

Common responses to sexual assault:

Every survivor of sexual assault responds differently. Many survivors feel alone and that no one can understand what they are going through. You are not alone. Talking to a counselor or other survivors can help. The following are some common responses that survivors may experience:

- Shock, denial or disbelief.
- Shame, embarrassment or guilt.
- Fears about being alone, about your future or about the person who did this to you.
- Anger or irritability.
- Sadness, crying spells or depression.
- Thinking about suicide or wanting to get away.
- Feeling a loss of control over your life and choices.
- Less interest in friends and not wanting to go out.
- Loss of trust in others and in your ability to make decisions.
- Difficulty with concentration and focus.
- Changes in sleep or appetite.
- Nightmares or flashbacks.
- Feeling insecure about yourself.
- Feeling anxious, nervous or scared.
- Feeling numb or having a hard time expressing emotions.
- Not being able to stop thinking about this event.
- Feeling like you will “be this way” forever.
- Memories of past sexual abuse may arise.

If you need help, please call your local domestic violence or sexual assault program.



Michigan Resources:

Affirmations (Ferndale, MI), (248) 398-7105
Helpline: 1-800-398-GAYS, www.goaffirmations.org

Equality Michigan, (313) 537-7000
1-866-962-1147, equalitymi.org

Transgender Michigan, (517) 420-1544
www.transgendermichigan.org

Other Resources:

National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH),
www.thehotline.org, 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
TTY 1-800-787-3224.

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN),
www.rainn.org, 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Information provided by the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Questioning (LBGTIQ) & Allies Task Force

The LBGTIQ & Allies Task Force is a statewide collaboration of members of the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence (MCEDSV) who work to both promote better access and inclusive services for LBGTIQ survivors of domestic and sexual violence and provide a supportive working environment for LBGTIQ service providers.

For more information about the LBGTIQ & Allies Task Force, please contact:

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Sexual Assault in LBGTIQ Communities

A Guide for Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender, Intersex, Queer & Questioning Survivors of Sexual Assault.

What is sexual assault?

Sexual assault is when there is sexual contact:

- Without consent.
- With the use of coercion, physical force, deception or threat.
- When the victim/survivor is mentally or physically incapacitated, intoxicated or impaired, asleep or unconscious.
- Sexual assault can be touching or any type of sexual penetration (oral, anal or vaginal) with any body part or object.

A person of any sexual orientation or gender identity can be sexually assaulted by anyone of any sexual orientation or gender identity.

Rape is not bound by sexual orientation or gender. It is a matter of consent. It is not defined by you saying or NOT saying “no.” If someone forces or coerces you to do something sexual you don’t want to do, that is sexual assault. Sexual assault can happen by a stranger, friend, family member, date or partner. The person who CAUSES sexual assault is the rapist. It is NEVER the survivor’s fault.

What can I do if I have been sexually assaulted?

- **Talk to someone you trust:** You can ask for what you need from them, “I just need for you to listen” or “I just need someone to be here while I sleep so I can feel safe.”
- **Sexual assault exam/health care:** A Nurse Examiner Program can provide a forensic exam, pregnancy prevention, services, antibiotics to treat some STIs, information about sexual assault support services and the criminal justice process, and future testimony in a sexual assault court case. They can help you figure out what steps you might like to take initially since making a decision right after a rape can be difficult. If you believe you could have contracted HIV during the rape, talk to the nurse or emergency room immediately. If you are not given assistance, call your local HIV/AIDS agency.
- **Criminal Prosecution:** If you do want to press charges, the first step is to file a police report. You can also file a police report without pressing charges. This way, you will not have to go to court and have follow-up interviews with detectives. Contact your local sexual assault crisis center to request an advocate to be with you when you report to the police. A skilled advocate can facilitate a police interview that will reduce your stress and improve your chances of effective prosecution.
- **Report Discrimination:** Contact Equality Michigan (equalitymi.org) at 1-866-962-1147 or (313) 537-7000 to get legal assistance and report a hate crime.

How can I help my friend or partner?

- Believe they have been sexually assaulted.
- Respect their need for confidentiality.
- Avoid judgmental comments/jokes.
- Ask how you can assist rather than giving advice.
- Respect their decisions even when yours may be different.
- Be a good listener.
- Avoid pressure to resume sexual activity. Let the survivor initiate sexual contact.
- Offer your unconditional love and support.

Common fears of LBGTIQ survivors of sexual assault:

- Not being taken seriously or having their experience minimized.
- Having their experience sensationalized.
- Having to explain how the assault happened in more detail than necessary.
- Being blamed for the assault.
- Not being understood if S&M was involved.
- Being treated in a homo, trans or biphobic manner by police, hospital or rape crisis center.
- Mistakenly being perceived as the perpetrator.
- Being “outed.”
- If the survivor’s community is small, the fear of other’s skepticism or people “taking sides” may cause the survivor to keep silent.
- The survivor’s guilt and self-blame may lead them to question their sexual identity and sexuality.
- Gay/bi male survivors may fear reporting due to the stereotype that they are promiscuous and therefore invited the sexual assault upon themselves.
- Lesbian/bi women survivors may fear reporting because women are not typically viewed as perpetrators of sexual violence.