**What is “Sexual Assault?”**

Sexual assault is any behavior or contact of a sexual nature that is unwanted – from sexual harassment to rape. Sexual assault occurs any time a person is forced, coerced, and/or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity. Sexual assault can happen to people of all ages, all genders and all socio-economic statuses.

**What constitutes Consent?**

Consent is an affirmative, clear and conscious decision by each participant to a mutually agreed-upon sexual activity. Consent is voluntary and must be given without coercion, force, threats or intimidation.

Consent can be withdrawn. Consent to some form of sexual activity does not imply consent to other forms of sexual activity. Consent on one occasion is not consent to engage in sexual activity on another occasion. A current or previous dating or sexual relationship, by itself, is not sufficient to constitute consent. Even in the context of a relationship, there must be mutual consent to engage in sexual activity. Consent must be ongoing throughout a sexual encounter and can be revoked any time. Once consent is withdrawn, the sexual activity must stop immediately.

Consent cannot be given when someone is incapacitated, unconscious, coming in and out of consciousness, or if that person’s understanding of the act is affected by a physical or mental impairment.

**What should I do if I think I was sexually assaulted?**

It’s hard to know what to do or how to feel after a sexual assault. But please know you are not alone. Talking with an advocate can be a good first step, as an advocate can help you understand and navigate your options. Regardless of the options you choose to explore, there are some things to keep in mind:

* **Your safety is important!** If you are in immediate danger call 911. If you are not feeling safe, consider reaching out to a friend for support.
* **What happened is not your fault!**
* **Call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800.656.HOPE (4673) or the Safe Passage Hotline at 208-664-9303.** You will be able to talk with a trained advocate in your area who can help answer your questions and direct you to the appropriate local health facility that cares for survivors of sexual assault.

**What if I want to receive medical care?**

Medical attention after a sexual assault can be very important and very often, once at your local healthcare facility, an advocate can be made available to you to help you through the process of receiving medical care during this tough time. If you can, it’s best to avoid showering or bathing before arrival. Bring a change of clothing with you if you are able.

In addition to receiving medical attention, you may wish to have a sexual assault forensic exam sometimes called a “rape kit.” During this exam, someone specially trained to perform this exam, such as Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), will collect DNA evidence that can help identify the perpetrator. **You do not have to agree to a forensic exam to receive treatment**, but doing so may give you a stronger case against the perpetrator if you decide to report the crime now or down the road.

**What if I can’t afford to seek medical attention?**

Like all healthcare, there may be some costs associated with medical attention and medication. There are victim compensation programs that may help cover some of the expenses. Most victim compensation funds require you to report the crime to law enforcement within 72 hours in order to be eligible. For more details on this program follow this link <https://crimevictimcomp.idaho.gov/>

**What if I’m thinking about reporting my sexual assault?**

The decision to report to law enforcement is entirely yours. Some survivors say that reporting and seeking justice helped them recover and regain a sense of control over their lives. Understanding how to report and learning more about the process by talking with an advocate can take away some of the unknowns and help you decide if reporting is right for you. You have several reporting options:

* **Call 911.** If you are in immediate danger, dial 911. Help will come to you, wherever you are.
* **Contact the local police department.** Call the direct line of your local police station or visit the station in person. If you are on a college campus you may also be able to contact campus-based law enforcement.
* **Visit a medical center.** If you are being treated for injuries resulting from sexual assault, tell a medical professional that you wish to report the crime. You can also choose to have a sexual assault forensic exam.

**What if I don’t want to report?**

There are many reasons why some people choose not to report their sexual assault. Your decision not to report is a personal one and doesn’t mean you don’t have other options. Talking with an advocate can help you identify other things you can do to address safety and well-being. Counseling, support systems, safety plans, and knowing you’re not alone can go a long way in helping you to begin the healing process.