



## WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT/ ABUSE?

**Sexual assault** is unwanted sexual activity, force, threats, coercion, or taking advantage of someone who may not give consent. The term sexual assault can apply to different types of unwanted behavior: rape, touching, fondling of genitals, and/or indecent exposure. When the victim is young, sexual assault may also be called sexual abuse.

**Child pornography** is when the sexual assault or abuse of a child is photographed or video recorded and may be sold or distributed.

**Sex trafficking** is the commercial sexual exploitation of any person age 17 years or younger. Commercial sex is the exchange of something of value for sex, including money, food, drugs, or shelter. Traffickers can include family members, boyfriends, or other adults. They target young people online or in-person, often with promises of love and belonging.

**Sextortion** is sexual exploitation that occurs primarily online. Perpetrators coerce or blackmail victims to provide sexual content, such as photos or videos, of the victim, or to obtain money from the victim or force the victim to have sex with them.



**Sexting** is sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or video images. This happens mostly using mobile phones but can also include the use of a computer or any digital device.



## WHO CAN BECOME A VICTIM OF A SEX CRIME?

Anyone can be a victim of a sex crime at any age of their lives. This includes boys, girls, and LGBTQ youth. Perpetrators target victims for a variety of reasons.

Sexual assault can be a one-time occurrence or it can continue over a period of time. Children and adolescents are often abused by people they know and trust, such as a parent or other relative, family friend, boyfriend, girlfriend, neighbor, teacher/coach, etc.

It is important for survivors of sexual assault/abuse to understand that it is not their fault. Sexual assault is something that happens to people – it is not who they are. Victims of sexual assault are survivors who can heal and move forward with hope and purpose.

## REACTIONS TO SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault can affect people in different ways but it is not uncommon to experience a wide range of emotions. Survivors may feel:

- Angry, sad, lonely, depressed
- Nervous, confused, or fearful
- Badly about themselves and their bodies
- Anxious all the time
- Guilty, even though the assault was not their fault
- Unable to concentrate or enjoy activities they took pleasure in before the assault

Some survivors may feel like they want to hurt themselves or others. If the abuse is ongoing, they may feel helpless to stop the abuser or feel hopeless that anything can be done.

Help is available. No one has to cope with the impact of sexual assault/abuse alone. It can help to talk with a rape crisis center or victims' advocate, counselor, or other trained professional. If the abuse continues to happen, *it is important to report it to the police or an abuse hotline.*

## WHO INVESTIGATES SEX CRIMES?

All law enforcement agencies take sex crimes very seriously. Some forms of sexual assault and abuse are primarily investigated by local police departments. The FBI is a federal/national law enforcement agency that investigates certain types of sex crimes, such as sex trafficking, sex-tortion, and sexting.

Often, the FBI and local police departments will work together to identify and stop perpetrators and ensure that victims receive help to cope with what has happened.

## WHO WILL KNOW?

Unless you are an emancipated minor (free from control by parent or guardian), your parents will be informed about what happened to you at some point in the criminal justice process. If you have concerns about notifying your parents, please talk to the FBI Agent or the Victim Specialist.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

Once a report or disclosure of abuse or an assault has been made, you will most likely be asked some questions by a local law enforcement officer or an FBI Agent. You will then be interviewed by a person who is trained to talk to people your age about sexual abuse or assault. The interview may take place in a variety of locations including a child advocacy center, hospital, or police department. Since the information you share with us is so important and we want to make sure we remember it correctly, we may audio or video-tape the conversation. The FBI Agent or Victim Specialist will coordinate with a trusted parent or legal guardian to schedule a time to talk more about the assault/abuse you survived and provide referrals for services.

In many cases, it will be helpful to have a medical/forensic exam conducted by a doctor or nurse with special training. The exam may help with collection of forensic evidence but it is also for your physical wellbeing. This is a good time to discuss any concerns you may have about sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection, or pregnancy.

If your case goes to court, you may be asked to testify. The prosecuting attorney handling your case and the victim/witness coordinator can help you prepare for court.