

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

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted in San Francisco, there are services and people who can help.

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

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?

It's understandable that survivor would like to figure out what happened, however, 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.

Is it OK to take a shower before coming to ZSFG for a forensic examination?

- It is best to resist the urge to clean up to maintain as much evidence as possible.
- If possible, avoid washing, showering, bathing, changing clothes, brushing your teeth or douching until you can meet with a sexual assault forensic examiner at ZSFG. This will help preserve perishable evidence if you decide you would like to undergo a forensic examination.
- If you have already taken a shower, there is still a chance evidence may be recovered so do not let this dissuade you from having a forensic examination if this is something you want to do.

Is it OK to use the bathroom before coming to ZSFG for a forensic examination?

- It is best to have a urine specimen collected and preserved as evidence as soon as possible, but you may use the bathroom if you need to.
- If you use the bathroom before a urine specimen is collected, it is best to avoid wiping with tissue if possible.

Is it OK to eat/drink something before coming to ZSFG for a forensic examination?

- It is best to avoid drinking or eating before having a forensic examination, but you may drink water and/or eat a snack if you need to.

Is it OK to change clothes before coming to ZSFG for a forensic examination?

- If you have already changed clothes or have bedding, 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 do recommend that you release these to law enforcement as soon as possible if you decide to file a police report.

Know your rights and options – it is important to feel that you have control over what happens to you after trauma.

- It is okay to ask questions
- It is okay to change your mind about what you want to do next
- Your safety and healing are the priority

Emotional Healing and Wellness

Therapy / counseling can be a helpful way to get extra support. Therapists who have special training and experience working with survivors of sexual assault can help you feel better. Please contact us for more information:

Trauma Recovery Center (TRC)

For Adults Age 18 & over

Phone: (415) 437 – 3000

Website: <https://divisionoftraumarecoveryservices.org/trauma-recovery-center/>

Our multidisciplinary team works together to support healing and recovery, and strives to create an environment where survivors feel welcome, safe, listened to and respected. Services include:

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

Child Advocacy Support & Resource Center (CASARC)

For Youth Age 17 & under and their families

Phone: (628) 206-8386

Website: <https://divisionoftraumarecoveryservices.org/casarc/>

Our team of specially trained therapists provide services for children that have suffered from sexual abuse and other forms of trauma, and their families. We help children re-establish trust, know their right to be safe from abuse, and foster resilience. Services include:

- Individual and family psychotherapy
- Advocacy and support
- Parenting skills and education