



HANDBOOK on

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# SEXUAL VIOLENCE

A resource guide to  
LEGISLATION, POLICIES, SERVICES  
and more



Women's Department  
Ministry of Human Development,  
Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation  
Belize  
2012

# **Hand Book** **on** **Sexual Violence**

A resource guide to legislations,  
policies, services and more



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The handbook was developed for the Women's Department by Consultant, Martha Carrillo and edited by Icilda Humes and Cynthia Williams.

## Foreword

In an effort to provide more educational resources to its clients and the general public, the Women's Department has over the years developed a series of handbooks on gender-based violence and legal rights.

In 2009, the Department through public consultations recognized that there was dire need to advance the advocacy and public education surrounding the issue of sexual violence. Through the UN Secretary General's *UNite Campaign to end Violence Against Women*, the Women's Department was able to access support to accelerate its efforts on sexual violence education through sexual violence forums and other public education initiatives. Through these efforts, it was recognized that a handbook to allow individuals to access information whenever they needed to and at their convenience was needed.

Sexual violence is still taboo in Belize. It's existence is often denied and its impacts are often ignored. The Women's Department remains committed to championing the fight against sexual violence in Belize through the enforcement of laws and policies, education on social justices and provision of support services.

Icilda Humes  
Director  
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2012

## Introduction

Sexual violence refers to any violence—physical or psychological—that targets sexuality or is enacted by sexual means, including; rape and attempted rape, forcing a person to strip naked in public, coercing two subjects to perform sexual acts on one another or harm one another in a sexual manner. All types involve victims who do not consent, or who are unable to consent or refuse to allow the act. It constitutes a profound violation of the body and person and is usually carried out in order to use control and dominance over the survivor and to degrade and demean the survivor. Anyone can experience sexual violence, but most victims are female. The person responsible for the violence is typically male and is usually someone known to the victim.

Sexual violence continues to be one of the most horrific forms of violence against women in the Caribbean including Belize. Access to protection and justice for survivors continues to be a challenge. Under-reporting of all forms of sexual violence due to lack of confidence in the police and justice system as well as fear poses barriers for survivors seeking protection and justice. Assessments conducted by UN Women (formerly UNIFEM) in the region indicate high incidence of sexual violence and low prosecution rates. Consequently, the Women's Department has advanced its efforts to educate the public on the issue of sexual violence.

### The Situation and Response

The Ministry of Health's 2010 National Gender-based Surveillance report indicates that there were a total of 1,227 cases of reported domestic violence in Belize in that year. Even though there are laws which prohibit rape, sexual harassment and marital rape, few offenders are charged and convicted and there continues to be a critical situation of under-reporting in Belize. The Women's Department as a part of the UN Women project entitled "Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action for ending Gender-based Violence in the Caribbean" has undertaken a number of initiatives in Belize focusing on ending sexual violence including the development of Sexual Violence Protocols, training for the Police and a media campaign. This Sexual Violence Handbook seeks to equip women and persons providing support to survivors with important information on how to respond appropriately and effectively to end sexual violence.

# What is Sexual Violence?

## Definition

- Sexual violence includes any sexual act that is perpetrated against someone's will. There are many types of sexual violence as it encompasses a range of offences included non-consensual sex act (rape), attempted non-consensual (attempted rape), other abusive sexual contact such as unwanted touching and non-contact sexual abuse including threats, exhibitionism, verbal sexual abuse.
- It is a horrific violation of one's dignity and person. It is usually an act of power and control over the victim to degrade and low-rate him or her.

## Different Forms of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence can come in many forms. In order to better understand the wide range that can occur, you must understand the definitions of different types of sexual violence, as well as other kinds of violence that often arise hand-in-hand with sexual violence.

**ACQUAINTANCE RAPE:** Acquaintance assault involves forceful sexual activities that occur against a person's will by means of violence, threat, or fear of bodily injury. These sexual activities are imposed upon them by someone they know and trust.

**COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION:** A form of sexual violence, economic exploitation and modern day slavery that violates the human rights of its child and adolescent victims. It is committed by those who pay for, whether in cash or kind, facilitate, make threats to lure or use children/adolescents in commercial sexual activities including, sexual intercourse or other sexual acts, production or selling of pornographic videos/photographs, performing in public or private sex shows.

**DATE RAPE:** Occurs between two persons who are dating. Often times the victim is coerced or manipulated into having sex.

**DRUG FACILITATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE:** Drug-facilitated sexual violence is the type of sexual violence in which drugs or alcohol are used to compromise an individual's ability to consent to sexual activity. This is often linked to date rape.

## What is Sexual Violence? (cont.)

**INCEST:** Incest is the type of sexual contact that occurs between persons that are closely related (e.g. parents, children, brothers and sisters, etc.).

**MALE SEXUAL VIOLENCE:** Men and boys are also victims of sexual assaults which include sexual abuse and rape. This type of violence is rarely reported because of cultural and societal attitudes.

**MARITAL RAPE:** This is rape between husband and wife when intercourse takes place without the consent of the female under the specific circumstances: 1.) the spouses live separately and apart within the meaning of the Married Persons Act, 2.) there is a written separation agreement between the spouses or proceedings for the dissolution of the marriage or 3.) a decree of nullity of marriage has been instituted.

**PARTNER RAPE:** Partner rape includes sexual acts committed without a person's consent and against a person's will when the perpetrator is the individual's current partner (married or not) or previous partner.

**RAPE:** Victims may be forced through threats or physical means. In some cases no weapon is used other than physical force. Anyone may be a victim of rape: women, men or children, the elderly, disabled or persons of different sexual orientations.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** Sexual Harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, unwanted requests for sexual favors, and other unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that tends to create a hostile, uncomfortable or offensive work or institutional environment.

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN:** Sexual violence against children is when a person usually an adult uses their authority and power over a child to engage in any form of sexual activity with them. This crime affects a child both physically and psychologically.

## Sexual Violence and the Law

### Offences related to Sexual Violence

The Criminal Code includes some of the possible offences that may be brought against a perpetrator and includes the following:

**Abetment** – where one person instigates another to commit a crime or assists with the planning of a sexual assault.

**Aggravated Assault** – where the perpetrator uses an object or a weapon such as piece of wood, a belt or shoes or other object to hit the survivor during an assault of a sexual nature. In addition, a sexual assault on a boy or girl that does not include penetration can be an aggravated assault.

**Assault and Battery** – other physical contact intended to frighten or cause pain, especially if person of low mental capacity or is an infant.

**Attempt** - where the crime was attempted but not completed as where interrupted by someone else, punishable as if crime committed.

**Carnal Knowledge** – where a man has sexual intercourse with a child under 16 years old. This is usually the charge where the perpetrator has had continual sexual relations with the child survivor or where the perpetrator is a family member.

**Common Assault** – touching the survivor in an inappropriate and unwelcomed manner, includes fondling.

**Conspiracy** – where persons plans or covers up the sexual violence perpetrated against the survivor.

## Sexual Violence and the Law (cont.)

**Dangerous Harm** – using an object to cause harm in a way to endanger life.

**Disobedience to Summons** – where person summoned to court does not attend.

**Forcible abduction**- To take away or detain a female of any age against her will with intent to marry or carnally know her, or to cause her to be married or carnally known by any other person.

**Grievous Bodily Harm** - using an object to harm which disfigures the survivor.

**Harm** - unlawfully and intentionally causes harm, injuries inflicted on the survivor during a sexual assault that results in a bruise or swelling constitutes harm.

**Incest** – where a male family member has a sexual relationship with a female family member, the male can be charged with incest, if the female is under 16, if she is over 16 she can also be charged.

**Indecent Assault** - Any unwanted sexual behaviour or touching of any person such as touching a woman's breast or exposing one's genitalia to another person, etc.

## Sexual Violence and the Law (cont.)

**Keeping Away Witnesses** – where a person willfully causes another to disobey a summons to attend court.

**Maim** – destruction of a limb or organ etc. such as a fracture, broken bones etc.

**Obscene Publication** – making available to the public any publication with obscene matters e.g. pornography.

**Rape** – where a man has sexual intercourse with a female without her consent. If the incident happens during the course of a marriage when the parties were separated or pursuing a divorce, the perpetrator may be charged with marital rape.

**Sexual Harassment** – Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment, when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. The Protection Against Sexual Harassment Act is also applicable to other institutions, and the law protects persons from sexual advances when, applying for a place of accommodation or as a tenant.

**Suppression of evidence** – where a person causes any person to refrain from giving evidence with the intention to obstruct justice.

**Trafficking** – where parent uses child for financial gain by causing child to be exploited for a sexual purpose.

**Unnatural Crime** – buggery or sodomy of a male.

**Wounding** – intentionally and unlawfully causes a wound.

## Sexual Violence Against Children

- Sexual Violence or sexual abuse occurs when an adult (or someone bigger or older than a child) involves a child in sexual activity by using his or her power over the child, or taking advantage of a child's trust.
- Tricks, bribes or threats and sometimes physical force are often used by perpetrators to make a child participate in the activity.
- Child sexual abuse is not just intercourse, it includes a wide range of activities including voyeurism, exhibitionism, touching or fondling of body parts and oral sex.
- Many adults tend to overlook, minimize, dismiss or disbelieve allegations of abuse. This may be especially true if the perpetrator is a family member.

### Physical Warning Signs:

- Difficulty walk or sitting
- Bloody, torn or stained underclothes
- Bleeding, bruises, or swelling in genital area
- Pain, itching, or burning in genital area
- Frequent urinary or yeast infections
- Sexually transmitted infections

### Behavioral Warning Signs:

- Reports sexual abuse
- Inappropriate sexual language
- Nightmares or bed-wetting
- Major change in eating habits and weight
- Suicide attempts or self-harming
- Shrinks away or is threatened by physical contact

Sexual violence, particularly during childhood, can lead to increased smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, and risky sexual behaviours in later life. It is also associated with perpetration of violence.

**NOTE: A child may feel that it is not abuse if threats and force are not involved.**

## What To Do If You Suspect Your Child Is Being Sexually Abused

Even though many parents are surrounded by messages of child abuse, they don't usually get much advice on how to talk to their children if they suspect that child abuse is occurring.

- Talk to your child directly.
- Ask them if anyone has been touching them in a manner that does not feel comfortable.
- Follow-up on anything that made you concerned. If your child did or said something that made you concerned, ask them about it.
- According to the Child Abuse Reporting Regulations it is mandatory for all family members, teachers, social workers, school administrators and all other persons who work with or provide services to children to report all suspected cases of child abuse to the police.
- Make sure that you let your child know that they will not be punished and whatever information you gather is mainly to protect and help them.
- Ask questions in a non-judgmental manner.
- Talk to your child about keeping secrets. Let them know that there are times when its not OK to keep secrets.
- Build a trusting relationship with your child.
- Even if they do not tell you about sexual abuse when you speak, create a safe place for them so that they will feel comfortable talking to you if it were to occur.
- Get the Police and the Department of Human Services involved if you have reason to believe that your child has been or is being a victim of sexual abuse.

**NOTE: Do not ask your child about sexual abuse in front of the person you suspect or is alleged by the child of abusing him or her.**

## Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls

The United Nations defines violence against women as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.'

- Intimate partner violence refers to behaviour in an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.
- Sexual violence is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva with a penis.
- These forms of violence result in physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health and other health problems, and may increase vulnerability to HIV.

### Health Consequences for Women

Sexual violence has serious short and long-term physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health problems for victims and for their children, and may lead to high social and economic costs.

- Health effects can include headaches, back pain, abdominal pain, fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorders, limited mobility and poor overall health. In some cases, both fatal and non-fatal injuries can result.

**Risk factors for being a perpetrator include low education, past exposure to child maltreatment or witnessing violence between parents, harmful use of alcohol, attitudes accepting of violence and gender inequality.**

## Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls (cont.)

### Health Consequences for Women

- Intimate partner violence and sexual violence can lead to unintended pregnancies, gynecological problems, induced abortions and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Intimate partner violence in pregnancy also increases the likelihood of miscarriage, stillbirth, pre-term delivery and low birth weight.
- These forms of violence can lead to depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties, eating disorders, emotional distress and suicide attempts.
- Sexual violence, particularly during childhood, can lead to increased smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, and risky sexual behaviours in later life.

### HIV/AIDS

- Sexual violence against girls can lead to lost childhoods, abandoned education, physical and emotional problems, the spread of HIV, and an often irrevocable loss of dignity and self-esteem.
- Sexual violence, including coercion, abuse, exploitation, rape and trafficking, has a devastating impact on children, particularly adolescent and pre-adolescent girls, who are among the most vulnerable members of any society.
- The risk of HIV infection is increased following forced sex, especially among young girls. Gender inequity and partner violence are associated with HIV infections.
- Girls who have experienced sexual abuse are less likely to use condoms and more likely to contract sexually transmitted infections.

**The socioeconomic costs are enormous and have ripple effects. Women suffer isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, and limited ability to care for themselves and their children.**

## Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls (cont.)

### Dispelling The Myths About Sexual Assault:

Our society's understanding of sexual assault is complicated by myths. Many of these myths blame or shame the survivor of sexual assault, instead of holding the offender responsible for his actions.

**Myth:** Women often provoke sexual assault by their behaviour or manner of dress.

**Fact:** No behaviour or manner of dress justifies an assault. Such a belief takes the blame off the offender and places it on the survivor. A man should always ask to ensure his advances are wanted. The idea that women "ask for it" is often used by offenders to rationalize their behaviour. Offenders are solely responsible for their own behaviour.

**Myth:** Most women lie about sexual assault.

**Fact:** Sexual assault is actually one of the most under-reported crimes. Statistics show us that very few women who are sexually assaulted report the assault to the police; most women do not report due to humiliation or fear of re-victimization in the legal process.

**Myth:** When a woman says "no" she secretly enjoys being forced, teased or coerced into having sex.

**Fact:** No one enjoys being assaulted. No one asks to be hurt. "No" means "no". It's the law. If a woman says no, it is the responsibility of the man to accept and respect her "no". Sexual assault can have serious effects on people's health and well-being.

**Myth:** Sexual assault only occurs when there is a struggle or physical injury.

**Fact:** Many survivors are too afraid to struggle. They may freeze in terror or realize that the overwhelming size and strength of their attacker makes resistance very dangerous. Acquaintances or relatives are more likely to use tricks, verbal pressure, threats or mild force. Assaults may also be drug assisted.

## Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls (cont.)

### Effects of Sexual Assault and Sexual Intimacy for Women

Experiencing sex-related symptoms after sexual assault or abuse is possible. Sexual abuse is not only a betrayal of human trust and affection, but it is, by definition an attack on a person's sexuality.

The ten most common sexual symptoms after sexual abuse or sexual assault include:

- Avoiding or being afraid of sex
- Approaching sex as an obligation
- Experiencing negative feelings such as anger, disgust, or guilt with touch
- Having difficulty becoming aroused or feeling sensation
- Feeling emotionally distant or not present during sex
- Experiencing intrusive or disturbing sexual thoughts and images
- Engaging in compulsive or inappropriate sexual behaviours
- Experiencing difficulty establishing or maintaining an intimate relationship
- Experiencing vaginal pain or orgasmic difficulties

### Safety

- Threats to the victim of a sexual assault or her family may have been made by the perpetrator. This may cause her to keep silent.
- In institutions, she may be forced to keep silent through implied and real threats both by the perpetrator and/or by others in the institution.

### Privacy

- She may resist reporting the sexual assault due to the need to repeat the story over and over again to the police, to prosecutors and in court.
- She may be unwilling to share details of the assault in order to protect her family (especially her children) from societal judgment.

## Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls (cont.)

### Privacy

- She may resist reporting the sexual assault due to the need to repeat the story over and over again to the police, to prosecutors and in court.
- She may be unwilling to share details of the assault in order to protect her family (especially her children) from societal judgment.

### The Psychological Impact

- Sense of self and concept of "reality" are disrupted
- Profound anxiety, depression, fearfulness, and identity confusion
- Development of phobias related to the assault setting
- Imaginary ailments (hypochondriac symptoms)
- Paranoia and obsessive fear of bodily harm
- Withdrawal from interpersonal contact and a heightened sense of alienation

## Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys

Men and boys are also victims of sexual assault. However, the laws as they presently exist in Belize do not consider males as victims of rape. Instead, the Unnatural Crimes law is applied.

### **Stereotypes and Myths:**

There are various stereotypes and myths that impact male survivor's ability to confront and deal with their sexual assault. These include:

- Men are immune to victimization.
- Men should be able to fight off attacks.
- Men shouldn't express emotion.
- Men enjoy all sex, so they must have enjoyed the assault.
- Only gay men can be victims of sexual assault.
- Male survivors are more likely to become sexual predators.

**These stereotypes and myths can lead to certain results for male victims of sexual assault including:**

- Dramatic loss of self-esteem
- Devalue their sense of masculinity
- Self-blame
- Feelings of shame, guilt and anger
- Feelings of powerlessness, and apprehension

## Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys (cont.)

- Social withdrawal and embarrassment
- Fears that they won't be able to protect and support their families
- Sexual difficulties such as erectile dysfunctions
- Self-destructive behavior such as drinking, using drugs and aggression)
- Intimacy issues
- Doubting their sexual identity

### Barriers

Male survivors of sexual assault may also experience certain barriers to seeking support or services, either from friends and family or from organizations and institutions.

### Support

- It can be difficult for men to seek help for fear of how others will judge them.
- Negative responses from friends and family can be damaging.

### Safety

- Threats to the victim of a sexual assault or his family may have been made by the perpetrator. This may cause him to keep silent.
- In institutions, he may be forced to keep silent through implied and real threats both by the perpetrator and/or by others in the institution.

## Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys (cont.)

### Privacy

- He may resist reporting the sexual assault due to the need to repeat the story over and over again to the police, to prosecutors and in court.
- He may be unwilling to share details of the assault in order to protect his family from societal judgment.

### Self-blame

- He may blame himself for the attack because he was not able to fight the aggressor off.
- He may think that the assault was not rape because he became sexually aroused during the attack (i.e., he had an erection or ejaculated). This is a normal physiological reaction, NOT a sign of enjoyment.

### The Psychological Impact

- Sense of self and concept of "reality" are disrupted
- Profound anxiety, depression, fearfulness, and identity confusion
- Development of phobias related to the assault setting
- Imaginary ailments (hypochondriac symptoms)
- Paranoia and obsessive fear of bodily harm
- Withdrawal from interpersonal contact and a heightened sense of alienation

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE—BOTH MEN AND WOMEN CAN BE VICTIMS.**

## Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys (cont.)

- Stress-induced psycho-physiological reactions
- Psychological outcomes can be severe for men because men are socialized to believe that they are immune to sexual assault and because societal reactions to these assaults can be more isolating and stigmatizing.

### **Sexual Assault against Heterosexual Men**

- He may experience “homosexual panic” - a fear that the assault will make him “become homosexual.”
- He may feel that he is less of a man if the attack has been by a man or a woman.

### **Sexual Assault against Homosexual Men**

- He may feel that he is being “punished” for his sexual orientation.
- He may fear that he was targeted as a member of the homosexual community. This fear may lead him to withdraw from that community.
- He may develop self-loathing related to his sexual orientation.

### **Relationships and Intimacy after Sexual Assault**

- Relationships may be disrupted by reactions of family members and partners to the assault such as a lack of belief/support.
- Relationships may also be disrupted by the victim's reactions to the assault.

The Women's Department provides support to all victims of  
Sexual Violence - Men and Women

## Response Protocols: What you should expect from the Women's Department

### Women's Department

The Women's Department is a key referring agency for services to survivors of sexual violence. The Women's Department is the main implementation agency responsible for training and advocacy of the protocol.

The Women's Department will follow these procedure:

**Screening** – Intake process will be conducted to determine whether the services requested by the survivor are provided by the Women's Department. If the services are not available at the Department the Women Development Officer (WDO) will make the necessary referrals.

**Assessment and Attention** - If the services needed are offered by the Department the Women's Development Officer will discuss different options available with the client and make recommendations on what may be helpful.

**Interviewing** – Interviews will be conducted in a confidential setting and the WDO will be sensitive to the emotional state of the survivor and maintain a non-judgmental attitude.

**Counseling** – Counseling services should focus on providing emotional support to the victim; providing them with important information and guiding them in the process of making their own decisions. While the Department offers basic counseling in terms of information sharing, counseling beyond this would be referred.

**Documentation** - A National Gender-based Violence Surveillance Form will be completed and the service being provided documented.

## Response Protocols: What you should expect from the Police

### Police

There are two main units within the Belize Police Department that respond to issues that relate to sexual or domestic violence:

- The Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) responds to allegations of domestic violence within the family which may include sexual violence.
- Criminal Investigations Branch (CIB) responds to allegations of sexual violence outside of the home setting and related crimes classified as indictable offences in the Supreme Court.

The police response is very important in ensuring victim safety and helping them to access protection and justice.

### **Guidelines for the Police:**

- Every individual has the basic right to a life free from fear and violence.
- Women and girls are the predominant survivors of sexual violence.
- Men, boys, the elderly, persons with disabilities and persons of different sexual orientation can also be survivors of sexual violence.

There are specific procedures which should be followed in addressing complaints made on the phone, at the station and on the scene.

### **Follow-up Action by the Police**

- Once the allegation has been substantiated and statements taken from the survivor, the perpetrator must be charged and brought before the court for the taking of his plea.
- The Officer must ensure that the perpetrator is brought before the court as soon as practical.
- The investigative officer **MUST** advise the prosecuting officer of any fact uncovered that may indicate that the perpetrator is likely to intimidate or tamper with the survivor and/or other potential witnesses.

## Response Protocols: What you should expect from the Police (cont.)

### Withdrawal of Complaints

- If a complainant requests withdrawal of a charge, a statement should be taken setting out clearly the reasons for the withdrawal
- The complainant must be informed that request for withdrawal will not necessarily result in the case being dropped as this is a matter to be decided by the courts.

### Complaints against a Police Officer

- Police Officers should be as vigorous in their response to suspected incidents involving other officers as they are of other complainants
- A proper investigation should be carried in accordance with the law and based on the Sexual Violence Protocols
- A supervisor must be a part of the response team
- Subsequent investigations should be carried out by an officer of a higher rank than the suspected perpetrator
- Department policies related to duty status, interdiction, suspension and related matters will be followed on the directives of the Commissioner of Police

### Complaints concerning Inadequate Police Response

All officers have the responsibility to be a part of the response whether or not they are assigned to the Domestic Violence Unit or the Criminal Investigations Branch. If a complainant believes that they did not receive adequate police response according to the law and these protocols they can file a complaint with:

- The Officer-in-Charge
- Internal Affairs Department/Professional Standards Branch
- Office of the Ombudsman

## Response Protocols: What you should expect from the Health Sector

### Health Sector

- Survivors of sexual violence have many concerns and fears about a medical examination following the violence event.
- A well-done medical examination can help to alleviate fears and address concerns.
- At the same time, it can ensure that evidence collected will aid in criminal case investigation and is a key element of bringing perpetrators to justice in Belize.

**A gynecologist or General Practitioner with experience will conduct the medical examination and should:**

- give sexual assault cases priority as emergency cases
- gather information for the medical forensic history
- collect and document forensic evidence from patients
- offer information, treatment, and referrals for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, including administering Post Exposure Prophylaxis.
- assess pregnancy risk and offer Emergency Contraceptives (ECs)
- address other presenting medical concerns;
- discuss treatment options with the patient including reproductive health services
- testify in court if needed
- ensure that patients are offered crisis intervention, support, and advocacy during and after the exam process

## Response Protocols: What you should expect from the Office of the Ombudsman

### Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman has the responsibility to ensure that the Police and other government agencies intervene and provide services to survivors in a manner that respects and protects their human rights.

The Office of the Ombudsman also has to ensure that the intervention will strengthen and support the judicial response so that convictions for sexual violence will increase and survivors will receive justice.

### The Complaints Protocols:

Complaints against police officers, medical personnel or other public officers in relation to sexual violence where a survivor is dissatisfied with the response can be made by:

- Utilizing the Complaints Form that may be obtained at the Office of the Ombudsman or any of the Women's Department offices countrywide; and
- The Ombudsman, upon receiving the complaint of the survivor, should take statements from the survivor and obtain all necessary other witnesses identified by the survivor.

### Where the report of sexual violence is made against a Police Officer or medical personnel, the Ombudsman shall ensure that:

- the officer's immediate supervisor is actively pursuing the case;
- appropriate notification has been made to the Commissioner of the reported incident;
- where allegations involve medical personnel or public officers, the Ombudsman shall make written complaints to the appropriate disciplinary commission or tribunal; and
- directives have been issued relating to the internal disciplinary

## Women and Sexual Rights

### Women's Sexual Rights:

- Women have the right to enjoy sex
- Women have the right to say "yes" or "no" to sex
- Women have the right to sexual expression without harassment or sexual violence
- Women have the right to live in a world free of sexual violence
- Women have the right to be the experts and owners of their own bodies
- Women have the right to carry condoms and insist that their partners wear them
- Women have the right to expect to have orgasms during sex
- Women have the right to heal from the trauma and abuse inflicted upon them and to enjoy sexual lives that are satisfying and fulfilling
- Women have the right to be with partners that understand that the female sexuality and anatomy are different from men's and equally as important and valid
- Women have the right to get pregnant if they want or prevent pregnancy if they want

Women's rights to control their sexuality is an indivisible part of their human rights. For women to realize this important aspect of their human rights, effective policies and laws need to be put in place to protect them from all forms of coercion, discrimination and violence.

**WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!**

## Ways to Reduce Risk of Sexual Assault

**While you can never fully protect yourself from sexual violence there are ways that you can reduce your risk of being assaulted.**

*Please note that these tips are primarily applicable to cases of teenagers and adults but some may be applicable to children in certain instances.*

**Be aware of your surroundings.**

- Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way to get out of a bad situation.

**Walk with confidence.**

- Even if you don't know where you are going, act like you do. If you are being followed, go into a store or an area with people or knock on a door for help. Avoid alleys and isolated spots.

**Avoid putting music headphones in both ears.**

- Staying alert is important, so avoid using headphones

**Avoid talking on the phone while walking.**

- You need to be very aware of your surroundings, especially if you are walking or running alone.

**Avoid walking or jogging alone, especially at night.**

- Vary your route. Stay in well-traveled, well-lit areas.

## Ways to Reduce Risk of Sexual Assault (cont.)

**Be wary of isolated spots, like offices after business hours.**

- This includes parks or deserted beaches. Meet in public where help will be nearby. It is more difficult to get help if no one is around.

**Stay away from alcohol.**

- Alcohol consumption can impair your judgment.

**Do not leave your drink (alcoholic or not) unattended even for a brief moment.**

- Trust no one but yourself around your drink. This includes drinking something you didn't get yourself. Substances can be added to drinks (spiking the drink) to cause drowsiness or lost of memory so that sexual assault can be committed.

**Be assertive — don't let anyone violate your personal space.**

- Be clear about your boundaries. Make your limits clear before you get into a sexual situation.

**Trust your instincts.**

- If a situation or location feels unsafe or uncomfortable, it probably isn't the best place to be.

## Ways to Reduce Risk of Sexual Assault (cont.)

### **Never hitchhike or pick up a hitchhiker.**

- Even when the person asking for a ride may be someone you have met before, remember to follow your instincts. If you are not comfortable or have second thoughts about giving the person a ride or taking a ride from someone then don't.

### **Don't allow yourself to be isolated with someone you don't trust or someone you don't know.**

- Again, remember to trust your instincts.

### **Establish a Buddy System.**

- When going to a party or other social events, go with a group of friends and don't be afraid to let a friend know when someone is making you feel uncomfortable.

### **Leave Lights On.**

- Leave some lights on when you are out and have your keys ready when you return. Consider installing outdoor lights as well.

### **Lock your door and your windows.**

- Make sure doors are locked even when you are at home.

## Ways to Reduce Risk of Sexual Assault (cont.)

Watch your keys. Don't lend them. Don't leave them. Don't lose them.

- Don't put your name and/or address on the key ring.

Park in well-lit areas and lock the car.

- Check the backseat and underneath the car (from a distance) before getting in. Keep your doors locked and consider carrying a cell phone for extra safety.

Have your key ready to use before you reach the door — home, car, or work.

- Try not to load yourself down with packages or bags as this can make you appear more vulnerable.

*Source: Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network; Alameda Family Justice Center*

Remember if you are attacked, trust your instincts and act quickly. The greatest chance at escape is usually when an attack begins. Depending on your situation, you can run or scream or kick, hit, bite or scratch, etc.

Screaming "fire" may be more effective than screaming "help" because at times people do not want to get involved in helping others but may be nosy when it comes to things like fires.

## Surviving Sexual Violence

- Too often survivors of sexual assault fail to identify these acts as violence. Failing to name them as violence often prevents survivors from seeking the help they need to overcome the trauma of having the control over themselves and their body forcibly taken away.
- Healing begins when survivors are able to identify the assault or rape as a crime against them, regardless of whether the act meets legal definitions.
- Whenever an individual is forced to have sex or engage in sexual activity without giving consent, their rights have been violated. The act may or may not meet the legal definition of some form of sexual violence however, the reactions, feelings, and need for assistance for the survivor are always present.
- Sexual assault is about power and control, not about sex and certainly not about feelings of affection or love.

### What if they feel that they “can’t get over it”?

Remember that no matter how much difficulty they are having dealing with sexual violence, it does not mean they are “going crazy.” The fear and confusion will lessen with time, but the trauma may disrupt his/her life for a while.

Survivors will likely feel anger, depression, anxiety, and perhaps have a general sense that everything is falling apart. However these feelings are a part of the healing process.

It is at this time that survivors sometimes seek assistance from trained professionals who can help to put their lives back together and recover from sexual assault-related post-traumatic stress.

## Surviving Sexual Violence (cont.)

- Even long after a sexual assault, some reactions may be triggered by people, places or things connected, or seemingly unconnected, to the assault.
- This phase is often marked by recurring nightmares, a generalized feeling of anxiety, and flashbacks to the attack. While these feelings are disturbing, they are a normal reaction to a trauma.
- Survivors may also have a fairly dramatic shift in feelings and sometimes in behavior very soon after the sexual assault. Where once they were fearful, tearful, confused, emotionally drained, and out of control, now they may appear to be just fine. Survivors are trying to heal by gaining emotional distance from the trauma. Thus, they still need the support of family and friends regardless of how they may appear to be feeling or behaving.
- Loss of sexual identity may also occur.
- When enough of the anger and depression is released and worked through, survivors may begin to recover from what has happened to them. They may still think and talk about what happened, but they will now understand and feel in control of their emotions. With time the trauma begins to play less of a major role in their life.
- At this point, they have not only survived but may also have recovered from the trauma.

## Surviving Sexual Violence (cont.)

### Will a survivor ever feel safe again?

- The recovery process may actually help survivors develop strengths, insights, and abilities that they never had (or never knew they had) before.
- Talking about the assault will help survivors feel better, but may also be really hard to do. In fact, it's common for them to want to avoid conversations and situations that may remind them of the assault. They may have a sense of wanting to "get on with life" and "let the past be the past." This is a normal part of the recovery process and may last for weeks or months.
- Eventually they will need to deal with fears and feelings in order to heal and regain a sense of control over their life. Talking with someone who can listen in understanding and affirming ways, whether it's a friend, family member, hotline staff member or counselor, is a key part of this process.

### For the partner of a sexual assault survivor

Like any other violent crime, the aftermath of sexual assault can be especially devastating for the survivor. However, due to the nature of the crime, sexual assault can also be difficult for the partner of the survivor as well.

It's important that the partner be patient, understanding and supportive throughout the healing process.

## Surviving Sexual Violence (cont.)

### What can a partner do?

- The first thing that a partner needs to remember is that sexual assaults are crimes in which the victim loses total control of his/her body. Therefore, control may be a big issue in the healing process.
- The partner needs to let the survivor make decisions as opposed to taking control themselves. For example, if the survivor is hesitant to go to the hospital, a partner should not grab the keys and say 'you are going to the hospital now!'
- It may be tempting to take control when someone they love is in crisis, but it's extremely important to respect his/her wishes, even in basic everyday decisions.
- The partner needs to let the survivor lead the healing process. They need to make themselves available to be with, to talk to, or just listen.
- If the survivor wishes to be alone, they need to give him/her space. They also need to try to be reassuring every step of the way.
- They need to tell their partner that they care and love him/her. Give as much time as needed to cope with the assault.
- Partners should not press for details, and should not ask leading questions. An example of a leading question might be 'Why were you out alone at night without me'? A better, more sensitive thing to say might be "I wish I could have been there with you...You didn't deserve anything like that to happen to you".
- Unfortunately, there isn't always a lot that a partner can do.
- Partners need to remember that they are not alone and they shouldn't be afraid to seek counseling themselves.

## Important Reminders about Sexual Assault

Sexual assault can happen to anyone, regardless of their sex, gender, race, class, age, size, appearance, or sexual orientation or what they look like. They are violent crimes used to exert power, humiliate, and control.

- "Sex" requires consent.
- "Sexual Assault" is a violent crime and is motivated by anger, hatred, and aggression. Being forced to have unprotected sex or to engage in more sexual activity than the person has wanted also constitutes sexual assault.
- People of all genders can commit sexual assault against persons of different genders.
- No one asks to be sexually assaulted. Even if a person picked someone up or they were already engaged in sexual activity, that person always has the right to say no.
- Laws regarding sexual assault can be very confusing, especially if the survivor is male or the attacker is female. Some legal definitions for what happened may not match our definitions.
- It is important for everyone to become familiar with local statutes for laws governing sexual assault in Belize.
- If a person can't say "no" because they were drunk, high, or unconscious, or have a disability, it is still considered sexual assault.
- Some times couples engage in role playing during consensual sex. However, if during role playing they had their boundaries violated in a "scene" or their "safe words" were not respected, it is still considered sexual assault.
- If a sex worker is forced to do something they did not agree to, it is still considered sexual assault.

## Support Services

### Support Services available in Belize:

#### Medical Care:

- There are hospitals and clinics in each district which can provide primary and secondary care to victims.
- All hospitals are equipped to perform medical forensic exams using the rape kit as well as provide testing for STDs, STIs, emergency contraceptives to avoid pregnancy as well as providing post exposure prophylaxis to prevent HIV infection.
- In addition, all hospitals also have mental health/psychiatric nurses that can provide immediate and follow up mental health care to victims where trauma counseling is not available.

#### Location:

##### Belize District - Belize City

**Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital**  
Princess Margaret Drive, Belize City  
223-1548

**Cleopatra White Polyclinic**  
Princess Margaret Drive, Belize City  
223-5213

**Matron Roberts Polyclinic**  
Magazine Road, Belize City  
227-7170

## Support Services (cont.)

### Belize District - Belize City

#### **Port Loyola Health Center**

2 Fabers Road, Belize City

227-5354

#### **Queen's Square Health Center**

Raccoon Street, Belize City

227-0559

#### **Belize Family Life Association**

Mercy Lane, Caribbean Shores Area, Belize City

202-5881

### Orange Walk District– Orange Walk Town

#### **Northern Regional Hospital**

Holy Trinity Street

322-2072

#### **Belize Family Life Association**

Hospital Compound

Holy Trinity Street

302-3481

## Support Services (cont.)

### Corozal District - Corozal Town

#### **Corozal Hospital**

Santa Rita Road

422- 2076

### San Pedro, Ambergris Caye - San Pedro Town

#### **San Pedro Polyclinic**

Mantaray Street, San Pedro Town

226-2536

### Cayo District - City of Belmopan

#### **Western Regional Hospital**

Floral Park Avenue, Belmopan

822-2263

#### **Belize Family Life Association**

Western Regional Hospital Compound, Belmopan

802-3095

#### **San Ignacio Hospital**

Bullet Tree Road, San Ignacio

824-2066

#### **La Loma Luz Hospital**

67 Western Highway, Santa Elena, Cayo

824-2087

## Support Services (cont.)

### Stann Creek District - Dangriga Town

#### **Southern Regional Hospital**

Mile 1 ¼ George Price Boulevard, Stann Creek

522-3832

#### **Belize Family Life Association**

5 Plum Street, Dangriga

502-2280

### Toledo District - Punta Gorda Town

#### **Punta Gorda Hospital**

115 Main Street, Punta Gorda

722-2026

#### **Belize Family Life Association**

Corner Main Street/North Street, Punta Gorda

702-2289

## Support Services (cont.)

### **Counseling Services and Psychiatric Care:**

Basic counseling services can be obtained from Psychiatric Nurses at all hospitals.

In addition, the Belize Family Life Association offers counseling services to women and men who have been victims of trauma. Additional spiritual support may be obtained in communities from churches. More intensive therapy can be obtained at the following:

### **Community Counseling Center (government agency– no fees)**

54 Freetown Road, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

Belize City

223-1406

### **Dr. Cayetano, Psychiatrist (private)**

3361 Orchid Garden

Belmopan City

822-0614

### **Haven House Shelter for Battered Women (shelter support)**

Belize District

222-4947

### **Mary Open Doors (shelter support)**

Church Street, San Ignacio Town

804-4562

### **Productive Organization for Women in Action (POWA) (advocacy support)**

Dangriga Town (contacted via the Women's Department)

502-0038

## Support Services (cont.)

### **Drug Treatment Programs:**

Often survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence develop drug or alcohol additions as they seek to self-medicate to numb the emotional trauma they face. Survivors can get help from drug treatment programs offered by:

#### **National Drug Abuse Control Council**

St. Joseph Street, Belize City

223-1051

#### **REMAR**

5 Johnson Street, Belize City

227-6123

### **Legal Advice and Assistance:**

Survivors may have need for legal advise and other related legal services. Assistance is available from:

#### **Legal Advice and Service Center**

70 Albert Street, Belize City

227-3442/227-2919

#### **Office of The Ombudsman**

To address the complaints and needs of a grieved person whose human rights were infringed by governmental agencies and other related groups.

91 Freetown Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Belize City

223-3594





Victims and survivors of sexual violence can seek support at the Women's Department in each district.

### Women's Department Offices

Office Location	Telephone Number
Belize City	227-7397 and 227-3888
Corozal Town	402-2120
Orange Walk Town	302-2058
San Ignacio, Cayo	804-2098
Dangriga, Stann Creek	502-0038
Punta Gorda, Toledo	702-2021