The Sexual Assault Response Center is a rape crisis center in Delaware. The center is committed to providing healing, hope, and empowerment to individuals whose lives have been impacted by sexual violence. SARC provides comprehensive, free, and confidential rape crisis services and community awareness and prevention services.

If you are interested in volunteering or making a donation, please visit our website at www.ywcade.org/sarc

Protective Strategies

Sexual violence is never the victim's fault. However, the following tips may help reduce your risk of sexual victimization and enhance your safety.

- Have a communication device (e.g. cell phone) in reach
- Maintain access to needed assistive devices and have back ups
- Talk regularly with trusted people to verify your safety
- Minimize financial dependency if you are able
- Trust your instincts – if you feel unsafe in a situation, leave or seek help
- Practice saying “no” and “stop” firmly and assertively
- Learn the basics about sexual violence, consent and personal boundaries
- Carefully screen caregivers and guardians and continue to check up on them
- Develop a safety plan with a SARA at SARC
Sexual violence occurs when you are forced, threatened or manipulated into any sexual contact against your will. Sexual contact without your consent is sexual assault, whether the offender is a stranger or someone you know. Elder sexual assault occurs when the person assaulted is over the age of 60.

Sexual assault can happen to anyone at any age, place, or time. The way a person dresses or acts does not cause sexual assault. It is never the victim-survivor’s fault.

Sexual violence is a crime of power and control. It is caused by a decision to control and violate someone in the most personal way. It is not caused by sexual desire or attraction.

Reactions to Sexual Assault
A person may experience a few, many or none of the following emotions and behaviors after a sexual assault. There is no “typical” way to respond to sexual violence.

- Depression
- Shock, disorientation and difficulty concentrating
- Unwanted and/or intrusive memories and flashbacks
- Being afraid and on guard
- Anger
- Self-blame, guilt, and shame
- Suicidal thoughts
- Emotional withdrawal, numbness
- Negative beliefs about self, family, friends and the future
- Problems with relationships
- Sleep disturbances, and nightmares
- Physical symptoms (stomach aches, migraines)
- Problematic coping behaviors (avoidance of memories, denial, alcohol or drug abuse)

Trauma caused by sexual violence may worsen conditions related to a person’s physical and cognitive abilities. Sexual assault may influence a person’s sense of safety.

If Someone You Know Has Been Sexually Assaulted
- **Encourage** them to talk. Listen without judging.
- **Tell** them you believe them, no one deserves to be sexually assaulted and it is not their fault.
- **Ask** if they are safe. If they are still in imminent danger, call 911.
- **Offer to go** to the hospital with them. Even days or weeks after an assault, medical attention may be needed.
- **Offer to call** the SARC Helpline for more information and support.
- **Ask** if they need any accommodations to access help.
- **Support** their right to make their own decisions about reporting the crime and seeking medical attention, to the extent possible.
- **Do not tell** others without their permission unless you are mandated to report. If you are mandated to report, and the situation meets the mandatory reporting requirements of suspected abuse, neglect, or an emergency situation involving an adult who is incapacitated, contact Adult Protective Service (APS). Program responds to cases of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of impaired adults online or by phone at 800-223-9074.

If You Are Sexually Assaulted
- **Go** to a safe place, if possible. If you are in danger, call 911.
- **Tell** someone about the assault – a family member, friend, caregiver, service provider or other trusted person.
- **Call** the SARC Helpline – a Sexual Assault Response Advocate (SARA) is trained to help you understand your medical and legal options and provide emotional support.
- **Consider** going to a hospital emergency department for a medical exam. They can provide a forensic exam to collect evidence, determine if you have injuries, test for sexually transmitted infections and provide treatment options.
- **If possible**, to preserve evidence, try not to bathe, change clothes, comb your hair or urinate. If you cannot wait until you arrive at a facility, suspect you have been drugged, save your first urine in a clean container and take it with you to the hospital. If you have changed clothes, place your clothes in a paper bag and bring them to the hospital. A forensic exam can collect forensic evidence that may be on your body and clothing that can assist with case investigation and prosecution.
- **Consider** reporting the assault to law enforcement. Sexual assault is a crime. Your report may enable police to hold the perpetrator accountable and may prevent another assault.