also experience barriers in seeking help based on stereotypes people have about our sexuality as individuals with disabilities.

So, What Should I Do? You may find support within disability advocacy organizations, like a Center for Independent Living, or protection and advocacy organizations. These organizations can help you advocate for your self-determination and enhance your safety.

Your Response to Sexual Assault

Your experience is yours, not anyone else's, and no one can assume to know what you are going through. You are also not alone and none of us responds to sexual assault in the same way. A hard part of the healing process is identifying how you and your body are reacting to the trauma you experienced. This can be challenging, and it can help you figure out what you need in order to recover. There is no one "right way" to respond to trauma, no one "right way" to heal, and no time-frame for how long healing takes. Be proud of each choice you take towards healing, no matter how big or small that choice may be.

Here is a list of common reactions to sexual assault that may help you identify how your body and mind are responding to what you experienced:

Physical Reactions: You may notice changes in your sleeping patterns, nightmares, headaches, loss of appetite or overeating, stomach issues (diarrhea, constipation, cramps, nausea, etc.), muscle tension, lack of concentration, impaired memory, and/or an increased use of drugs or alcohol.

Emotional Reactions: You may have feelings of denial, fear, sadness, anger, guilt, shame, confusion, and/or embarrassment. You may also experience flashbacks, hyper-vigilance (heightened sense or being very

aware of your surroundings in a way that you weren't before, or being fearful of everyday activities), mood swings, irritability, depression, and suicidal thoughts. You may feel very upset, very calm, or anything in between. You may not feel anything at all, feel numb, or feel that your emotions are mixed up or out of place. Or you may feel like you are on an emotional roller coaster, with your emotions going up and down at any given moment.

Social Reactions: You might notice a fear of being in public or social situations, missing school, being unable to complete homework, a drop in your grades, fear of being alone, withdrawing from friends and family and after-school activities, difficulty trusting others, trouble with physical or emotional intimacy in relationships, and feeling isolated from others. You may also find yourself acting differently in social situations than you did before; sometimes this involves taking more risks.

Any of these responses are normal after experiencing the trauma of a sexual assault. Be patient with yourself.

Towards Healing

Surviving an assault can impact all aspects of our lives. Healing can happen, and it can take time. Our paths to recover from the harm caused by an assault may have many stages; the important thing is to take care of ourselves and keep moving forward.

We offer you the following suggestions to consider in your healing path. Many of us who have experienced sexual assault have found these helpful. And remember that your healing is yours and can take whatever form is best for you.

Immediate Steps

If the assault happened within the last few hours, safety is a priority. Try to get to a safe place and maybe ask a trusted friend to stay with you. If you are under eighteen, reach out to an adult you trust to support your safety planning; they may have access to resources people under the age of 18 may not. After you are safe, you may want to consider the following:

Advocacy: Most community or tribal sexual assault advocacy programs provide free services to individuals who are impacted by sexual assault. The people who work in these programs are called advocates. They can

help you understand what to expect if you pursue medical care or criminal action, can assist you in safety planning, and can provide referrals to other service providers. However, remember that if you are under 18 or have someone legally appointed to help you make decisions, advocates are mandatory reporters of certain crimes. For more information see the mandatory reporting obligations section in this booklet.

Reporting to Law Enforcement: Remember this is your choice and if you want to report a sexual assault, try to preserve evidence. If you were assaulted and feel like you may want to report, avoid drinking, bathing, showering, douching, brushing your teeth, or changing clothes. Place sheets or other soiled materials in a paper bag for safekeeping – plastic bags can ruin evidence. Collecting physical evidence from your body usually needs to occur within 96-108 hours after the assault and requires going to the hospital or family justice center for a forensic exam, often called a rape kit.

Medical/Forensic Exam: You may choose to seek medical care for any injuries you have as a result of the assault. Preserving physical evidence can also be very important. The forensic medical exams are lengthy (ranging between 3-6 hours) and invasive. Remember that some types of evidence cannot be recovered once they are lost and can only be collected within a certain time. The exam involves the collection of bodily fluids and an examination and documentation of any trauma to the oral, anal, and vaginal cavities.

You should not be personally charged for this exam; the state will cover all costs not covered by sources like your health insurance (if you have it). Know that if you have private insurance, it will be billed for the exam and the state will pay anything that insurance doesn't cover. The medical bill or statement of benefits from your insurance company that you or your parents receive may indicate that services were for a sexual assault exam. A local attorney, victim advocate, or the medical worker providing the exam should be able to help you understand this process better.

Immediate Contraception: If you are worried about being pregnant you can try to get emergency contraception, which can be taken up to three days after the assault. This contraception is often called Plan B. It is important to know that this is NOT an abortion pill, it will only prevent you from getting pregnant if you are not already pregnant. You can usually buy these pills over the counter without a prescription at drugstores and pharmacies, even if you are under the age of 18. Sometimes it is locked up or kept behind the pharmacy counter, so you may have to ask the pharmacist or store clerk for help getting it, but you do not have to have a prescription or show your identification. These pills usually cost \$40-\$50 and can be especially difficult to access in small towns. If you don't want to take immediate contraception, that is okay, but try to schedule a doctor appointment as soon as possible to learn about your options and get a pregnancy test. If you need financial support, reach out to your local sexual violence program who may be able to access emergency funds from the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence.

Physical Healing

We encourage you to seek immediate medical care, especially if you are worried about your health or if you were injured during your assault. However, there are other aspects of physical healing and health that you may want to think about in the long term.

Medical Care: Depending on the kind of trauma you experienced, your medical needs may vary. If you've been sexually assaulted you may access medical care through a personal physician, health district or health center, Planned Parenthood, or university health services office to get tested for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. There are preventative measures that are most effective if taken right away so it is better to get tested as soon as possible. Letting your doctor know about the assault can be one way to help you assess your options for care. But know that in Idaho, doctors must report to law enforcement when they become aware of certain crimes. It is okay, and recommended, to ask the doctor you see about their reporting responsibilities before disclosing details about your experience.

Understand Pain is a Message of Survival: Many of us who experience trauma report feeling all sorts of emotional and physical pain in the aftermath. It can be in the form of flashbacks, numbness, stomach discomfort, loss of memory, inability to relax muscles and much more. Pain is a message, and it's our body's way of telling us that it needs help. Understanding this can help us make sense of the pain and hopefully find positive ways to heal your body and yourself in the process.

Sleep: Sleep can be a vital part of your healing process. It can help you recover both physically and mentally. Sleeping gives your brain time to regenerate and restore itself, which will help you feel more in control and connected to your body and your surroundings. It can be especially hard to get good sleep in the aftermath of a traumatic event, so you may want to develop some bedtime strategies to help your body relax and prepare for sleep. This practice can be as simple as listening to your favorite song, changing your schedule to sleep during the day when you may feel safer, sleeping with a light on, or sleeping in an area of your home that feels safe to you.

Be Kind to Your Body: It is important to treat your body kindly. One way to do that is to drink lots of water and eat healthy food, which will help your body and brain heal over time. Not every day will be easy, but you have everything you need within you. It can also be helpful to be physically active, if you can. Try laying still and breathing for a few moments when you wake up to see how your body feels, perhaps you can work stretching into your day in doses. You can work your way up to more rigorous physical movements and activities outside of your home for when you're ready, like going for a walk. Any kind of movement supports your physical and spiritual recovery by reconnecting you to your body and moving around fluids that support physical healing as well (lymphatic system). Physical activity can make us feel more connected to our bodies and in control of our movements. Try to avoid excessive amounts of alcohol and drugs. You may feel drawn to alcohol and drugs after trauma to mask the pain you feel; this can potentially make it more difficult for you to heal. Try to connect with a harm reduction drug and substance abuse programs if one is available to discuss ways to still take care of your body, even if you continue to choose drugs and alcohol as a way to cope.

Breathe: The impact of sexual assault can affect your whole being. By working on and restoring one part of yourself, all parts of you can benefit. You can feel overwhelmed after a sexual assault and the simple act of intentional breathing can help.

Take three breaths. By focusing on your breath, you will think clearer and have more control over your actions or reactions. This focus and time will help you feel more connected to your body.

Low and Slow. When you are feeling overwhelmed you may take rapid, shallow breaths, which only increases anxiety. Instead, try to take low and slow breaths, from down in your belly button. This can help to begin the healing process.

Movement with your breath. When you take these healing breaths, raise your arms on the inhale and lower your arms on the exhale. This will help you keep your breathing slow and it will help you feel present in the moment.

Emotional/Mental Healing

Healing from trauma is a hard and painful experience and it may seem easier to suppress and hide your pain than turn towards it. However, hiding from pain that still exists within you can make it even harder to carry around. This section focuses on helping you find positive ways of healing from within that will help you feel in control over your life and your body.

Self-Harm/Suicide: Many of us who experience sexual assault feel suicidal or engage in self-harm. This is normal and you are not alone. If you are harming yourself or are feeling suicidal, try to reach out to someone for help. Please contact an advocate, a mental health counselor, a trusted friend or a helpline listed at the end of this booklet.

Practice Daily Self-Care: The most important step you can take is to practice daily self-care. This might sound easy or even cliché, but self-care is a vital step in healing and often hard to do.

- Kindness – Be compassionate with yourself.
- Rest – Try to sleep a six to eight hour block each day.
- Breathe – Practice breathing each day or download a meditation or breathing app on your phone.
- Water – Drink water and stay hydrated throughout the day.

- Support – If you are able, spend time with friends and family who accept and support you, and make you happy.
- Spaciousness – Take five minutes a day to do something restorative for yourself (drink a cup of tea, take a quiet moment to think of something positive, or take a short walk).
- Take small actions – Healing is a slow process. Take on challenges that you feel ready for and go through them slowly and with purpose.

Create Strong Relationships: If you have a strong support system, healing from trauma feels a little bit less daunting. If you can, tell someone you trust about your experience. Tell them as much as you feel comfortable talking about, and let them know that you need them as a support system. Having people to talk to allows you to share your feelings, gain support, receive positive feedback, and find new ways towards healing. If you are unsure who to talk to, or your friends or family are having a hard time supporting you, many organizations have support groups or chat features for people impacted by sexual assault. In these groups, you can share your story, be connected to resources, and form community networks.

Counseling: In addition to developing a support network, you might want to consider speaking with a counselor or attend a support group. You may be able to access free or low-cost counseling through a health center, school, community or tribal advocacy program, or through a private referral. Your local sexual assault advocacy program or your physician may be able to give you a list of counselors skilled in working with individuals who have experienced sexual assault. Talking to a professional about your experience can be empowering. Additionally, the counselor can give you individualized tools to help you heal and cope in healthy ways. However, not everyone has the access or means to get counseling. Healing can also happen through holistic and/or traditional healing practices (i.e. rituals, ancestral medicines, dancing, etc.).

Know Your Triggers: Reliving your assault is incredibly hard, and unfortunately something that many of us experience. This is often known as being “triggered.” Triggers are things (smells, sounds, locations, etc.) that cause us to experience a flashback or react as if the assault was happening again in present time. Being triggered can be overwhelming and can make you feel out of control.

If you have triggers, it may be helpful to know what they are (the things in the environment that cause the flashbacks) and plan for those situations or

avoid them if possible. Recognizing your triggers can help you feel more in control and prepared. Knowing these doesn’t mean you won’t be triggered, but it can help you prepare and find new ways of dealing with them.

Being Optimistic: Staying hopeful can help you be more resilient. This is different than simply ignoring the problem or pretending that you are happy or okay. And believing in yourself and knowing that you are trying to heal from an incredibly difficult trauma can help you move forward in your healing. Time is a huge part of healing. Be kind to and patient with yourself!

#MeToo: In 2017, the #MeToo social media campaign, originally started by Tarana Burke, created the conditions for many of us to speak about sexual assault, and, by sharing these stories, interrupt the social norms of secrecy that protect the individuals who commit these acts of sexual violence. #MeToo has demonstrated the strength of cis and trans girls and women who have rebuilt themselves. Through the power of their voices, women have made visible the depth and breadth of sexual harassment and sexual assault in our culture. This is resilience in action. Sharing powerful stories and what we have been through, connecting with other brave people like us – it tells us that we can survive! Go to <https://metoomvmt.org/> to learn more.

Know you are not alone: You are more than your trauma. You are whole and beautiful, and you deserve to feel that way. You can gain control in your life and find your sense of purpose. Get involved in your community and do things that are meaningful to you. If this speaks to you, then find ways to join the #MeToo or other related movements.

Here are other ways to make a difference in your community:

- Express your experiences through art, photography, or dance.
- Learn more about feminism, social justice, gender violence, and the ways you can promote social, economic, and political equity across genders.
- Read authors like bell hooks or Gloria Anzaldúa or Roxane Gay's book *Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture*.

Legal Information and Options

Mandatory reporting is the process in which people in Idaho are required by law to report crimes like assault or rape when they happen to certain people. If you are under 18 this law applies to you, and the adults you talk to may be required to report what you have experienced to law enforcement or other agencies. If you are over 18 and considered a vulnerable adult under the law, certain professionals also have an obligation to report any abuse you disclose to them. This does not mean you should not talk to an adult. It is just to let you know that they may not be able to keep what you tell them totally private. It is okay to ask adults about their reporting requirements before you give them specific details about your experience.

It is important that you weigh your legal options and make the choice that is best for you at this point in your healing process. If you want to report a sexual assault, here are some options:

School or College Reporting Options: If you are attending school, you have the option to report the assault to an administrator there. Most schools in the United States are required under Title IX to ensure an environment free from sex and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence. Generally, educational institutions are required to ensure that individuals who are sexually assaulted can continue their education.

Examples of options a school or college may offer include academic accommodations or schedule changes, dorm and class transfers, school-based no contact orders, and mental health support. Regardless of whether you report the assault to law enforcement, your school or college must take its own action, through a thorough and impartial investigation, which may lead to possible consequences, such as suspension or expulsion of the offender from the school. Check your school's student handbook or policies to find out where you should report.

Criminal Action: You have the right to file a police report. If you report the sexual assault to law enforcement, you may be assigned a victim witness coordinator who will assist you through the criminal justice process to lessen re-victimization and connect you to community resources. However, as employees of the criminal justice system, victim witness coordinators have limits on confidentiality and may be required to share information you disclosed to them with others, such as an officer, detective, or prosecutor, who may then be required to give that information to the defendant through the defense attorney. After the investigation, the prosecutor in the location where the crime was committed has the discretion to determine whether or not to file criminal charges.

Whether or Not to Report to Law Enforcement

For some of us reporting a sexual assault to law enforcement is a very empowering experience, but for some it is not. You should know going in that it is often hard to “win” in cases relating to sexual assault and abuse, but it is possible. Here are some things to keep in mind when considering whether or not to report to law enforcement:

You will have to share what happened in detail. Sharing your experience of the sexual assault is a very personal thing and if you choose to report the assault you will be asked to talk about what happened to you in a very detailed manner. It is important to know this going in, so you are ready and can decide if you want to pursue legal actions. Lawyers and community-based advocates may also be able to support you in sharing what happened to you in a way that feels best.

It is possible that not everyone will believe what happened to you, especially for historically marginalized community members, such as people of color and trans, queer or gender non-conforming people because of systemic oppression, and a conviction of the person who assaulted you is not guaranteed. Sadly, people sometimes doubt our

stories, which can be a painful experience in itself. Your story is your story, and no one should tell you otherwise. It is possible that within the legal system people will question your story or try to blame you. Remember, in the legal system the person who assaulted you being found guilty or convicted is not guaranteed.

You might feel a loss of control. Some people find reporting to law enforcement to be an empowering experience; however, others feel a loss of control. This process can be long and drawn out, and unfortunately you will not have much control over the events or the final outcome. This does not necessarily mean it will be a negative experience, but it is something you need to consider. Having an advocate can help you regain control in this confusing process since they have a greater understanding of the system and can explain to you what is going on.

Civil Legal Assistance

Individuals who have been sexually assaulted can benefit from civil legal assistance to address the impact of problems caused by the assault. An attorney may be able to assist you with the following legal issues:

- **Privacy:** Request notice of or challenge a request for your records, and ensure service providers understand privacy laws, work with schools and employers to ensure they abide by state and federal privacy laws to protect your information
- **Safety:** Work with your campus or school, landlord, and employers to create safety plans, and/or request accommodations to increase your safety and well-being
- **Housing:** Negotiate with your landlord to allow you to terminate or transfer your lease to a different location or make accommodations to increase your safety

- Financial: Help you apply for public or crime victim assistance if you've had out of pocket costs due to the assault and help determine if you can hold a third party liable for damages related to the sexual assault
- Employment: Help you secure leave, unemployment insurance, accommodations, enhance the safety of your work environment, transfer of you or the perpetrator, or taking employment action against the perpetrator
- Education: Negotiate with your school to make accommodations to assist you in continuing your education and help with challenges you've had in school as a result of the assault, advise you in any student disciplinary action against the person who assaulted you, and enforce the rights you have under federal and state law
- Immigration: Refer you to an immigration attorney or someone who is licensed to assist someone with the immigration process to allow you to stay in the United States to finish school or continue at your job

and ensure that your immigration status is not used against you in any criminal proceedings related to the assault. An immigration attorney will better understand the implications of your status and to identify any possible legal remedies should you choose to file legal action

- Crime Victim's Rights: Explain the criminal justice system and enforce your rights under the Idaho Crime Victims' Rights Act

Several organizations in Idaho provide free civil legal assistance for people who have been sexually assaulted. See the resource section of this booklet for more information.

For Families and Friends

Sexual assault is a devastating experience for individuals who were harmed and those of us who are close to them. Family members and friends experience a wide range of emotions and reactions after someone we love is sexually assaulted. We may experience some of the same feelings as our loved one. These feelings and reactions are normal.

- **Loss:** We may experience a sense of loss because the person we care about has been changed by this experience and life as we know it may also be changed for a period of time.
- **Revenge:** Seeking revenge against the perpetrator is a common feeling or urge for those of us close to the person who was harmed. Our feelings of rage and wanting to hold the person accountable are completely understandable; however, acting on this urge will not be helpful to our loved ones. In fact, our loved ones may experience added stress if we threaten action against the perpetrator because they may fear for our safety. Deciding to act on feelings of revenge or rage can make our loved one feel powerless all over again. Finding alternative ways to release our anger is important to everyone's well-being.

- **Blaming:** The person we care about may have been assaulted while participating in activities that others may disapprove of (drinking, going to a party, etc.). These decisions did not cause the sexual assault and does not make our loved one responsible for the violence. The only one responsible is the person who chose to use violence.
- **Guilt:** We may feel guilty that we were not able to protect our loved one and may try harder to protect them now. It is important that we communicate our feelings to our loved one. Our concern for our loved one's safety may be appreciated, but over-protectiveness and restricting freedom may feel like mistrust or blame for what happened. One of the most important steps for our loved one is to regain a sense of power over choices and actions in their lives. After an assault, it is easy to become upset when others make decisions for us. The Information & Resources section of this handbook contains a list of resources for you and your loved one.

Why Does This Happen in Our Communities?

Gender violence is a problem in our society that affects all communities. Gender violence includes abusive relationships, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking. While everyone is hurt by violence, those of us who are girls, women, and gender nonconforming are hurt by these forms of violence the most.

Gender violence is common in our society because of our cultural beliefs and what we consider to be “normal” or “acceptable.” In our culture, men are given more value and power than any other gender. This leads to high rates of gender violence.

Gender violence does not happen in isolation. Gender violence is supported by larger forces or systemic oppressions, like patriarchy, which takes power over and harms girls and women. Systemic oppressions are the ways in which history, culture, beliefs, institutional practices, and policies interact to keep a ranking or power for some over others.

Our society values human beings based on identities, like gender, race, national origin, class, sexuality, ability, immigration, or refugee status. Ranking human beings supports the power and privileges that some groups of people hold to keep power over others. We need to create communities where everyone is valued, safe, and can thrive.

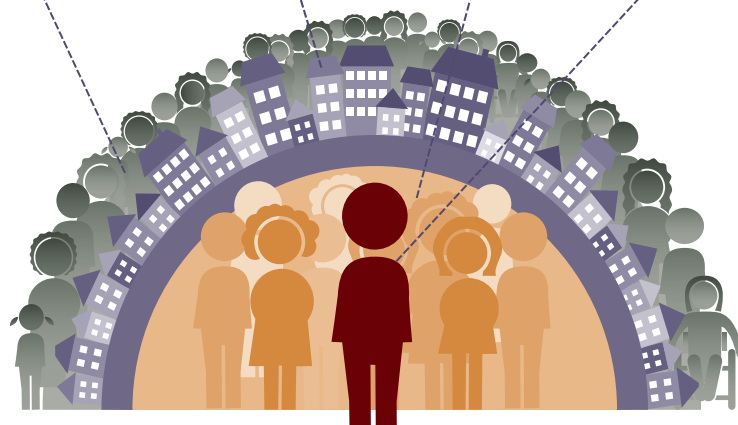
Individuals do not act in isolation, but are influenced by other people, social structures, and our society

Systemic Oppressions like Patriarchy – Large forces which dominate and harm groups of people based on gender and other identities.

Government, Religious, and Community Structures – May educate and enforce oppression and dominance.

Families, Friends, and Peers – Influences us to accept discrimination (i.e. “boys will be boys” = sexism), inequity (i.e. “if girls acted like ladies things like this wouldn’t happen” = strict gender roles) or oppression.

Individuals – May choose to use violence that is fueled and supported by a dynamic system of power and dominance.



Idaho Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Programs Help-line Numbers

Advocates Against Family Violence – Caldwell (208) 459-4779
Advocates for Survivors of Domestic Violence – Hailey (208) 788-6070
Alternatives to Violence of the Palouse – Moscow (208) 883-4357
Bingham Crisis Center – Blackfoot (208) 681-8712/ Spanish (208) 681-8715
Boundary County Youth Crisis and DV Hotline – Bonners Ferry (208) 267-5211
Coeur d’Alene Tribal STOP Violence Program – Plummer (208) 686-0601
Crossroads Harbor Domestic Violence Shelter (previously known as Mini Cassia Shelter for Women & Children) – Rupert (208) 436-0987
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Center – Idaho Falls (208) 235-2412
Elmore County Domestic Violence Council – Mountain Home (208) 587-3300
Family Crisis Center – Rexburg (208) 356-0065
Family Safety Network – Driggs (208) 354-7233
Family Services Alliance of SE Idaho – Pocatello (208) 251-4357
Lemhi County Crisis Intervention – Mahoney House – Salmon (208) 940-0600

Oneida Crisis Center – Malad (208) 766-3119
Priest River Ministries – Priest River (208) 290-6529
ROSE Advocates – Weiser (208) 414-0740
Safe Passage Violence Prevention Center – Coeur d’Alene (208) 664-9303
Shoshone County Women’s Resource Center – Wallace (208) 556-0500
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Victims of Crime Assistance Program – Fort Hall (208) 339-0438
Shoshone Paiute Tribes STOP Domestic Violence Program – Owyhee, NV (775) 757-2013
‘Úuyit Kímti Program (New Beginnings) (formally known as the Nez Perce Tribe Women’s Outreach Program) – Lapwai (208) 621-4778
Voices Against Violence – Twin Falls (208) 733-0100
Women’s & Children’s Alliance – Boise (208) 343-7025
YWCA of Lewiston-Clarkston – Lewiston (208) 746-9655

National and Idaho Helplines

National Helplines

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673 – Free, bilingual (English/Spanish) or chat online at online.rainn.org – Get help and referrals from advocates.

National Runaway Safeline: 1-800-786-2929 – Confidential support.

National Street Harassment Hotline: 1-855-897-5910 – Support, advice, and legal resources information.

National LGBTQ Helplines

Anti-Violence Project: 212-714-1141 – Free, bilingual (English/Spanish), 24-hour, 365-day-a-year crisis intervention and support to LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of any type of violence.

Trevor Lifeline (for LGBTQ* youth): 1-866-488-7386 – Crisis intervention and suicide prevention for LGBTQ youth.

Civil Legal Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors

Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence: (208) 384-0419 – call for referrals to attorneys available to help in a spectrum of civil legal services that impact survivors.

Resources for Specific Communities

#MeTooMovement website <https://metoomvmt.org/advocacy-resources-library/national-resources/> – A comprehensive list of national resources for specific communities, including but not limited to:

- Resources for Youth Survivors
- Human Trafficking Resources Domestic Partner Violence Resources
- Resources for LGBTQI Survivors
- Resources for College Students
- Resources for Sexual Assault in Workplace
- Resources for Male Survivors
- Support for Survivors with Disabilities
- Resources for Military Survivors
- Medical or Physical Resources
- Resources for Undocumented Individuals
- Resources for People of Color
- Resources for Incarcerated Victims



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