

# After Sexual Assault: Survivors in San Francisco Have Options and Rights

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, there are services and people who can help. This page provides information about what can be done right after an assault and later.

This information is from the San Francisco SART (Sexual Assault Response Team). SART is a group of agencies that provides a team approach to care and services for sexual assault survivors. Our goals are to help survivors know their options and rights, and to provide high- quality care for all survivors in our community.

## What should I do if I've been assaulted?

Only you, the survivor, can decide what is best for you. This page suggests things you may want to think about after a sexual assault.

### Seek a Safe Place

- If you are in immediate danger, call 911.
- Physical safety - Find a safe place where you feel protected and comfortable
- Emotional safety - Identify what would make you feel supported and comforted. Ask for what you need.
- Reach out for support.
  - Call San Francisco Women Against Rape (SFWAR)'s 24-hour hotline: (415) - 647- RAPE (415-647-7273)
  - Contact a trusted friend or family member.

### Seek Medical Care

You may decide to seek medical care in order to take care of your health and/or to have evidence of the assault collected, in case you want to report to police.

- **Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital, located at 1001 Potrero Avenue**, is the only medical facility in San Francisco where survivors can receive specialized care and forensic evidence collection.
- **These services are free and you do not need to make a police report.**

At the hospital, trained Rape Treatment Center (RTC) or, for minors, Child Advocacy Support and Resource Center (CASARC) medical providers will explain your options and rights.

### **Your options include:**

- A physical exam
- Medication to prevent sexually-transmitted infections, including HIV
- Medication to prevent pregnancy
- Collection of evidence in case you decide to report to law enforcement

### **Your rights include:**

- The right to have an advocate and at least one other support person of your choice present with you during the exam

## **If the Sexual Assault Just Happened:**

- In case you decide to have evidence collected, **try not to clean up** (wash, shower, bathe, change clothes, brush your teeth, eat or douche) even though you may want to.
- It is harder to collect evidence after cleaning up but even if you already have, it still may be possible to collect evidence.
- If you believe you may have been drugged, it is important to obtain urine and blood samples as soon as possible.
- If you have already changed clothes or have sheets, furniture, or any fabric that may have secretions on them, we recommend that you put these items into dry paper bags and close the bags. You may keep these items at home, but we recommend that you give these to the police as soon as possible if you decide to file a police report.

## **Reporting to Law Enforcement**

**Sexual assault is a crime, and it is not your fault.** If you decide to report the assault to police, it is the first step in investigating the assault and the person who assaulted you.

- In an emergency, you can call 911.
- If you are not in immediate danger, you can call the **San Francisco Police Department** at **(415)-553-0123** and ask for more information on where to file a police report.

There is no time limit for reporting, although the sooner you report, the more evidence can be collected.

## Know your rights:

If you are an adult victim, you can

- **Stop participating in a police investigation at any time you wish**
- Ask that your name and address not become public record
- **Have a victim advocate and at least one other support person of your choice present** at any interview with law enforcement authorities, deputy district attorneys and defense attorneys
- **You can file a police report no matter what your immigration status is.** San Francisco is a Sanctuary City, and city workers (such as police) are prohibited from asking about your immigration status

# Frequently Asked Questions about Sexual Assault Exam Services

## What is the San Francisco Rape Treatment Center (RTC)?

RTC medical providers have specialized training in providing medical care and Sexual Assault Exam Kits to survivors. They will help you understand your options for care and can provide referrals to other services you may need.

## When should someone get help from the RTC?

It is ideal to seek medical services as soon as you can to care for yourself and to increase the chances of effective evidence collection. Normally, RTC medical providers can see survivors up to 5 days after a sexual assault; however, the medications used to prevent HIV transmission can only be prescribed up to 72 hours after an assault.

## How long will the RTC visit take?

Each visit is different, depending on what services a survivor chooses. An average visit is usually about 4 hours, but some may be shorter or longer.

## Can you confirm that I was sexually assaulted?

Unfortunately, no. Sometimes survivors are not sure about some parts or all of what happened, which can be stressful. A physical exam alone cannot confirm what happened, but some of the services below can help with those concerns. If a survivor chooses to file a crime report and evidence is collected, they can talk with the police investigator to find out more.

### **Will I be able to find out if I was given drugs or alcohol?**

It depends. Many drugs do not stay in your system for more than a few hours. All toxicology blood and/or urine samples are released to the SF Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for testing and will not be tested in the hospital. Survivors can follow up with their SFPD investigator about any toxicology results if the assault was reported to law enforcement.

### **When will the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit be processed?**

The Kits will be delivered to the SFPD Crime Lab within five days and the testing process will be started. The testing process should be completed no later than 120 days after.

### **If I don't want to go forward with a police investigation, but want to know if there is foreign DNA present, how can I find out?**

A survivor can request this information in person at the SFPD Special Victims Unit office (SVU), and it may be shared unless it interferes with any ongoing investigation(s). Survivors are not required to continue with the investigation process if they only want this information. Also, if a survivor has designated another person to receive the information, SVU must be notified of that in writing.

### **Will I get my clothes back and when?**

Unfortunately, no, not if your clothes are collected as evidence.

## **Information for Students**

If you are a student, you may have access to additional resources and options. For K - 12 students, contact your school directly for resources or more information. You may also find out more about Title IX here: [stopsexualassaultinschools.org](http://stopsexualassaultinschools.org)

If you are a student at a college or university in San Francisco, you may also have additional resources to assist you. Consider checking out your school's webpage for information on Title IX or go to this webpage for information for each of the schools in San Francisco: [sfgov.org/dosw/external-resources](http://sfgov.org/dosw/external-resources)

**If you want to file a crime report, you can choose to report the assault to your school's campus security/police, to the San Francisco Police Department, or both.** Depending on whether your school employs sworn police officers, your campus police may not be able to conduct a criminal investigation. They may only investigate for the school's administrative process. Some schools have agreements with the SFPD

about reporting and investigation, and others don't. You can always contact the SFPD directly to report a crime, even if you have already reported to campus police.

**You can speak with your school's Title IX Coordinator, who can provide you with information about complaint procedures for investigating and addressing the incident.** The coordinator can also provide information about resources and your rights and options. They can let you know about possible actions the school may offer in order to reduce or eliminate negative impact on you. Examples include: adjustment to work assignments, course schedules or supervisory reporting relationship; requiring the accused to move from University housing; immediately prohibiting the accused from coming to the University; or prohibiting the accused from contacting the parties involved in the reported incident.

These options may be available to you whether or not you choose to report the sexual violence to campus police or law enforcement. **Title IX Coordinators ARE currently mandated to report information about the assault to school administration.**

**You can speak to a mental health professional about what happened, either at your school's counseling center or another program.** Mental health professionals are generally not required to report information about sexual assaults to your school's administration or to the police so you can usually speak with them confidentially. Make sure to ask the person you speak with about how they might share information with others. Mental health professionals and counselors can provide support and help you navigate your options.

## San Francisco SART Resources

**Rape Treatment Center (RTC)** (for Survivors Age 18 & over)

(415) 437 - 3000

[traumarecoverycenter.org](http://traumarecoverycenter.org)

- Immediate health needs related to the assault
- Advocacy and support
- Forensic examination with evidence collection
- Referrals for follow-up care

**Trauma Recovery Center (TRC)** (for Survivors Age 18 & over)

(415) 437 - 3000

[traumarecoverycenter.org](http://traumarecoverycenter.org)

- Trauma-informed, evidence-based mental health services
- Individual and group psychotherapy
- Help with practical needs

### **San Francisco Women Against Rape (SFWAR)**

(415) 647-RAPE (415-647-7273)

[sfwar.org](http://sfwar.org)

- 24-hour crisis hotline for support, information, and referrals
- Survivor-centered advocacy
- Peer counseling and support group

### **Child Advocacy Support & Resource Center (CASARC)**

- for Survivors Age 17 & under

(415) 206-8386

[Casarc.org](http://Casarc.org)

- Immediate health needs related to the assault
- Advocacy and support
- Forensic examination with evidence collection
- Mental health services for child survivors and their families

### **San Francisco Police Department Special Victims Unit**

(415) 553-1521

[sfgov.org/police](http://sfgov.org/police)

- Crime report
- Preliminary investigation
- Follow-up investigation
- Evidence kit testing

### **Victim Services Division of the San Francisco District Attorney's Office**

(415) 553-9044

[sfdistrictattorney.org/victim-services](http://sfdistrictattorney.org/victim-services)

- Victim Compensation
- Emergency Assistance
- Court help
- Referrals

### **San Francisco District Attorney's Office**

(415) 553-1751

[sfgov.org/police](http://sfgov.org/police)

- Reviews cases presented by law enforcement
- May do follow-up investigation
- Determines cases to be prosecuted
- Prosecutes in criminal court

# Additional Resources

## **RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline**

(800) 656-4673

- 24/7, free, confidential information and support

## **Cooperative Restraining Order Clinic (C.R.O.C.)**

(415) 864 - 1790

- Free legal help getting a restraining order if you are a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
- Consultation about your rights as a victim of crime and what civil and criminal legal options are available to you.

## **National Crime Victim Bar Association**

(202) 467 - 8716

- Referrals to local, experienced lawyers
- Help filing a civil lawsuit against a perpetrator whether or not there is a criminal case
- Help exploring your options to sue an offender or other responsible party for money

## **Catholic Charities Legal Assistance**

(415) 972-1200

- Immigration legal help
- Can help you apply for certain kinds of visas if you are undocumented and have been the victim of a crime, including U Visas and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) petitions

# Ideas for Taking Care of Yourself

Self care means taking steps to feel safe and well. Taking good care of yourself can help after the trauma of an assault, whether it just happened or was a long time ago. You are the expert on what feels helpful to you.

## Here are some ideas for positive coping:

- Remind yourself that your feelings are normal and you will heal from this trauma
- Be gentle to yourself
- Avoid self-blame
- Seek counseling
- Get extra rest
- Join a support group and meet other survivors
- Pay attention to what helps you feel better
- Ask for help - big or small, reach out
- Physical activity can help reduce stress and regulate emotions
- Reach out to your support system if it helps to talk with or just be with people who care about you
- Try positive distractions - a movie or book that gives you a break from thinking about trauma
- Remember drugs and alcohol only postpone feelings and don't support healing
- Eat healthy meals and snacks
- Give yourself time to heal

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