

SEXUAL ASSAULT

What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual violence is any act (verbal and/or physical), which breaks a person's trust and/or safety and is sexual in nature. The term "**sexual violence**" includes: rape, date/acquaintance rape, incest, child sexual assault, ritual abuse, marital or partner rape, sexual harassment, exposure, and voyeurism. Sexual assaults are acts of violence where sex is used as the weapon.

Victims/survivors of sexual violence are forced, coerced and/or manipulated to participate in unwanted sexual activity.

Sexual assault on college and university campuses is occurring at an alarming rate. The majority of these are date/acquaintance rapes perpetrated against women by men. Alcohol and drugs as well as gendered communication may be factors in sexual assaults. Regardless, it is **NEVER** the victim/survivor's fault no matter what she wore, where she was, whether or not she fought back, or whether or not she and/or the perpetrator were drinking.

If you have been raped, you may be feeling:

- A variety of strong emotions—fear, anxiety, depression, guilt, disorientation, powerlessness, shame, shock, disbelief, embarrassment, denial, anger;
- A number of physical problems—sleep disturbances, nausea, stomach problems, change in eating habits, nightmares;
- Confused and alone, wondering if and how you should tell your family and friends;
- Even though the rape occurred a while ago, you would now like to talk to someone about what happened.

Whatever your feelings, there are support services available to help you.

What to do if you have been sexually assaulted:

- Go to a safe place as soon as you can.
- Call someone you trust to be with you, like a rape crisis counselor, friend or parent.
- Call the local or campus police or simply dial 911.
- Don't shower, bathe, or douche after the attack.
- Preserve forensic, physical, & electronic evidence.
- Seek care at a hospital. Take a change of clothing with you if you go.
- Consider filing charges against your attacker.

Preserve any evidence.

Evidence of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking should be preserved as soon as possible, even if you are unsure about reporting to the University or filing criminal charges. Preservation of evidence is essential for both law enforcement and campus disciplinary investigations.

Write down, or have a friend write down, everything you can remember about the incident, including a physical description of the assailant. You should attempt to do this even if you are unsure about reporting the incident in the future.

Forensic Evidence

If you choose to report the assault and pursue legal options, a prompt forensic examination can be crucial.

Steps to Preserve Forensic Evidence

- Avoid drinking, bathing, showering, brushing your teeth, using mouthwash, or combing your hair.
- Do not change clothes. If you have already changed your clothes, place your clothing and other items (sheets, blankets) in a brown paper bag (a plastic bag may destroy evidence).
- Go to a hospital emergency department, such as DHMC, which has the capability to provide a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE or "rape kit") and medical care for victims of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. A [Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner \(SANE\)](#), a healthcare provider trained to provide comprehensive care for a victim, can collect forensic evidence.
 - A SAFE (rape kit) can only be completed within 5 days of the assault. You have the right to refuse the entire exam or any part of it at any time. You may also decide to complete a forensic exam anonymously.
 - By Louisiana law, evidence collection expenses are covered at no cost to you.
- If you suspect that you are the victim of a drug-facilitated sexual assault, ask the hospital or clinic where you receive medical care to take a urine sample. Drugs, such as Rohypnol and GHB, are more likely to be detected in urine than in blood. Rohypnol stays in the body for several hours, and can be detected in the urine up to 72 hours after taking it. GHB leaves the body in 12 hours.

Consider bringing someone to the hospital with you for support.

- The hospital automatically calls a WISE advocate to be available any time someone comes in for a SAFE. You can decide whether or not you want to speak with the advocate. The advocate is a confidential resource who is not affiliated with the College. They can provide you with confidential support and talk with you about your options.

If you need a ride to or from the hospital, University Police will escort you 24/7 at no charge. Contact ULPD at [\(337\) 482 6447](tel:3374826447).

- You do not have to specify the details of why you need to go to the hospital to the Police officer.

Physical Evidence

Physical evidence should be preserved even if you choose not to go to the hospital for a forensic exam. Save all of the clothing you were wearing at the time of the assault. Put each item in a separate paper bag (do not use plastic bags). Save all bedding (blankets, sheets) and put each in a separate paper bag. Take photographs of any visible physical injuries (bruising, scratches) for use as evidence. If you report to law enforcement, they may want to take their own photos as evidence.

Electronic Evidence

Evidence such as texts, emails, Facebook posts, chats, pictures, videos or other forms of electronic communication can be helpful in a college or criminal investigation. Download, save to a .pdf, take screen shots, or use other methods to preserve electronic evidence.

Report the incident.

You may choose to report the incident to the Police Department where the incident took place, and/or to University Police (ULPD). The Title IX Coordinator can also receive a report.

If you are unsure as to whether or not you want to report the incident, you can talk with a University Police officer about 'hypotheticals' to find out more information. You can have a University staff member, or someone else with you during this process.

If you under 21 and were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of the assault you will NOT be charged for using by University Police Department or The University of Louisiana at Lafayette .Sexual assault is a crime in all 50 states. Whether or not you were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of the incident, does NOT make it your fault. No one has the right to touch you without your consent.

What to do if you know someone who has been sexually assaulted:

If you know someone who has been a victim of rape, you may notice that the person seems to act differently—withdrawn, afraid, or unsure. You may feel angry or upset. What can you do?

- Listen. A good counselor or friend knows how to listen and not speak. Concentrate your energy and attention on their feelings, not your own.
- Try not to judge: “If I had been in your situation, I would have....” “Why did you go in there?”
- Avoid “fixing” your friend. Help your friend make a list of options, and let her or him decide what to do (even if you don’t agree with it).
- Don’t rush the healing process just to make yourself more comfortable. People need time to heal. Be patient.
- Encourage your friend to seek help from a counselor where the services are professional, confidential and free (i.e., UL Counseling and Testing Center, Rape Crisis Line 337 233-7273). As a loved one of a rape survivor, you may also desire counseling and advice.