

Information for Parents about Sexual Assault

A parent's worse nightmare is to have a child who's been sexually assaulted. Sexual assault affects everyone in a victim's life. It is important to recognize and to attend to your needs as well as the needs of your child.

Each victim's reaction to being sexually assaulted is individual. It follows that the victim's pain and needs will be unique as well.

The sexual assault often leaves the victim feeling a loss of control over her or his life. Right now the victim needs to be in control of her/his own actions. It is best to avoid forcing the victim to do anything, in any way. Allow the victim to make choices that she/he feels are necessary. Your support in this process is critical.

Some common reactions of Sexual Assault Victims include:

Restlessness Anxiety Guilt
Insomnia Nightmares Fear
Flashbacks Drug Abuse Fatigue
Depression Change in Appetite
Problems at work or school
Problems in relating to others

Things that parents can do:

- Tell the victim that you believe her/him and that the sexual assault-regardless of what the victim was wearing, doing or saying -is not the victim's fault
- Be ready to listen
- Recognize that nothing that you can do will erase the sexual assault. In short, you can't fix it
- Face your own fears and prejudices about sexual assault
- Seek counseling for yourself to help deal with your own feelings
- Accept her/his experience the way it happened
- Avoid comparisons
- Fight the natural tendency to deny the experience
- Respect her/his wishes and, to the extent possible, allow your child to choose what is right for her/him
- Recognize your limitations and try to avoid "rescuing" your child

Concerns

- **Going Out:** Sometimes the daily routines of life will be threatening to the person dealing with the aftermath of a sexual assault.
- **Domestic:** Routine chores and responsibilities may seem burdensome.
- **Home Security:** The victim will be concerned about the safety of her/his home.
- **Need to get away:** Victim might appreciate having a place to stay for a while outside her/his home. The victim also might appreciate having a companion stay with them.
- **Medical:** If the assault happened recently, you may want to suggest she/he seeks medical attention. In Iowa the sexual assault medical exam and prophylactic treatment is paid by the State.
- **Financial:** There are some financial consequences for the victims of assault, such as the cost of lost wages, counseling, medical care, property held for evidence (e.g., bedding and clothing). Reimbursement; however, can take time and doesn't cover all costs. Don't assume that an offer of financial help from you will be insensitive.

Rape Victim Advocacy Program

Concerns

- **Legal:** Often the family believes that the victim should report the assault to the police and pursue legal options. It is important to know that may be an option that is acceptable to some victims, but for many victims, this is not something they choose to do.

The University of Iowa administrative process (Including sanctions) is a separate process from Law Enforcement.

- **Professional:** Make sure your daughter or son knows that there are community resources to contact for support. Offer to get information. The Rape Victim Advocacy Program offers free short term counseling and can help with referrals for longer term therapy. The most important thing that the victim needs is to regain control of her own life.

It is never the victim's fault!



Support, Information and Referral services to survivors of sexual abuse, as well as significant others, friends and family. All Services are free and confidential.

Rape Victim Advocacy Program

332 South Linn St.,
Suite 100
Iowa City, IA 52240

Local Crisis Line: (319) 335-6000
(800) 228-1625
Office: (319)-335-6001
Fax: (319) 335-6057

Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline:



Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline

Rape Victim Advocacy Program

Sexual Abuse Information for Parents



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Local Crisis Line
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(800) 228-1625

Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline:
(800) 284-7821