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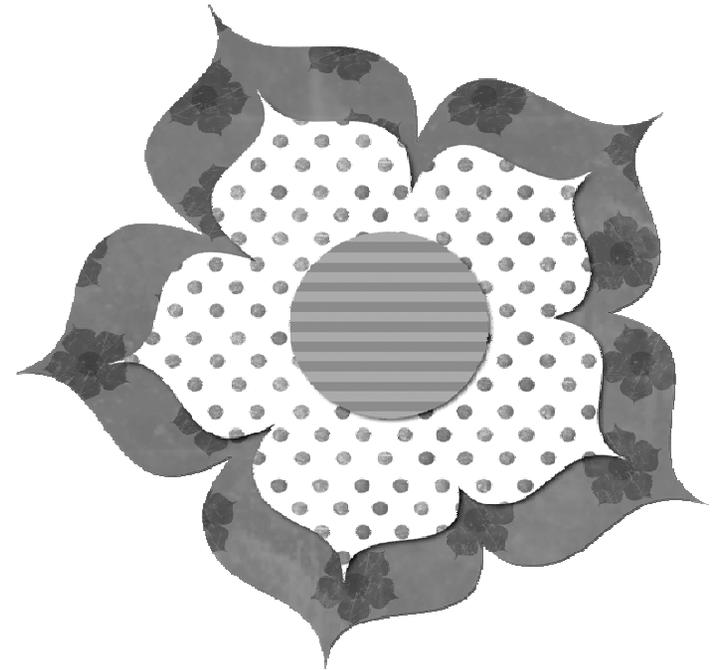
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www.thesafecenter.org

*A Handbook
For Survivors
of Sexual Violence*



This handbook is intended for adult survivors of sexual violence. Information in this book has been taken from the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence “Handbook for Survivors of Sexual Violence”.

Table of Contents

Facts about Sexual Violence	1
What You May Be Feeling	2
Common Reactions to Traumatic Events	4
Talking with Significant Others	5
Criminal Sexual Conduct	6
Stalking	6
Personal Protection Orders	8

A petition for a PPO can be made using standard court forms available from the County Clerk. Ask for the correct form based on whether or not you have a domestic relationship with the person to be restrained. You do not have to include your address on the paperwork. You will be required to fill in (in your own words) the facts and circumstances that led you to request the PPO. Be as specific as possible, and include dates of events if you can. You can also attach copies of medical histories, pictures or police reports if you have them. Your assailant will receive a copy of your written statement, and any other attached information when served with a copy of the PPO.

If you and the other party have any other court actions, like a divorce, custody award, or visitation orders, indicate that on the form so that the court can make sure orders do not conflict with each other.

The judge should sign your PPO within 24 hours if the judge believes that the person to be restrained may commit one of the prohibited behaviors. If the judge does not sign your PPO, the judge must state the reasons for the denial in writing. If the judge does not believe you are in immediate danger, you may request a hearing for the PPO. You must attend the hearing or your PPO is likely to be denied.

Once you have a signed PPO, the clerk will give you true copies. Carry a copy with you at all times, even if you leave the state.

**For questions regarding Personal Protection Orders,
please contact an Advocate at
(989) 723-9716.**

Personal Protection Orders

A Personal Protection Order (PPO) is a Circuit Court order prohibiting an assailant from certain behaviors.

A PPO allows the police to make an immediate arrest for behaviors that would not otherwise be criminal. A PPO is effective upon the judge's signature and remains in effect for no less than six months.

Who Qualifies

There are two types of PPO's; Domestic and Stalking. A domestic relationship exists when the victim and the assailant:

1. The victim and assailant are married or were previously married; or
2. They have a child in common; or
3. They reside or have resided in the same household; or
4. They have or have had a dating relationship.

Dating is defined as "frequent, intimate association characterized by the expectation of affectional involvement."

If a domestic relationship exists, the PPO can prohibit a number of behaviors. If no domestic relationship exists, the PPO can only prohibit stalking.

Applying for a PPO

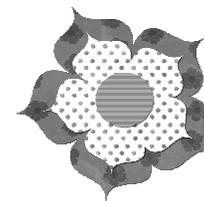
If you are in immediate danger, you can petition the court for an "ex parte" PPO. It is not necessary to hire an attorney to get a PPO, you may do it yourself and/or with assistance from a RAVE advocate.

Facts about Sexual Violence

Understanding the facts surrounding sexual violence may help in recovery. What happened to you was a crime. You are not to blame.

The Facts...

- * Sexual violence is an act of power and control, not sex.
- * Very few perpetrators are mentally incompetent and/or out of touch with reality. Sexual violence may be planned or carried out by acquaintances, intimate partners, family members or strangers.
- * No one asks to be abused, injured or humiliated. This line of thought blames the victim for what happened to them instead of blaming the perpetrator who chose to commit the crime.
- * Individuals of all ages and races have been the targets of sexual violence. Not one of them "caused" their assailant to commit a crime against them.
- * Most sexual violence encounters are committed by someone the victims knows; a friend, neighbor, co-worker, classmate, spouse, partner or family member.



What You May Be Feeling

There is no standard response to sexual violence. You may experience a few, none or all of the following:

Shock and Numbness

Feeling of spaciness, confusion, being easily overwhelmed, not knowing how to feel or what to do. You may react in a way that is similar to your reactions during other crisis in your life (some examples might be tears, irritability, nervous laughter, withdrawing).

Loss of Control

Feeling like your whole life has been turned upside down and that you will never have control of your life again. Your thoughts and feelings seem out of control.

Fear

Fear that the assailant may return; fear for your general physical safety; fear of being alone; fear of other people or situations that may remind you of your assault.

Guilt and Self-Blame

Feeling like you could have or should have done something to avoid or prevent the assault; doubts regarding your ability to make judgments.

Isolation

Feeling that this experience has set you apart from other people; feeling that other people can tell you have been sexually assaulted just by looking at you; not wanting to burden other people with your experience.

Michigan's Anti-Stalking Laws

Stalking: This crime is defined as a willful course of conduct involving repeated or continued harassment of another individual that causes the victim (and would cause a reasonable person) to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested. This crime is a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in prison or up to \$1,000 fine or both.

Aggravated Stalking: This crime includes the factors listed above plus one of the following aggravated factors: making credible threat of injury, violating a Personal Protection Order, violating a bond condition, or having previous conviction for stalking. This crime is a felony punishable by up to 5 years in prison or up to \$10,000 fine.

What to do if you are being stalked

- * **Report harassing/uninvited conduct to your local police department.** Even if the police cannot take any action at first, reporting the incident will begin to document the history of stalking.
- * **Plan for your safety.** Tell your co-workers and neighbors what is going on. Get a cell phone if you can. Teach your children how to dial 911.
- * **Keep a log of all the harassing incidents.** Include the time, place and description of the incident, as well as any witnesses to the incident.
- * **Get a Personal Protection Order.** You can complete the paperwork on your own or set an appointment with a SafeCenter Advocate.

Criminal Sexual Conduct

In Michigan the legal term used for sexual assault or rape is "Criminal Sexual Conduct". There are four degrees of criminal sexual conduct.

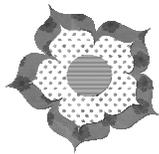
First and third degree involve forced or coerced penetration. This can involve vaginal, anal or oral intercourse or putting a finger or object in another person's genital or anal opening.

Second and fourth degree involves forced or coerced sexual conduct. This includes touching the groin, genital area, inner thigh, buttocks, breasts or the clothing covering those parts.

The degree of the penalty depends on a number of factors such as: physical injury; extortion; the element of surprise; number of assaults; and/or whether a weapon was used.

The age of the victim and whether the rapist is a member of the family or in a position of authority is a consideration in the degree of the penalty.

Criminal sexual conduct does not require a witness other than the survivor. It is a crime if the rapist is the spouse of the victim.



Stalking

If you were assaulted by someone you know, you are at greater risk of being stalked or harassed by the perpetrator or by friends or family of the perpetrator.

Vulnerability and Distrust

Feeling that you are at the mercy of your own emotions or the actions of others; not knowing who to trust or how to trust yourself; feeling of suspicion and caution.

Sexual Fears

Feeling that you do not want to have sexual relations; wondering if you will ever want or enjoy sexual relationships again; fear that being sexually intimate may remind you of the assault.

Anger

Feeling angry at the assailant. You may find yourself thinking about retaliation. You may be angry at the world since you no longer feel safe. If you are religious, you may feel angry that your faith did not prevent this.

Disruption of Daily Activities

During the first few days or weeks after the assault you may feel preoccupied with intrusive thoughts about the assault. You may experience difficulty concentrating, nightmares, sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, phobias, general anxiety or depression. You may have memories of a prior crisis.

There is no right or wrong way to react to sexual violence.

Recovery

Experiencing so many different emotions is part of working through what has happened to you. There is no right or wrong way to react to sexual assault.

Common Reactions to Traumatic Events

Initial Crisis

For the first few days or weeks, the violence may seem unreal. You may feel numb or you may experience intense or heightened emotions. There is nothing wrong or unusual about these kinds of reactions.

Outward Adjustment

This is the time when pressure to “get on with your life” might come from within or others in your life. Many survivors may appear, on the outside, to have forgotten about the assault or be satisfactorily “dealing with it” as they deal with practical matters such as returning to work, school or other normal routines.

Secondary Crisis

For many people, something happens in their life which may make their previous coping mechanisms ineffective, causing them to face the assault. Acknowledging the assault can be quite painful. Survivors of sexual assault describe feeling depressed or having flashbacks or obsessive thoughts about the assault. Again, it is important to remember that these responses are completely normal.

Integration

You are changed by the assault but have integrated the experience as one event among many other life experiences. You may feel as though you have survived the assault and have dealt with the thoughts and emotions of the trauma. You may still spend time thinking about and talking about the assault, but may find that when triggers and flashbacks occur, the feelings surrounding the experience do not last as long and may become less intense over time.

Talking with Significant Others

Parents, friends, co-workers, employers, neighbors and partners can be sources of support and solace. Follow your own heart when dealing with who to turn to. It is ok to ask for help in time of crisis. People who truly care about you may need to be told how to help you. It is ok to say:

“I don’t want to be touched.”

“I need to be held.”

“I would like to talk about what happened.”

“I don’t want to discuss that.”

If someone close to you is having a hard time being supportive or coping with your assault, you might want to ask them to read the following section.

How to Help a Survivor of Sexual Violence

- * Believe her.
- * Reinforce that the assault was not her fault.
- * Validate her experience.
- * Be supportive, don’t overreact.
- * Be patient. The survivor may express a range of strong emotions.
- * Allow the survivor to offer and not offer the details of the assault.
- * Don’t gossip. Allow the survivor to choose whom she shares the details of the assault.
- * Understand that the survivor might not want to be touched.
- * Consider that the experience is only one part of the person’s life.
- * Avoid being overly protective.
- * Don’t take decision making power away from the survivor.
- * It is ok if you need help as well. Find support for yourself.