

RIGHTS OF THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

People who disclose or report an experience of sexual violence have the following rights:

- To have confidentiality protected;
- To be treated with dignity and respect;
- To be informed about on- and off-campus services and resources;
- To be informed about the procedures in place to address sexual violence and reporting options;
- To decide whether or not to access available services and to choose those services they believe will be most beneficial;
- To make an informed decision regarding whether to report the incident to campus authorities and/or local police;
- To have an on-campus investigation with the University's

If you need additional supports, please feel free to contact one of the following:

Sakala Success Centre – lower level Administration Building. Ext. 4141

Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre:

- www.casasa.ca
- 1-866-956-1099 (phone and text)

Kids Help Phone:

- www.kidshelpphone.ca
- 1-800-668-6868
- Text: CONNECT to 686868

Distress Line: 403-266-4357

Crisis Services Canada: 1-833-456-4566

Mental Health Helpline: 1.877.303.2642

If you are interested in participating the First Responder to Disclosure of Sexual Violence Training, please contact:

Elise Kruithof – elisekruithof@burmanu.ca

You can also come by the Sakala Success Centre.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE TELLS YOU THAT THEY HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED



If a friend or someone you know was sexually assaulted, she or he may experience a variety of emotional reactions. For some, the emotional impact of sexual assault can be immediate and short-term. For others, the effects can be long-lasting. Your friend may find it helpful to talk to a counselor about these feelings.

How can you help:

Listen - A friend may confide in you 10 minutes or 10 years after the assault. At that time, it doesn't matter so much what you say but how well you listen. Allow the person to talk, but do not push for details or ask a lot of questions. Let your friend decide what and when s/he feels comfortable telling you about the assault and its impact.

Be Supportive - It is important that the survivor feels support from friends and family. Be careful not to invade his or her space. The survivor may be quite frightened and not want to be in close physical contact with anyone, even someone who is trusted.

Believe your Friend - It is important that the survivor has someone who believes that she/he was assaulted. Let your friend know right away that you care and want to help. It takes courage to talk about a sexual assault with other people. Many victims remain silent because they feel ashamed and/or they fear that they will be disbelieved or blamed if they tell other people about what happened to them.

Show empathy for what your friend is going through - Remember that your friend has been through an emotionally painful, traumatic experience. Your friend may act differently after the assault. Some of your friend's reactions may be hard to watch, but you "being there" for your friend can help a lot.

Be patient and understanding - The trauma of a sexual assault does not go away quickly. It may take a while for your friend to recover. Sometimes friends and family members expect sexual assault victims to be "over it" in a few weeks. Understand that the pain the victim feels, and the symptoms, may last for a long time.

Respect your Friend's Privacy and Confidentiality - Don't disclose what the victim tells you to other people. Let your friend decide whom she or he wants to confide in.

Don't Blame Your Friend - No one deserves to be sexually assaulted or asks to be raped. Avoid searching for things your friend should have done. Survivors often blame themselves and need to know it was not their fault. The only one to blame is the perpetrator

Allow your Friend to make his/her own Decisions - During a sexual assault, a person loses all control and it is important for the survivor to regain that control. One important way for the survivor to re-establish control is to make decisions autonomously. You may make suggestions such as calling the police, the victim/witness hotline, or telling a resident advisor, but allow the survivor to make her/his own choices.

Provide Ongoing Support - Sexual assault has many lasting effects. It is important for you to realize that each survivor recovers at her/his own pace. Do not question the timing of the recovery. Remain supportive and provide encouragement.

Don't be Afraid to Ask for Outside Help - Your friend may need medical attention or counseling. Offer to accompany your friend to get help, such as medical care, an evidentiary examination, counseling, or other services. Offer to be with your friend when she or he makes a police report or tells a parent or partner. Do what you can to assist your friend in getting information about these and other options so she or he can make informed decisions.

Encourage your Friend to "Reach Out" –

- a. Encourage your friend to get medical care, even if the assault happened a while ago and even if

your friend does not appear to have any physical injuries.

- b. Encourage your friend to talk with a counselor. If your friend is not ready to talk to a counselor "in person," encourage your friend to call the Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support line and talk with a counselor on the telephone (1-866-956-1099).
- c. If your friend is willing to report the crime, encourage her or him to contact the police as soon as possible. Police officers can help victims get medical care and resolve concerns about their safety.
*Reporting an incident of sexual violence does not mean that the victim must file charges. If the victim wishes to file a charge with local law enforcement officials, the Sakala Success Centre will provide assistance when requested.
- d. Assist your friend in finding information and resources.

Know Your Own Limitations and When to Refer a Friend to someone else - You don't need to know all the answers – your friend is just looking for someone to listen and be supportive.

Take Care of Yourself - Understand your own feelings. You may also feel confused, hurt, angry, or frightened. Such feelings are normal. Know and respect your own limits. There is only so much you can do to help your friend. You can provide support, compassion, and companionship when your friend wants it, but try not to make commitments that you cannot fulfill. Remember that it was not your fault. You may feel guilty, thinking that somehow you could have prevented your friend's sexual assault. Don't forget that sexual assault is a violent crime and you are not responsible for someone else's actions.