

# TOWARD HEALING AND JUSTICE

A Handbook for Survivors of Sexual Assault

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Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault

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## Acknowledgements

This handbook is dedicated to the survivors of sexual violence. It is intended to provide general information and is not intended to give advice on specific medical, legal, or emotional situations. Every individual, every case, and every local region will have their own unique differences.

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- “Information for the Survivor of Sexual Assault”, Ozark Rape Crisis Center, Inc., Harrison, AR. 1999.
- “Sexual Assault Information for Victims, Families and Friends”, Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition, 1999.
- “What Everyone Should Know About Sexual Assault in Virginia”, VAASA: Virginians Aligned Against Sexual Assault, especially the section on “Special Concerns” by Claire Kaplan, sexual education coordinator, University of Virginia.
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This handbook is dedicated to  
survivors of sexual assault.



## I. INTRODUCTION

Many people who have experienced some form of unwanted sexual activity may not think of themselves as victims of sexual assault. However, sexual assault is a term that describes a wide range of unwanted or nonconsensual sexual activities. Sexual assault occurs most frequently between two people who know each other such as acquaintances, significant others, and family members (a parent and a child).

Through the media we hear about sexual assaults committed by strangers more than other types of sexual assault. The media tends to sensationalize sexual assaults committed by strangers, but the reality is that they do not happen as frequently as sexual assaults committed by someone the victim knows. Non-stranger sexual assaults are some of the most under reported crimes and something that many people are uncomfortable talking about. *Anyone can be a victim of sexual assault, it happens to men and women, children, teenagers, adults and the elderly.*

Sexual assault is an emotional shock, and most often considered (by those who work with people who have been sexually assaulted) a trauma. It is a situation

where power and control was taken away. Anytime that something happens that takes away our sense of power and control we get frightened and feel some sense of loss of security. Since our sexuality is highly personal, sexual assault can feel like a very personal attack.

If you have experienced unwanted sexual activity, we hope that the information in this booklet will help you know that you are not alone, provide you with information to help you make informed choices, and support your recovery.

Everyone who has been sexually assaulted has dealt with it differently. There is no “right way” of dealing with this. Each individual needs to do what seems right for him or her at the time. The most common feelings are a combination of emotions such as shock, confusion, fear, anger, helplessness, self-blame, guilt, embarrassment, shame, numbness, and disbelief. Whatever your reaction, please know that it is not uncommon to experience a mixture of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts after this type of trauma. Most survivors of sexual assault experience many of these feelings. With time, support, self-understanding, and self-compassion, the difficult or painful emotions you may be having will subside.

Whether the assault was recent or long ago we sincerely wish it had not happened. Please know that *whatever* you did to survive the assault was the right action. No matter what the circumstances, no one deserves to be victimized. *It was not your fault.* The responsibility belongs to the person who assaulted you. That person committed an act of violence, which is a criminal offense.

In this booklet we will use the term survivor to acknowledge that as a victim of sexual assault, you survived.

Sexual assault causes a great deal of confusion in our lives. Allow yourself the time and assistance you may need to heal. *Be gentle and patient with yourself.* Honor yourself by acknowledging the reality of what happened. Allow yourself to have whatever feelings may come, and use as many resources (family, friends, counselors, rape crisis programs) as you need. *You do not have to recover from this without support and assistance.*

***Find people who:***

- Believe you and believe in you.
- Can listen, listen, listen.
- Can manage whatever feelings arise in themselves and are ok with whatever feelings you share with them.
- Are willing to let you make your own decisions about next steps.

Family and friends are also encouraged to read this handbook, as the impact of sexual assault affects those close to the survivor. We hope that they want to provide the best support possible during this difficult time. The information contained in this booklet can provide important information and insights.

## **YOU ARE A SURVIVOR, AND...**

### ***You Are Not Alone***

One in four Colorado women and one in seventeen Colorado men have experienced a completed or attempted sexual assault at some point in their lifetimes.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, every day in this country, 1,871 women are sexually assaulted.<sup>2</sup>

## ***You Did Not Consent***

*Even if you didn't fight back or say "no", it is still sexual assault. Submission is not consent. If you didn't voluntarily say "Yes" then you did not consent. Nonconsensual sexual activity is sexual assault.*

## ***You May Have Known Him/Her***

In upwards of 80% of sexual assault cases the victim knows the offender. Only about 22% of all forcible rapes were committed by a stranger.<sup>3</sup> The majority of sexual assaults occur in the home of the victim, a friend, relative, or neighbor. It doesn't matter if you knew each other, were dating, or were married. Without willing consent it is a sexual assault.

## ***You Are Not Going Crazy***

Even though it may feel that way. The thoughts and feelings experienced after a sexual assault are related to the trauma of the assault. It is not uncommon to experience shock, guilt, fears, anxiety, shame, and feelings of disorganization. Common physical reactions include nightmares, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, fatigue, and many other reactions. Immediately after an assault, the physical body reacts to the flood of survival hormones released as a result of the assault. Your ability to gain enjoyment from your daily life may be impacted, even to the point of depression and thoughts of suicide. Certain fundamental beliefs have been affected such as your ability to feel safe in the world, trust other people, or have control over what happens to you. When these beliefs get tested, confusing thoughts and feelings occur. *You are reacting normally to a severely abnormal and traumatic situation.*

### ***It Wasn't Because of How You Dressed or Acted***

Sexual assault is an act of manipulation, coercion, violence, anger, power and control by the perpetrator. Sex becomes a target for the purpose of taking away power and control in the most violating and humiliating way possible. Anyone can be a victim of sexual violence. Victims of sexual assault are female and male, children and grandmothers, beautiful or plain, rich or poor. Although perpetrators frequently try to blame the victim ("She asked for it," "She led me on," etc.), *the responsibility clearly lies with the perpetrator.*

### ***You Kept Yourself Alive***

Whatever you did to stay alive was exactly the right thing to do. In a physically threatening situation survival instincts take over. Even if there was no overt physical force, rapists use coercion, pressure, threats, or weapons to control. The fact is that, above all, *you survived*. Many people submit to assault to keep from being hurt, killed or because they were afraid. "Over two-thirds of rape victims fearing injury or death, do not resist an attack and therefore may not sustain any bruises, marks or other visible injuries."<sup>4</sup>

### ***This May Have Happened Before***

If you have been sexually assaulted before, you may be having an especially difficult time coping. The effect of a new assault can compound any problems from prior experiences. Maybe you are thinking that it is something about you that invites these events, or that you deserve the assaults for some reason. No matter how many times you have been assaulted and no matter what the perpetrators may have told you, *you do not* deserve what has happened. NO ONE deserves to be the victim of an assault. Counseling can be especially helpful if you have experienced multiple sexual assaults.

People who perpetrate sexual violence are manipulative and deceptive; they exploit people's trust, good nature, and vulnerabilities. Perpetrators will try to blame their victims and avoid responsibility, but the perpetrator is the one responsible and must be held accountable.

## **SOME THINGS THAT WE THINK ARE HELPFUL FOR YOU TO KNOW:<sup>5</sup>**

*These points will be discussed in greater detail in other chapters of this handbook.*

1. Sexual assault is a crime that reduces the victim's ability to maintain power and control of a sexual situation. You can begin to reclaim your power by making your own choices about how to proceed following an assault.
2. A sexual assault counselor or victim's advocate can provide emotional support by being an objective listener and help you make informed choices by providing information about common reactions to the trauma of sexual violence, law enforcement procedures and legal issues.
3. You are not to blame. The person who assaulted you is responsible.
4. It is important to seek medical attention for possible injuries and to be screened and treated for the possibility of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy.
5. You are free to choose (if you are over 18) whether or not to make a report to police.
6. You may be eligible for Crime Victim's Compensation to help you pay for medical, counseling and other expenses if you do report to police.

7. You have the choice to pursue prosecution of the perpetrator by making a report to the police. However, law enforcement or the District Attorney's office - not the survivor - make the final decision about whether or not to prosecute.
8. It may be helpful to seek counseling to help you heal from the trauma of sexual violence. Although many survivors simply want to forget about it and move on with their lives, they sometimes find that unresolved feelings create obstacles to moving on.
9. It is never too late to talk about a past incident of sexual violence and begin healing.



## II. WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE? WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

There are many different kinds of sexual violence. Sexual violence occurs any time a person is not consenting to a sexual act. Examples range from violations of personal space and safety, such as exhibitionism or “being flashed,” voyeurism or secretly being watched, obscene phone calls, nonconsensual pornography, forced undressing, sexual harassment at work or school, and sexual mutilation to penetration or intrusion. Many people are unaware that these are considered forms of sexual violence and that they are considered criminal acts.

*Sexual Assault* is both a legal term and a general term. *Sexual violence* involves both *Sexual Assault* and other forms of *Unwanted Sexual Contact*. Understanding what sexual violence and legally criminal sexual behavior is can help survivors understand why they feel the way they do, and recognize behaviors that are against the law.

### COLORADO’S SEXUAL ASSAULT LAWS

Under Colorado law, *Sexual Assault* is an act of sexual penetration or intrusion *without a person’s consent*. Rape is a term that people commonly use to describe acts of unwanted penetration, although the term “rape” is not a legal term in Colorado. Sexual penetration or intrusion can be vaginal, oral or anal by any body part or object.<sup>6</sup> Under Colorado law, forms of sexual assault include rape and attempted rape by *anyone*, regardless of whether it’s an acquaintance, boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, stranger, or gang.

Fondling and touching without consent are also recognized as crimes in Colorado<sup>7</sup> and are called “*Unlawful Sexual Contact*.” This can involve touching of

the genitals, buttocks, anus, or breasts, whether it is under or on top of clothing.

**“Sexual Assault on a Child”** involves subjecting a person under fifteen years old to any sexual contact if the perpetrator is four or more years older than the victim (for example, a 14 year old and an 18 year old); or having sexual contact with someone under 17 years old if the perpetrator is at least ten years older than the victim (such as a 16 year old with a 26 year old).<sup>3</sup>

In addition, sexual contact with anyone under the age of 18 by a person in a position of power or trust is considered Sexual Assault on a Child. Examples would include sexual contact by a teacher, coach, religious leader, doctor, parent, stepparent, or anyone responsible for the care of a child. *These laws apply to minors even if they think they consented to the sexual contact.*

An unwanted sexual contact can be experienced as intrusive, violating and degrading. It is common to think that acts that involve penetration are the “most serious,” but often people feel violated, degraded and frightened by less invasive forms of unwanted sexual contact. Trust your own reactions and get the support that would be most helpful to you. Talking to someone about what has happened can be extremely helpful. Regardless of the extent of the activity, if it was unwanted sexual activity it is a crime and a personal violation.

### **CONSENT– WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN COLORADO?**

According to Colorado law, ‘consent means cooperation in act or attitude pursuant to an exercise of free will and with knowledge of the nature of the act’. That means that permission is given *freely and with cooperation* for the activity, and that the person giving consent *fully understands the nature of the act*. Having a current or previous relationship with the perpetrator does not

automatically constitute consent. *Giving in to an act out of fear is SUBMISSION, not consent.* The fear may have been generated by intimidation or isolation, verbal or nonverbal threats, physical violence, or a weapon.

Consent is also considered absent in situations of “*Sexual Assault on a Child*” (see above under “Colorado’s Sexual Assault Laws”.) This is an abuse of authority by a person in a position of power or trust, and is a criminal act.

**According to Colorado Law, situations implying a lack of consent include:**

- The perpetrator knows that the victim does not consent.
- The perpetrator knows that the victim is incapable of recognizing the consequences of his or her own conduct.
- The victim is physically helpless and has not consented.
- The perpetrator has in some way (through intoxicants, drugs, etc) substantially impaired the victim’s power to understand or control the situation for the purpose of causing submission.
- A person is drunk, unconscious, asleep, or otherwise unable to indicate a willingness to participate.

For complete Colorado legal definitions of sexual assault, and other unlawful sexual behavior, see Colorado Revised Statutes, available on the Colorado website, at [www.colorado.gov/government](http://www.colorado.gov/government) or **contact the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault at 303-861-7033 or toll-free 877-37-CCASA.**

Although survivors often feel that they are responsible for what occurred, it is important to know that *in the absence of voluntary consent, the responsibility belongs to the*

*perpetrator. The perpetrator ignored what you wanted or did not want and is responsible and should be held accountable for his/her actions.*

## **IS SEXUAL ASSAULT REALLY A PROBLEM IN COLORADO?**

### ***Unfortunately, sexual assault is all too common***

- In Colorado, one in four women and one in seventeen men have experienced an attempted or completed sexual assault.<sup>8</sup>
- Most sexual assaults are committed by someone the person knows.<sup>9</sup>
- On college campuses, sexual assault involves the use of alcohol or drugs 90% of the time.<sup>10</sup>
- Only 16% of rapes are reported to police.<sup>11</sup>
- 61% of all rapes occurred before victims reached the age of eighteen years old.<sup>12</sup>
- Nearly one-third of rape victims will develop stress disorders as a direct result of the assault (at sometime in their lifetime). This in turn increases their risk for serious alcohol and drug abuse problems.<sup>13</sup>
- Sexual assault can happen to anyone, at any time, in any place. People of all ages, economic classes, races, levels of education, and who live in all types of neighborhoods are victimized.

## **SITUATIONS IN WHICH SEXUAL ASSAULTS AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE OCCUR**

Sexual violence can occur in many situations and involve various every day relationships. There are many “myths” (untrue beliefs) about sexual violence and assault. An example of one of these myths is that sexual assault typically occurs at night, on a dark street, by a stranger. This example describes a sexual assault scenario that in

reality represents a minority of situations in which sexual violence occurs. The following situations are examples of differing circumstances in which sexual violence can occur, and is not all-inclusive.

### ***Acquaintance Sexual Assault***

Acquaintance sexual assault can include sexual assault by a partner, spouse, family member, date, or by anyone that is known to the victim such as a friend, doctor, teacher, neighbor, someone met at a party, etc. The shock and betrayal from being assaulted by someone known, and trusted can be especially painful. Unfortunately, *these are the most common types of sexual assault*. Remember, being forced into sexual activity by someone known is sexual assault, regardless of the nature of the relationship.

A survivor of this type of sexual assault may question his or her ability to judge and trust others. Mutual friends and family may react with disbelief and possibly rejection, which can make one feel especially alone. It is important to *seek out those who can and will provide support*, either family, or friends, or by finding a sexual assault services provider.

### ***Marital Sexual Abuse/Assault***

It is important to know that a long-term relationship or marriage license *does not* give anyone permission to demand or force sexual activity. Sexual abuse within marriage occurs when *mutual* consent for a sexual act is absent. Everyone has times when physical or sexual closeness is unwanted and, even within intimate relationships, that choice should be respected.

Sexual violence in marriage or long-term relationships often occurs along with other forms of violence and abuse. It is a way for a partner to exert control or power over the other. Domestic abuse refers to mental, physical,

emotional, financial, and sexual abuse occurring within a family or close relationship. Domestic violence is an act used to gain power and control over the partner or family member. It is a serious and often life-threatening pattern of violence.

### ***Minors and Teenagers***

In 1992, research showed that 61% of all rapes occurred before the victim was 18.<sup>14</sup> It is a sad fact that about 25% of all young people in our country are sexually assaulted by the time they are eighteen.

It is important for teens to know that *any forced sexual activity is not OK* and is against the law. If the person is an adult or much older, it may be a crime even if there is uncertainty about the issue of consent.

A teen survivor may face some special circumstances that may make it more difficult to tell someone about the assault. It is understandable that there may be fear of consequences if the assault occurred while disobeying family rules. Teenagers may fear that if they tell; their parents may try to limit activities and freedom. However parents of teen survivors should make sure that the teen is not hurt and is safe. Teenagers and children deserve to get medical attention and emotional support. Nobody should have to recover from an act of sexual violence alone, without concerned and supportive adult help.

If the sexual assault was perpetrated by a friend, neighbor, family member, or someone else trusted by the family, teens are often afraid that they will not be believed. It is especially important that teens and minors can *think of even one adult in their life who will believe them, will not blame them, and who will help them to make some decisions about what to do next.*

## ***Incest***

One of the most difficult forms of sexual assault to talk about is *incest*. Sexual contact between family members is incest. The perpetrator can be male or female, a parent, stepparent, aunt or uncle, sibling, or any other family member. Both females and males can be victims of incest. It can occur in any family.

Incest survivors often feel very alone, both at the times of the sexual activity as well as during adulthood, because of what happened. Incest survivors often also feel as if they are/were responsible for what happened. It is important to know that our society's response to childhood sexual assault has changed over the years; survivors are believed and can get help, even years after the abuse.

In many cases there are concerns that the truth would be very painful to other family members. However the need of the incest survivor to be able to get help sorting through what has happened to them is of utmost legitimacy and importance. They were not to blame for what happened; the adult perpetrating the activity is responsible for the consequences of their actions.

Survivors of all ages are to be believed and deserve help if desired. It can really help to find someone trustworthy to talk to. It is important to know that in certain cases, for example if the incest is still occurring, certain people such as teachers, school counselors, or doctors are required to report it to police or child protective services. *This is because our society recognizes that this should NEVER happen to any child and will want to provide protection.*

If there are concerns about the possibility that a report may have to be made, the survivor can try to locate someone at an agency with whom they can talk anonymously.

## ***Male survivors***

Sexual contact without consent is sexual violence, regardless of the victim's gender. Men often don't think this could happen to them, but it can and, unfortunately, does. Sexual assault is extremely difficult for all victims, male as well as female.

Because the majority of sexual assaults on men are by other men, male survivors often experience questions or confusion about their sexuality or sexual identity. Many survivors, male as well as female feel like their body has betrayed them by responding in some way to the sexual activity. It is not unusual for there to be confusion because physical responses did not match emotional reactions during the assault. This does not mean that the assault was enjoyable or that the victims are in any way responsible for what has happened.

Men often feel extremely embarrassed by what happened and may hesitate to talk to anyone or report it to law enforcement out of fear of ridicule or that they won't be believed. Men deserve to have legal and emotional support just as do women. No one has the right to control and violate another's body.

*Men may need special support. There are several ways to get help:*

- Call a crisis line/sexual assault services center anonymously, and request a male counselor if this is more comfortable.
- If going to a hospital, a male nurse or doctor can be requested (if this is more comfortable).
- Some areas may have a support group of male survivors to help with the healing process. Unfortunately this may not be available in all regions.

## ***Alcohol and Drugs***

The most commonly used “date rape drug” is alcohol. It’s cheap, legal, easy to get, and most people drink it voluntarily. As a result, it is commonly used by perpetrators of sexual assault to make their victims more vulnerable.

In large quantities, alcohol can have strong sedating effects, leaving anyone more vulnerable to assault. Even in small amounts, alcohol creates changes in our brain and nervous system functioning. These changes can impair judgment, causing people to make choices that would not be made if they were sober. Alcohol can also greatly decrease motor coordination, making it difficult for to have control over the body.

One of the prevalent “myths” (untrue beliefs) is that if someone was drinking alcohol and then was sexually assaulted, the victim is to blame for the assault. Some police, medical staff, or even loved ones may still believe this myth. *Remember, drinking alcohol does not give anyone the right to commit sexual assault.*

Drugs of all types have been used for centuries to sedate victims, and more easily commit sexual assault. There are certain drugs that are incapacitating and cause memory loss. They may be colorless, odorless, tasteless, and will dissolve quickly and easily in liquid. The effect is usually felt within 15-30 minutes after ingestion.

### ***Common “date rape” drugs include:***

- Gamma Hydroxybutyrate (GHB, Grievous Bodily Harm, Easy Lay);
- Gamma Butyrolactone (GBL, Renutrient, Blue-Nitro, Rest-Eze, Invigorate);
- 1,4 Butanediol (FX, Kava-Kava.);
- Flunitrazepam, Rohypnol (Roofies, Rope, Roach);

- Ketamine Hydrochloride (Ketamine, Special K, Ket, KitKat).

Recreational drugs (marijuana, cocaine, LSD, methamphetamines, crack, heroin, etc.) also make people more vulnerable to sexual assault. With alcohol or any drug, judgment and/or memory may be impaired, causing survivors to ask, “What happened?” *Remember that consenting to using drugs does not mean there was consent to have sex.* Legally, a person who is drunk, unconscious, asleep, or otherwise unable to indicate willingness to participate *cannot give consent* to sexual activity.<sup>15</sup>

When drugs and/or alcohol are involved in a sexual assault, additional concerns come up for survivors. Because memory loss may leave them wondering exactly what did and did not happen, they may have increased feelings of loss of control and vulnerability.

It is not unusual for a sexual assault victim to blame oneself for what happened if drugs or alcohol were used voluntarily. *Drugs and alcohol do not cause rape. The rapist made a decision to assault a person who was vulnerable.*<sup>16</sup> In fact, Colorado law considers that a perpetrator who uses drugs to help sexually assault someone has committed a more serious criminal offense.

If there is a possibility that drugs were involved, urine or blood can be tested for their presence, if the test occurs within approximately 48 hours. (Many of these drugs will leave the system within 8-48 hours.) The testing could provide important evidence towards the case. It is important to know that some drug screens may show all drugs that are in the system.

## ***Elderly and Disabled Persons***

Perpetrators of sexual assault tend to look for vulnerable people. Persons with disabilities are 1.5 to 5 times more at risk of sexual abuse and assault as are members of the general population.<sup>17</sup> More than 60,000 rapes of women older than 50 years of age are reported annually.<sup>18</sup> As with other types of sexual assault, the assailant is typically someone known to the victim, such as a family member, caretaker, neighbor, or friend. Unfortunately, these types of assault are not rare.

A senior or disabled individual has the right to be treated with respect for taking action and seeking resources. Emotional support and other kinds of assistance may be available from local agencies that advocate for persons who are elderly and/or have disabilities. It may be helpful to ask if there is a staff member experienced in working with sexual assault issues.

## ***Gang Rape***

Gang rape is when two or more people commit a sexual assault. This can be especially terrifying and often involves physical as well as sexual violence. As with any other sexual assault the intention is aggression and domination, and additionally may be an initiation ritual to “bond” the members of a group.

Survivors of gang rape are more likely to sustain physical injuries and may have heightened fears of retaliation if they report the sexual assault to the police.

## ***Ritual Sexual Abuse***

This is sexual assault or contact by any individual or group as a part of a cult or ritual activity. The violence perpetrated may be sexual, physical, and or emotional. Survivors may have been forced to have sexual contact or

to assault another victim. It is similar to gang rape in that it may have the additional purpose of building solidarity within the group, and there may be a very real fear of violent retaliation for “telling”. Again, medical and other resources can be very helpful. There are resources and people available to help who have experience and training with this type of abuse.



### **III. HEALTH AND MEDICAL CONCERNS**

You may have many health or medical concerns following a sexual assault. Although sexual assault is considered a violent crime, the degree of physical injury sustained varies. It is not unusual to sustain almost no physical injury from a sexual assault. Even if you think you don't have any obvious physical injuries it is recommended that you seek medical attention. You may have been exposed to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or be at risk for pregnancy.

If you choose to report the sexual assault to law enforcement, a trained medical professional should collect evidence for prosecuting the case. Often signs of injury such as bruising or soreness don't become evident immediately. Injuries can be important evidence for successful prosecution.

Also, the emotional affects of sexual assault should not be underestimated. *Seeking care may be your first step toward reclaiming control over your body and your life.*

#### **CHOOSING TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL**

There are a couple of things to consider when deciding whether to go to the hospital. The most important is your safety. We assume that in a medical emergency you would go directly to the hospital. Here we will describe the options to consider other than emergency medical care.

The hospital can provide two types of services, emergency medical care and collection of evidence to prosecute the case. If you do not wish to report the case to law enforcement (if you are over the age of 18) and you do not have a medical emergency, then you can go to your personal physician or other medical provider for medical attention.

If you would like to report the assault to law enforcement then it is important to get to the hospital as soon as possible after the assault. As time passes, evidence is lost. Physical evidence can be collected through a forensic medical exam within 72 hours of the assault. After this time, there still may be some evidence available but it is unlikely that law enforcement or hospital professionals will perform a forensic evidence collection exam (because too much evidence will no longer be available).

If you choose to go to the hospital **do not change your clothes or shower**. You could be destroying evidence that is important to your case.

You may be able to get both medical assistance and emotional support at the hospital. Medical assistance involves treating injuries and screening for possible sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. Also an advocate or counselor may be available for emotional support and information.

If you decide to report to law enforcement, physical evidence may be collected (**preferably within 72 hours of the assault**) through a forensic evidence collection exam. In sexual assault cases, physical evidence may include clothing, bedding, and bodily secretions such as semen and blood. Collection of forensic evidence may improve the chances of successfully convicting the assailant.

If you do not wish to report to law enforcement, there is no legal or physical reason to go through the forensic evidence exam. The forensic evidence collection process (often called a “rape kit”) for sexual assault can be a lengthy, invasive and embarrassing experience. A sexual assault victim advocate or counselor can provide information and help you sort through your feelings to assist you in making an informed decision.

The choice to have the forensic exam is yours. It may feel like the last thing you want to do immediately after a sexual assault. However if you choose (even later on) to pursue criminal justice, the forensic medical exam can provide some of the most important evidence towards obtaining a conviction of your assailant.

## **AT THE HOSPITAL**

- You may have to wait at the hospital before being seen.
- You may have the option of being anonymous (not giving your real name) in the healthcare facility. If anonymity is important to you ask about this during the process of checking in.
- You have the right to privacy. Your interview and examination should occur in a private interview area and/or examination room. If this does not seem to be happening, *ask* that you be allowed to provide information in privacy.
- You may request to be attended by a female doctor/nurse and the hospital may provide this if they can accommodate the request.
- Law enforcement officers should not be in the examination room during the exam; however before or after the exam they may interview you. They are responsible for maintaining custody of the chain-of evidence, which means that they will be given the results of the exam.
- A hospital cannot refuse to treat sexual assault victims if they decline to report to law enforcement. Some hospitals may have a policy of reporting all violent crimes occurring to their patients to law enforcement. Hospital personnel are required to report all sexual assaults on minors to either law enforcement or child protective services. Even though the hospital may be required to report, the victim can choose whether to make a report. However, in the case that you decline to

make a report, no forensic evidence collection exam will occur and you will be responsible for payment for assessment and treatment as with any other injury or medical need.

- Any direct cost associated with the collection of forensic medical evidence should be paid for by the referring or requesting law enforcement agency.<sup>19</sup> If for some reason this doesn't happen, in most cases there are funds available through Crime Victims Compensation (through your county district attorney's office); or through the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Victims Compensation may cover other medical expenses, such as tests for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, emergency contraception ("the morning after pill"), etc.
- If possible, for your comfort, have a friend or advocate with you. You don't have to go through this alone. You may want to ask if there are specially trained sexual assault victim advocates available through the hospital, the law enforcement agency, or through a local sexual assault services agency. Their role is to provide support for you. They can help explain procedures, assist you to find helpful resources, and help you to understand your feelings.
- It is helpful to bring an extra set of clothes with you to the hospital, as the ones you are wearing may be taken as evidence. Some facilities may have extra clothing (sweat suits, underwear) available.
- Healthcare personnel should be able to provide you with resources for follow-up care, for both medical and psychological needs.

## **FORENSIC EVIDENCE COLLECTION**

Some communities in Colorado have *Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs)* who are specially trained to provide comprehensive care for the victims of sexual assault. If

your community does not have a SANE program, then other healthcare personnel will conduct the exam.

### ***The Forensic Evidence Collection Exam***

This exam usually takes 2-4 hours. It is possible that what is said by you during the exam may be recorded as evidence. Alcohol and drug screens are NOT routine, and should only be done if there is concern that the assailant drugged you; or took advantage of you if you had too much alcohol; and/or your medical condition or history warrants a toxicology screen for the purpose of providing optimal care. You have the right to decline any parts or steps of the exam.

### ***The person conducting the exam will:***

- 1) Obtain a history of: the assault, including dates, time and location; events leading up to and after the assault; use of force or threats; which orifices were assaulted (mouth, anus, and/or vagina), and with what (penis, finger, object); whether or not a condom was used; whether and where the assailant may have ejaculated; physical injuries or pain; and what you did after the assault (changed clothes, brushed teeth, etc.). These questions may be uncomfortable and difficult; however it is important to tell the examiner as much detail as you can remember.
- 2) Obtain medical and sexual history, which may include: medications; contraceptive use; allergies; and past medical history; date of last menstrual period (to evaluate possibility of pregnancy) and date of last voluntary sexual intercourse (necessary for the discrimination of DNA evidence).
- 3) Conduct a pelvic examination. A specialized piece of equipment called a colposcope may be utilized to help see internal injuries – important as evidence. Photographs of external and internal

injuries maybe taken – also important as evidence. Many survivors experience discomfort with this part of the examination, however it is important for assessing and treating injuries and for the collection of evidence.

- 4) Collect physical evidence (pubic hair samples; cleaning under nails, clothing; swabbing assaulted areas, etc.)

**Again, it is important that you not change your clothes or shower following the sexual assault.** Those actions could destroy evidence that is important to your case.

Following the forensic evidence collection the doctor or nurse should help you to evaluate the potential for contracting a sexually transmitted disease and explain courses of action available for dealing with this risk. You may be offered medication to prevent sexually transmitted disease and pregnancy. A blood test for pregnancy may be done prior to the administration of any medication.

You should be instructed to follow up in 10-14 days for a re-check exam with your primary healthcare provider, Planned Parenthood, or the local Health Department for STD screening and evaluation for Hepatitis and HIV exposure. *It is very important to have the follow-up tests even if you have no symptoms.* Baseline HIV testing and counseling regarding medication to prevent HIV can be obtained at the local Health Department.

If additional bruises or body surface injuries appear in the days following the exam, let the police know as these may provide additional evidence. Do receive additional medical treatment as necessary. Be sure to save receipts for follow-up treatment and medications as Victims Compensation may cover them.



## **IV. LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE**

It is important to know that the course of action initiated through reporting an assault to Law Enforcement and the Criminal Justice systems differs from filing a lawsuit for a civil court case. The Criminal Justice system's goal (initiated by the report to Law Enforcement) is to hold people accountable for their criminal activity and to prescribe punishment according to the law.

A civil court lawsuit is for the purpose of recovering monetary compensation for damages done. You may wish to explore either or both courses of action. More information about civil court lawsuits will follow in the next chapter.

### **THE DECISION TO REPORT**

Reporting a sexual assault to law enforcement is a very personal decision. Some people choose not to report because of personal, cultural or other reasons. Reporting will require that you remember and tell the details of the assault, which can be emotionally draining.

People choose to report for many reasons including: to regain some sense of control by taking some legal action, to attempt to hold the perpetrator accountable for the assault, and/or help to protect others by getting a sexual offender off the streets. Each person's experience is unique and the decision regarding which course of action to take is up to the individual. There is no one right way to go.

If you choose not to report, please still do take care of yourself by obtaining any necessary medical attention and counseling.

If you decide to report, remember, the sooner the assault is reported the better; it increases the chances of the police recovering physical evidence.

Physical evidence can usually be recovered up to 72 hours after the assault. If a report is made within 72 hours of the assault, a forensic evidence collection exam (“rape kit”) will be done at the hospital to try to collect physical evidence (see previous section, Health and Medical Concerns). If you choose to report you are eligible for Victims Compensation, which can help with medical bills, counseling and other crime-related expenses.

Anyone over the age of 18 can decide whether or not to report a sexual assault to the police. Sexual assaults that involve minors will have to be reported by people called “mandatory reporters”. Mandatory reporters include hotline advocates, doctors, teachers, counselors and other professionals who work with youth. They are people who are obligated by law to report any form of abuse on children including sexual assault and sexual abuse. These people must report if a young person has been sexually abused or assaulted in order to provide protection to the minor. These reporting laws are important, they demonstrate that the safety and well being of young people to be of utmost importance.

### **STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS (TIME LIMITS FOR REPORTING)**

- Sexual assault must be reported to law enforcement within 10 years of the time of the assault to be considered for criminal proceedings. There are a few exceptions to this, please consult CCASA, a lawyer, or the statutes for more information.
- The statute of limitations for civil proceedings is 10 years after the first memory of the last incident or after realizing that the sexual assault or abuse resulted in a condition or consequence that is a problem for the

victim. (This statute should be interpreted by a lawyer on a case by case basis.)

***Remember, you don't have to go through any of these steps alone.***

Most communities have sexual assault/abuse service providers or victim-witness programs connected with law enforcement agencies that will provide a Victim Advocate for you.

You may have many other concerns and questions about what to expect and your rights during the law enforcement investigation and the criminal justice process. Don't be afraid to ask questions of the investigator, prosecutor, or Victim's Advocate (see below.)

- Victim's Advocates are trained and have experience with the criminal justice system; they can support and guide you through the process.
- It is important for you to know the extent of your right of confidentiality. There are different types of advocates and confidentiality laws protect some, but not all. Confidentiality means that what you tell someone can be kept private. Law Enforcement personnel, including Victim's Advocates cannot hold back information that you share with them that is relevant to the case even if you wish it to remain confidential.
- There are sexual assault/abuse community programs, which have specially trained victim's advocates who do have the ability to hold your disclosures about the assault in confidence. (Please see the list of Colorado agencies in the back of this booklet.)
- Many licensed mental health providers and counselors also have the ability to maintain your privacy, except in the case of sexual assault or abuse against a child or minor.

If you are under 18, and have been or currently are the victim of sexual violence or abuse, you should not have to continue to live in fear of the next incident or emotional pain from previous incidents. There are people who may be able to help find a way to make the abuse stop.

Although a report legally may need to be made, you can still get emotional support for yourself even if you choose to not speak with Law Enforcement. There may be phone hotlines available so that you can talk about your situation anonymously first and make informed choices. You may wish to call a hotline first (call your local sexual assault services center (see the list in back of this booklet), mental health center or CCASA to get hotline numbers), and ask, without giving your name, if your confidentiality can be maintained, regardless of your age.

The most important thing is your physical and emotional well-being. Find someone you can trust to talk with.

## **MAKING A REPORT TO THE POLICE**

The following is an explanation of the process of reporting a sexual assault to the police and some common police procedures that may be helpful for you to understand.

When you call the police to report a sexual assault, an officer or detective will respond to the location of your call. The responding officer will ask for some basic information regarding the sexual assault and then a decision will be made regarding going to the hospital for a forensic evidence collection examination.

If you have injuries requiring medical attention, get to a hospital for treatment. (See section on medical issues for more information on forensics evidence collection and health concerns.)

If you do not require immediate medical attention, the officer will ask you several detailed questions about the sexual assault, such as location, what happened, a description of the person that committed the assault, etc. The officer will ask you these questions while the details are fresh in your mind.

It can be helpful to write down whatever you remember as soon as possible after the assault and then to return back to these notes and add additional information as it comes back to you over the following days. It is not unusual for some survivors to remember bits and pieces initially and with the passage of time to remember additional information.

Some of the questions the police will ask will be very personal, but a detailed recount of the assault is very important to the investigation. You may be asked to go step-by-step through everything that happened. It is important to give as much detail as possible, even if it seems unimportant or embarrassing. They may also ask you to use very precise language, including proper names for body parts. This is often uncomfortable because we are not used to saying these words, especially to someone we don't know very well. However, this can be important information.

If you were drinking or taking drugs prior to the assault, it is important to inform law enforcement. The police are not there to approve or disapprove of you, but it is very important that the officer understand exactly what happened so that they know how to conduct the investigation. In Colorado, having sex with a person who is incapacitated by alcohol or drugs is a crime.

## **EVIDENCE COLLECTION**

You may be asked by the officer and/or a detective to help locate the scene of the crime. Then the crime scene may be sealed off and searched for evidence.

A valuable source of evidence is your body and clothing. If at all possible, do not wash, bath, brush your teeth or change clothes before you contact the police or go to the hospital. The police will need to take the clothing you wore before, during and/or after the sexual assault as it may contain evidence such as fibers, hairs, or seminal fluid critical to the investigation. This evidence can be used to connect the suspect to the crime.

The police will keep your clothing for the duration of the investigation. You can re-claim your property after the court case is complete if you wish, but it may be damaged (holes cut in it to remove an important piece containing evidence, etc). If you choose to have your property returned, know that you may want to prepare for its return. Often survivors have mixed feelings when they receive their personal items. It can re-trigger memories of the assault. Sometimes your property is returned by mail, if you would like to be notified about this or would not like your property returned, talk to a victim advocate or the law enforcement officer in charge of the case to find out how to do this.

In addition to collecting evidence from your body and clothing the police may take fingerprints (using a black powder that can be messy) and photographs.

### ***The follow-up investigation***

A detective will be assigned to investigate your case. Sometimes it is necessary for the detective to re-interview you in detail about the sexual assault. Remember that the

more details you are able to provide, the more information the detective will be able to include in the investigation.

The detective may want to photograph any visible injuries. If you do not know the suspect's name, you may be asked to look at several photographs of possible suspects, in either a "mug-shot" book or a "photo line-up". A police artist may assist you in doing a composite drawing of an unknown suspect.

At any time, you may contact the detective with questions regarding the investigation or with any additional information you remember. Again, additional bits of information may come with time.

## **THE ARREST**

It is impossible to make any general statements about the length of time it takes to make an arrest. It differs with each case. An arrest may not ever be made because the police do not identify or find a suspect; or there may not be enough evidence to provide "probable cause" and that the suspect committed the crime. This does not mean that the police do not believe you, just that there is insufficient evidence to make an arrest.

If there is sufficient evidence and the suspect can be located, the suspect will be arrested and taken to jail. A bail amount will be set and the suspect may be able to post bail (sometimes called posting bond) and get out of jail. The bond is usually a large sum of money that is held to make sure the suspect shows up at trial.

You have the right to contact the jail by phone or in writing and ask to be notified if the suspect is released. *Usually, a condition of bail is that the suspect must not have any contact with the victim. If the suspect attempts to contact you, call the police immediately.*

If an arrest is made, then you will become involved with another part of the legal process, the court system and the Office of the District Attorney.

**YOUR RIGHTS AS A CRIME VICTIM:<sup>20</sup>**

- To be treated with fairness, respect and dignity and to have a swift case resolution.
- To be informed of and be present at all critical stages of the criminal justice process.
- To be present and heard in court for any bond reduction, amendment of charges, disposition, sentencing, or continuances.
- To have a safe waiting area near the courtroom.
- To confer with the District Attorney's Office before the case is resolved or goes to trial and to be informed of the outcome.
- To prepare a Victim Impact Statement and to be heard at sentencing.
- To have restitution ordered.
- To pursue a civil judgment against anyone who has committed a crime against you.
- To be informed of post conviction release or modification hearings.
- To get your property back quickly when it is no longer needed for prosecution.
- To apply for Victim Compensation for crime-related losses such as therapy and medical expenses.

As the victim of a crime, you may be eligible for *Crime Victim's Compensation*, which is a fund of money collected as fines from people who have committed crimes. These funds are then available to assist victims of violent crimes with losses sustained as a result of the

crime. Victim's Compensation may pay for counseling costs, medical expenses, property damage and lost wages as a result of the crime. Contact your local Office of the District Attorney for more information and an application. A Victim Advocate can assist you in this process.



## **V. THE COURT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

### **OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

Sexual Assault, like other crimes, is viewed legally as a *crime against the State* rather than against the person. It is the responsibility of the Office of the District Attorney to file the charges against the suspect. For this reason, you do not have to hire an attorney as you would in a civil case.

If charges are filed in your sexual assault case, the State provides someone called a prosecutor (a District Attorney or Deputy/Assistant). As a victim you are viewed as a victim/witness to a crime committed against the State. The Office of the District Attorney makes the decision to prosecute based on the strength of the evidence and witnesses. If they decide they are not taking your case to court, it is your right to know that and to know the reason for this decision.

The case will be assigned to a specific courtroom and judge, which should remain the same throughout the court process. You will be notified of the name of prosecutor assigned to your case and should meet with the prosecutor before you testify in court.

When your sexual assault is reported, an advocate from the District Attorney's Victim/Witness Office should be assigned to your case. The advocate's role is to explain the legal process, and provide assistance to you. He/she can answer your questions, give information, assure that your input is considered in the case, and act as your main point of contact with the prosecuting attorney.<sup>21</sup>

## **THE DEFENSE**

The Defense Attorney represents the “defendant” (court term for the perpetrator) in court. The Defense Attorney may want to talk with you before you testify in court. It is your decision whether or not you speak with the Defense Attorney. It is strongly recommended that you discuss any contact with the Defense Attorney with the prosecutor prior to the contact. If you decide to speak with the Defense Attorney, you may notify the prosecutor and request that they be present during the interview.

## **THE COURT**

Appearing in a court of law can seem like being in a foreign land, as there are specific rules, language, and protocols. In addition to the unfamiliarity with courtrooms and court procedures, having to publicly discuss details of a sexual assault may be very difficult.

The advocate from the District Attorney’s Victim/Witness Office can be especially valuable in helping you to successfully negotiate your way through the court system. Tell him or her your needs and ask any questions you have about procedures and the process.

The criminal justice process may seem to be counter to your personal and emotional needs following a sexual trauma. The scheduling of the hearings will be out of your control. There may be last minute postponements causing you to repeatedly “prepare” (emotionally as well as mentally) for a court appearance. You may have to talk about the assault repeatedly. You may have to see the perpetrator in the court room and you won’t be able to control the verdict.

The stress involved with pursuing your sexual assault case through this system may be considerable, and that is why having supportive people who care about you with you at

this time can be so important. Some survivors find that the emotional healing doesn't seem to begin until after this process is over.

## **COURT HEARINGS**

*Advisement:* Once the case moves to the District Attorney's Office, the suspect will be referred to as "the defendant". The defendant is advised of the charges on which he/she was arrested and the possible penalties for the crime. If the defendant is still in jail, the judge may do this through closed-circuit television.

*Preliminary Hearing:* This hearing is a "probable cause" hearing, in which the judge hears testimony and determines if there is enough evidence to take the case to trial. The defendant has a right to this hearing but may waive his/her right to the hearing and just have the case set for trial. If the judge determines that there is enough evidence to take the case, then the case is "bound over" for trial. [The judge should order the defendant to have an HIV test with the results released to you.]

This is the first time you may be subpoenaed to appear in court to testify. If you receive a subpoena (notice to appear), call the prosecutor to arrange a meeting or phone conversation prior to your testimony.

*Arraignment:* The defendant will enter a plea of guilty or not guilty before the judge. This is done after the case is "bound over" for trial at the preliminary hearing.

*Pre Trial Motions Hearing:* This is a hearing where the prosecution and defense attorney present arguments to the judge as to what evidence or information will be used at the trial. You may or may not be asked to testify at this hearing.

*Plea Negotiations:* Many cases are settled without having to go to trial by negotiations between the prosecutor and the defense attorney. A plea bargain is when the defendant pleads guilty to the crime or a lesser crime for a reduction in the sentence. The prosecutor will discuss plea negotiations with you, and you should express your feelings about it; however it is up to the prosecutor to decide whether to take the terms of the plea bargain to the judge. If a plea bargain is accepted, there will be no trial. It is not unusual for survivors to have mixed feelings about a plea agreement. You may feel relief at not having to testify and at having a quicker resolution of the case; and you may also feel disappointment with a lesser charge.

*Trial:* The District Attorney's office prosecutes a case by presenting witnesses and evidence to the jury and must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant committed the crime. The defense attorney will represent the defendant at trial. The jury makes the final decision (verdict) as to whether the state has proven the case beyond a reasonable doubt. If proven, the verdict will be guilty. If not proven, the verdict will be not guilty. *A not guilty verdict does not mean that you were not believed, but rather that the state failed to meet its burden of proof.*

*Continuances:* Sometimes a hearing or the trial is "continued". This means that the hearing or trial will be set for a later date and you will be notified of the new date.

*Sentencing:* If the defendant is found guilty at the trial or pleads guilty in a plea bargain, the judge will impose the sentence. The Probation Office investigates the defendant's background and makes a sentencing recommendation to the judge. You have the right to speak at sentencing or write a letter to inform the judge of the impact of the assault on you and your feelings regarding the sentence. These "Victim Impact Statements" can be important and useful, to both the court and also as a part of your healing and recovery.

## CIVIL LAWSUIT

In addition to criminal prosecution, you can hire a private attorney and sue the assailant for personal injury in civil court. If you win this lawsuit, the assailant will be ordered to pay money for damages caused, including medical expenses, loss of income and pain and suffering. Punitive damages may also be ordered, to punish the offender. If the offender is found guilty in criminal court, you are more likely to win the civil court case.

You may feel much more in control over a civil lawsuit. The rules and procedures are different than in criminal court. However, this type of action needs to be considered realistically. If your assailant owns little of value and has no income, a civil suit could result in a judgment that is impossible to collect. Most lawyers will not even consider taking a case if collecting monetary compensation is not realistic (that is, the defendant has no money). For additional information a consultation with an attorney is recommended.<sup>22</sup>



## VI. HEALING AND RECOVERY

“I won’t be a victim forever. I will always remember; but ultimately, I’ll move on...soothed by the fact that my soul is strong and my spirit unbreakable.”

### **REAL HEALING IS POSSIBLE...IT IS A PROCESS**

In the best of worlds, at the best of times, there would be no violence. Unfortunately, sexual violence occurs all too often in our world, and it can happen to anyone.

If you have been a victim of sexual violence and/or abuse either recently or in the past, you have probably been left with many confusing thoughts or feelings about what happened. These thoughts and emotions are a normal reaction to a physically and/or psychologically traumatic event. There are many responses that we each may have. As we are all different and unique individuals, so we all will heal and recover in our own, unique way.

It is important to know that uncomfortable and even painful thoughts and feelings that you may have experienced or are experiencing are a part of the healing process. One of the kindest and most helpful things that you can do for yourself is to find a supportive person or people with whom you can just be yourself. It can really help to talk about the thoughts and feelings in an atmosphere of compassionate acceptance and support.

Asking for help is not weakness, it is actually strength; and help is available for you somewhere in your world. Seek it out.

## THE HEALING PROCESS

Survivors progress through stages of healing in different ways, which makes recovery unique for each individual. However, there are some reactions to trauma, and sexual assault in particular, that are common and normal. We hope that this chapter can help you to better understand what you may be experiencing.

In the initial aftermath feelings may include confusion, anger, fear, guilt, shame, embarrassment, depression, loss of control, numbness or shock. You may have difficulty concentrating. Your thoughts may race. You may find yourself reviewing and re-living what occurred, or asking unending questions such as “why me?” Sleep disturbances, nightmares, and flashbacks of the assault are also common.

Physical symptoms can include soreness, muscle tension, headaches, fatigue, and gynecological problems. It may seem like your whole life has been disrupted and is focused on the assault, especially if you are interacting with law enforcement during the initial stages of the investigation. Although these are normal reactions to trauma, they can be very distressing. Be gentle and patient with yourself, and do whatever you need to at this time to reclaim your life and feel safer.

Over days or weeks, you may need to appear as if everything is fine. You may not want to talk about what happened and want to “just forget” that it happened. This can serve a useful purpose for a while. It can be a coping mechanism, allowing you to function in your life. Unfortunately, the reality is that we don’t usually really “forget”. The discomfort may appear to be gone, but can re-emerge in unusual ways.

Alternatively, you may feel preoccupied with thoughts about the assault. Either or both extremes, feeling

overwhelmed or not feeling anything at all are not uncommon following a traumatic event. Again, taking small steps to return to “normal” life and focusing on self-care will promote recovery.

Other problems may appear that seem to be unrelated to the assault such as alcohol/drug problems, relationship problems, or depression. Disruption of normal sleeping patterns and nightmares are common. Physical concerns can develop such as digestive problems, headaches, and/or fatigue.

You may notice that you experience unusual thoughts, feelings and/or behaviors; and that you may not be acting “like yourself”. Some of these experiences may include:

- Increased alcohol and/or drug use;
- Keeping to yourself, isolating from friends and loved ones;
- Increased fears (of leaving your home or being at home alone, of people, or of certain places);
- Avoiding work or over-working;
- Increased irritability;
- Engaging in risky behaviors;
- Suicidal thoughts;
- Change in eating habits (not eating or over-eating);
- Changes in sleep habits (unable to sleep or sleeping too much);
- Having nightmares and/or flashbacks.

All of these reactions can be responses to trauma. It can be helpful to consciously recognize that you are reacting to an abnormal and serious event (an assault). Notice when you are not acting “like yourself” and then try to remind yourself that it may be related to what happened.

Remember, you can *seek out support and resources, which can assist you to take constructive and self-affirming action.*

### ***Have Patience with Yourself***

It can take weeks, months and even years to recover and emotionally integrate what has happened. There is no one right time-line. Eventually, as you move through the process of healing, the assault will change from being the central focus in your life to being something painful that occurred in the past.

There may be times when thoughts and feelings related to the assault return. These can be “triggered” by such events as seeing a TV show about sexual assault, seeing a person who reminds you of the perpetrator, or being near the assault location. You may have thought you were “over it” only to be faced with the challenges of re-experiencing some of the effects of the trauma.

Remember to *be kind and gentle with yourself.* Think about how you would like your best friend to be there for you at this time and then *try to become your own best friend.* Seek out helping and caring resources. It may be difficult, but possible.

### ***Will I Ever Get Over This? Why Can't I Just Forget?***

Remember, recovery from sexual assault or violence is a process that is different for every individual, and there are no hard and fast time-lines or schedules for recovery.

It is common to simply want to forget the assault and push it behind you. At times you may need to do this in order to get through your daily life. *However, trying to “push it all away” and acting like “nothing happened” is a lot to expect from yourself. You have been through an experience that can shatter basic assumptions that we all take for granted,*

*including assumptions about trust, safety, and our ability to control our worlds.*

It may be helpful to know that you don't have to face it all at once. You can take a middle road, allowing yourself to deal with the thoughts and feelings about what happened in small pieces, at a pace that you control.

A counselor who has special training and experience working with sexual trauma can be extremely helpful. Give yourself a break, you don't have to do this alone. Talking with a supportive person(s) may help you to understand and cope with the feelings and thoughts you are having. Some survivors find it helpful to share with others who have been through a similar experience. Check the back of this booklet for sexual assault services agencies that are in your area. **Or call the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault (303) 861-7033, toll-free (877) 37-CCASA** for help locating resources.

Be very gentle with yourself, try not to expect too much too fast. You may not feel completely like yourself as quickly as you would like, and may have periods of emotional pain, but hopefully these periods will become shorter and less frequent with the passage of time. *Believe that you CAN heal.*

***Feelings/Issues commonly experienced:***

*Fear(s):* Fear that the perpetrator may return, fear for your personal safety, and fear of being alone or of being with strangers. Fears can come and go and also may vary in intensity. Typically these will lessen with time.

*Depression:* Depression is more than “sadness” or a “down” mood. Signs of depression can include sadness and despair; changes in sleep habits (either too much or not enough), changes in appetite (increase or decrease), inability to concentrate, general decrease in energy levels,

lack of motivation, and social withdrawal. Sometimes suicidal feelings accompany depression. If these should occur *please seek help*. Depression during the weeks and months following sexual trauma can come and go. An experienced counselor can help you to deal with depression.

*Anxiety:* Anxiety is a very common reaction to trauma. Increased heart rate (often experienced as sensations of the heart “pounding”), difficulty breathing, extreme alertness, racing thoughts, jumpiness, shakiness, and panic are all symptoms of anxiety. The symptoms of anxiety are extremely uncomfortable and even may cause you to feel as if you are “going crazy”. If you are experiencing these reactions, you are not going crazy; you are experiencing an extreme stress reaction to a very stressful event.

A balanced routine of rest, activity, meals, and exercise can go a long way towards enhancing your “stresshardiness”. Working with your breathing (learning how to breath deeply and slowly), and being aware of your thoughts are also useful coping skills for anxious moments. It can be helpful to create an “*Emergency Kit*” to use during anxious or panic-filled times.

Things to include in your “Emergency Kit”:

- List of phone numbers of helpful people to call when you are feeling anxious.
- List of healthy activities that soothe and calm you, e.g. music, a bath, a walk.
- Sayings, songs, poems, and prayers that feel strengthening and soothing.
- Pictures of people you love and who love you and places that are relaxing.
- Instructions for deep breathing.

Practices such as deep relaxation, meditation and Yoga are proven methods for reducing anxiety.

*Flashbacks, Nightmares and Intrusive Memories:* A possible reaction to trauma is to experience intense memories or even to “re-live” what happened. This reaction is very related to how our bodies and minds physically process traumatic events.

How we store and remember traumatic information differs from storage and memory of events that are not traumatic. These reactions can be a predictable response to the intensity of the event, and are often “triggered” by an event that reminds you of the trauma.

Working intentionally and in a controlled way (small pieces at a time) with the thoughts and feelings related to the violence is one of the best ways of lessening the occurrence of these reactions. Many of the methods for coping with anxiety are also effective for dealing with flashbacks and intrusive memories. A counselor trained in the dynamics of trauma can be especially helpful.

*Guilt and Self-Blame:* You may struggle with thinking that if you had done something differently that this wouldn't have happened; or you may experience a loss of trust in your own judgment. Know that *even if you did have a lapse in judgment, that you still did not deserve to be victimized.*

Sexual violence is a very harsh penalty to pay for a moment of poor judgment. People who perpetrate sexual violence tend to be very manipulative and controlling, doing or saying whatever they think will help them to achieve their “conquest”. They will try to place responsibility on their victims by insisting that the act was consensual or that the victim was in some way to blame for what happened.

Work with regaining your sense of self-trust by learning about the dynamics of sexual violence. It can also be helpful to do some reading about sexual assault and recovery. We have included a reading list at the end of this handbook.

*Anger:* It is natural to feel anger when our ability to control what happens to us is removed. You may feel angry because of the unnecessary life disruption caused by the assault. You may feel anger not only towards the perpetrator, but also towards others and yourself for “letting it happen”. You may feel angry with God that this was allowed to happen to you.

*Know that you have a right to your anger but that anger can be destructive if you use it unskillfully or direct it towards yourself.* Try to be clear about who is responsible for the violence (the perpetrator), and if necessary seek help to gain this clarity. The perpetrator of violence and/or abuse is always responsible for his or her actions.

Try to find constructive outlets for the anger. Physical activity, sharing feelings with supportive others, journaling or writing, can all be helpful. If you have a spiritual or religious connection, it can help to talk with a spiritual leader who is familiar with victimization issues. Find what will work for you to express and resolve your anger in a healthy way.

*Trust:* You may feel that your ability to trust people and the world have been taken from you. You may also wonder if you can trust yourself and your ability to judge others or assess danger. You may find yourself reacting to others with increased caution and guardedness. The re-building of trust in yourself and in others will require time. You may need to closely evaluate your thoughts about trust and trustworthiness. It is also important to know that, while 20-20 hindsight is always more accurate, no one has perfect judgment about how others will behave in the future.<sup>23</sup>

*Powerlessness:* You may feel as though you have lost the ability to control anything in your life. You may feel victimized by the assault, by the reactions of others, and even by “the system” (medical, law enforcement, etc.). It is not uncommon (although extremely uncomfortable) to feel out of control and incompetent.

The fact that you experienced an incident in which you had your power and ability to control taken from you in a violating and humiliating way can *shatter the basic assumption of being in control* held by most of us most of the time. Again, you may need to become very aware of your thoughts and your beliefs.

*Safety:* You may wonder if you will ever feel safe again. Heightened awareness and fears of danger are fairly common after an assault. Allow yourself to think of options for helping yourself to feel safer such as installing new locks for your home, having a friend stay with you for awhile, installing motion detector lights, taking a self-defense course, and/or installing caller ID. Let yourself know that the ability to feel safe again can return, in its own time, by taking small steps.

*Sexual Intimacy:* It may take awhile for your normal levels of sexual desire and response to return. You may wonder if you will ever desire and enjoy sexual intimacy again. You may have fears about what your partner thinks about you or if he or she still finds you desirable.

You may avoid sex out of fear of being “triggered” and having a flashback of the attack. Or you may use sex as a means of coping. These and other reactions are common concerns among sexual violence survivors. Allow yourself to find your own pace for rediscovering the joys of physical intimacy. Clearly communicate your concerns and needs about sexual contact or touching with your partner. It will be helpful if your partner will follow your cues regarding

physically intimacy for a while. A counselor experienced in sexual trauma recovery for couples may be helpful.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING HEALING IN THE AFTERMATH OF A SEXUAL ASSAULT**

**Let go of Self-Blame.** Remember that sexual violence is about aggression and control, it is usually not an act of passion or intimacy. Often people wonder “why me?” and blame themselves for the assault. These feelings often arise from a common, mistaken belief that sexual violence happens to individuals who “ask for it” in some way.

The truth is that *anyone can be a victim of sexual violence*. The perpetrator is responsible for the assault. Even if you feel you used poor judgment, it is critical to understand that the punishment for poor judgment should never be violence. *NO ONE DESERVES TO BE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED.*

*Expect that you may be bothered by uncomfortable thoughts and emotions.* Remember, these thoughts and emotions are normal reactions to a physically and/or psychologically traumatic event. Remind yourself that posttrauma effects are normal as the body, mind, and spirit recover from what has happened. Give yourself time and space to work with these thoughts and feelings. With healthy coping skills, these will lessen and fade away.

**Work with stress levels.** Dealing with the emotions and also the legal process following an assault can be stressful and exhausting. Promote your own natural healing abilities by taking especially good care of yourself: get enough rest, eat nourishing food, and engage in healthful stress-reducing activities. Self-care is extremely important now.

**Spend time with loved ones and others who care about you.** Be with people who love you and want to support

you in healthy ways. Seek out comfortable friends, those with whom you can safely “be yourself”, even if “yourself” feels awful. Stay connected with people who care about you. Resist isolating yourself.

**Avoid the overuse of alcohol or other mind-altering substances to numb post-trauma effects.** It really won't make the pain go away for long, and may produce more problems than solutions. Alcohol and drugs can actually decrease the quality of your sleep. Good quality sleep (which is different than “passing out” from alcohol or drugs) promotes healing. Our bodies and minds have an amazing natural ability to heal. We promote this natural resiliency by healthful self-care. Again, try to accept that you will probably be experiencing some uncomfortable thoughts and feelings for a while.

It is OK to ask for help. Talking with supportive others such as friends, family, victims' advocates and counseling professionals will promote recovery. Find people who are concerned, trustworthy, understanding, and encouraging. It can be especially helpful to talk with others who have been in similar situations. Agencies and counselors may offer special groups for survivors. Talking about feelings is never easy, but it can be a key to healing, no matter how long ago the violence occurred. Many survivors find that they feel better if they have the opportunity to freely and confidentially discuss any problems or emotions they are experiencing. Seek medical assistance if physical symptoms persist.

Your family and friends may struggle with similar feelings as you. They may mistakenly blame you or themselves for the assault. They may believe not talking about it will make the feelings go away.

If the person with whom you choose to talk is not supportive, seek out someone else. If the unsupportive

person is a spouse/partner, family member, or close friend, education may be helpful. Sharing literature about sexual assault or inviting family members to accompany you to a counseling session may help. Invite them to read the next chapter, “For Family and Friends”.

*It is often the case that survivors don't seek help for many years after the violence, for lots of valid reasons. It is never too late to heal from a sexual assault. Individuals who seek help even many years later can experience significant relief from depression, anxiety, and fears that can persist for years following unresolved sexual assault.*



## **VII. FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

Sexual assault can have a significant impact on those who are in any type of close relationship with a survivor, producing confusion and many emotions for significant others. It is painful to think about someone we love being harmed in this way.

If someone you love has been the victim of sexual violence, there are a number of things you can do to help with the healing process. Although you may naturally tend to focus on the survivor, it is also important that you deal with your own thoughts and feelings about sexual violence so that you can be most supportive. You may experience intense reactions due to your caring for the survivor. Just as the survivor's greatest task is self-care at this time, you will also need to find ways to take care of yourself.

To be truly supportive to the survivor, you will need to respond to the feelings that the assault raises for you. It is important to be willing to face your own fears and prejudices about sexual violence and to have accurate information. Our culture holds a lot of myths about sexual assault that can greatly impede the healing and recovery of both the survivor and their loved ones. Reading other parts of this booklet may help.

### **HOW TO BE HELPFUL**

Sometimes people believe that the best way to deal with a crisis is to deny it. You may find yourself saying, "don't worry/don't cry/don't think about it." Such reactions can make the survivor feel unheard, and denial may not a helpful response for many reasons. Sexual violence is significantly stressful; to imply that it isn't or shouldn't be is disrespectful and discounting to the survivor. And, this

attitude can create more problems than it resolves. Allow your loved one to have their emotional reactions. Sometimes the most supportive thing you can do is to simply *LISTEN*. You do not have to (and probably cannot) “fix it”. This can be difficult as it is never easy to witness the pain of a loved one. Yet often being a supportive witness to that pain can help empower the survivor because you demonstrate that regardless of what happened you still accept and love them even with their reactions. If you can bear it, i.e. hearing about what happened and being with them and their reactions, maybe they can also.

Do recognize your own limitations, and if it is too much for you, seek help from someone trained in counseling survivors of sexual violence. This is not a failure on your part.

*If the survivor becomes actively suicidal or physically selfdestructive, seek professional help immediately to keep them safe.*

## **WE ALL REACT DIFFERENTLY**

Men and women often react differently to the assault of a loved one. Husbands, fathers, brothers, boyfriends may react initially with anger and a desire for revenge. They may blame themselves, out of the desire to have been a “better protector”, and to defend against their own feelings of helplessness. Acting on these reactions may not be helpful to the survivor. The survivor needs you to be safe, reasonable, and supportive, in order to assist them to take the steps necessary to heal and recover.

Female friends and family members may have their own strong reactions of fear and vulnerability to hearing about the violence and may consciously or unconsciously send the survivor the message to “not talk about it”. It is

important to be aware of your own reactions. It is also important that the survivor, as much as possible, has the power to make his or her own decisions in the aftermath of the assault.

The survivor may react towards you in confusing ways. They may seem very “unlike” themselves for awhile. Know that the individual that you love has been deeply affected by this experience, and it will take a while for them to sort through their thoughts and emotions.

Being the victim of sexual violence can lead us to have many questions about our ability to trust others and ourselves. This struggle with being able to trust can impact many of our relationships. Reading the other sections of this booklet, although directed to the survivor, may help you to better understand the trauma and aftermath of sexual victimization; and be more helpful to your loved one.

***Someone who has been sexually assaulted has experienced the ultimate loss of power.***

Helping your loved one to regain a sense of control over their lives can be very important. It is not unusual for survivors to struggle with making even small decisions after an assault. Give your ideas but allow them to make their own decisions even if they struggle. It is an important step towards healing from violence. It also is important that the survivor believe that you trust him or her to make his or her own decisions.

It is especially important that the survivor make her or his own decision around whether or not to report the assault to law enforcement. You can provide your thoughts about this and then let her or him choose the path. Going through the law enforcement investigation and the Criminal Justice system can take a long time, be very stressful, and ultimately may not result in a conviction.

The system is not perfect. The survivor must be the one to decide what is right for him or her.

***No matter what, it wasn't their fault.***

Sexual assaults can occur under circumstances where the survivor may have been involved in activities or behaviors that others may question or even disapprove of (use of alcohol or drugs, going to unknown places, not locking the doors, fighting back, not fighting back, etc.). Please remember that a decision to participate in any of these behaviors is never the “cause” of a sexual assault. *Violent, abusive behavior is always the responsibility of the perpetrator.*

Poor judgment or risky behavior does not warrant becoming a victim of violence, or give someone else the right to rape. Remember that breaking rules and testing boundaries are common behaviors, especially for teenagers. Often, trying to place the “cause” of the assault on something the victim did or didn't do is our attempt to maintain the illusion that we can be in total control over our life. We like to believe that as long as we never make a poor judgment, we will always be safe.

Certainly, trying to be aware and careful goes a long way towards safety, but sexual violence is never an appropriate consequence for making a mistake. The perpetrator chose to commit an act of great physical and psychological harm towards another human being in the most violating and degrading way possible. That is the responsibility of the perpetrator, and they need to be held accountable.

***It may take a while.***

Being the victim of or witness to violence is a significant life stressor. All significant stressors require that people change and adapt towards regaining life balance. The changes you see in your loved one and in your relationship

may be difficult. It may seem that it takes a long time for the survivor and the relationship to find a new, comfortable balance. Have patience and know that you and your loved one do not have to do this without some guidance. You are not alone. Thousands of survivors and their families heal and recover from sexual violence, and there are skilled supportive services available. You will find referral sources at the back of this booklet.

## **ABOUT SEXUAL INTIMACY**

Being a victim of sexual violence may affect feelings about sexual intimacy for some time after the incident. Sexual contact can stir up feelings and reactions for victims, which are related to the violence.

If you are the sexual partner of the survivor try to have patience. The survivor may desire little or no physical contact for a while or may wish to limit contact strictly to demonstrations of affection. Remember, the survivor lost the power to control what happened to them during the sexual violence. They need to regain their confidence in the ability to have physical control over their body.

It is important to recognize the possibility of temporary change in an intimate relationship, due to the effects of the assault. It is often a part of the healing path following a sexual assault. Remember that although some things may change for your partner and your relationship for a while, most survivors recover from the trauma of sexual violence and re-establish loving intimate relationships.

### ***Some important things you can do:***

- Believe her or him.
- Be yourself – treat the survivor just as you normally do. Try to not be overly protective.
- Express your caring and concern for the survivor.
- Allow the survivor to have her or his feelings.
- Reassure the survivor that confusing and painful feelings are to be expected.
- Let the survivor know that the assault was not her or his fault. *Do not blame or judge the survivor or her/his actions.*
- Remember that powerlessness is a big issue. You may guide the survivor, but let the survivor have control of her or his own life and make her or his own decisions about how to proceed.
- Encourage, but do not force the survivor to talk. Listen in a caring way, but don't try to "fix".
- Help the survivor understand the importance of getting medical attention, gently encourage seeking help from those with expertise in sexual violence.
- Find healthy ways to deal with your anger, rage, and fears without further traumatizing the survivor.
- Respect the confidentiality of the survivor.
- ***TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.*** Make sure YOU have emotional support, if necessary.



## VIII. SURVIVOR RESOURCES

### COLORADO AGENCIES BY ALPHABETICAL ORDER

**Advocate Safehouse Project**  
Glenwood Springs  
Hotline: 970-285-0209

**Advocates Against Battering and Abuse**  
Steamboat Springs  
Hotline: 970-879-8888  
[www.advocatesaba.org](http://www.advocatesaba.org)

**Advocates Against Domestic Assault**  
Trinidad  
Hotline: 719-846-6665

**Advocates for Victims of Assault, Inc.**  
Frisco  
Hotline: 970-389-0090

**Advocates of Lake County**  
Leadville  
Hotline: 719-486-1249

**Advocates-Crisis Support Services**  
Craig  
Hotline: 970-824-2400

**Advocates-Victim Assistance Team**  
Hot Sulphr Springs  
Hotline: 970-725-3412

**Alliance Against Domestic Abuse**  
Salida  
Hotline: 719-395-9823

**Alternative Horizons**  
Durango  
Hotline: 970-247-9619

**Alternatives to Family Violence**  
Commerce City  
Hotline: 303-289-4473

**Alternatives to Violence, Inc.**  
Loveland  
Hotline: 970-667-2151

**Anti-Violence Program**  
Denver  
Hotline: 303-852-5094  
Toll Free: 1-888-557-4441

**Archuleta County Victim Assistance Program**  
Pagosa Springs  
Office phone: 970-264-2131

**Arkansas Valley Resource Center**  
La Junta  
Hotline: 719-384-7764  
Assault Survivors Advocacy Program, UNC  
Greeley  
Hotline: 970-351-4040  
[www.unco.edu/ASAP/](http://www.unco.edu/ASAP/)

**Association in Women's Care**  
Colorado Springs  
719-591-6666

**Boulder County Safehouse**  
Boulder  
Hotline: 303-444-2424  
[www.bouldercountysafehouse.org](http://www.bouldercountysafehouse.org)

**Child Advocacy Resource and Education, Inc.**  
Evans  
970-356-6751

**Children's Advocacy for the Pikes Peak Region**  
Colorado Springs  
719-636-2460

**Clear Creek County Advocates**  
Georgetown  
Hotline: 303-569-3126  
[www.colorado.clear-creek.co.us](http://www.colorado.clear-creek.co.us)

**Coalition for Children, Inc.**  
Denver  
303-320-6321  
[www.safechild.org](http://www.safechild.org)

**Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence**  
Denver  
303-831-9632  
Toll Free: 1-888-778-7091  
[www.ccadv.org](http://www.ccadv.org)

**Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance (COVA)**  
Denver  
303-861-1160  
Toll Free: 1-800-261-2682  
[www.ColoOrg.com](http://www.ColoOrg.com)

**Colorado State University**  
Fort Collins  
970-491-6384  
[www.colostate.edu](http://www.colostate.edu)

**Colorado West Regional Mental Health**  
Glenwood Springs  
970-945-8439

**Denver Victims Service Center**  
Denver  
Hotline: 303-894-8000  
TTY: 303-860-9555  
[www.denervictims.org](http://www.denervictims.org)

**Domestic Safety Resource Center**  
Lamar  
Hotline: 1-800-639-4895

**Domestic Violence Initiative for Women with Disabilities**  
Denver  
303-839-5510  
[dvidenver@aol.com](mailto:dvidenver@aol.com)

**DOVE, Advocacy Services for Abused Deaf Women and Children**  
Denver  
Hotline: 303-831-7874

**Estes Valley Victim Advocates**  
Estes Park  
Hotline: 970-586-4000

**Family Tree**  
Wheat Ridge  
Hotline: 303-420-6752  
[www.thefamilytree.org](http://www.thefamilytree.org)

**Fort Lewis College**  
Durango  
970-247-7153  
[www.fortlewis.edu/cub/prevention](http://www.fortlewis.edu/cub/prevention)

**Gateway Battered Women's Shelter**  
Aurora  
Hotline: 303-343-1851

**Gunnison County Law Enforcement Victim Assistance Project**  
Gunnison  
Hotline: 970-641-8000

**High Plains Sexual Assault Center**  
Sterling  
Hotline: 1-800-522-6484

**Jubilee House of Gunnison County, Inc.**  
Gunnison  
970-641-2712  
[www.Visit\\_Gunnison.com/jubilee](http://www.Visit_Gunnison.com/jubilee)

**Kit Carson County Victim Assistance**  
Burlington  
719-346-8876

**La Plata Counseling**  
Durango  
970-259-6226

**Latimer House Counseling and Advocacy**

Grand Junction  
Hotline: 970-241-6704  
www.hilltop.org

**Mary's Hope**

Denver  
303-377-0293  
www.maryshope.org

**Moving to End Sexual Assault (MESA)**

Boulder  
Hotline: 303-443-7300  
www.joinmesa.org

**Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains**

Denver  
Hotline: 1-200-322-1020  
Toll Free: 1-800-230-PLAN

**Power Choices/Power Voices**

Lakewood  
303-623-5771

**Project PAVE**

Denver  
303-322-2382  
www.projectpave.org

**Rape Assistance and Awareness Program (RAAP)**

Denver  
Hotline: 303-322-7273  
Spanish: 303-329-0031  
TDD: 303-329-0023  
www.raap.org

**Rape Intervention Team**

Durango  
Hotline: 970-247-5400

**Renew, Inc.**

Cortez  
Hotline: 970-565-2100

**Resource Center of Eagle County**

Avon  
Hotline: 970-949-7086

**Response**

Aspen  
Hotline: 970-925-7233

**Safehouse Denver**

Denver  
Hotline: 303-318-9989  
www.safehouse-denver.org

**San Miguel Resource Center**

Telluride  
Hotline: 970-728-5660

**Sexual Assault Survivors, Inc.**

Greeley  
Hotline: 970-352-7273  
Toll Free: 1-800-656-HOPE  
www.survivorinfo.org

**South Weld Victim Services**

Longmont  
303-833-2707

**Trauma Treatment Center**

Denver  
303-790-5585

**Tri-County Resource Center**

Montrose  
Hotline: 970-249-2486

**Trust, Education, Safety, Support and Action (TESSA)**

Colorado Springs  
Hotline: 719-633-3819

**Tu Casa**

Alamosa  
Hotline: 719-589-2465

**University of Colorado at Boulder**

Boulder  
Helpline: 303-449-5555  
Counseling and Psychological Services: A Multicultural Center: 303-492-6766

**Victim Outreach Information**

Golden  
303-202-2196

**Victim Services Network**  
Denver  
720-913-9256  
TTY: 720-913-9921

**Victim/Witness Services**  
Lamar  
719-336-7303

**Violence Prevention Coalition of  
Southwest Colorado**  
Durango  
970-247-2304

**Volunteers of America,  
Southwest Safehouse**  
Durango  
Hotline: 970-259-5443

**WINGS Foundation, Inc.**  
Lakewood  
1-800-373-8671  
[www.wingsfound.org](http://www.wingsfound.org)

## COLORADO AGENCIES BY REGION

### Denver Metro

Alternatives to Family Violence  
Boulder County Safehouse  
Denver Victims Service Center  
Domestic Violence Initiative for  
Women with Disabilities  
DOVE, Advocacy Services for Abused  
Deaf Women and Children  
Family Tree  
Gateway Battered Women's Shelter  
Moving to End Sexual Assault (MESA)  
Power Choices/Power Voices  
Project PAVE  
Rape Assistance and Awareness  
Program (RAAP)  
Safehouse Denver  
Trauma Treatment Center  
University of Colorado at Boulder  
Victim Outreach Information  
Victim Services Network

### Southwest

Advocates of Lake County  
Alliance Against Domestic Abuse  
Alternative Horizons  
Archuleta County Victim Assistance  
Program  
Fort Lewis College  
Gunnison County Law Enforcement  
Victim Assistance Project  
Jubilee House of Gunnison County,  
Inc.  
La Plata Counseling  
Rape Intervention Team  
Renew, Inc.  
San Miguel Resource Center  
Tri-County Resource Center  
Tu Casa  
Violence Prevention Coalition of  
Southwest Colorado  
Volunteers of America, Southwest  
Safehouse

### Northeast

Alternatives to Violence, Inc.  
Assault Survivors Advocacy Program,  
UNC

Child Advocacy Resource and  
Education, Inc.  
Colorado State University  
Estes Valley Victim Advocates  
High Plains Sexual Assault Center  
Kit Carson County Victim Assistance  
Sexual Assault Survivors, Inc.  
South Weld Victim Services

### Southeast

Advocates Against Domestic Assault  
Arkansas Valley Resource Center  
Association in Women's Care  
Children's Advocacy for the Pikes  
Peak Region  
Domestic Safety Resource Center  
Trust, Education, Safety, Support and  
Action (TESSA)  
Victim/Witness Services

### Northwest

Advocates Against Battering and  
Abuse  
Advocates for Victims of Assault, Inc.  
Advocates Safehouse Project  
Advocates-Crisis Support Services  
Advocates-Victim Assistance Team  
Clear Creek County Advocates  
Colorado West Regional Mental  
Health  
Latimer House Counseling and  
Advocacy  
Resource Center of Eagle County  
Response

### Statewide

Anti-Violence Program  
Coalition for Children, Inc.  
Colorado Coalition Against Domestic  
Violence  
Colorado Organization for Victim  
Assistance (COVA)  
Mary's Hope  
Planned Parenthood of the Rocky  
Mountains  
WINGS Foundation, Inc.

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