

# About Sexual Abuse Victim Service Programs

## What Are Sexual Abuse Victim Service Programs?

Sexual abuse victim service programs are dedicated to helping victims after a sexual assault. Sexual abuse service providers have highly trained staff that can help victims access care and resources in moments of crisis as well as offer different resources for ongoing support related to sexual violence. Sexual abuse advocates provide confidential communications with victims.

## What to Expect If You Call a Sexual Abuse Victim Service Program

**24-Hour Crisis Line.** Most programs have a 24-hour crisis line that is answered by trained advocates to provide callers with emotional support, safety planning, and options for services available in the community. Most programs allow callers to remain anonymous until they are comfortable providing personal information.

**Cost.** Most sexual assault programs offer all of their services at no cost to victims.

**Crisis intervention services.** Many programs offer 24-hour crisis intervention services to help during or after an abusive incident. An advocate may be available to meet with you at an emergency room or other safe place.

**Medical accompaniment.** Many programs have staff and volunteers who can meet a sexual assault victim at a health care facility to provide support during and after a sexual assault exam.

**Support.** All programs have people who can listen and help you sort out options.

**Information and referrals.** Staff can provide information on the dynamics of sexual assault and abuse and referrals for other services that may be helpful.

**Advocacy services.** Most programs have specially trained advocates who can assist you in finding help with other agencies such as the aging network, criminal justice, immigration, housing, social security, employment protections, and more.

**Counseling.** Most programs provide you with an opportunity to meet others who have had similar experiences (often called peer support) or may provide individual counseling or referrals for therapy if you think it would be helpful for your situation.

**Support groups.** Some programs run groups for children, youth and adults. A few programs offer support groups specifically for older survivors.

**Privacy.** Most programs have strict confidentiality policies and will not share information about you or your situation with others. Sometimes there is an exception to this rule if advocates are mandated to report elder abuse by state statute. You can request this information when you call to ask for help.

## What to Expect If You Call a Legal Advocate

**Most programs offer information about the legal system and information on tools that may be helpful for you such as protection orders. Most do not provide legal counsel, but can refer you to free or low cost attorneys.**

**When you talk to a legal advocate, you can expect that:**

- Services are offered free of charge
- Legal advocates are not attorneys and will be unable to give legal advice

**Advocates can offer a range of services that might include:**

- Accompanying you to court
- Helping you fill out paperwork
- Helping you understand the civil or criminal process
- Outlining or prioritizing the legal options that are available
- Informing you about what actually goes on in court
- Preparing you for a hearing or trial, and giving support before, during, and after
- Referring you to low or no-cost lawyers

If you are in danger and want law enforcement to respond, call 911. To talk to someone confidentially for support and information, call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](https://www.nvhw.org/) at 1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224. To find your local sexual abuse victim service program, call the [Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network](https://www.rapecrimecenter.org/) at 1-800-656-4673 (HOPE).