What to Do if You are Sexually Assaulted

Rockhurst University Counseling Center, ex 4275

Sexual assaults are all too common, even on college campuses. In fact, approximately one in every six women in the United States is a survivor of rape or attempted rape, while about 10% of all sexual assault victims are men (find references for these and other related statistics on the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network Web site). The staff of the Rockhurst University Counseling Center are deeply concerned about sexual assaults and are committed to supporting students who have been sexually assaulted. The information that follows is meant to provide guidance to such students, their friends and others who support them. Here is a list of topics covered on this Web page—click on any of these headings to go directly to that part of the Web page:

1. Contact information for Campus Security and KC resources
2. What to do immediately following a sexual assault
3. What to do within 24 hours of a sexual assault
4. What to do in the days following a sexual assault
5. Should you report the sexual assault?
6. Additional resources

Contact information for Campus Security and KC Resources

Campus Safety and Local Police

- **Campus Security** (4911 from campus telephones, or 816-501-4010): call to access campus security officers, ambulance, local police, and emergency services. For more information, see their website at http://www.rockhurst.edu/services/security/index.asp.
- **Police Department**: 911

Medical Services

- **Saint Luke’s Hospital ER** (816-932-2171): medical services and collection of forensic evidence; located at 4400 Wornall Road, Kansas City, Missouri 64111. See their website at https://www.saintlukeshealthsystem.org/app/hp.asp
- **Truman Medical Centers ER** (816-404-1500): medical services and collection of forensic evidence; located at 2301 Holmes Street, Kansas City MO 64108. See their website at http://www.trumed.org/.

Counseling and Support

- **Rockhurst University Counseling Center** (816-501-4275): free, confidential counseling services for students. A “counselor on call” is available 24 hours/7 days whenever school is in session; you can access the counselor by contacting your Resident Assistant or Area Coordinator, or by calling the campus dispatcher at 816-501-4000. If you contact the campus dispatcher, you only need to provide your first name and telephone number, and ask the dispatcher to have the counselor call you back.
- **Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA)** (24 hours/7 days crisis hotline 816-531-0233): free, confidential crisis counseling; support groups; support during medical exams; advocacy and guidance in reporting the crime to the police and in navigating the judicial process. For more information, see http://www.mocsa.org/.
- **Campus Ministry** (816-501-4747): pastoral counseling and support. For more information, see the Campus Ministry website.
- **Residential Life** (816-501-4663): support and coordination of other services, contact your Resident Assistant, Area Coordinator, Resident, Director, Director of Residential Life.
- **Dean of Students** (816-501-4030): support and advocacy through campus judicial process; help in arranging for leaves or academic support.
Campus Judicial Process

- **RU Student Judicial Officer** (816-501-4126): The Judicial Officer will help you discuss your rights and options in the Judicial Process.

What to do immediately following a sexual assault

- **Go to a safe place.** Consider going to your room, a friend’s room, or anywhere you will feel safe.
- **Do not clean up.** It may be difficult to keep from cleaning yourself up, but if you do you may destroy evidence that could be useful should you decide to report the assault to the police. Don’t wash up, douche, change clothes, eat, brush your teeth, go to the bathroom, or brush your hair. Even if you are not sure about reporting the assault, it makes sense to preserve the option of reporting until you make a final decision.
- **Call someone you trust.** No matter how late it is, you should not be alone. Consider calling a close friend or family member. Also consider calling an Rockhurst University staff member, such as the Counseling Center’s counselor on call (816-501-4275) or Campus Security (816-501-4010). Also consider calling Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA) (24 hours/7 days crisis hotline 816-531-0233) whose staff can be especially helpful in advocating for you and providing support.

What to do within 24 hours of a sexual assault

- **Secure medical consultation.** Go to the Saint Luke’s Hospital ER or go to Truman Medical Centers ER (see above for contact information) where they provide medical care for victims of sexual assault, and have the expertise to collect forensic evidence of the assault for possible prosecution of the assailant. The gathering of this evidence does not commit you to pursuing legal action against the assailant, but does preserve your options. Consider asking someone you trust to accompany you when you go to your medical consultation and strongly consider calling the staff from MOCSA who can be especially helpful in providing support for you during your medical consultation (see 24 hrs / 7 days contact information, above).
- **Consult with someone who can help you review your options for reporting the assault.** Your best community resource in this regard is MOCSA (see 24 hours/7 days contact information, above). The staff at MOCSA offers a variety of free support services to survivors of sexual assault, and can serve as your advocate as you decide whether or not to report the assault to local police. You may also choose to go directly to the Kansas City Police Department. Your best Rockhurst University Resources for reporting the assault include any one of the deans, the Director of Residential Life, the Director of Human Resources, or Campus Security (see contact information for all of these, above). If the assailant was a student at Rockhurst University, any one of these campus officials can help you decide whether and how to pursue judicial proceedings on campus. Your dean can also help you arrange to make up any missed school work, or even arrange for a temporary leave from school.

What to do in the days following a sexual assault

- **Consult with a counselor.** Many survivors of sexual assault experience troubling emotions in the wake of the assault. Sometimes these emotions occur immediately after the assault, and sometimes they occur later. It isn't uncommon for survivors to experience shock, anger, helplessness, self-blame, shame, problems with eating or sleeping, difficulty concentrating, mood swings, irritability, denial and fear. A professional counselor can help you sort through and understand your feelings and can help you work to get your life back on track. The RU Counseling Center offers free individual counseling to all RU students, and MOCSA offers free crisis counseling and support groups (see contact information for both, above). You might also consider seeing a private psychotherapist in the local community or
in your hometown. The Counseling Center can provide you with a list of private psychotherapists in and near Kansas City.

• **Consult with other RU staff that can provide support.** Consider talking with your dean, the college chaplain or the staff at Campus Ministry (see contact information for these, above).

## Should you report the sexual assault?

While it often makes sense to consult with an advocate or counselor as you consider whether or not to report a sexual assault, the decision is a very personal one and is entirely your own. Note that it is particularly helpful to report sexual assaults by strangers because such assaults pose an alarming risk to the campus community. From a safety and investigatory standpoint, the sooner a sexual assault is reported, the better; even so, reports that occur weeks or months after the assault can be helpful as well. Survivors of sexual assault choose to report the assault for many reasons:

- They may want the assailant to be punished for the crime.
- They may be concerned that the assailant will assault them or someone else again.
- They may want campus crime statistics to show how common sexual assaults are so that more will be done to prevent them.
- They may want to regain a sense of control over the situation, and may want to work against the “blame the victim” tendency that sometimes presents itself in these situations.

Survivors of sexual assault can anticipate that campus judicial officers, local police investigators and the local courts will do their best to hold assailants responsible for their crimes; even so, the campus judicial process, the local police investigations and the local courts do not work perfectly, and survivors of sexual assault should secure support and advice as they prepare to report the assaults.

### Options for reporting:

- **You can report the assault to RU.** Particularly if the assailant is a RU student or if the assault occurred on campus, you should report the assault to RU officials. You can discuss your rights and options by contacting Dean of Students (816-501-4030) or by contacting Campus Security (816-501-4010). If circumstances indicate, Campus Security may release a warning to the entire campus to protect the community, but will do so in a manner that protects your identity and safeguards your privacy.

- **You can pursue formal criminal charges by reporting the assault to the Police Department.** Many survivors of sexual assault find it extremely useful to arrange for staff from the MOCSA to accompany them when they report the assault to the police. The staff from MOCSA are particularly well-positioned to help guide survivors through the police and court systems (see their contact information, above). The staff from Campus Security can also serve as a helpful bridge between students and the local police (see their contact information, above). When you report the assault, local police officers will interview you, take a statement and investigate. Depending on the results of the investigation, an assistant district attorney may be assigned to your case and may follow your case to completion.

### Additional Resources

- The **National Women’s Health Information Center** offers a useful web site on sexual assault, http://www.4woman.gov/faq/sexualassault.htm. The site includes links to several relevant national organizations, and covers the following topics: *What is sexual assault? Who are victims of sexual assault? How can I help prevent being sexually assaulted? Where else can I go for help? How do I help someone who was been sexually assaulted?*

- Robin Warshaw’s (1994), *I Never Called it Rape: The Ms. Report on Recognizing, Fighting, and Surviving Date and Acquaintance Rape* (ISBN 0060925728), is one of the best self-help books available relating to acquaintance rape and is also a valuable
resource for partners and family members of rape survivors. It is available from the RU library.