



COMMUNITY LIAISON UNIT

COLUMBUS DIVISION OF POLICE • STRATEGIC RESPONSE BUREAU

Information of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Stalking

Introduction:

Sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking are acts intended to intimidate, hurt, humiliate, degrade, dominate and control another person. If something like this has happened to you, it is important to remember that whatever you did or did not do; it was not your fault. The person that did this to you is to blame; you did not deserve it or ask for it.

If you have been a victim of crime, you have rights.

The following information is intended as a basic guide for victims of violent crime in Franklin County. Sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking are violent crimes frequently committed against women, men and children.

Crime victims are often afraid to talk about what has happened to them. They may be unsure how the court system works, or they may be afraid of what will happen to them, their family, or the perpetrator. While these are common and normal fears, there are places that you can go for assistance if you have been the victim of sexual assault, domestic violence or stalking.

Furthermore, the agencies listed in this booklet are sensitive to cultural issues and have experience working with diverse populations. While respecting the law, they will attempt to provide you with services or refer you to programs familiar with your situation.

As a victim you may be eligible to receive compensation through the Ohio Victims of Crime Compensation Program. Contact this program directly for more information.

Remember - you are not responsible for the abuser's behavior and cannot control or change their behavior.

Basic Definitions:

Sexual Assault: Sexual assault occurs when someone forces or coerces you into a sex act against your wishes (without your consent).

Domestic Violence: Domestic violence occurs when your spouse, intimate partner, or family or household member threatens with words and/or weapons, attempts to cause, or causes you bodily harm (for example: hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, biting or choking).

Stalking: Stalking occurs when someone repeatedly invades your personal space and privacy. These repeated acts may cause you mental distress and/ or fear of bodily harm (for example: they follow you, call you, threaten you, or contact you repeatedly).

All of the above are considered crimes of violence. If you are a victim of any of these or other violent crimes, make sure you are physically safe and call 911. If you have been injured, seek medical attention.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF A SEXUAL ASSAULT

Seek medical care at a local emergency department for any injuries you have (or may not know you have). The emergency department staff can also collect physical evidence, and they will document any injuries if you wish.

Most local emergency departments offer comprehensive and supportive services to victims of sexual assault. Most emergency departments have Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE'S), who are specially trained in the field of forensic nursing and the collection of evidence, and volunteer advocates, who specialize in supporting sexual assault survivors. Both can assist you through the hospital process.

For the best evidence collection results: DO NOT bathe, douche, brush your teeth, go to the bathroom, smoke, or change clothes before going to the hospital. If you must change your clothes, bring the clothes you were wearing at the time of the assault with you.

If you are the victim of sexual assault, contact the Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio (SARNCO) 24-hour Helpline at (614) 267-7020, or toll free through the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) at 1-800-656-HOPE.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

If you are a victim of domestic violence, call the police and contact CHOICES 24-hour Hotline & Shelter, (614) 224-4663 or the Columbus City Prosecutor's Office Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit, (614) 645-6232, Monday -Friday 8:00 a.m. -4:30 p.m. Shelter may be available to you at CHOICES.

Your safety and the safety of your children are more important than anything else. If you are afraid that your partner may hurt you - Develop a safety plan:

- Plan ahead for someplace to go if your partner threatens you or makes you feel unsafe. Go to a neighbor, friend or family member you can trust to help you and your children.
- Decide on a door or window to exit quickly and safely to escape.
- Do not confront or challenge your partner if he/she is intoxicated or on drugs.
- Try to set aside some cash, extra clothing, extra keys for the house and cars, and any important documents for you and your family (for example: social security cards, birth certificates, divorce documents, passports, visas and immigration papers). If you need to leave the house in a hurry, think about where you can safely keep these things (perhaps a friend's, relative's or neighbor's house).

IF YOU HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF STALKING

- Call the police and make a report whenever an incident occurs.
- Contact the Columbus City Prosecutor's Office Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit, (614) 645-6232, Monday-Friday, 8 AM-4:30 PM.

In Franklin County, criminal cases are heard in either:

- Franklin County Municipal Court - this court is responsible for misdemeanor cases.
- Franklin County Court of Common Pleas - this court is responsible for felony cases.

If you are not sure whether you are a victim of a misdemeanor or felony crime, you can call either prosecutor's offices listed. You must have either the defendant's name or the case number when you call.

A legal advocate or victim witness assistant will be available to help you through the entire court process.

IMPORTANT:

- Always wear proper clothes to court! If in doubt, call your prosecutor or victim witness assistant.
- Try to find someone to take care of your children while you are in court, or bring someone with you to watch your children. Some judges do not allow children in the courtroom. More importantly, certain information discussed in court can be very traumatic for children.