

University Health Center

University of Maryland, College Park



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Sexual Assault & Relationship Violence Recovery Program

Location

The Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Recovery Program is available through the Mental Health Service within the University Health Center (UHC), which is located directly across the street from the Stamp Student Union on Campus Drive. We are currently on the third floor. (*Location is subject to change due to UHC construction and renovation.*)

Hours

Mental Health Service Hours are:
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Phone

Call (301) 314 - 8106 for questions or to schedule an appointment.

Sexual Assault is any unwanted sexual contact forced by one person on another. It can be done by a stranger or by someone known, including acquaintances, dates, boyfriends/girlfriends, or partners. Sexual assault includes intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, assault with objects, fondling, and any action intended to coerce, force, or intimidate another into performing unwanted sexual acts. Attempted assaults may be extremely distressing, even if they are interrupted and stopped.

Sexual assault is a terrifying violation of a person's right to control his or her own body and takes away the ability to make a sexual choice. Because sexual assault is an act of domination that often is violent, being sexually assaulted means that the person has been assaulted both physically and psychologically. It produces extreme and conflicting feelings in the survivor, among which are fear, shame, anger, and depression.

Though women are more frequently the victims of sexual assault by male perpetrators, we recognize that some survivors are male and some perpetrators are female. We are here to help regardless of the nature of the assault situation.

Violence In Relationships exists on a continuum from verbal abuse to physical abuse. It is usually thought of as any behavior by one partner intended to intimidate, control, or hurt the other. Although verbal or emotional abuse may not seem as serious as physical violence or sexual assault, the results can be equally devastating. Abuse of any kind can erode a person's sense of worth or self-esteem.

Stages of Sexual Assault Recovery

Survivors usually manifest emotional and physical reactions to sexual assault that fall into three stages.

The Acute Stage

This initial stage usually lasts from a few hours to several weeks. It is characterized by shock, disbelief, fear, anger, and phobic reactions to the place where the sexual assault occurred. Flashbacks, an immediate sense of reliving the sexual assault, and sleep disturbances also are reported.

The Adjustment/Recoil Stage

This stage is considered temporary. The survivor feels things are back to normal and attempts to regain some sense of control. Survivors block out the impact of the sexual assault.

The Resolution/Integration Stage

This stage is the time when healing occurs. It can be a difficult time, characterized by many of the same feelings that occurred initially, but with more likelihood of resolving them. Survivors may become depressed, have dramatic mood-swings, feel alienated from others, or withdraw into themselves. It is at this point survivors often seek psychotherapy.

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Common Reactions to Sexual Assault or Relationship Violence

Fear is a universal response. Many survivors fear seeing the attacker again. Many may also fear sounds, smells, places, or anything that reminds them of the assault. These fears and others are normal; one should do whatever one needs to do to feel safe.

Anger may occur during or at any time after a violent assault. Like fear, it is expressed by nearly all survivors, although in many different ways. Anger may be directed toward everyone, or toward people with characteristics similar to those of the attacker. When directed outward and properly focused, anger is a healthy response to sexual assault. When misdirected, for instance, at people in one's life who have no responsibility for the assault, or at one's self, anger can be destructive or immobilizing.

Depression is a very common reaction to a violent assault. People may feel bad about themselves or about those around them. Some cry all the time and some are not able to cry at all. Some feel tired all of the time, lose their appetites, or overeat. Some feel as though things are hopeless and will never improve. Support from loved ones can help get through these times. Don't delay seeking help if feelings of hopelessness or thoughts that life is not worth living arise.

Shame is an almost universal reaction to a violent assault, especially when it's by someone known. People often blame themselves, feeling that if they hadn't gotten themselves into the situation, the assault wouldn't have happened. It is important to remember that errors of judgment, not sizing someone up early enough, etc. are never the same as being responsible for being assaulted. Often, what eventually eases the feelings of shame and self-blame is support and acceptance by others who have been victims of sexual assault or relationship violence.

The Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Recovery Program offers students the following services to help them cope with and heal from any form of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault or relationship violence:

Individual Therapy: Any student who has been assaulted, recently or in the past, is eligible for short-term individual psychotherapy provided by the Mental Health Service staff.

Recovery Group: The support of other women who have gone through a similar experience is an invaluable aid in recovery from any kind of sexual or relationship violence.

Crisis Intervention: We are able to talk to people in the turbulent days immediately following an assault.

Brief Couples Psychotherapy: Sexual assault can affect everyone in a person's life, especially those closest. Couples therapy often helps people sort out feelings and understand how the sexual assault is affecting the relationship, and how each of you can cope better. For on-going relationship concerns, couples will be referred out. Brief couples counseling is available for same- or opposite-sex

couples.

Consultation: We can speak on the phone to students who are not ready to come in person, or to staff, professors, significant others, etc. who may have questions about what a student may be going through. We give informational interviews to the university media.

For information regarding sexual assault and relationship violence or to schedule an intake session, call the Mental Health Service at (301) 314-8106.

Additional Campus Resources

- Victim Advocate, University Health Center (301) 314-2222
- Counseling Center, Shoemaker Building (301) 314-7651
- Campus Chaplains (301) 314-8450
- Student Legal Aid Office, Undergraduate Office: (301) 314-7756 Graduate Office: (301) 405-5807
- Judicial Programs Office (301) 314-8204
- University Police Rape and Aggression Defense (RAD) (301) 405-3555
- Women's Health Unit, University Health Center (301) 314-8190

For 24-hour sexual assault services, including referrals for medical exams and emergency services, call:

- Prince George's County Sexual Assault Center: (301) 618-9420
- DC Rape Crisis Center (202) 333-RAPE (7273)
- Montgomery County Sexual Assault Service (301) 656-9420
- Family Crisis Center, Prince George's County (Shelter and counseling for people in abusive relationships) (301) 779-2100
- RAINN (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network) (800) 656-HOPE (4673)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 799-SAFE (7233)