

SEXUAL VIOLENCE DEFINED

Sexual violence is unwanted, forced or coerced sexual contact. It is also sexual violence when a person is unable or unwilling to give consent. It can be in the form of:

- Rape (stranger or non-stranger)
- Sodomy
- Incest
- Statutory Rape
- Sexual exploitation
- Sex trafficking
- Sexual and street harassment
- Dating Violence
- Alcohol and drug-facilitated sexual assault
- Child sexual abuse
- Stalking
- Indecent exposure
- Unwanted touching (i.e. fondling or molestation)
- Voyeurism ("peeping tom")

KNOW WHAT CONSENT IS

Defining consent is easy. Without active consent, a sex act is a sexual assault. "Enthusiastic" consent is the idea that all partners are actively into and agree to sex acts. Consent can be granted (and removed) at any time – it's everyone's responsibility to seek a definite "yes" rather than looking for a "no."

There's no such thing as "legitimate rape" and expecting victims to physically resist in order for the sexual assault to be valid is another form of victim blaming. Often victims appear to "go along" with the assault or don't "fight back" as a survival mechanism. Everyone reacts to trauma in different ways. A victim may succumb to the violence because of fear, confusion, or an inability to resist. They know they must do whatever is necessary to survive or to lessen the potential for greater violence.

Aside from being 18 or older, remember that under the law your potential partner must be mentally competent to understand what is happening. If your partner is substantially impaired, you can't get consent.

CONSENT AND MINORS IN NORTH DAKOTA

In North Dakota, a person can be charged with a serious crime if they engage in a sexual act or sexual contact with a minor (anyone under 18). The seriousness of the crime and the penalties are even greater if the minor is under the age of 15. Even if a minor person has consensual sexual contact with someone younger than 15, they can be charged with gross sexual imposition (the legal term for rape in North Dakota) in juvenile court. If the case is transferred to adult court, the defendant will be treated as an adult sex offender and will be subject to the same penalties as an adult. (Adapted from "What Teenagers Need to Know About Sex Offenses" by North Dakota Office of Attorney General)



10 WAYS TO HELP END SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. Assess your own actions

Do your own actions, attitudes, or beliefs help support the objectification and de-valuing of women and girls? Don't join in on behavior that makes light of sexual violence – and let others know that sexist jokes and language aren't acceptable.

2. Speak up and speak often

Sharing how you feel is important because silence affirms and supports sexual violence. Being open about what you think can influence and change attitudes, especially of those close to you. Sexual violence isn't OK – so stand up and say so!

3. Ask how you can help

It's not easy or even popular to stand against violent actions or behavior. Ask how you can help if you suspect abuse, harassment, or an assault. And if you are abusing other people in ANY way, stop immediately and seek professional help.

4. Help create a culture shift

Listen to and learn from women – don't be afraid to help create a culture shift that doesn't tolerate disrespect or devaluing of women. Don't objectify women or act in ways that make them feel uncomfortable. If you're unsure, ask!

5. Be a positive example for young people

Aside from being a healthy role model, teach youth that "no" means "no" and "stop" means "stop." Help boys understand that "being a man" means treating women with respect. Help girls understand that only THEY have the right to make decisions about their body and those decisions should be respected.

6. Always hold the perpetrator accountable

Avoid making excuses for the perpetrator's behavior or buying into the argument that sexual violence is caused by substance abuse, mental illness, lack of anger management skills, or stress. By making excuses, you diminish the perpetrator's responsibility for their actions and blame the victim for the sexual assault.

7. Remember that no one "wants" sexual violence

Never voice, believe, or support the idea that the victim "wanted it." Sexual assault is a violent crime that no one asks for – one with an extensive recovery and healing process.

8. Communicate with your partner

Make sure you find out what your partner wants – never assume. If you think you're getting mixed signals, talk to your partner. If they say they aren't sure, wait until they're sure. Remember that consent isn't automatic. Respect your partner's right to say "no" or change their mind at any time. And most importantly, treat your partner with respect and dignity – never pressure, coerce, or force them to have sex.

9. Be a source of support for people in your life

Let your friends and family know you're someone they can talk to about sexual violence or abuse. If someone discloses a sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, or abuse of any kind, let them know you believe them and connect them to a local crisis intervention center.

10. Get help for yourself

If you are the victim of sexual violence, the most important thing to know is that it isn't your fault. Emotional support is very important – who are people you can talk to and who will support you? Preserve evidence by not showering, bathing or douching, eating, changing clothes, or altering the environment where the assault took place. Getting connected to a confidential victim advocate can help you think about options for reporting, medical care, counseling services, safety planning, as well as your rights and legal options.

GET CONNECTED

For more info or confidential help with a crisis 24 hours a day, call 1-800-656-HOPE.

**RAPE,
ABUSE &
INCEST
NATIONAL
NETWORK**

For a directory of state crisis intervention centers, scan this code with a smartphone.

