

Impact of Sexual Abuse

Survivors of sexual assault often experience:

- An increase or decrease in appetite and, consequently, rapid weight loss or gain
- Anger, numbness, withdrawal, detachment or extreme sadness
- Nightmares, restlessness or difficulty sleeping, or sleeping much more than usual
- Mood swings and/or emotional outbursts
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Difficulty concentrating
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Everyone reacts differently to trauma, so you may experience some, many or none of these symptoms. There are services available to help you heal from the effects of sexual violence, and some of them are included in the resources section of this brochure. No matter what, you are not to blame for the abuse, only the perpetrator is.



Resources

Advocacy, Inc.

An organization committed to advocating for, protecting and advancing the legal, human and service rights of people with disabilities.
512-454-4816
www.advocacyinc.org

Department of Aging and Disability Services

701 W. 51st St.
Austin, TX 78751
512-438-3011
www.dads.state.tx.us

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

www.dfps.state.tx.us
Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline
1-800-252-5400

SafePlace

Disability Services ASAP (A Safety Awareness Program)

PO Box 19454
Austin, TX 78760
512-267-7233
TDD: 512-927-9616
www.safeplace.org

TAASA

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault

512-474-7190
Fax: 512-474-6490
www.taasa.org

You can find a listing of sexual assault service providers in your community from the TAASA website.

A Guide for Sexual Abuse Survivors with Disabilities



The voice of sexual violence survivors in Texas.



Texas Association Against Sexual Assault

6200 La Calma
Suite 110
Austin, Texas 78752

www.taasa.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline
Free. Confidential. 24/7.

1-800-656-HOPE

Personal Rights

All people have personal rights, regardless of race, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation or disability (physical or cognitive). You have the right to:

- Personal safety
- Privacy
- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Information on sexuality and to have safe and healthy sexual relationships with the person or people of your choice
- A life free of violence and abuse
- Say no if someone makes you uncomfortable, whether that person is a stranger, caregiver, family member or anyone else
- Talk to someone you trust and access services from a sexual assault center if you have experienced sexual abuse
- Be free of guilt and shame for any abuse you experience - only the perpetrator is to blame
- Decide for yourself, without pressure from others, whether you want to report to police, obtain a sexual assault exam or pursue charges against the perpetrator



What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse consists of a wide range of sexual activities that are forced upon someone. Men and women alike can be either perpetrators or victims of sexual abuse. Examples of sexual abuse include: making inappropriate sexual remarks, forcing you to watch sexual materials like pornography, not



respecting your privacy or physical boundaries (e.g., unnecessarily walking in on you or touching you while dressing or going the bathroom), fondling you against your will, or exposing themselves to you. Sexual assault includes acts such as touching your breasts, genitals or buttocks without permission, forcing you to engage in oral sex or forced sexual intercourse.

You may feel pressured to submit to abuse due to fear or dependence on the abuser. If the perpetrator is someone close to you, they may try to make you feel guilty or obligated to them. No matter what, sexual abuse is never the victim's fault. Responsibility lies solely with the person committing the abuse.

Perpetrators of sexual assault and abuse can be anyone, from strangers to acquaintances, friends, or even family members or caregivers. Submitting to unwanted sexual contact or behavior should never be a condition of receiving care.

If You Are Sexually Assaulted

There are some steps you may want to take if you are sexually assaulted.

- First, make sure you are in a safe place
- If you are injured, call 911 or go to the emergency room
- You may want to call someone you trust to be with you
- If you want forensic evidence collected with a sexual assault exam:
 - You should not shower, bathe, douche, go to the bathroom, smoke, eat or drink anything or change clothes before evidence is collected, but if you already have, you can still obtain an exam, though the likelihood of finding evidence may be decreased
- If you want or need counseling, find your area sexual assault program by calling 1-800-656-HOPE or visiting www.taasa.org.
- Remember that it is not your fault, regardless of the circumstances

