

# know your rights as a survivor of sexual violence

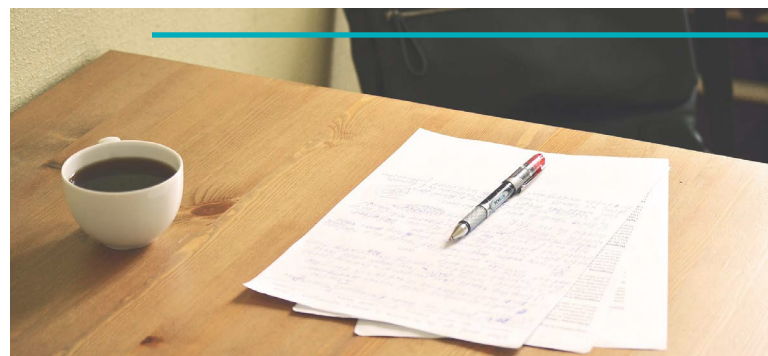


The **Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights** was enacted in 2019 to outline basic protections and fundamental rights for survivors. As a survivor of sexual violence, the time immediately following an assault can seem confusing and overwhelming. Next steps in the aftermath of an assault should be led by the survivor.

**No matter what a survivor chooses to do in the aftermath of an assault, they should know their rights are guaranteed, even if the assault is not reported to law enforcement.** The Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights declares all survivors of sexual violence have the right to be treated with dignity and compassion and the right to be free from blame. The Bill of Rights also affirms that the survivor should be free from any suggestion that they contributed to the risk of being assaulted. *Sexual violence is never the fault of the survivor.*

## SURVIVORS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Choose whether to report to law enforcement.
- Be free from any suggestion that they must report the crime to have their rights guaranteed.
- Be free from any suggestion that victims should refrain from reporting crimes in order to avoid unwanted personal publicity.
- Have their report of sexual assault treated seriously.



## SURVIVORS HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED OF AND ACCESS:

- Existing medical, counseling, mental health, or other services available for victims of sexual assault, whether or not the crime is reported to law enforcement.
- Treatment and interviews provided in a language in which the victim is fluent.
- Assistive devices to accommodate disabilities that the victim may have.
- Testing for HIV or any other sexually transmitted infections and assistance with compelling and disclosing the results of testing for a communicable disease from the person who caused harm.

## SURVIVORS HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED OF AND ACCESS:

- **Evidence collection and preservation.** Evidence collection is time sensitive and should occur within five days of the assault. Survivors can choose to have evidence collected whether or not they pursue a criminal case. All forensic evidence is retained for a minimum of five years. If the survivor chooses to report to police, either at the time of collection or later, they can request information on the status of the evidence.
- **Financial compensation.** The Victims of Crime Compensation Office (VCCO) offers assistance with accessing compensation for expenses that occurred as a result of an assault, including the cost of mental health counseling, medical bills, relocation, and loss of earnings. Survivors can reach the VCCO at (877) 658-2221 or [www.NJVictims.org](http://www.NJVictims.org).
- **A civil protective order.** Under the Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act of 2015, survivors can seek a civil protective order against the person who caused them harm if there is risk of further harm.
- **The no-cost services of a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), if the survivor is over the age of 13.** A SART is comprised of a Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate (CSVA), a Law Enforcement Officer (LEO), and a Forensic Nurse Examiner (FNE).
  - The **CSVA** is a confidential resource who can support the survivor through the SART process. The CSVA provides emotional support and can help the survivor explore their rights, options, and available resources.
  - The **LEO** can provide thorough and objective assistance in responding to and conducting a criminal investigation of sexual assault.
  - If the assault occurred within the last five days, the **FNE** can tend to the medical needs of the survivor and perform a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE) Kit to collect forensic evidence. **The survivor can choose to work with one, two, or all three of the SART members.**

The support of a **Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate** is always available, **24 hours a day**. To learn more about survivors' rights and options or to speak with an advocate, contact your **local sexual violence service provider**.

*If you are in immediate danger, call 911.*

New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
[www.njcasa.org](http://www.njcasa.org)  
24-hour Statewide Hotline:  
(800) 601-7200



## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Attorney General Standards for Providing Services to Victims of Sexual Assault. (2018, November). Retrieved from <https://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/AG-SART-Standards.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> N.J. Ct. R. 5:7B. Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills/PL19/103\\_.PDF](https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills/PL19/103_.PDF)

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The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is the statewide organization representing 21 county-based rape crisis centers and Rutgers University's Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance. NJCASA elevates the voice of survivors and service providers through advocacy, training, and support for efforts to create safer communities for all people.

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against sexual assault