

# Choices Following Sexual Violence

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One of the most important aspects of supporting someone who has survived sexual violence is working to restore their sense of power and control over their body and their life.

When someone decides to sexually violate another person, they take away that person's freedom to make decisions about their own body.

This can be deeply traumatic and have long-lasting consequences.

That's why it's crucial that a survivor of sexual violence have control over all decisions related to their recovery, big and small.

This includes things such as:

- When, where, and to whom they disclose.
- What language they use to describe the violence and the person who perpetrated it.
- Any decisions related to their safety, physical and mental health.
- If they wish to report to police.
- What kind of support they require.

Only the survivor knows what they have been through and what is best for them.

"Honour the ways we survive and seek justice. There is no 'right' way to survive sexual assault. A survivor can tell no one, tell themselves, call the police, tell a friend, heal on their own, with community, utilize transformative justice. We can feel okay some days, some months and other times we can feel different minute to minute."

**Farrah Khan,**

*Five Ways to Support Sexual Violence Survivors During the Jian Ghomeshi Trial*

As a support person, you can outline some of the choices that a survivor has following sexual violence and what those options may entail.

The goal is to empower the person to make informed decisions about what types of support they need and want to access.

This handout explains some of the options that a victim/survivor has after sexual violence. It describes resources that you can refer a victim/survivor to, and what they might expect when navigating these resources.

## Choices for Youth

When the victim/survivor is under 16 (or under 19 if the person who perpetrated the violence is a parent/guardian) you must alert the local child protection agency, even if this information was told to you in confidence.

Child protection social workers will then work with local police to conduct a joint investigation, which will include an interview with the child/youth (a social worker and police officer will be present). Whether investigators contact the child/youth directly, or a parent or guardian, to set up the interview will depend on their age and the circumstances.

If required, Child Protective Services can help arrange a physical exam, and will discuss additional supports with the child and/or parent(s) or guardian(s).

## Safety first

It is important to make sure that the person who was violated feels safe and is not in immediate danger.

### Are they in immediate danger?

If the person is in immediate danger, work with them to get them out of that situation. This could include calling 911. Remember that some people do not feel comfortable or safe calling the police and may not want you to call 911.

### Creating Safety

If they live with the person who harmed them, they may want to temporarily or permanently relocate to a friend's or a relative's house, or a transition house (no cost to residents). See "Where to Get Help" on [breakthesilencens.ca](http://breakthesilencens.ca) for a list of transition houses.

If the person who violated them has keys to their space, you might ask the victim/survivor if they want to have their locks changed, and if they would like you to contact a locksmith.

If the violence just happened and they are at home, creating safety could mean locking the doors, making themselves feel as comfortable as possible, and employing self-care strategies.

If the person told you via phone, text or an online message and they are not somewhere that they feel safe, you can stay on the phone or exchange messages until they arrive somewhere that they do.

### Do they want company?

Another consideration is if they want company. It is okay if they want to be alone. If they do want company, ask what they need and respect their boundaries. Do they want to talk about what happened or do they need to be distracted? Do they want to be touched or hugged?

*These decisions are completely up to them.*

## Medical options

There are several options when it comes to seeking medical attention following an assault:

### A. The victim/survivor wishes to report to the police

A medical exam is paired with a forensic exam. During the forensic exam, a nurse collects evidence to be used for a possible police investigation or court case.

### B. The victim/survivor is unsure whether they want to report to police

A medical exam is paired with a forensic exam after which the evidence is held (for six months) while the victim/survivor decides if they want to report.

### C. The victim/survivor wishes to disclose to medical professionals, but not report to police

A medical exam is carried out, and the person discloses the sexual assault to the medical professional(s).

### D. The victim/survivor does not wish to disclose to medical professionals or report to police

A medical exam is carried out and the person does not disclose that they have been sexually assaulted. This allows the person to tend to their immediate physical needs while not disclosing.

### Reasons to seek medical attention

After sexual violence a victim/survivor may want to seek medical attention for the following:

#### 1. Physical injuries (external or internal)

If the person has physical injuries they can see a primary health provider, and/or go to a hospital.

#### 2. Pregnancy (testing, emergency contraception, and counselling regarding pregnancy options including abortion)

If the victim/survivor is worried that they might be pregnant, emergency contraception (which can help prevent pregnancy) can be taken up to five

days later and it is most effective if taken within 24 hours. Emergency contraception can be purchased without a prescription at most pharmacies.

### 3. **Tests and treatments for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

If the person believes they could have contracted an STI they can see a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) or health care provider.

### 4. **HIV testing and treatment**

If the person has reason to believe they could have contracted HIV, a medical professional can administer post-exposure prophylaxis (a combination of HIV medications that can prevent contraction of HIV). Post-exposure prophylaxis must be taken within three days (72 hours) and daily for four weeks.

## Bringing a support person

The victim/survivor also has the option of bringing a support person (a friend, family member, Elder, advocate) with them to the hospital, doctor's office, or clinic. If the person you are supporting would like you to accompany them and you are unable, you can help them brainstorm an alternate support person.

If you do accompany them, it is important to ask them what kind of support or advocacy they need and want from you. It is important to ask questions such as:

1. Do they want you there during examinations?
2. Do they want you to remain quiet or do they need help articulating what happened?
3. If the latter, what details do they want to disclose and what language are they most comfortable with? For example, are they referring to what happened as rape, assault, or something else?
4. If the person you are supporting is transgender, what do they want you to do if they are misgendered or referred to by their birth name?
5. Do they want you to take notes for them to consult later? Trauma can have profound impacts on memory.

## Barriers to seeking medical attention

While seeking medical care may be empowering for some, others may find it stressful or triggering to answer questions about the assault and be touched by a medical professional. Many people have mixed feelings about medical care following sexual assault.

It is important that the victim/survivor feel empowered to ask questions and make their own decisions.

It is their body and they have the right to know what is happening.

*It is completely up to the person who has been assaulted if and when they seek medical attention.*

**Some people may be hesitant to seek medical attention because they are worried that they will not be believed, will encounter stigma, or be judged by others.** A woman might worry that she will be seen as having "asked for it," while a man may worry that service providers won't believe that a man can be a victim/survivor of sexual violence. Someone who was violated by a woman may worry that the health care professional will not believe that women can perpetrate sexual violence. Such concerns result from widely held rape myths and stereotypes.

**Members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community may worry that a medical professional is not educated about LGBTQIA2S+ identities** and may ask ignorant or insensitive questions, express homophobic or transphobic views, or discriminate against them.

**These concerns can be heightened for people who live at the intersections of several marginalized identities.** An African Nova Scotian woman may worry not only about the stigma that surrounds being a victim/survivor of sexual violence, but also racist assumptions that are made about Black women.

**Racism within the healthcare system also creates added barriers for Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, and other racialized people.** A 2012 report from the Health Council of Canada included accounts from Indigenous patients who were given improper care for serious conditions because a health care professional assumed they were drunk and/or on drugs.

If a clinic or hospital demonstrates a lack of cultural competency, it may discourage a racialized person from seeking health care. Additionally, if an emergency room/clinic/sexual assault centre doesn't have a racially diverse staff team, a racialized victim/survivor may not feel comfortable or safe accessing their services.

“Research shows that racism against Indigenous peoples in the health care system is so pervasive that people strategize around anticipated racism before visiting the emergency department or, in some cases, avoid care altogether (Kurtz et al., 2008; Tang & Browne, 2008; Browne et al, 2011).”

First Peoples, *Second Class Treatment report*,  
The Wellesley Institute

**The person you are supporting may have been previously traumatized by the health care system** and worry that seeking care will trigger that trauma. Many victims/survivors already experience feelings of powerlessness, and being triggered may intensify these feelings.

For example, transgender people are often misgendered or called by their birth names in a medical setting, which can be a stressful and/or traumatic experience.

**In a small community or on a First Nations reserve** the victim/survivor may worry that people will ask why they are/were at the clinic.

## Health care options

### **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)**

If the assault(s) took place within the last five days, the victim/survivor will be able to access a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). If the person is pre-pubescent (has not yet reached puberty), it is recommended that they see a SANE within 24 hours, as it can be difficult to collect evidence. They are still able to access a SANE after 24 hours.

These registered nurses are available 24/7 in multiple locations across the province and have advanced training in providing nonjudgmental, confidential support as well as conducting medical exams, and collecting forensic evidence.

A person may want to see a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner to take care of any physical injuries, test for pregnancy or STIs, begin treatment if necessary, and collect evidence for police.

*Evidence will only be collected at the request of the person who has been assaulted. The victim/survivor has a minimum of six months to decide if they want the evidence to be transferred to the police.*

*A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner will not involve the police unless requested by the victim/survivor.*

If a victim/survivor goes to an emergency room in a region that has a SANE program and tells staff they have been sexually violated within the past five days, the staff will call a SANE if the victim/survivor chooses. The victim/survivor will usually then be guided to a private room to wait for the SANE. The victim/survivor can also call the SANE phone line and ask that nurse meet them at a participating hospital.

A nurse will arrive within 90 minutes after being called.

The medical and forensic exams take approximately two to four hours. It is preferred that the victim/survivor go straight to the hospital without showering or changing clothes in order to preserve forensic (i.e. DNA) evidence, which can be used if charges are filed and the case goes to trial. It is a good idea for the person to bring a change of clothes so they can shower and change following the examination.

Some evidence can still be collected if the person has showered and/or changed and having done so should not discourage a person from getting a forensic exam.

The **medical examination** portion of the visit involves the SANE taking a medical history, documenting details of the sexual violence, identifying any injuries or potential infections, taking urine samples to test for pregnancy, and offering an optional internal (pelvic and/or anal) exam. Additional STI testing will take place two weeks after the violence, and if needed, six weeks, three months, six months and a year after the initial exam.

The **forensic** portion of the exam (if requested by the victim/survivor) is to collect any evidence, which can

be used if the victim/survivor decides to report to police. This is sometimes referred to as a “rape kit”. It may involve collecting clothing, taking pictures of injuries, and taking swabs. Nurses are also able to detect injuries using a UV light. The victim/survivor can have the forensic exam done and decide later if they want to report the assault to police. Drug testing is also available for victims/survivors who know or believe that a drug was used to perpetrate the assault. The collected evidence will be sent to an RCMP lab, however, oftentimes the person won't get the results unless they engage in a criminal justice process.

*Physical and forensic exams can be re-traumatizing for some. As such, the victim/survivor can choose to stop either at any time.*

The SANE can provide fact or expert testimony in court if the victim/survivor chooses to report, charges are laid, and the case goes to court.

## Sexual assault centres

There are three sexual assault centres in Nova Scotia: Avalon Sexual Assault Centre (Halifax), Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association, and Colchester Sexual Assault Centre (Truro). These centres exist to support victims/survivors of sexual violence, educate the public, and advocate to end sexual violence.

## Sexual health centres

The Halifax Sexual Health Centre provides services including: pelvic examinations, emergency contraception, pregnancy testing, tests and treatments for Sexually Transmitted Infection (STIs), anonymous HIV testing, and counselling regarding pregnancy options, including abortion referrals.

Sydney, Stellarton, Amherst, Sheet Harbour, and Bridgewater also have sexual health centres that can provide information, support and referrals, but not clinical services.

## First nations health centres

Each of the 13 Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia has its own health centre.

## Youth Medical Considerations

**Duty To Report** If the person you are supporting is under 16 (or under 19 when the person who perpetrated the violence is a parent or guardian), then you are legally obligated to alert the local child protection agency, even if this information was told to you in confidence.

**Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner** If the person you are supporting is pre-pubescent, it is recommended that they see a SANE within 24 hours as evidence can be difficult to collect. People of any gender can access this service so long as they are 13 years and older. Avalon's SANE program serves all ages.

**Sea Star Child and Youth Advocacy Centre** Sea Star is a Halifax-based coordinated services for children and youth who have experienced abuse. Sea Star is a child/youth friendly setting. They receive referrals from Department of Community Services (DCS) or through the police.

**Youth Health Centres** Youth Health Centres provide information and referrals, advice and counselling, and some clinical services in regards to all aspects of youth health and wellbeing. There are 52 Youth Health Centre locations across the provinces, most of which are located in high schools

## Walk-in and university clinics and family doctors

If there isn't a local SANE program or Sexual Health Centre, the victim/survivor may want to visit a walk-in clinic or family physician. If they are a university student they may also have access to an on-campus health centre.

## Telecare 811

Connects Nova Scotians with a registered nurse who can answer health related questions and present health care options. This service is available 24/7 and free of charge.

## 211 Nova Scotia

A 211 operator can answer questions about, and connect the caller with, community and social services across the province. This service is available 24/7 and free of charge.

# If the victim/survivor chooses to report to police

When a victim/survivor chooses to report to police there will be a series of steps. How the process unfolds will depend on the perceived seriousness of the crime and whether the accused pleads guilty or not guilty.

The entire process may be completed in a number of days if the accused pleads guilty, or it can take several months, or even years. There are often lengthy periods between each court hearing.

## Reporting to Police

### Police Investigation

If the person chooses to report the assault to police, the police will first take a statement. This statement is videotaped and will be used as the person's "official statement" in court. However, the videotaped statement does not eliminate the need for the person to give testimony in court.

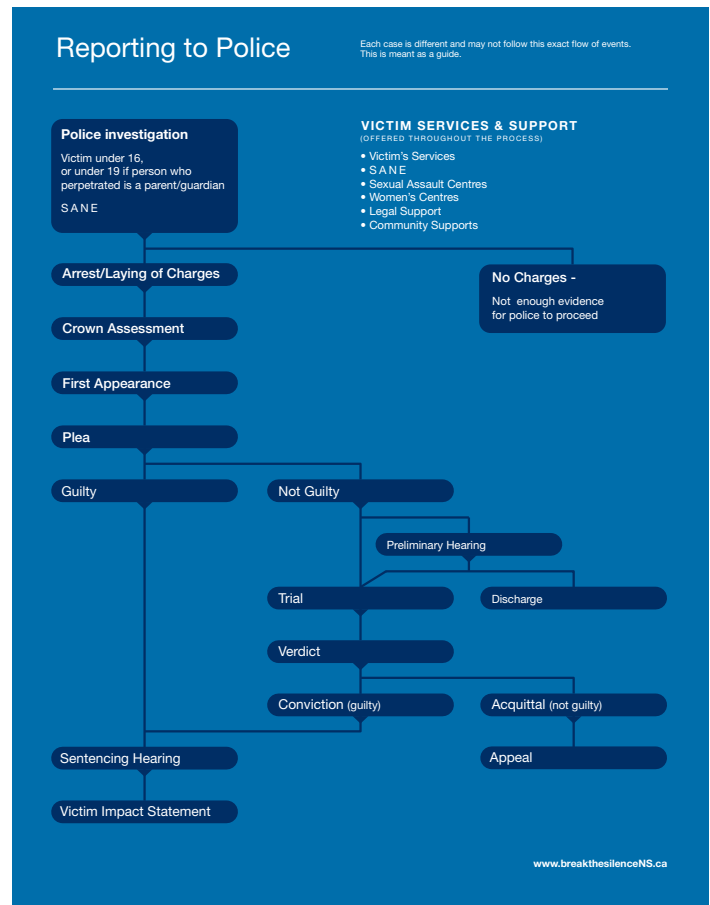
The victim/survivor can bring a support person to the police station, but the support person cannot be in the room when the victim/survivor gives their statement. The statement and any further communication with the police about the event will be disclosed to both the Crown and the Defence lawyers and can be used or shared in court by either party.

If the sexual violence happened recently, the police will also collect evidence, which could include clothes, items from the location in which the assault took place, and pictures of any marks or injuries. They may also interview any witnesses who were present or have relevant information.

The police will then question the person who perpetrated the violence (called "the suspect" during the investigation and the "accused" if charges are laid).

*The officer in charge should communicate with the victim/survivor throughout the investigation.*

It is the police who lay charges and the Crown Attorney who pursues those charges. The Crown Attorney is the lawyer who represents the province, not the victim/survivor, in court. This means that the Crown Attorney is not the victim's/survivor's lawyer and the victim/survivor does not get their own lawyer.



A victim/survivor can hire a lawyer for support and guidance but they cannot represent them at most court hearings, such as Trial and Sentencing. Some people may opt to get legal advice regarding, for example, their statement to police, or what they could reasonably expect before they report.

### No Charges

The victim/survivor still has access to all supports, including victim services.

If the police do not lay charges it is because they do not believe they have enough evidence to proceed.

### Arrest/Laying of Charges

Charges will only be laid if police determine that there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe the person committed an offence.

If the person is arrested, they are usually released within 24 hours, sometimes with an order not to

contact the victim/survivor. If police do not release the accused, they must be brought before the court for a bail hearing within 24 hours. A bail hearing is where a judge decides if the person charged with an offence should be released or held in custody until trial. If the person you are supporting is worried that the accused will try to contact or harm them, they should contact the Crown Attorney (<http://novascotia.ca/pps/contact.asp>).

### **Victim Requests that Charges are Withdrawn**

If the victim/survivor decides that they do not want charges laid or want charges withdrawn, the police and/or the Crown Attorney should respect their request. If the police do lay charges, only the Crown Attorney can drop or change those charges later on. Though the victim/survivor cannot technically withdraw charges after they are laid, they can ask the Crown not to proceed. However, if the victim/survivor (who is the key witness) withdraws from the legal process, it is likely that the Crown will drop the charges.

### **Victim Services and Supports**

The Provincial Victim Services Program, through its four regional offices, provides information, support, and assistance as a case moves through the criminal justice system. The victim/survivor has access to these supports throughout the process, even if charges aren't laid. The victim/survivor can also access other supports including women's or sexual assault centres, SANE, and legal and community supports.

### **Crown Assessment**

The Crown will proceed with the case if they believe there is a realistic prospect of conviction and think it is in the public interest to do so. This is a higher legal test than the one that the police use in deciding whether to lay a charge.

### **First Appearance**

The first appearance is the first time the accused will be in front of a judge.

If the suspect self-identifies as Aboriginal (they do not have to have status or live on reserve), the judge, Defence, or Crown may request what is called a Gladue Report. Prepared by an independent Gladue Writer, the report is a pre-sentencing or bail hearing report that

takes into consideration factors such as the person's history with residential schools, child welfare, and sexual or physical abuse. It also takes into account any learning disabilities, mental illness, fetal alcohol syndrome, trauma, or substance use or abuse. It also includes the impacts of racism and poverty on the person's life. The report can also include if the person has taken part in traditions, celebrations, or family gatherings such as fishing, sweat lodges, dances or cultural events. It will also identify sentencing options that are available in the person's community.

The Gladue writer may interview the victim/survivor. This process may be difficult as they will have to re-tell their story in detail. The report is taken into consideration when the judge determines eligibility for bail as well as a sentence.

### **Plea**

The accused pleads guilty or not guilty.

### **Not Guilty Plea**

Note: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that an accused person has the right to be brought to trial in a timely manner. In 2014/2015, the median case processing time for sexual assault cases in adult criminal courts in Canada was 310 days, a decrease of 14 days or 4% from the year prior (Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 252-0055).

### *Preliminary Hearing*

The first time the victim/survivor will have to appear in court as a witness is for the preliminary hearing. This is where the judge decides if there is enough evidence to go to trial. The accused will also be present and other witnesses may be called.

Note: There is not always a preliminary hearing.

### *Trial*

If the person pleads not guilty there will be a trial where both the Crown and Defence lawyers will ask the victim/survivor and other witnesses or experts what happened before, during, and after the incident.

Because of the presumption of innocence the accused is not required to testify on the stand and be cross-examined. The trial will take place before a jury or judge.

A trial can be a difficult, stressful, and triggering experience. If a person chooses to report sexual violence and it goes to trial, it is incredibly important that they have a strong support network and practice self-care before, during, and after the trial.

The victim/survivor can ask the Crown to request courtroom aids such as a translator or a screen to block their view of the accused.

In Canada there is a law referred to as the “rape shield” law, which prevents Defence lawyers from using a victim’s/survivor’s sexual history against them in court. Unfortunately this law can be overturned or ignored.

### *Verdict*

The formal decision or finding of guilt or innocence made by the judge or jury.

In order for someone to be found guilty of a sexual assault, three things must be proven in court:

- Occurrence – that the assault actually happened.
- Identity – that the accused person is the one who perpetrated the assault.
- Consent - that it was not consensual.

The judge or jury may take hours, days or much longer to reach a verdict.

### *Acquittal*

If the jury/judge decide the accused is not guilty, they will be acquitted (set free).

### *Conviction*

If the jury/judge find the accused is guilty, they will be convicted. This means they will receive a sentence. A sentence is the punishment given to a person convicted of a crime.

### *Appeal*

Both the Crown and Defence are able to appeal the verdict or sentence within 30 days.

### **Guilty Plea**

If the person pleads guilty there will be no trial, but instead a sentencing hearing where the judge will impose a sentence.

### *Sentencing Hearing*

The judge determines an appropriate sentence for the offender (accused who has been determined guilty). A sentence may include jail time, community service, and/or registry with the National Sex Offender Registry.

### *Victim Impact Statement*

The victim/survivor will have the opportunity to file a “victim impact statement” in court outlining how the sexual violence has impacted their life. The victim/survivor can choose whether or not they want to read the statement in court.

### **Can the accused claim that they mistakenly thought they had consent?**

In court, the accused may claim that they thought they had consent, and the judge may accept this argument.

According to Canadian law, a person **cannot** claim that they thought the victim/survivor consented if:

- Being intoxicated led them to believe that the victim/survivor had consented;
- They were “reckless” about determining if the victim/survivor was consenting.
- They ignored cues that there was no consent.
- They didn’t “take proper steps” to see if there was consent.

The accused also cannot claim that the act was consensual because they waited a sufficient amount of time after a “no” and the victim/survivor did not express a “no” again. If someone communicates no, it is a no until the person agrees to the sexual act.

### **Why might people be hesitant to report to police?**

1. Victims/survivors are often not believed and are blamed for what happened to them.
2. It is rare for a sexual assault charge to result in a conviction and a victim/survivor may feel that it is pointless and will only cause further emotional distress.
3. It can be re-traumatizing to tell your story to authority figures such as police officers and lawyers.
4. The victim/survivor most often knows the person who violated them.



5. Some people do not view what has happened to them as sexual violence.
6. Many blame themselves.
7. Gaps in memory caused by stress or trauma can make reporting sexual violence challenging, even if it occurred recently.
8. It can be difficult to establish physical evidence of sexual violence.

## Legal Supports

Legal supports include Nova Scotia Legal Aid, Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network (MLSN) and the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia.

### *MLSN*

The Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network (MLSN) is a support system offered free of charge for Indigenous people involved in Nova Scotia's criminal justice system.

Staff can provide support to victims/survivors whether or not charges have been laid. An Indigenous person who is a victim/survivor of a crime can either be referred to or contact the MLSN directly and will receive a response within 48 hours.

The MLSN has two Aboriginal Victim Support Workers (one for Cape Breton and one for the mainland) who can guide a victim/survivor through the court process, help them prepare for court, and assist with victim impact statements.

Cape Breton – 1-877-379-2042  
Mainland Nova Scotia – (902) 895-1141

### *Nova Scotia Legal Aid*

Nova Scotia Legal Aid (NSLA) provides a range of free legal services including information and legal advice, both over the phone and in person. There are several ways to apply to NSLA. You can apply on-line (<https://www.nslegalaid.ca/online-application/>) or contact the office where you live to apply in person or by phone (<https://www.nslegalaid.ca/legal-aid-offices/>)

### *Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia*

This non-profit organization provides free legal information to all Nova Scotians. Their phone line is open Monday to Friday 9:30 am to 5:00 pm.

Legal Information Line: 1-800-665-9779  
<http://www.legalinfo.org/>

## Emotional Wellness

There is no right or wrong way for a victim/survivor to deal with sexual violence.

A victim/survivor can feel a range of emotions and anything they feel or don't feel is okay. Download the **Sexual Violence: An Introduction** handout for more information on some common responses to sexual violence.

Having someone to talk to whom they trust, who believes them, and who can help them sort through their emotions, reactions and options is a key element of someone's healing process.

It is crucial for the person to know that they are not alone, and having people they can share with (including other people who have survived sexual violence) helps them to do that.

If they aren't ready to talk about what happened or don't feel they have someone they can talk to, another option is to journal. There are also online resources for people who have survived sexual violence. Download the **Enhancing the Wellbeing of Support People** handout for more information on both self and community care.

### *Counselling*

The person you are supporting may want to talk to a non-judgmental, compassionate, trauma informed professional who has been trained to support those who have been sexually violated.

Anything the person says to a counsellor is strictly confidential. There are, however, some circumstances where a counsellor has to share information. For example, the disclosure of child abuse, if someone plans to seriously harm themselves or others, or if someone plans to kill themselves.

### **Sexual Assault Centre Counselling**

All three sexual assault centres in Nova Scotia offer both individual and group counselling for those who are 16+.

Avalon and Antigonish provide counselling to victims/survivors who are women, transgender or gender non-identified and Colchester provides counselling to victims/survivors of all genders.

**Antigonish:**

<http://awrcsasa.ca/sexual-assault-services/group-for-survivors-of-sexual-trauma/>

**Colchester:**

<http://www.colchestersac.ca/programs.htm>

**Avalon (Halifax region):**

<http://avaloncentre.ca/services/counselling-services/>

**University and NSCC Counselling**

If the person is a student at a Nova Scotia university, they will have access to free counselling through their institution's counselling centre/counsellor. The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) does not have an on-campus centre; students first must set up an appointment with the Manager of Financial Aid and Student Counselling and ask for a referral to off campus psychological services. University counselling centres or students' unions may offer group counselling and peer-support programs.

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) students can access supports and professional counselling through their student services department. Follow this link for the phone number for each campus: <http://www.nsc.ca/services/contact-us/index.asp> Students can also access external 24-hour confidential counselling through the Student Support Program: Telephone: 1-800-268-5211 (Canada-wide). There is no cost for either.

**Private Counselling**

If the victim/survivor has the financial means, a health and dental benefits plan, or Employee and Family Assistance Plan (EFAP), they may want to visit a private counsellor.

Visit this website to find a local psychologist who specializes in supporting victims/survivors of sexual violence: <http://apns.ca/search-psychologist/>

Check out this website for a list of Registered Social Workers who have private practices in Nova Scotia, including those who work specifically with victims/survivors of sexual violence: <http://nsasw.in1touch.org/client/roster/clientRosterView.html?clientRosterId=149>

**Mental Health Emergency**

*Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team*

If the person is in crisis, they can call the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team, which offers 24/7 province-wide telephone support and mobile response within the Halifax Region. In Halifax call (902) 429-8167 and outside of Halifax call 1-888-429-8167.

Within the Halifax Region a plain clothes police officer will accompany the team. The police car is unmarked and these officers have additional training in mental health. If the person is in crisis and lives outside of the Halifax region, and the Mobile Crisis Team believes that they are in need of an in-person wellness check, they will call the RCMP.

The Cape Breton Regional Hospital, located in Sydney, offers a 24/7 Emergency Crisis Program where people in crisis can receive emergency mental health care. Call (902)-567-7767.

**Mental Health Supports/Counselling for Youth**

- Sexual Assault Centre — Free counselling for youth 16 and up.
- Kids Help Phone — The Kids Help Phone provides phone or web counselling to youth who are 20-years-old and under. The 24/7 service is free, anonymous, confidential, and nonjudgmental. For more information visit: <https://www.kidshelpphone.ca/>
- IWK Mental Health Services — Located in Halifax, the IWK Health Centre provides a wide variety of mental health and addictions services for people under the age of 19. Call 902.464.4110 in Halifax or 1.888.470.5888 toll free and ask for Central Referral to determine if someone is eligible for service and to book an appointment. This initial call will take 15-20 minutes. For more information visit <http://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/mental-health/mental-health-and-addictions-services-iwk>

There are many groups and organizations that support the wellbeing of young people. For a list of youth supports in your region, check out the "Where to Get Help" section at: [www.breakthesilenceNS.ca](http://www.breakthesilenceNS.ca)

## Indigenous Mental Health Supports

- **Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Crisis and Referral Center  
1-855-379-2099**

The Mi'kmaw Crisis and Referral phone line is available toll free 24/7 to Mi'kmaw people across the province. The Center also provides online support through the Eskasoni Crisis Worker Facebook account. Both are services of Eskasoni Mental Health.

- **Indian Residential School Crisis Line  
1-866-925-4419**

This 24-hour phone line provides support to former residential school students in crisis.

- **Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centres (MFHC)**

There are two Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centres (MFHC): one in Waycobah First Nation, which serves Cape Breton/Unama'ki, and one in Millbrook First Nation, which serves the mainland. The MFHCs serve Mi'kmaw people, including children, impacted by family violence and are open 24/7.

Waycobah Family Healing Centre

Crisis line: 1-800-565-3440

Telephone: 902-756-3440

Millbrook Family Healing Centre

Crisis line: 1-800-565-3440

Telephone: 902-863-8483

- **Non-Insured Health Benefits Program**

Provides status First Nations and recognized Inuit people with financial coverage for counselling and prescription drugs. The counselling coverage is for "mental health counselling to address crisis situations when no other mental health services are available and/or being provided" (Guide to Mental Health Counselling Services, First Nations and Inuit Health, Government of Canada). Only mental health professionals who are enrolled with NIHB will be covered. For more information visit: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/nihb-ssna/benefit-prestation/gener-qa-qr-eng.php>.

For a list of eligible mental health providers, contact Health Canada's Atlantic office by phone 1-866-225-0709 or in person at the Maritime Centre (1505 Barrington Street), 18th Floor, Halifax.

- **Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program (IRS RHSP)**

Provides financial coverage for enrolled psychologists and social workers to residential school survivors regardless of status. To be eligible, the school the survivor attended must be named in the 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Coverage is also available to the survivor's spouse, anyone raised by or in the home of a residential school survivor, and any relation of a residential school survivor who has experienced the impacts of inter-generational trauma caused by residential schools.

To access coverage, or for more information, contact Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program Atlantic regions at 1-866-414-8111 or in person at the Maritime Centre (1505 Barrington Street), 18th Floor, Halifax.

- **Health Canada brochure to help people cope with emotional reactions to residential school memories:** [http://healthy Canadans.gc.ca/alt/pdf/publications/healthy-living-vie-saine/mental-health-sante-mentale/coping-emotional-faire-face-emotivite-eng.pdf](http://healthy Canadians.gc.ca/alt/pdf/publications/healthy-living-vie-saine/mental-health-sante-mentale/coping-emotional-faire-face-emotivite-eng.pdf)

For more information on both the Non-Insured Health Benefits and Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support programs check out the Guide to Mental Health Counselling Services: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/nihb-ssna/benefit-prestation/crisis-urgence/guide-eng.php#a31>

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**For more information contact:**

Sexual Violence Prevention & Supports  
strategy@novascotia.ca  
902-424-6841

**[breakthesilencens.ca/training](https://breakthesilencens.ca/training)**

## Sources

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Sexual Health Nova Scotia

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