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## Facts About Sexual Assault

### **Some people have the wrong idea about sexual assault.**

They think the assailant was overcome with sexual desire, the victim was dressed too seductively or "asked for it", or that all victims wanted sexual contact.

These ideas assume that sexual assault is motivated by passion. It isn't. Sexual assault is a violent crime, a hostile attack, an attempt to hurt and humiliate. **Sex is only the weapon.**

**Sexual assault is a crime.** In the State of Oklahoma, **rape** is defined as an act of sexual intercourse with a male or a female without consent where force or violence is used or threatened. **Sexual battery** is the touching, feeling, or mauling of the body of another person without consent.

Sexual assault occurs with increasing frequency, but remains the most under-reported crime in the criminal justice system. Nationwide, there is a rape every six minutes. A woman is beaten every 18 seconds; three to four million are battered every year. **Three out of four women** will be the victims of at least one violent crime during their lifetime.

In over **one-half of reported rapes, the rapist is an acquaintance, neighbor, friend or relative.** Acquaintance rape is less likely to be reported to the authorities than rape by a stranger. Acquaintance rape frequently occurs under circumstances where the victim, the attacker or both have been drinking or are intoxicated. The victim of an acquaintance rape may not recognize it as a crime or consider the incident as a rape.

## The Rape Scenario

**The Victim** – You are a victim of a crime if you have had unwanted sexual contact. Sexual assault is no less serious just because you know your assailant. Previous sexual contact with your assailant does not justify or excuse the crime. If you think sexual assault is motivated by passion or happens because the victim asked for or wanted it, look at the facts. Sexual assault can happen to anyone - you, your children, co-workers or friends, or other members of your family.

**The Situation** – Perhaps you think sexual assault happens only in certain high-risk situations such as hitchhiking, walking alone at night, or going out socially alone. It's true that sexual assault can occur in such situations, but it also takes place in ordinary, seemingly safe places. In fact, about one-third of all rapes occur in or near the victim's residence. About one-half of rapes are by first or casual dates or romantic acquaintances.

**The Rapist** – Imagine a typical rapist. Whom do you picture? A sex-crazed man? A psychopath? More often than not, those stereotypes are wrong. Most rapists don't look peculiar or behave strangely. Mainly, they want to hurt, humiliate and degrade another human being. Rapists are not sexually deprived men; most have available sexual outlets. In addition, many are married and lead normal lives prior to conviction and often come from the same socioeconomic background as their victims. Rapists may be repeaters and may continue to rape until they are caught.

**The Crime** – "I thought I could trust him; I thought he was my friend. I started feeling uncomfortable, but I ignored my feelings. I thought he would never do anything to hurt me. Suddenly, he was a stranger. He was doing something I never thought he would be capable of – my friend was raping me." – *Donna - 20-year old acquaintance rape survivor.*

## **INCREASING YOUR SAFETY FACTORS**

**Anyone can be a victim. Sexual assault awareness is based on environmental alertness. Remember, alcohol dulls your reflexes. When uncomfortable, trust your instincts!**

### **Be Alert When With Acquaintances**

- Find out about a new date. Ask others who know or have dated the person. Date with friends before accepting a single date. Make definite plans in advance. Don't leave a group setting with a person you don't know well.
- Set sexual limits and communicate those limits. Tell your partner clearly what you intend. Establish that any sexual activity will be a mutual decision. Speak up if you're getting confusing messages from your partner. Be forceful and firm; don't worry about being polite. Don't fall for lines such as "You would if you loved me." Consider or practice approaches such as "Stop this! I'm not enjoying it." Pay your own way or share costs to avoid arguments such as "You owe me - I spent all this money on you." Beware of partners who disregard your requests.
- Be assertive. State what you really want and are feeling. Remember, alcohol and other drugs compromise your ability to make decisions. When you say "no", make your message clear. When you say "yes", be sure you know what you're agreeing to. Don't be embarrassed to yell, make a scene or run away. Don't worry about offending your partner; remember, you are being humiliated.
- If you are uncomfortable with a date, you can choose to end it. Take your own vehicle or meet at the destination. Carry money for a phone call or fare home. Avoid parties where men greatly outnumber women. Don't accept rides from newly made acquaintances.
- Be careful when inviting someone to your residence or accepting an invitation to theirs. Avoid secluded places where you are put in a vulnerable position. Acquaintance rapes often occur in a residence.
- Take care of yourself – don't assume other people will take care of you or protect you from harm.
- Trust your INSTINCTS – believe your inner feelings when you get uncomfortable about a person or situation. Respond as soon as you feel uncomfortable!

### **Be Alert Where You Live**

- Be sure the doors of your residence are locked when you are there as well as when away.
- Use peepholes to identify people before opening the door.
- Require identification from service providers.
- Don't let anyone you don't know well inside your residence to use the phone; make the call for them.
- Never indicate to anyone that you are alone.
- Close curtains and shades at night.
- List your initials instead of your first name on your mailbox and in the telephone directory.
- Refrain from doing laundry in a deserted or poorly lighted facility.
- Avoid being in isolated areas such as laundries or parking garages by yourself, especially at night.
- Always have your key ready for quick entry into your residence.
- Have a telephone readily available near your bed for quick use at night.
- Hang up immediately on unwanted calls.
- If you find a door or window open or signs of forced entry upon arriving at your residence, don't enter. Go to the nearest phone and call the police.

## Be Alert When Walking

- Avoid walking alone. On campus, use the **Campus Safe Walk, call 325-WALK.**
- Stay in well-lighted areas, away from alleys, bushes, and entryways.
- Walk confidently, directly, and at a steady pace.
- Walk on the side of the street facing traffic.
- If a driver stops to ask directions, avoid getting near the vehicle.
- Don't hitchhike and only accept rides from people you know well.
- If a car appears to be following you, turn and walk in the opposite direction.
- Carry a whistle and use it if you feel you are in danger.
- If you are in trouble, attract help any way you can. Yell, call for help, shout "fire", or break a window.
- Above all, be aware of your surroundings and the people around you, even those you know.

## Be Alert In Vehicles

- Have your key ready when you approach your vehicle.
- Check inside your vehicle before entering.
- Always keep your vehicle locked with windows up, even while driving.
- Park in well-lighted areas.
- Avoid isolated roads and short-cuts.
- Never pick up hitchhikers or people you don't know well.
- Keep your vehicle in good repair. Make certain you have enough fuel.
- Remain inside your vehicle if you develop mechanical trouble. Keep the doors locked and the windows up until help arrives. To signal distress, put up the hood or display a sign. If someone stops to offer help, don't leave the vehicle; ask that they call the police or a service provider.
- If you are followed, drive to the nearest open business for help, or go to a police or fire station.
- When dropping someone off, wait until passengers have safely entered their residence or destination.
- If involved in a minor collision at night or in an isolated location, do not exit to inspect damage or contact the other driver. Signal the other driver with your lights, and proceed to the nearest lighted and occupied business or police station.

**ALWAYS Report  
Suspicious or Criminal Activity  
to the Police  
IMMEDIATELY**

## Know Your Defenses

**Anyone can be a victim of sexual assault.** You should think about the kinds of defense you would be willing to use. In some cases, resistance can frighten off or discourage the attacker, but it can also lead a rapist to become more violent or increase efforts to subdue the victim.

**Now is the time to consider your options; there is little time to think during an attack.** Could you really hurt an acquaintance who tried to hurt you? Are you willing to yell? Are you able to run? Remember, rape is a crime of violence, not passion. You've got to assume that a rapist is willing to use violence. If you are attacked, your main concern must always be your safety.

Because all people and all situations are different, there is no ONE way for you to protect yourself. People have different capabilities, and you must decide for yourself the best defense method for you.

There are several ways to react to a sexual assault...

## Passive Resistance

**The goal of passive resistance is to think and talk your way out of the situation. With passive resistance, you can:**

- Try to calm the attacker. Try to persuade him not to carry out the attack.
- Claim to be sick or pregnant. Tell him you have a sexually transmitted disease. This may intimidate the attacker.
- Try to discourage him. Pretend to faint, cry hysterically, act insane or mentally incapacitated.
- If you're at your residence, tell the attacker a friend is coming over or that your spouse or roommate will be back soon.

## Active Resistance

**Active resistance is intended to distract or temporarily injure your attacker to create an opportunity for escape. Nobody can tell you whether or not active resistance will be the "right" thing to do. A decision to resist actively, however, is irreversible. Your goal is to escape, not to win. Here are some pros and cons regarding the most common types of active resistance:**

- **YELLING**  
A yell can surprise or frighten an attacker away if he fears people will come to help. But yelling won't help in isolated or noisy areas.
- **STRUGGLING and FIGHTING BACK**  
A forceful struggle may also discourage an attacker, but most will retaliate and have the potential to inflict serious injuries. However, you must not be afraid to hurt an attacker. All kicks and blows must be forceful and should be aimed at vulnerable areas such as the groin, eyes, or instep.
- **MARTIAL ARTS**  
Special self-defense skills such as judo or karate are popular. If you are proficient in such techniques, they can be very effective. But proficiency requires practice.
- **WEAPONS**  
Some people carry weapons such as guns, knives, or spray chemicals to ward off attackers. Unless you are trained and not afraid to use these weapons, they can be very dangerous. The attacker might be able to turn them against you. Also, some weapons cannot legally be carried, so check with local law enforcement authorities.

## Submitting to an Attack

If you believe you might get hurt defending yourself or if you're afraid to fight back, don't. Sexual assault is still an assault and still a crime, even if you do not have a single cut or bruise. Victims who do not resist should never feel guilty; it is the assailant who committed the crime.

**If attacked, escape.**

**If trapped, stay alive.**

**If assaulted, memorize details.**

## **If You Have Been Attacked...**

### **What should you do if you are a survivor of sexual assault?**

Giving in is a survival strategy - don't blame yourself! A rape-threatening situation is a life-threatening situation. Your only responsibility is to yourself – stay alive.

Many survivors of sexual assault don't know where to turn for help or what to do. You may be afraid or ashamed to talk to anyone, or want to act as though nothing has happened.

#### **If you've been assaulted, get help quickly.**

Call 9-1-1, on campus or off. The dispatcher may want you to stay on the line until a Police Officer arrives. If not, then call a friend, your RA, and/or the Se Sexual Assault Hotline, 360-0590.

## **IF YOU ARE RAPED**

Call 9-1-1. If the Dispatcher does not keep you on the line, call a friend, your RA, or the Sexual Assault Hotline. If you are in an unsafe location, go to a friend's house or somewhere that you feel safe. Be sure to discuss this change of location with the dispatcher before you go. Report the rape to the authorities (*this does not mean that you must proceed with prosecution*). The more that acquaintance rape is reported, the easier it may be to prevent.

If you are physically injured and have transportation, seek medical treatment, informing the hospital staff of the sexual assault. They will contact 9-1-1 and begin preserving evidence (*clothing, etc.*) for the investigation. **DO NOT** douche, bathe, shower, or change clothes before the Police contact you.

A member of the **OU Sexual Assault Response Team (S.A.R.T.)** will respond alongside or shortly following the Police response. This advocate is there to support you throughout your ordeal. SART advocates are trained in all aspects of this situation to help you survive and regain control of your life. SART members know and understand the SANE exam, areas for counseling, police investigations, and the prosecution of the perpetrator.

## **Emotional Concerns of Survivors**

### **As a survivor of a violent crime, you will probably experience strong emotional reactions...**

- You may feel guilty because society has conditioned you to believe you "asked for it" or did not do enough to fight off your attacker.
- You may feel angry and take it out on those you love.
- You may feel afraid that your attacker will come back.
- You may feel ashamed of what has happened to you.
- You may feel helpless because it seems you have lost control of your life.
- You may feel unclean, even after bathing.

### These feelings may cause you to behave in ways you normally would not.

- You may not be able to sleep, or you may have terrible nightmares.
- You may find your eating habits changing.
- You may not want to be left alone.
- You may not be able to resume your normal sexual relationships.
- You may have trouble concentrating and making decisions.
- You may cry uncontrollably.

## Helping the Survivor

### Believe the survivor. People rarely make up stories about being a sexual assault victim.

- Let the survivor know you want to listen. How you listen matters more than what you say. Don't interrupt; let stalls and silences happen. Show interest; nod, maintain eye contact, repeat back. Let the victim know you care. Express sympathy ("*I'm very sorry this happened to you*"), empathy ("*It must have been frightening for you*"), and concern. Acknowledge that the survivor is **blameless**. S/he may have used poor judgment, but no one deserves to be raped. Avoid blaming language.
- Be patient; survivors may feel the need to talk about the assault repetitively or may not feel able to talk to you at all.
- Let the survivor control the situation and who is informed about the assault. The victim needs to regain control; encourage her or him to make as many choices as soon after the event as possible. Respect confidentiality – when discussing the assault, use a private location. Even if you disagree, respect the survivor's right to choose the course of action; offer (*but don't impose*) choices.
- Realize that you will have strong feelings about the assault; seek counseling for yourself. Avoid communicating your biases and negative emotions to the survivor.

## What Happens If I Call the Police?

First, they will make sure you are safe. They'll help you get to the Norman Women's Crisis Center. A Police Officer will examine the location where the assault was committed and will collect evidence. Your physical examination will be conducted at the Norman Women's Crisis Center by a **Sexual Assault Nurse Team (S.A.N.E)** member. SANE nurses are specifically trained in recovering evidence, assisting the patient in understanding the medical processes in each step of the exam. Your SANE nurse can communicate with you and your SART advocate, who is there to assist you from start to finish, for as long as you feel the need.

You'll speak with a trained sexual assault investigator soon after the attack. This investigator will review your earlier statement and may ask very specific questions. If your attacker was a stranger, you may be asked to look at photographs of prior offenders or to help a police artist prepare a sketch of your attacker. As the investigation progresses, the police will remain in touch and keep you abreast of developments. If a suspect is located, you will be asked to confirm the identification through means that prevent the suspect from seeing you.

## What Happens at the Examination?

You'll be given a medical examination by a SNAE nurse at the Norman Women's Crisis Center. IF you are physically injured in ways beyond the assault (cuts, broken bones, etc.), you will be taken to Norman Regional Hospital where you will be treated for both the injuries and the assault. The SANE nurse will be contacted to attend to you in the hospital and will collect all the

evidence in the same manner. This evidence will be needed if you decide to pursue prosecution and is available only immediately after the attack.

Your SART advocate will stay with you from beginning to end, providing information about your exam, your follow up counseling, the investigation, and the prosecution, if you so desire. Your SART advocate will help you regain control of your life.

At your request, the doctor can also check for pregnancy and give medication to prevent sexually-transmitted diseases. It's important that you have a follow-up exam to ensure you didn't later develop such a disease. The hospital staff can also refer you to appropriate counseling resources.

## What Happens If I Prosecute?

For situations where the attacker is a student at the University, institutional disciplinary proceedings are an option in addition to or instead of the regular criminal prosecution system; again, the venue for prosecution is up to you. Ultimately, you must appear in court in order to prosecute the offender. It takes courage to report and prosecute a sexual assault, but it is the only way to stop the assailant and may help you regain your sense of control.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES... NORMAN CAMPUS

As part of the University's effort to provide a environment conducive to the conduct of the institution's educational, research, and public service missions, the following sexual assault services are provided:

1. **The University provides** educational programs to enhance awareness of sexual assault and the conditions which foster this offense on university campuses.
2. **The University conducts** programs designed to educate the university community on prevention of sexual assault.
3. **The University provides** services to survivors of sexual assaults which occur on institutional property or who are affiliated with the University.
4. **The University undertakes** to safeguard the rights and interests of the survivor and pursues sanctions against the perpetrator(s) of sexual assault.

### Responsibility for these functions is assigned as follows:

1. **The Police Department provides** emergency response for survivors immediately following an assault, provides law enforcement/investigative services as applicable, pursues prosecution of the perpetrator(s) pursuant to the preference of the survivor, and conducts prevention programs to enable students, faculty, and staff to better avoid being assaulted.
2. **The Division of Student Affairs provides** support and counseling services to sexual assault survivors following an attack, informs the survivor of and provides access to institutional disciplinary resources for prosecution of the perpetrator(s), facilitates the provision of advocates or other support to the survivor so long as s/he desires, and conducts education programs to enhance awareness of sexual assault on campus.
3. **The Police Department and the Division of Student Affairs coordinate** their respective efforts in education and prevention programs and services.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Sexual assault awareness programs are available at no charge to any interested group, including classes, organizations, and clubs. These presentations attempt to dispel myths, provide information and give practical measures to take to increase safety. If you are interested in such a program, call **OUPD, Women's Outreach Center, Women's Resource Center or OU Counseling & Testing Services.**

For more information on sexual assault or services to survivors, contact any of the following:

<b>EMERGENCY</b> <i>(On or Off Campus)</i>	<b>911</b>
Norman Police Dept. <i>(Business/Info Line)</i>	321-1600
Norman Shelter for Battered Women	360-0590
Norman Women's Crisis Center	701-5660
Number Nyne Crisis Line <i>(8pm-4am)</i>	325-NYNE (325-6963)
OU Counseling Services	325-2911
UPD <i>(Business/Info Line)</i>	325-1717
Sexual Assault Hotline <i>(Norman Facility)</i>	360-0590
Women's Resource Center	364-9424
Women's Outreach Center <i>(OU)</i>	325-4929



**BE READY. Have a plan.**

**KNOW what you will do  
if you are assaulted.**

**NEVER get into a strange car.**

**AND**

**NEVER be forced into a vehicle,  
even if the assailant has a weapon.**

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**Trust Your Instincts** (TM) booklets are available from the University of Oklahoma Police Department. **Questions?**

Send E-mail to the Crime Prevention and Community Relations officer, at [mail-crimeprev@oupd.ou.edu](mailto:mail-crimeprev@oupd.ou.edu)

This printer-friendly version of the [Trust Your Instincts](#) publication is available at [http://www.oupd.ou.edu/crimeprev](#)