Sexual Violence Against Older Adults

We have a right to be safe at all stages of our life.

If A Person You Know Is A Victim of Sexual Violence

Listen and Believe - Listen without judgment, believe what the victim tells you, and acknowledge feelings. Confusion, anger, sadness, guilt, numbness, helplessness, hopelessness, and self-blame are all common reactions to sexual violence and trauma.

Offer Your Support - Let the victim know you are there for support now and in the future. Keep the victim’s information private unless the victim tells you otherwise.

Make a Referral - Refer to the Kansas Crisis Hotline, 1-888-END-ABUSE (1-888-363-2287), and the community-based sexual assault advocacy program in your area (see phone number list).

Speak Out - Speak out when you hear someone blaming any victim for the violence. Remind others that the responsibility for the violence lies with the perpetrator and that nobody deserves to be sexually violated, regardless of the victim’s age or medical condition.

Advocacy Support Services

Getting in touch with the community-based sexual assault advocacy program can provide a victim of sexual violence with the support and assistance they need for the safety and healing process. These programs offer services 24-hours a day, seven days a week. Services include crisis hotlines, safety planning, information and referrals, personal advocacy, criminal justice advocacy, civil court advocacy, hospital and medical advocacy, support groups, assistance with crime victims’ compensation, assistance with protection orders, and more. Victims can access these resources anonymously.

All of these services are free and confidential. Any information shared with an advocacy program listed in this brochure is private and cannot be shared with anyone outside the organization, unless:

- The program is required to disclose the information by law; or
- The victim signs an informed, written, time-limited release permitting them to disclose the information.

For support, contact the sexual assault advocacy program nearest you (see phone number list).

For more information about services and resources for older adults in Kansas, visit: www.kdads.ks.gov

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Sexual Violence in Later Life

Sexual violence can affect individuals across the lifespan. Sexual violence includes sexual actions and words that coerce, manipulate or are force upon someone with the intent to intimidate, humiliate or control. Sexual violence can include unwanted touching or fondling; forced sexual contact; rape; humiliating or objectifying the victim’s body; forcing the victim to engage in unwanted sex; sexualized kissing; sexual harassment and threats; forced viewing of pornography; using the victim to produce pornography; exhibitionism or exposing the victim’s body as a form of humiliation. An additional form of sexual violence is the unnecessary, obsessive or painful touching of the genital area that is not part of a prescribed care plan (Ramsey-Klawsnik, 2010). Many victims of sexual violence have survived multiple victimizations over the course of their lives (NSVRC, 2010).

As with any form of sexual violence, it is important to remember that it can occur to anyone, regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or ability. However, most identified older victims of sexual violence are female (Burgess, Ramsey-Klawsnik, & Gregorian, 2008). Sexual violence in later life is often perpetrated by those who have special and trusted relationships with the older adult. These relationships often include caregivers, intimate partners, fellow residents, and family members, including adult children.

Signs of Sexual Violence

Victims of sexual violence may show a wide range of signs or no signs at all. No one victim will have the same reaction following a sexual assault, rape or unwanted sexual contact. However, due to age-related changes in the body, victims who are older tend to suffer more serious physical injuries during an assault than younger victims. The emotional and social effects of sexual violence may also greatly impact someone who is victimized later in life.

Here are a few possible signs of sexual violence that has occurred in later life. These may also be signs of other health issues, as well.

- Genital injuries, human bite marks, imprint injuries or bruising on thighs, buttocks, breast, face, neck, and other areas
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI)
- HIV/AIDS
- Fear, anxiety, agitation, mistrust or dramatic changes in behavior
- Trouble sleeping, incontinence, lack of desire

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