

# Helping a Sexual Assault Survivor

## **3 Keys to Survivor Care**

1. Care for physical well being - get to hospital
2. Encourage them to tell an authority figure - RA, police, professor, etc.
3. Care for emotional well being - get counseling as soon as possible.

## **Empower the Survivor**

Survivors have just been victimized by having all their control taken away. By telling them what to do or ordering them you may re-victimized them at a fragile time. Firmly or repeatedly suggest, but make sure that they are making the decisions. They should feel that they are in complete control of the response to the assault.

## **Don't Blame the Victim**

No one deserves to be assaulted. These things have nothing to do with one person victimizing another:

- How the person dresses
- How much they drank
- Who they were with
- What sexual activity they engaged in the past or this time, etc.

You will likely find yourself repeating "It is not your fault."

## **Believe the Survivor**

Sexual assault is a vastly underreported crime. 90% of the assaults that occur on campus this year will not be reported to ANY authority. The best thing you can do for a student who tells you that they have been assaulted is believe them - unconditionally. Let someone else investigate, that is not your role! It costs you nothing to believe and not believing can cause major damage.

## **Escalate**

It is important that you not make a promise of absolute confidentiality. You will likely need to share this with your supervisor, even if names are not involved, and they will likely share it with their supervisor. You will work together do what you can to make sure that the student gets the help they need in the form that they need it. Often this will vary depending on the individual situation. Make no promises other than you will only tell those who absolutely need to know and who will want to help the resident. Do assure them that you will not share this with other floor members or other RAs, this is often their major concern anyway.

## **Resources**

### Campus

Sexual Assault Survivor Advocates  
Police  
Student Health Service  
Counseling Center  
Judicial Affairs

### Community

Local Hospital  
Police  
Community Rape Crisis Hotline

Keith E. Edwards

[www.menendingrape.org](http://www.menendingrape.org)