



*RECOVERING FROM  
SEXUAL ASSAULT*

---

*A HANDBOOK AND GUIDE ON WHAT TO  
DO TO RECOVER FROM SEXUAL ASSAULT*

**FOR SUPPORT SERVICES AND  
MORE INFORMATION**

---

- The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) National Hotline (open 24 hours/day): 1-800-656-HOPE
- Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ACASA): 1-866-63-ACASA (22272) or [www.acasa.us](http://www.acasa.us)
- National Sexual Violence Recourse Center (NAVCR): [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)
- National Online Resource Center on Sexual Violence Against Women (VAWnet): [www.vawnet.org](http://www.vawnet.org)
- Arkansas' Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis Hotline: 1-800-977-5776

## ARKANSAS CRIME VICTIMS REPARATIONS BOARD

---

The Arkansas Legislature created the Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Act with Act 817 in 1987. The legislation provides a method of compensating and assisting victims and their dependents that have suffered personal injury or death as the result of a violent crime, including sexual assault. The fund assists victims or their dependents with medical expenses, funeral expenses, lost wages and psychological counseling.

Under Act 396 of 1991, the Crime Victim Reparations Board will reimburse a medical facility for costs incurred in performing a medical-legal examination on sexual assault victims. This section is an overview of the Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Act.

The eligibility criteria for the sexual assault reimbursement program are:

- Treatment sought and rendered within 72 hours
- The 72-hour time limitation maybe waived if victim is a minor or if the Crime Victims Reparation Board finds that a good cause exists for the failure to meet the 72-hour requirement
- A sexual assault victim does not have to participate in the criminal justice system or cooperate with law enforcement in order to be provided with a forensic medical exam and to be reimbursed for charges incurred.

What is not covered:

- Ambulance
- Treatment
- Counseling
- Follow-up visits

The Arkansas Crime Victim Reparations Act will pay the following:

- Overall maximum is \$10,000/victim
- Medical expenses are paid at 65% of balance submitted, but if the provider accepts payment they are agreeing to accept as payment in full
- Mental health expenses are paid up to \$3,500 for out-patient treatment and \$3,500 for in-patient treatment
- Funeral expenses are paid up to \$7,500

One of the most positive aspects of the Arkansas Crime Victim Reparations Program is that a portion of the funding comes from individuals who commit crimes. A major source of revenue for the program is the assessment of court costs and fees.

The program also receives money through the Federal Victims of Crime Act as well as the court-ordered restitution collected from criminals.

Please apply for the compensation fund even if you are not sure you will qualify. Determination is made on a case-by-case review.

For more information, contact the Arkansas Crime Victim Reparations Board at 501-682-1020 or at 1-800-448-3014.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Introduction	2
The Facts about Sexual Violence	3
Medical Care	4
Emotional Aftermath of Sexual Assault	8
Rape- Related PTSD	9
Criminal Justice Procedures	10
Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Act	12
For Support Services or More Information	13

---

This booklet is intended as a supplemental resource for survivors of sexual violence. Local services should be contacted to obtain additional information and advocate assistance.

This project was supported by Grant # 2015-WR-AX-0030 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

## INTRODUCTION

---

If you or someone you know has been assaulted, the information in this booklet will be helpful in regards to the medical exams, follow up medical exams, emotional care and the legal system. It doesn't matter how or why the crime occurred. It doesn't matter if there were drugs or alcohol involved, where you were or your relationship to the perpetrator.

### **YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME.**

No one has the right to assault you. It is a crime that can and does happen to anyone.

### **IT IS NEVER YOUR FAULT.**

If you at any point don't understand what's happening, ask. The nurse, doctor, detective, prosecutor, or victim advocated are available to answer your questions. Please go to ACASA's website, [www.acasa.us](http://www.acasa.us), to locate the nearest victim assistance program in your area, or call toll-free 1-866-63-ACASAS (22272).

If you decide to report a sexual assault, call the police as soon as possible after the incident. If possible, do not bathe or shower, douche, brush your teeth, gargle, smoke, drink anything, go to the bathroom, wash your clothes, or touch anything connected to the assault. You may accidentally destroy evidence that is needed to support the case.

A uniformed officer will respond to the call and gather information about the assault. A detective will be assigned to conduct a more detailed interview and investigate. In small towns or rural areas, the uniform officer may also serve as the detective on the case.

You may have a friend or support person/advocate accompany you during the interview. If you have a friend or support person with you during an interview, they should not talk, they are there for support for you, not to answer questions or remind you of details.

If you would feel more comfortable talking with an investigator of the same sex, one is usually available upon request. The interview with the detective is conducted in private, but you may usually have a friend or support person with you.

This interview is one of the most important parts of the investigation. The questions that you are asked may be difficult and embarrassing to answer but it is important that you fully answer all of the questions.

If you don't understand a question or why it is being asked, request an explanation. Questions are designed to help you recall details for a complete statement and to aid in the investigation. Don't be surprised if the detective uses a tape recorder during the interview.

explain the criminal trial process, what to expect when you testify and what the defendant may use as a defense at the trial.

If any representative of the defendant contacts you, call the prosecutor or the detective. You are not required to talk to the defense attorney if they call you.

### The Arrest

When an arrest is made, if the suspect was not personally known to you, you may be asked to view a line-up or photo array to identify the suspect.

### Bond

The defendant has the right to have bond set. If bond can be met, the offender will be released until the trial. A no contact order may be issued as a condition of release. If the defendant contacts you to threaten or harass you in any way, immediately contact the police and the prosecutor.

### Plea-Bargaining

Plea-bargaining may take place between the prosecutor and the defense attorney after the defendant's initial hearing. The negotiation of a guilty plea often means that the charges will be reduced from the original charge. If a plea agreement is reached, this could mean no trial and sometimes a lesser sentence. If your case is plea-bargained, you have the right to be notified prior to the offer being made to the defendant. Discuss the terms of

the plea agreement with the prosecutor so that you understand why a plea agreement is being offered.

### Criminal Trial

Before the trial, the prosecutor may ask you to meet with him/her to review your police statement and explain how the case will be presented at trial. It is a good idea to visit the courtroom prior to the trial so that you are familiar with the layout. The defense chooses whether the trial will be held before a judge or before a jury. At the trial, you and other witnesses may be required to testify. In addition, the medical examination, laboratory analysis and the police investigation will be presented. It is important for the judge and/ or the jury to hear all of the evidence. Please note that the defendant does not have to testify at the trial.

At trial, the prosecutor will be presenting the evidence and questioning you and the other witnesses. You will be asked to give a complete account of the assault. The defense attorney will question you. Stay calm and answer the questions as they are asked. If you don't understand a question, it is okay to ask the attorney to repeat it or to say that you don't understand what is being asked.

If the defendant is found guilty, he has the right to appeal. However, a finding of not guilty cannot be appealed by the state. **A not guilty verdict does not mean that a crime has not occurred.**

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCEDURES

---

Sexual assault is a violent crime. Like all other violent crimes, it is the responsibility of the state to prosecute the offender on your behalf. Seeking police assistance and court action may involve you in a long complex process, but your determination can also reduce the chance that the same person will assault other people or re-assault you.

When you are discussing the attack with the police, detective or persecutor, don't be afraid to ask questions about any words or procedures that you don't understand. Write down all the names and the phone numbers of all the people who are working with you so you can call them if you have further questions or remember something that might be important to your case.

The sooner you report to the police the more likely it is for an arrest to be made. The officer that responds to your initial report will need a brief summary of what happened, where and when it occurred and background information on you. A description of the perpetrator may be dispatched to patrol officers.

An in-depth interview will be conducted in private with the detective who is assigned to your case. This is one of the most important parts of the case, so this interview will be detailed and thorough. If there are bruises or other signs of the attack that were not visible at the hospital, pictures may be taken.

The place that the incident occurred may be searched and examined for evidence such as fingerprints, stains, weapons, and other evidence. Do not touch or remove anything from the scene until this is done. If the perpetrator was not known to you, you may be asked to look at photographs or work with the police sketch artist to create a composite picture.

### Prosecution

When a crime is committed in Arkansas, it is considered a crime against the state. Prosecutor's Offices, not private lawyers, try criminal cases. You, the survivor, are a witness to the crime. You do not have to pay for the assistance of the Prosecutor's Office.

Sexual assault cases are difficult to prove in court without thorough evidence. This might mean there is not enough evidence to prove the case in court.

There is a possibility that the prosecutor will decide not to file charges. If you disagree with the decision or don't understand why the decision was made, ask for an explanation. This does not mean that the prosecutor thinks the report is false.

The Prosecutor's Office may interview you concerning the case. They may ask some of the same questions that the detective asked you. Remember, this is not because they don't believe you, but to clarify the details for themselves. If charges are filed, the Prosecutor or Victim Assistance Coordinator will

## THE FACTS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

---

- Victims of sexual violence do not invite or cause that assault to happen. Only the person initiating the sexually violent act is responsible.
- Sexual assaults are committed primarily out of anger and/or a need to feel powerful, to control and dominate another person.
- Victims of sexual violence are forced, coerced or manipulated to participate in unwanted sexual activity.
- Victims are usually traumatized by the assault. Friends and family members may also experience a trauma reaction.
- Sexual assault is a reportable crime. It is important for you to consider reporting so sexual offenders can be identified by the criminal justice system and the community.

In Arkansas, professionals are required to report the crime if the victim is a child or:

- Was assaulted by someone in a position of trust or authority (i.e., coaches, therapists, teachers)
- Is physically, emotionally, or mentally disadvantaged

Sexual assault, whether it happens to you or someone you know, is a major life-changing event. It can create roadblocks to normal life at home, at work, or at school, and affect relationships with friends, family, or co-workers.

### If You Have Been Sexually Assaulted

1. Get to a safe place.
2. Contact someone who can help you: a friend, the police, sexual assault services, any or all of the above.
3. Do not shower, drink or eat, go to the bathroom, brush your teeth, gargle, smoke, douche, or change your clothes. These activities destroy important physical evidence in the event that you decide to report to the police.
4. Get medical attention at the hospital ER or rape crisis center right away. Even if you don't want to report this to the police, you may have injuries you are not aware of. You may want to do what you can to prevent pregnancy or sexually-transmitted diseases. Physical evidence can be collected up to 72 hours after the assault (24 hours after for oral or anal penetration). Some evidence may still be collected after 96 hours.
5. The police can take you to the hospital or meet you there.
6. As soon as you have a quiet moment, write down everything that you remember happening, with as much detail as possible. This will help you with your own healing process and in any legal action you might decide to take.
7. **The assault was not your fault.** Whether or not you report to the police, talk to someone that is knowledgeable and trained in sexual assault issues so that you can start the process of recovering

## MEDICAL CARE

---

Whether or not you choose to report to the police, medical care is important to your physical and emotional recovery. A local hospital emergency room or rape crisis treatment center can provide immediate medical attention. You will be asked to sign a consent form to allow the medical personnel to examine, treat and administer medication.

### Why Immediate Medical Care is Important

Many survivors experience a variety of physical symptoms after the attack. Some of these are caused by physical abuse or violence while others result from the survivor's emotional distress.

- Soreness
- Muscle tension
- Headaches
- Stomach pains
- Nausea
- Sleep disturbance

Common gynecological symptoms:

- Vaginal discharge
- Itching
- Burning sensations
- Generalized pain
- Genital abrasions
- Genital lacerations
- Bleeding in the vaginal or anal area

Even if there is no discomfort or pain, you should seek medical attention. Many survivors are in shock for varying

amounts of time following the rape, and may not be as aware of their bodies and pain as they would be normally. For example, you may not be aware of an internal injury or bleeding for several hours or days or you may not remember that part of the assault. Because of the apparent shock, the danger of untreated internal injury and the possibility of a sexually transmitted disease (STD) and pregnancy, you must seek immediate medical attention.

Another concern is medical evidence. Unlike other crimes of violence, medical evidence should be collected within 72 hours after the attack. Even if you have decided not to make a police report, it is important to collect and record all possible evidence. If you change your mind later, then this evidence can be used in arrest and court proceedings. If the evidence is not collected within the allotted time, preserved and transferred to the authorities, then it is of little use in court.

### The General Examination

You will be asked about your general state of health and about significant past medical history (i.e., allergies, medication you take). The doctor or nurse examiner will perform a general physical exam, which includes recording blood pressure, weight and temperature, and examining ears, eyes, mouth, heart, lungs, response and limbs. The doctor or nurse examiner will ask specific questions about the sexual assault. These may include:

## RAPE-RELATED PTSD

---

Although some survivors do not experience this form of post-traumatic stress disorder, an awareness of its symptoms may help to guide you if you do.

The stages of rape related PTSD are:

1. Primary Crisis Stage (the sexual assault experience through the first few days):
  - Coldness
  - Clamminess
  - Numbness
  - Shock
  - Shaking, cold sweats, nausea, overreaction to noises
  - Loss of appetite
  - Change in facial expression
  - Loss of normal energy level
  - Sudden crying or the inability to cry
  - Confusion about time, loss of immediate memory
  - A sense of loss, violation
  - Feelings of loss of control over life, helplessness, shame or humiliation, alternating anger and sadness
  - Fears of dying, darkness, of being alone or isolated, of the rapist returning, of falling asleep
  - Unusual impatience, inability to handle normal routines, and changes in personality in handling relationships

### 2. Secondary Crisis Stage

- Continued difficulty in sleeping
- Continued loss of energy level
- Continued loss of appetite
- Feelings of intense anger and rage, or of being "overwhelmed"
- Depression
- Difficulties with intimate relationships
- Withdrawal from sexual activity
- Change in feelings about physical appearance
- Continued impatience and inappropriate displays of anger
- Excessive and persistent fear of something associated with the sexual assault (knives, cars, death, people following behind, sex of the assailant, etc.)

### 3. Third Crisis Stage

Some reactions may remain, but if you have had help, the sexual assault will no longer be on your mind. The sexual assault no longer dominates your life, and you will begin to feel more

## THE EMOTIONAL AFTERMATH

Sexual assault traumatizes the survivor, spouse, partner, family members and friends. Sexual assault elicits physical and emotional reactions in all survivors, which continue long after the immediate danger has passed. Sexual assault survivors share certain feelings about themselves and those around them, but the degree to which an individual experiences the emotional reaction varies. Recovery comes from regaining control over your life and from receiving support and understanding from family and friends.

Sexual assault survivors not only experience difficulties in sleeping but also may have nightmares and feelings of rage or shame, and of loss. Many survivors experience fears of being alone and of being around men, and have difficulty with present and future sexual relationships. Often family, close friends, and lovers are not able to deal with the sexual assault, which directly affects the survivor. You can make a positive step forward by communicating with people, who care about you, and who want to assist you in your healing.

### Professional Counselors Are Available

As a survivor of sexual assault you may experience crisis symptoms, which respond best to early crisis intervention. It is important that you use the available community mental health counseling,

advocacy, and family/friend support. The crisis intervention counselor's goal is to help you focus on the help you need, your future decisions, how to protect yourself, and how to take positive control over your life.

### Recommendations

In addition to seeking medical help after sexual assault, you should be aware of:

- The availability of professional counselors.
- The value of supportive friends and family, who can help you cope positively with the sexual assault experience.
- The benefits of rest, regular meals, exercise, and maintaining as normal a daily routine as possible.
- Rape related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the situational crisis experienced by survivors and the important people in your life: family, spouse, partner. Studies have shown that immediate crisis counseling will help resolve this trauma positively, in the least possible amount of time.

- The length of time between the rape and the examination
- Sexual acts that were performed during the rape (vaginal intercourse, oral intercourse, anal intercourse, degree of penetration, whether a condom was used, and if ejaculation occurred)
- Date of last menstrual cycle
- Your method of birth control
- The last date and time you had consensual intercourse
- Any significant actions after the assault (showering, douching, changing clothes)

It is very important to tell the doctor or nurse examiner what happened so that they can provide you with the proper treatment and obtain evidence of the assault.

You have the right to have an advocate with you during the medical exam for support, to answer questions, and to ask for a break, if you need one.

### The Pelvic Examination

The pelvic examination is similar to an annual examination and pap smear. The doctor or nurse examiner will check external pelvic and internal genital areas for tears, cuts, bruises, or other signs that force was used. This will be noted in the medical report.

There will also be an internal exam done to collect evidence and check for tears, abrasions, and other injuries. A speculum will be inserted and smears and cultures

will be taken from the vagina to test for semen, sperm cells, and STDs.

Doctors and nurse examiners will routinely perform an anal examination during a rape examination. The doctor inserts a gloved, lubricated index finger into the anal opening to feel for tears, or abrasions. If there is evidence of anal rape, then the doctor will take smears and cultures from the anal canal to test for sperm cells and semen. This test is slightly uncomfortable, and pressure can be relieved during this brief exam by breathing slowly through an open mouth.

### Other Possible Tests

1. **Fingernail scrapings:** If you scratched or touched the perpetrator, any material found underneath the fingernails may be matched to the rapist, his clothing or things found at the scene of the crime. This may help identify the rapist or locate the exact place of the crime.
2. **Wood's Lamp Exam:** In a dark room this lamp causes semen and other substances left on the body or clothing to glow. The fluorescence is not evidence, but it suggests areas of the body or clothing that should be examined more carefully.
3. **Public Hair Exam:** This test includes combing the pubic area for hairs, which may have come from the perpetrator. These hairs, if found, can be matched with hairs later gathered from the rapist to help prove his identity.

4. Several of your pubic hairs will be removed to compare with any loose ones. If indicated, appropriate photographs of the assaulted areas may be requested.

You can refuse any part of the exam that feels uncomfortable to you.

### Testing For STDs

There is a possibility that you may have contracted a sexually transmitted disease from the assailant. STDs cannot be diagnosed immediately, but the doctor or nurse examiner may take blood tests and cultures to aid in the diagnosis. There are preventative medications available that may be offered to you. If you choose to take these medications as a preventive measure, cultures may not be required. Be sure to tell the doctor or nurse examiner if you are allergic to any medication.

If you take preventive medication at the hospital, it is unlikely that you will contract STDs from the assault, but you must have follow-up tests. Your private physician or the hospital will arrange for follow-up testing.

There tests are needed because often there are no outward signs that you have contracted an STD. Because gonorrhea and syphilis can greatly harm the body and the reproductive system as well as endanger life, you need to be retested at the right times. In addition, herpes is often mistaken for a yeast infection. Herpes symptoms may occur as early as

two weeks after exposure, but may never occur at all. Also, follow-up tests show that there is not an STD present, it is possible to infect someone else through oral, anal, or genital contact.

Free tests and treatment are available at public health clinics or at women's clinics.

### Pregnancy Testing

If you were not using some form of birth control at the time of the assault, there is concern that you may become pregnant. Although it is not certain that you will become pregnant as a result of the assault, the doctor or nurse should talk to you about methods to prevent pregnancy. If you know or suspect that you are already pregnant, you must tell the doctor or nurse examiner.

Before you are given pregnancy-preventing drugs, you must give a urine sample to determine if you were pregnant before the attack.

If you decide to exercise other options, medical professionals can provide information about referrals. It is important for you to discuss your choice with your doctors and counselor. You may also want to talk it over with family and friends.

### Before Leaving the Emergency Room

If possible you should read the medical report, in order to request any important

changed or additions. Often bruises do not appear for several hours or days after an injury, but the doctor or nurse examiner should note any soreness or tenderness.

If possible take a change of clothing with you, as the police may collect your clothing for evidence; (especially underpants and articles with semen or blood stains). The hospital may provide a shower after the examination and under garments to wear home.

The nurse or the doctor will instruct you on the care of your injuries, STD follow-up information, and medication, if prescribed. The police may wish to question you further, and might ask you to come with them to the station. You have the right to make an appointment to meet them at a later time if you feel unable to continue.

In any case, you should read the completed police report carefully and make any needed additions or corrections. You should write down the telephone numbers and names of the police contacts, the investigating officer, the detective who will be handling the case, the doctor or nurse examiner who examined you, and your counselor or advocate.

You may want to arrange for a safe place to stay for the night. If you were assaulted in your home, you might want to arrange to stay at a friend's place, with your family, in a shelter or in a hotel. If you want to return to your home, you

might want to arrange for a friend or a family member to stay with you. If an advocate was not with you at the hospital, please contact a hotline or mental health center for counseling and advocacy before or immediately after leaving the hospital or police station, and make an appointment for the next day, or earlier, if possible.

You might need to arrange for transportation from the hospital to the place where you are staying, with family, friends, or the police. If you called the police, they may provide transportation for you from the hospital or police station to your destination.

Once in safe surroundings you can take a bath, wash your hair, eat a good meal, and try to rest.