

## **AFTER A SEXUAL ASSAULT – REPORTING TO POLICE**

### **Important information for adult survivors of sexual assault in P.E.I.**

After experiencing a sexual assault, you have a lot of decisions to make, including who to tell and whether to get medical attention or report to police. We hope that this document will help you make the best decision for yourself.

#### **Should I report to the police?**

- It is your choice whether or not to report a sexual assault to the police.
- You can report a sexual assault at any time, regardless of when the assault took place. There is no time limit for reporting or laying charges for sexual assault.
- After a report of sexual assault, the police will conduct an investigation. They are responsible for gathering information and evidence to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to support a prosecution.
- You can have a support person with you when you meet with police. They may be asked to leave the room during part or all of the interview.
- Reporting does not guarantee that the accused will be charged and/or convicted.

#### **What will happen if I report to the police?**

- You can report the assault by calling 911, or by calling or going to the police agency responsible for the area where the assault took place. You can also go to the hospital to get examined and let the hospital staff know that you want the police to be contacted.
- If you are reporting a recent assault, take any evidence you may have. To preserve evidence, it is best if you do not change your clothes, wash, shower or bathe, eat or drink, or brush your teeth. But, if you have done any of these things, you can still report to police.
- After reporting a sexual assault, a police officer will take your statement. They will want to know the details of what happened and will ask a lot of questions. Your statement may be videotaped.
- The police will want to collect as much evidence as possible. In the case of a recent assault, they may want to take pictures of any injuries you may have and may ask if you want to go to the hospital to collect more evidence.
- At the hospital, if appropriate to your situation, you may choose to have a sexual assault examination kit completed to collect forensic evidence. A “kit” is a box that holds the swabs, bags and container used to collect and store evidence from your body. Evidence can usually be collected up to 72 hours after an assault.
- You can still report an assault without having had forensic evidence collected. However, this may mean there is less evidence available to proceed with the case.

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- The police will continue to collect available evidence and interview witnesses. They will also interview the accused if the person has been identified.
- Before laying charges, police will present all the evidence to the Crown Prosecutor who will decide if there is a reasonable likelihood of conviction.
- If charges are laid, the accused may be held in custody until the court hearing or placed on an undertaking with conditions. If you have concerns for your safety, speak to the police officer about this.
- If the case goes to court and the accused pleads guilty, there will be no need for a trial. If the accused pleads not guilty the case will proceed to court. You may be required to testify.
- With your permission, police will refer you to Victim Services for assistance. You can also contact Victim Services directly.

### **Victim Services**

Queens and Kings County: 902-368-4582

Prince County: 902-888-8218

You can access services whether you have reported to police or not. A victim services worker can assist you in the aftermath of the assault, provide information about the criminal justice system and support you through the court process.