

WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

Sexual assault is a legal term used to describe any form of sexual activity that has been forced by one person upon another. Any act done without consent is sexual assault. These acts may include unwanted touching, kissing, sexual acts, intercourse, etc. "Forced" means any threats, coercion or use of physical force.

Under Canadian laws sexual assault within a marriage or relationship is still a crime and a perpetrator can be charged under the same laws as someone who assaults a stranger.

Sexual assault is a legal term used to describe a variety of offence, you may hear others use words like "rape", "assault", "harassment" or "sexual violence". These words are meant to highlight the severity of the crime. You should use whatever word you are comfortable with. For clarity, we will use "rape" and "assault" in this pamphlet.

WHAT IS ACQUAINTANCE RAPE

Sometimes called "date rape", Acquaintance rape and assault occurs between two people who know each other (friends, partners, family friend, classmate, etc).

Contrary to popular belief, acquaintance rape is more common than rape and assault by a stranger.

STATISTICS

From 2006 to 2010, the perpetrators of reported sexual assaults of women were:

- Casual acquaintances (26%)
- A non-spousal family member (24%)
- Strangers (13%)
- Current or former spouses/boyfriends or girlfriends (10%)
- Friends (7%)
- Unknown relationship (17%)

Victims/survivors of sexual assault are less likely than victims of other crimes to report to police. The 2009 General Social Survey found that 88 per cent of sexual assaults in Canada were not reported to police.

Statistical information from Avalon Sexual Assault Centre.
More info here:
<http://avaloncentre.ca/resources/statistics/>

LET'S TALK ABOUT ACQUAINTANCE RAPE

It can be hard to talk about acquaintance rape. We're often told that rape is something done by strangers in dark alleys at night, so when the perpetrator is someone we know, and the crime occurs in a space where we may feel safe usually (our own dorm, a friend's house, etc), it can be difficult to find the words to talk about your experience.

There is also a common misconception that acquaintance rape is less serious and less traumatic than rape committed by strangers. This is not true, and is a harmful myth about rape that may make it less likely that a victim seek help or support.

You may read resources or websites that seem to suggest that acquaintance rape is avoidable, and gives suggestions about how to "avoid" rape. These often focus on staying vigilant, avoiding being alone with others, and not drinking or doing drugs. Rape is a crime, it is never the victim's fault. These "suggestions" ignore the fact that acquaintance rape often happens in the context of abusive or coercive relationships, or that the victim knows and may trust the assaulter. It also places the onus on the victim to "protect themselves" from rape. This is part of victim-blaming culture, and may result in the victim feeling shamed or stigmatized.

If you have been raped or assaulted you are not alone, and it is not your fault.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT ACQUAINTANCE RAPE?

- Teach boys not to rape
- Teach children of all genders to talk about their desires and their boundaries
- Know where you or your friends can get help if rape or assault does occur
- Talk to your friends about acquaintance rape, tell them that you support them
- Believe someone if they tell you that they were raped or assaulted.
- Learn about rape myths and realities and fight misinformation in your community

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SUPPORT A FRIEND WHO HAS BEEN RAPED OR ASSAULTED

- Believe them and listen to them.
- Do not use judgemental language ("what were you wearing?", "were you drinking?"). Assault is never the victim's fault.
- Let them make their own decisions about what happens next. Everyone's process for dealing with a traumatic event is different. Empower them to make decisions about their own process.
- Be familiar with places in your community where a person can get help, offer to accompany them.

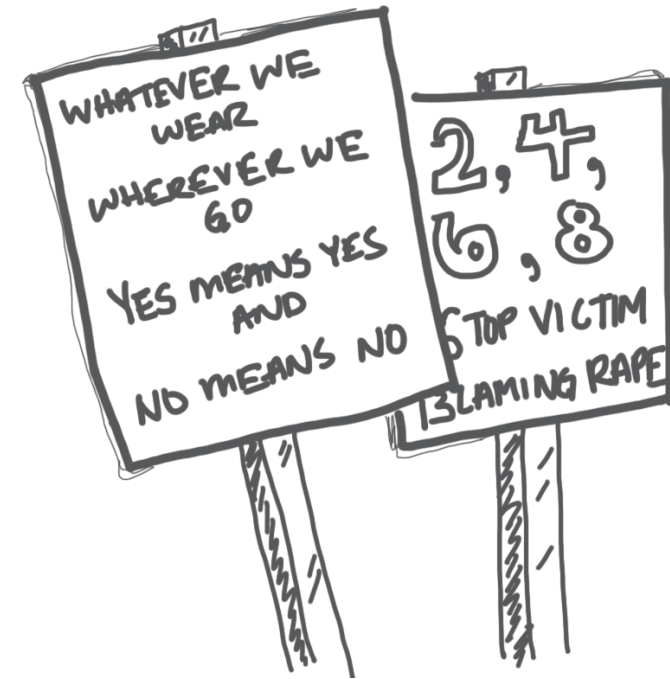
WHERE CAN YOU GET HELP?

Sexual Health Centre Lunenburg County
8-4 Hillcrest St, Bridgewater
www.sexualhealthlunenburg.com
The sexual health centre can provide support, resources and referrals related to rape and assault.

Second Story Women's Centre
18 Dufferin Street, Lunenburg
<http://www.secstory.com/>
Second Story Women's Centre provides a wide range of services including crisis support, programming, referrals, and a healing room with several practitioners.

Avalon Sexual Health Centre
1526 Dresden Row, 4th Floor, Halifax
<http://avaloncentre.ca/>
Avalon Sexual Assault Centre provides counselling, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program, community and legal education, and professional training.

Sexual Health Centre
Lunenburg County



LET'S TALK ABOUT...
ACQUAINTANCE
RAPE