REPORTING SEXUAL ASSAULT
I want to tell, but...

will the police come?
what if they don't believe me?
will people stop talking to me?
how will it affect my community?
will this bring shame to my family?
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will this bring shame to my family?
if nothing happens I will see him every day.
his sister works at the health centre.
I need my family together.
everyone knows our story.
YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

You deserve to be heard. You deserve to be believed. You deserve help. But you may not know where to get help, or what will happen when you do.

If you want to report a sexual assault and live in an urban area, there are three options. You can go to the police station (or call the police), go to the hospital or health center, or go to (or phone) a sexual assault center.

If You Want To Report:

- Make the report as soon as you can but it is important to know it is never too late.
- Ask the police or hospital staff for support, and about what will happen next.

*IMPORTANT*  Don’t wash hands, shower, file nails, drink, gargle, bath, douche, change clothes, use alcohol or drugs, or clean yourself up.

This gives the best chance of collecting evidence that the sexual assault happened.
Should I Contact the Police?

This is your choice.

If you **call the police**, an officer will be sent to you to take a statement that will be used to write a report. Depending on when the assault occurred, the officer might suggest you go to the hospital.
You can also go to the police station. When you arrive, tell the front desk staff that you have been sexually assaulted. The police will ask a person from Victim Services to be present to support you. This person is there for you, and will be able to connect you to follow-up services.

An officer will take a statement. They will ask questions to gather evidence, and will either ask you to write a statement or will write one for you based upon the interview, and you can sign it once you agree that it tells the events correctly. The police may also videotape you while you tell what happened.

If it is within 3 days of the assault, they may ask to collect physical evidence, including skin swabs and photos.
Should I Seek Medical Help?

This is a good idea, even if you don’t feel physically hurt. At the hospital, tell the front desk staff you have been sexually assaulted. This person may call a nurse, and you can ask to wait in a quiet, private area.

Staff will ask you to sign consent forms. Ask them to explain the forms so you understand what you are signing. One form will allow the nurse to contact other service providers on your behalf. These providers can support you after you report and help you identify follow-up services. If you give permission, the nurse will contact the Sexual Assault Center.

Usually, you will be able to choose if you want to involve the police at the hospital. If you do, the nurse will contact them and an officer will come to the hospital with a kit to collect evidence, which the nurse will use. **YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER YOU WANT TO COLLECT EVIDENCE BEFORE THE NURSE EXAMINES YOUR BODY.** This will ensure that the best evidence is collected, and that you will only have to be examined once. The nurse will take swabs of your skin and scrape under your nails, and collect samples of pubic hair, head hair and nail clippings. This is to look for DNA evidence. The exam will take between 2-5 hours.
Evidence collection may feel uncomfortable and disturbing. You can have a support person with you, and you can say no to any step or stop the exam at any time for any reason. You can also ask the police officer to wait outside the door.

**IF YOU ARE YOUNGER THAN 18, THE STAFF MUST CALL THE POLICE AND CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES RIGHT AWAY.**

The nurse will do a **physical exam** to check for injury and to take steps to prevent sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. It’s best to get this exam within 72 hours. During the exam, the nurse may take blood and urine samples. If you decide to collect evidence, the nurse will do this exam at the same time.

You may be asked to undergo a toxicology screen to look for evidence that you were drugged or intoxicated. You may be worried that people will blame you if you were drinking before the assault. But if the test shows you were drinking or using drugs, it helps show that you could not agree to have sex.

Evidence collection can only be done up to 7 days after an assault, but within 72 hours is best.
Should I Call or Go to the Sexual Assault Center?

Sexual Assault Centers are staffed by people with specialized training who can help you understand all the available options. If you decide to go to the hospital or the police, a staff member can accompany and support you. Most sexual assault centers have a 24 hour Crisis Line that is staffed by trained volunteers. If you need or prefer to phone someone, they are a good first option.
What Can I Do If I Live in an Isolated Community?

If you live in an isolated community, it can feel especially difficult to report.

There are fewer resources and supports available. Rural communities do not usually have specialized sexual assault services. If you want to be treated by a specialized team, the police will transport you to the closest service.

You can also receive a sexual assault kit and medical care at the local hospital or health center.

Your local health care provider can tell you about follow-up services in your area, which may be available through Family Services or Mental Health Services. Lastly, you could call the 24 hour Alberta Crisis Mental Health line. These volunteers are trained to offer support, however they are not specialized in issues related to sexual assault.

It may be a good idea to seek support from a trusted Elder or friend in your community to help you cope with anything that might surface after your report.
People You Might Meet When Seeking Help:

Reporting a sexual assault requires many types of service providers to work together, and it is important to understand what their roles are. Some are your supports and others have a specific job to do and MUST be neutral.

Victim Services Staff: This person is your supporter and can offer you support through the process and help you identify follow-up resources. If you go to the police, they will contact Victim Services and ensure they are there before the police question you. Victim Services staff are usually volunteers. If the police do not do this automatically, you can ASK them to call and tell them you want to wait until Victim Services arrives before they begin evidence collection.

Sexual Assault Center Staff: These people are your supports and guides through the process. They have special training in sexual assault, and will know about:

- What you might experience or feel immediately after an assault, as well as in the long-term
- How best to support you
- All options available to you, and what is involved in each step
Sexual Assault Center Staff cont.:
They are experts at coordinating between services and can accompany you to the hospital or the police station. They can give you an overview of each step and stay with you throughout the process. They can also help you prepare for court and accompany you there should charges be laid.

Police:
This person is impartial, and acts to uphold the law. The police collect evidence to determine whether a report can be tried in court. It is their job not to take sides, but to get the facts. They may ask you many questions about what happened, and you may begin to feel like they don’t believe you. They do this to give your case the best chance of success should they prosecute. The police present evidence to the Crown Prosecutor, who decides if there is enough evidence to go to trial.

Medical Staff:
This person is impartial, and they are required to be objective and health-focused, even though they will collect evidence during the exam, and will be a witness if the matter goes to trial. The clinician may ask you questions about what happened, but these are to identify injuries or health concerns. They should treat you as a patient, not a victim, and this will make the evidence stronger if they are called to testify in court.
Alberta Sexual Assault Centers

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
Toll Free: 1-877-237-5888
TTY: 403-508-7888

Sexual Assault Center of Edmonton
Crisis: 780-423-4121
TTY: 780-420-1482
780-423-4102

University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre
780 - 492 - 9771

Sherwood Park - SAFFRON Centre
780-449-0900

Fort McMurray Family Crisis Society
780-743-4691 ext. 229
Crisis: 780-743-1190

Bonnyville Dragonfly Sexual Assault Services
780-815-4456

Lloydminster Sexual Assault & Information Centre
Crisis Line: 306-825-8255

Peace River Sagitawa Friendship Centre
Providing Assistance, Counselling & Education (PACE)
Cell: 780-618-3933

Grand Prairie & Peace Country Sexual Assault Help Line
Toll Free: 1-888-377-3223

Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre (Red Deer)
Crisis: 403-356-1099
Toll Free: 1-866-956-1099
403-340-1124

Stettler Association for Communities Against Abuse
Toll Free: 1-866-807-3558

Southeastern Alberta Sexual Assault Response Committee, Medicine Hat
403-548-2717