

Your Privacy Is Worth Protecting

A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Assault

*“I never doubted that things
would be kept confidential. That is
the trust the sexual assault crisis
counselor instilled in me at a time
when I did not trust anyone.”*

A Sexual Assault Survivor



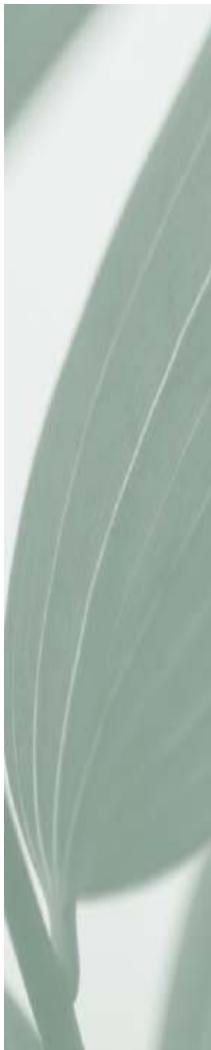
If you have been the victim of sexual assault, you may be concerned about how to protect your privacy. Who has access to your information and how that information is used should be controlled by you, in your own time and in your own way. To make sure that you keep this control it is important that you know your rights about privacy and confidentiality.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2001-WL-BX-0012 awarded by the Violence Against Women Office, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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Who Can Help Me Protect My Privacy?

After a sexual assault, survivors may not be aware of all their rights about privacy with the different people with whom they come in contact. A Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) advocate/counselor can accompany you throughout the process, inform you of your rights, answer your questions, and help make sure that your privacy is protected.



What Are My Rights?

You have a right to privacy. That means that you can refuse to answer any questions about:

- the sexual assault
- your sexual orientation
- your sexual history
- your medical history, including HIV status
- your mental health history, including counseling or therapy

You can refuse to answer these questions even if they are asked by doctors or nurses at the hospital, the police, the prosecutor, friends, family, co-workers, social workers or counselors. Your sexual assault advocate/counselor can help you sort through your options if you are asked about these topics.

Are My Conversations Confidential?

By law, your conversations with the following people are confidential:

- your spouse (*unmarried partners are not included in this law*)
- a sexual assault or domestic violence counselor
- a therapist or psychiatrist
- an attorney
- a member of the clergy

These conversations are protected by what is called in the law “*privileged communications*,” even if you are a minor. That means that any information provided by you in these conversations can only be shared with others if there is a court order.

Be aware that most people you come in contact with after the assault will NOT be in a confidential relationship with you. Hospital staff, the police, college campus staff (like Residential Advisors), and the Office of Victim Services (OVS) victim advocate at the court *can* give information about you to other people without your consent or knowledge.





How Can A SACS Advocate/Counselor Help Me Protect My Privacy?

A SACS advocate/counselor can assist you in protecting your privacy throughout the healing process. Your counselor can help you decide when, and if, you want to share your private information with others, and how that information may be used if you do.

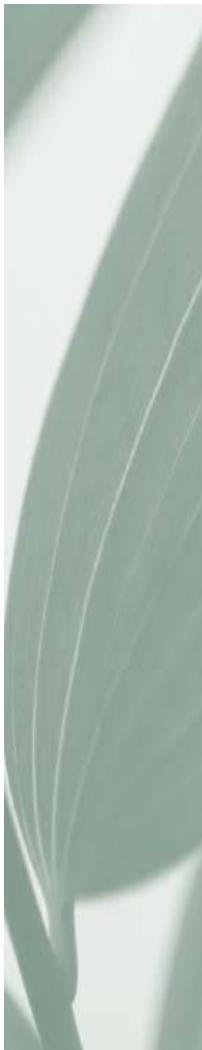
If you are under 18 years old, ask your advocate/counselor about any special rules or circumstances that may mean that your information is not kept private.

Is Everything That I Say to My SACS Advocate/Counselor Confidential?

Your advocate/counselor will not tell anyone what you talk about, except in these very specific circumstances:

- If you share information with your SACS advocate/counselor about a specific child, mentally retarded adult, or a person of any age in a long-term care facility that has been, or is in danger of being abused or neglected.
- If your SACS advocate/counselor believes that there is a serious, immediate danger that you might hurt yourself or someone else (i.e., suicide or homicide).
- If your SACS advocate/counselor needs guidance from their supervisor.
- If on the **rare** occasion that a SACS center is subpoenaed to give out some of your information. The center will not give out any information without first contacting you and discussing it with an attorney to determine how to fight the release of your information.





What if I want My SACS Advocate/Counselor To Share My Information With Others?

Sometimes survivors want certain kinds of information shared with someone else, like a therapist or doctor. If you want your SACS advocate/counselor to give information to another person, you can sign a waiver giving permission for your SACS counselor to release your information. You should fully discuss the pros and cons with your advocate/counselor before signing the waiver.

You can also change your mind about the waiver at any time. Tell your advocate/counselor that you would not like any more of your information to be released. (You may have to fill out a form saying this). If your SACS counselor has not yet shared your information, it will remain confidential. If your counselor has already shared your information, it will not be shared any more.

What If I Have More Questions?

If you have any more questions about your rights, ask your SACS advocate/counselor. All staff and volunteers at SACS centers receive extensive training on confidentiality issues and know the importance of confidentiality as a foundation of healing for survivors.





*As a Survivor of Sexual
Assault, You Have Certain
Rights Under Connecticut
State Law:*

- You have the right to decide whether or not you want to report the assault to the police.
- If you are involved in a court case, you have the right to have your name and address remain confidential from people not involved in your case and released only by order of the court. *(The defendant will still have access to this information through his/her attorney).*
- You have the right to not have your name, address, or phone number disclosed in the courtroom during any court proceeding involving the prosecution of your case.

Your Rights

(cont.)

- You have the right to have your conversations with a sexual assault advocate/counselor remain confidential and not be used in court, unless you give permission. It is important to know, however, that if another person (*like someone at work or a person standing in a hallway*) can overhear your conversation with your advocate/counselor, the sexual assault counselor can be asked to testify about those conversations in court.





**24-Hour
Statewide Sexual Assault Hotline**

1-888-999-5545 1-888-568-8332
English Spanish/Español

- Hotline will connect you with the nearest Sexual Assault Crisis Center
- All Hotline workers are certified sexual assault counselors
- We do not subscribe to caller ID

**ALL SERVICES ARE FREE
AND CONFIDENTIAL**



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