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ARE THERE CHILDREN INVOLVED?

If children are involved, you are mandated to report to local child protective services.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Immediate needs come first. Make sure the person is safe from the perpetrator and any physical injuries are treated. Escort them to the hospital if there are any injuries that need medical attention.



EMOTIONAL

Assess the person's emotional state. Listen empathically. Use PIES: paraphrasing, "I" statements, emotional labeling, and summarizing, like this:

Paraphrasing is simply repeating a thought back to the person in your own words.

I statements are subjective responses, such as, "I'm so angry at the person who did this to you. I want to help you in any way I can."

Emotional labeling involves identifying something for what it is. If the person says, "I feel so ugly and stupid," you can say, "It's normal to feel badly when someone violates your dignity."

Summarizing is also repeating back, but generally after the person has told the entire story.

Assure the person that the sexual assault was not their fault and that they can, and will, feel better in time.



LEGAL

Share their legal options. If the survivor is a minor, reporting the assault is mandatory. If the survivor is over 18, they may choose. Does the survivor want to report the assault? If so, they must collaborate with legal services, local police, and forensic services. Crime scenes must be processed immediately while evidence remains viable. The survivor should avoid showering or bathing, and even urinating if possible. Do not clean the room, change clothes, or comb their hair.

In some states, individuals can access treatment and counseling free of charge when they report an assault. Reporting can contribute to a survivor's regaining of a sense of agency; but it doesn't guarantee prosecution of the perpetrator. A 2016 CNN report states that of nearly 300,000 USA victims reported from 2005-2010, only about 12% ended in arrest.²

In most states, survivors of sexual assault incur no cost for a forensic exam, but check to be sure. If they will be charged, tell the survivor so they can make an informed decision. A sexual assault exam is performed by a trained professional. Go to <https://www.rainn.org/articles/rape-kit> for details on what to expect.

Some survivors don't want to report. Fear of retaliation, social condemnation, fear of getting the perpetrator in trouble, fear of illegal activity being discovered in the reporting process, cultural beliefs, religious beliefs, and financial dependency upon the perpetrator are just some possible reasons. The survivor may need time to consider his or her options. Never pressure or force a survivor into reporting (after all, they've already been forced once).

But make sure the survivor knows that she may be able to obtain a "Jane Doe rape kit," meaning she can anonymously undergo a forensic exam, receive a code, and report later if she chooses. Accompany her to the hospital and request this if she chooses it.



PSYCHOLOGICAL

Depending upon the person's support group, natural resilience, and other factors, long-term psychological help may be needed. Assure the survivor this is not weakness on his or her part. Encourage the survivor to take advantage of free counseling that may be available through state funding. The RAINN website has a database of trained professionals at <https://centers.rainn.org>.

RESPECT

Believe the victim.

Do not ask for proof of violence.

Assure the victim it is not their fault.

Re-assure that confidentiality will be maintained but explain its boundaries.

Assess:
Is the person safe from further attack?

YES

NO

Call the police
or otherwise ensure safety.

Assess:
Is the person free of injuries that need attention?

YES

NO

Assist the person
in seeking treatment.

Assess:
Is the person emotionally stable?

YES

NO

Help the person
stay calm through active listening and emotional support.

Assess:
Does the person wish to report the assault?
(Always report if underaged.)

YES

NO

Inform the person
of the "Jane Doe" rape kit.

Accompany
the person to the police or hospital.

ACTION

Outline available realistic options— e.g. police, Domestic Violence agency, shelter, court for restraining order.

Supply appropriate information, leaflets and contact numbers.

Make a referral on the victim's behalf (with their permission) if that is wanted.

Document the incidents and actions and keep safely.

USE THIS DECISION TREE TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE INITIAL PROCESS.

With each **NO** resolve the situation, then return to the last **YES** to proceed.