

## First Response: A Guide for Sexual Assault Disclosures

**S**afety  
**E**mpowerment  
**E**mpathy  
**K**nowledge

The goal of the First Responder is to provide a safe place that empowers a survivor to seek what they need.

### Safety

- Immediate physical concerns
- Immediate emotional concerns
- Privacy
- Confidentiality

### Empowerment

- Let the survivor decide what to talk about
- Help the survivor understand what they might experience emotionally
- Help the survivor understand what their options are and how to access them
- Be respectful of their decisions
- Use empowering language

### Empathy

- Believe the survivor
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Validate their experiences

### Knowledge

- Know your role
- Be prepared
- Utilize what is available

dedicated to healing.  
advocating for change.

{[www.barcc.org](http://www.barcc.org)}

**Empowerment 101:** *Change these sentences into empowering sentences*

1. You should go to the hospital.

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2. When are you going to report it?

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3. What did your mother say when you told her?

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4. Obviously, you'll want STI prophylaxis.

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5. What I think you should do first is call the hotline.

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6. I don't think this can be reported.

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7. How can you avoid the perpetrator from now on?

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8. Let's talk about making your situation safer.

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9. Its great that you want to help, but your friend really needs counseling.

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10. Let me tell you how I can help.

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## Surviving Rape: Time Sensitive & Important Information

If someone you know has been sexually assaulted recently, there are time periods and information you and the survivor should be aware of.

Rape is an act of violence and control, using sex as a weapon. It is NOT motivated by sexual desire, but by the desire to overpower and dominate the victim. Rape affects all genders from every race, class, and age group. Over eighty percent of all rape victims have some acquaintance with their attackers.

### BOSTON AREA RAPE CRISIS CENTER: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) is a community-based organization with a mission to end sexual violence through healing and social change. Our services include individual counseling, group counseling, hotline counseling, medical advocacy, legal advocacy, community education and professional training. All of our services are free of charge and confidential.

Our hotline is staffed 24 hours a day and is for anyone affected by sexual violence:  
617-492-7273 or 800-841-8371

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Be sensitive to what the survivor is telling you. Always believe them, and support whatever they say and decide. Rape is very traumatic and rarely does anyone lie about being raped. Rape can happen to anyone. Listen and respect the survivor's choices and provide them with accurate information. Refer them to providers who can help the survivor if they want it.

### GUIDELINES FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT

1. Determine how long since the assault.
2. Evaluate immediate safety.
3. Determine the survivor's immediate concerns.
4. Present available resources.
5. If the survivor is interested in medical care, refer them to the nearest SANE hospital.

### TIME SENSITIVE ISSUES

If a survivor wants to get a rape kit (evidence collection kit), they should:

- ✓ Not bathe, shower, brush their teeth or go to the bathroom. This is important to preserve evidence.
- ✓ Not change their clothes. If they already have, they can place the original clothes in a clean paper bag.
- ✓ Go to an emergency department that is a SANE site within 120 hours of the assault (5 days).

#### Within 72 hours:

- Start HIV Prophylaxis if appropriate after assessment.

#### Within 96 hours:

- Test for any drugs if the survivor suspects being drugged.

#### Within 120 hours:

- Get a medical examination at a SANE site – SANE nurse whenever available.
- Forensic evidence collection kit (rape kit) can be done.
- Start pregnancy prophylaxis “morning after pill” if appropriate.
- Get STI prophylactic treatment.
- Call your local Rape Crisis Center to get medical advocate accompaniment.

#### After 5 days:

- Survivor should see his or her own doctor.  
*Survivors do not need to report to the police in order to get medical treatment or to have evidence collected.*

## SANE HOSPITALS

When someone is assaulted within the past five days, they should be referred to a SANE hospital. Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program (SANE) consists of certified nurses. They provide coordinated, expert forensic care necessary to increase prosecution of sexual predators. The SANE program delivers the highest level of care to sexual assault victims accessing hospital emergency departments, 24 hours a day. They are currently available at designated hospitals in all regions of the state. In the Boston area, they may be available at **Boston Medical Center, Massachusetts General Hospital, Beth Israel, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Cambridge Hospital and Children's Hospital Boston.** For information on SANE hospitals outside of the Boston area, please call our hotline at 617-492-7273 or 800-841-8371.

BARCC has a list  
Dept. of Public Health also  
LEGAL INFORMATION EMS  
can route

The forensic evidence collection kit will be preserved for 6 months, regardless of whether a police report has been filed. If a police report is not filed within 6 months but may be filed at a later time, the survivor may request that the kit be held for another 6 months. It is crucial that the survivor know the kit # because all kits are stored anonymously. Under MA law, the survivor may file a police report within 15 years of a rape or 27 years after child sexual abuse. A civil lawsuit may be filed within 3 years of a sexual assault. There are exceptions to the MA criminal and civil statute of limitations. If a survivor has questions about an individual situation, the survivor should consult with a legal advocate or attorney.

## VICTIM'S COMPENSATION

A victim of a sexual assault in MA may be eligible for financial compensation from the state for crime related expenses. To the extent insurance or other funds do not cover expenses, the survivor may be reimbursed for medical, counseling and dental expenses as well as lost wages. To be eligible, a police report must be filed with a law enforcement agency; survivors are exempt from the 5-day reporting requirement if there is "good cause" for the delay. If a survivor does not wish to file a police report, expenses incurred as a result of a forensic sexual assault exam may still be covered. The application must be filed within 3 years of the crime; if the survivor was under the age of 18 when the crime occurred, the survivor may apply until age 21. Please contact the Attorney General's Victim Compensation and Assistance Division at 617-727-2200 for more information. You may also contact BARCC's Legal Advocacy Program at 617-492-8306 for assistance with the application process.

## WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER THE RAPE

Every survivor reacts to rape in her/his own unique way. Some express their emotions – they may talk, cry, or scream – while others prefer to keep their feelings inside. Some will tell lots of people about the rape, while others wait months or years before discussing the rape. It is important to respect each person's choices and individual style of coping.

## IMMEDIATE CRISIS STAGE

Despite individual differences in style, there are stages that almost every survivor goes through. Listed are the feelings a survivor may feel.

- **Fear:** It is normal to feel afraid after being raped. Some survivors find it very hard to be alone at night, or in a setting like the one in which they were raped.
- **Anger:** The survivor may feel outrage at what happened. The anger may be towards the rapist, people they love, the world, or themselves.
- **Loss of Control:** Survivors often feel powerless. They have been robbed of control over their bodies.
- **Guilt:** Many survivors feel like it is their fault. We live in a culture that blames the survivor. No one deserves to be raped.
- Survivors may also be feeling isolated, have difficulty sleeping, find they can't eat or sleep, have nightmares or can't concentrate.

## IMPORTANT RESOURCES:

*Boston Area Rape Crisis Center* - [www.barcc.org](http://www.barcc.org)  
24 hour hotline- 800-841-8371