

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA POLICY ON SEXUAL ASSAULT

The University of Florida values the health and safety of every individual on campus and expects its students to treat other persons with respect and dignity. Any behavior that causes the sexual abuse/assault of another person will not be tolerated, is a violation of the university's Code of Student Conduct, and may result in sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. Disciplinary action on the part of the university does not preclude the possibility of criminal charges against the individual.

The term "sexual assault" as used by the university is synonymous with "sexual battery," also referred to as rape. It is a violation of state law, and is defined as the "oral, anal, or vaginal penetration by, or union with, the sexual organ of another or the anal or vaginal penetration by another with any other object."

Sexual assault includes, but is not limited to, gang rape, acquaintance rape, date rape, marital rape, and stranger rape that occurs both on and off college campuses.

Sexual assault can occur any time of the day or night; it can occur at home, in the work place, in social settings, and in public places. Both men and women have been sexually assaulted by strangers, people whom they have known and trusted, and people whom they have dated.

In order for the university to deal more effectively with sexual assaults, it is essential these incidents be reported. Thus, all students and others are encouraged to report incidents of sexual assault to a university official, e.g., the Office of Victim Services, the University Police Department, the Student Judicial Affairs Office, the Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery Education, the Student Mental Health Clinic, or the Counseling Center.



WHAT YOU CAN DO IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

In the aftermath of a sexual assault, the victim may be experiencing fear, insecurity and frustration and will need care and support. A friend, spouse, or family member can play an important role by providing reassurance and support. **Allow your friend to reflect** upon what has happened and their feelings, but do not press for details. Let him/her set the pace. Listening is one of the best things you can do at this time. In short, be a trusted friend.

If your friend has not received medical attention, encourage her/him to do so. For additional support, call the **University Police Department's crime victim advocate**. The medical facility will notify the police; however, it's up to your friend to make the decision whether to file a police report.

You may be a valuable resource by **seeking out and providing information** that will assist in understanding options. For example, you can let your friend know that reporting the rape and collecting evidence does not automatically lock her/him into prosecuting the offender. What it does do is assist the police in identifying the method and possible identity of the assailant. Because rapists tend to repeat, any information that can be provided may prevent the sexual assault of someone else.

Making the decision to report a sexual assault, and to undergo the subsequent processes of evidence collection and possible judicial proceedings, will be difficult for your friend. Although it's only natural to want to give advice, **avoid trying to control the situation**. A sexual assault victim needs to regain control and must be allowed to make her/his decisions.

Whatever decisions are made, your friend needs to know that she/he will not be judged, disapproved of, or rejected by you. The victim suffers a significant degree of physical and emotional trauma during and immediately following a rape that can remain for a long time. **Being patient, supportive and nonjudgemental** provides a safe, accepting climate into which your friend can release painful feelings.

Sometimes friends or family take the sexual assault personally, losing sight of the real victim. They feel resentment or anger and unleash this anger on the victim and others in general. Sometimes a sense of frustration and helplessness is pitted against a powerful urge for revenge. Do not make the mistake of discounting or ignoring your emotional responses. It's important to realize that you also are responding to an unwanted crisis. You are trying to understand what happened and adjust to unfamiliar realities. **Take advantage of support services** in your community that offer counseling for sexual assault victims and their significant others.

You may be asked to testify in judicial proceedings about your friend's remarks, actions, and state of mind, especially if you were one of the first people she/he approached. **Jotting down a few notes** may be helpful later.

If you are concerned about the problem of sexual assault and want to participate in a rape prevention education program or if you have any ideas to share, contact one of the agencies listed under "Where to Go for Help."



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AND OTHER INFORMATION & RESOURCES



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

Get to a safe place.

If you are in a vulnerable area, it's important that you go to a safe location. For example, go to your home (with locked doors and windows), a friend's house, a locked car, or a place where there are several people.

Get medical attention immediately.

The primary purpose of a medical examination following a rape is to check for physical injury, the presence of sexually transmitted diseases, or pregnancy as a result of the rape. The secondary purpose of a medical examination is to aid in the police investigation and legal proceedings. Get medical attention as quickly as possible.

If you think you may have been drugged, report your suspicion to the police. Ask for a sexual assault nurse examiner to conduct a urine test for the presence of any sedating drugs.

Don't bathe or douche.

Bathing or douching might be the first thing you want to do. But don't—even as much as you want to. You might literally be washing away valuable evidence. Wait until you have an examination.

Save your clothing.

It is all right to change clothes. But save what you were wearing. Your clothing could be used as evidence for prosecution. Place each item of clothing in a separate paper bag for police.

Report the incident to the police.

It is up to you, but reporting a rape isn't the same thing as prosecuting a rape. Prosecution can be determined later. To contact police, call 911 (V/TDD), 24-hours a day. A number of university staff members are willing and able to assist victims in reporting assaults to the proper authorities.

If you are a victim of a sexual assault and decide not to notify the police, please secure medical attention and contact any of the victim support resources listed in this guide.



WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Many sexual assault cases go unreported because the victim fears retaliation or humiliation if word gets around she/he has been the victim of a sex offense. Victims tend to feel guilty, as though they did something to bring it on themselves, and often keep the incident to themselves or share some of the incident with a close friend. While this may be helpful in the immediate sense, we urge you to talk to a knowledgeable counselor about your reactions to being victimized.

The various on- and off-campus services available to all victims of violent acts are designed to assist victims in overcoming the trauma of the attack and proceeding with their goals and responsibilities at the university. We strongly suggest you report any instance of sexual assault to a law enforcement agency. The **University Police Department's Special Investigative Unit, 392-1111 (V/TDD)**, the **Gainesville Police Department, 334-2400**, and the **Alachua County Sheriff's Office, 955-2500**, have staff trained to assist victims. Each agency urges victims to report the crime. Many rapists are repeat offenders and will continue unless they are apprehended and convicted.

The **University of Florida Office of Victim Services** provides a civilian support person for anyone who may become a victim of crime while on the university campus. You may utilize the services of the Victim Advocate Program even if you choose not to report the assault to the law enforcement agency. This service is confidential. The Advocate ensures the rights of the victim to be informed and treated with fairness. The Advocate also makes referrals and assists victims with locating other needed services such as counseling support groups or other community assistance. The Advocate is available 24 hours a day and may be called upon by law enforcement to respond to a crisis. Victims may also consult the Advocate directly by calling **392-5648, weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**, or by calling the **University Police Department at 392-1111 (V/TDD) after hours.**

The **Alachua County Office of Victim Services** is contacted when the police or sheriff's office receives a call about a sexual assault. Victims may also call **264-6760** if they do not want to report the crime to a law enforcement agency. The rape and crime victim Advocate offers support while the victim has a medical examination and is being interviewed by the police. In addition, Advocates will accompany victims through legal proceedings and the process of applying for compensation of medical bills and loss of wages as a result of crimes. They offer individual counseling for victims and their families or friends and group counseling for victims of sexual assault. All services are free and confidential.

The **Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery Education (CARE)**, located in the Infirmar, room 245, **392-1161 x4231**, is a university-sponsored agency for sexual assault victims and their spouses seeking individual or group counseling. CARE is a specialty service with professionals trained in sexual victimization recovery. All records are kept strictly confidential.

The **University Counseling Center**, P301 Peabody Hall, **392-1575**, has professional counselors and therapists, and offers individual or group counseling dealing with any form of sexual exploitation. All services are free and confidential. The center has an excellent referral system, should you think your needs will be better met by a different agency or program. The **Student Mental Health Clinic** also is available for a wide range of personal, interpersonal and emotional concerns. The service is located in the Infirmar, **392-1171**.

WHAT VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CAN EXPECT FROM THE UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

The University Police Department maintains a policy to ensure sexual assault victims are afforded sensitivity and humane consideration. All officers receive specialized training in the investigation of sex offenses. Topics discussed are Florida law, university philosophy and policy, sensitivity to the needs and feelings of the victim, support resources, and investigation methods.

- ☛ Officers will ensure a Victim Advocate is available throughout the process to address a victim's and significant others' needs.
- ☛ Officers will treat a victim with courtesy, sensitivity, dignity, and understanding.
- ☛ Officers will act thoughtfully without prejudging or blaming a victim.
- ☛ A victim's request to speak to an officer of the same gender will be accommodated.
- ☛ Officers will meet privately with a victim at the victim's choice of location.
- ☛ Officers will make arrangements for medical treatment with respect for a victim's choice of medical facility.
- ☛ Officers will inform a victim of services available on and off campus.
- ☛ Officers will answer a victim's questions at any time and will explain the criminal justice system and process.
- ☛ Officers will diligently investigate each case thoroughly and consistently and will keep a victim informed on the progress of the case.
- ☛ A victim's name and identifying information will be withheld from the public and press in accordance with the Florida Public Records Law.