

C.A.R.E. Chronicle

SPRING 2021

Would you know what to do if you were sexually assaulted? Please Call C.A.R.E.

When a Hospital Response Team Advocate from C.A.R.E. arrives at the emergency room of the hospital, the victim who came to the hospital because she was raped is sitting in a hospital bed feeling alone and scared while waiting for a forensic exam. She has no idea what to expect. She has no idea what a forensic exam is, and she is reeling from the trauma she has just experienced. A C.A.R.E. advocate arrives and immediately lets the victim know that the horrific violence she experienced was not her fault. The advocate is there to support the survivor and will explain what steps will be taken to complete the forensic exam and why the evidence collection is important, who she will encounter during the exam, what to expect about making a statement to law enforcement and will reinforce the advocate's role to comfort, support and inform the victim who has survived the violent assault.

This is just one of the critical services C.A.R.E. provides to survivors in our community. When it comes to sexual assault, a good portion of our agency's time and energy is spent providing prevention education outreach to other human services agencies, to businesses and service organizations, and at public events across Charlotte County. We are always open to scheduling speakers with youth service providers, sports and coaching organizations, or any community group to discuss healthy relationships, affirmative consent about sex, and respecting boundaries about personal choices. But when a person survives a brutal sexual assault a C.A.R.E. Advocate is always ready to respond.

It is not unusual for a rape victim to feel scared and ashamed about what happened. This is not okay! No one ever deserves to be violated, assaulted, or abused. Not ever! Sexual assault does not happen because of the clothing a victim is wearing, or because of being out late at night, or because of having a drink at a party. Sexual assault happens because rapists feel entitled to control and dominate their victims. Make no mistake about it, rape is a crime. A repeat offender of the crime of rape describes his rape experiences as "powerful and very exciting". He goes on to say, "I felt as if I got something I was entitled to and I repaid her for sexually arousing me."

Rape culture is a term used to show the ways in which society blames victims of sexual assault and normalizes male sexual violence. Phrases like "she asked for it" and "boys will be boys" are used frequently. It is the tolerance of this behavior that reinforces blaming survivors of trauma. The glamorization of sexual violence and objectification of women's bodies create a toxic environment in which rape culture thrives. Instead of educating boys and men not to rape, our society teaches rape prevention instead of putting a stop to it. Action needs to be taken to stop rapists by prosecuting these crimes with significant penalties for convictions.

People from all walks of life, regardless of gender, age or sexual orientation, experience rape culture. It is not about what someone is wearing or where people gather; it is a matter of us as a society failing to educate ourselves and our children to build a healthy, respectful environment for everyone. This is why victims are reluctant to step forward and report the crime of rape or to ask for help. Rape culture is not funny or acceptable and we should stop acting like it is.

Getting back to that forensic exam, commonly referred to as a "rape kit", what happens? A trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) conducts the exam which can take a few hours. Evidence of the assault is collected from the victim's body, skin, and clothing and secured in envelopes. Photos of injuries are taken. This is an invasive process and can feel as intrusive as the original rape. This is necessary should the victim decide to report the assault to law enforcement. A small fraction of reported rapes make it to trial and a key component to moving a case forward is that a thorough forensic exam was completed shortly after the assault. There is a shortage of such medical providers nationwide, and in fact we have only one SANE available in Charlotte County.

The C.A.R.E. Advocate stays with the survivor during this invasive process to inform and support her/him. Survivors often apologize for crying and taking so much of the advocate's time. Can you imagine that? Our caring advocates will walk them through all the steps and will

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Choose to Make a Charitable Gift

You can choose to make a charitable gift that costs you nothing during your lifetime! Planning for your current and future financial needs is a must. You need to consider contingencies in life, kids, grandkids, and long-term health care. Your plans need to be flexible and can be changed to meet the unknown. Then you can think about what is left after your lifetime expenses are covered. You can make a gift to an organization that you support which has a place in your heart. C.A.R.E. would be honored to be the recipient of your planned gift.

Estate planning with trusted professionals creates benefits for you as a



donor; reduces estate and gift taxes, avoids capital gains taxes, puts capital to work, increases cash flow, and provides for diversification of assets. Our goal is to help you as a donor achieve your philanthropic planning goals by working with you and your personal, trusted advisors to achieve your legacy goals and tax planning objectives.

You can make provisions for your family and provide a planned gift bequest to the charity for which you volunteered and donated to throughout your life. Consider your options with the following example:

You have 3 children, and you feel you should leave one-third of your estate to each child (33 1/3%). You also have supported 3 different non-profit organizations during your lifetime that you really want to continue to support. There is a simple way to do it all:

- Leave each child 30% for a total of 90% of the estate
- Earmark the remaining 10% for your favorite charitable organization(s)
- Leave your legacy gift and be acknowledged during your lifetime
- Feel personal satisfaction that the organization will be able to continue its mission to benefit future generations

Check out legacy giving on the C.A.R.E. website at <https://carefl.org/giving/legacy-giving/>

Ongoing

Domestic Violence Support Group

Saturdays at 10:00 AM

ReUse Stores

County Recycle Centers
Englewood and Port Charlotte
Open Tuesdays through Saturdays

Upcoming

Walk - Run - Count Steps

#runforconsent

Snap your photo all month and tag @carecharlottecounty

April 28th is **Denim Day**

Yoga & Wine

May 1st at 11:00 AM for \$30
Punta Gorda History Park
RSVP

<https://carefl.org/event/yoga-wine-may-2021/>

Visani Comedy Night

C.A.R.E. Auxiliary
May 5 at 7:30 PM

YES, I would like to help survivors of violence in Charlotte County.

You can count on my support to help families stay safe.

- \$18 provides a 20-minute crisis hotline call for a victim of sexual assault
- \$23 sponsors a survivor safety/legal services screening with a paralegal
- \$50 provides a week's supply of paper goods, laundry and cleaning supplies for the shelter
- \$90 supports private counseling services for a child victim
- \$121 provides for replacement of critical documents for a family of 4 (birth certificates, ID card)
- \$325 provides a consultation with a domestic violence attorney for injunctive representation

Other amount \$ _____ in honor of _____

For: Birthday Anniversary Other occasion _____

Your Name _____ Email address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

To make a credit card donation, please go to www.carefl.org OR

Please bill my credit card. VISA MASTERCARD DISCOVER AMERICAN EXPRESS

Name on card _____ CC# _____

Expiration Date ____/____/____ CW# _____ The Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies, Inc. PO Box 510234, Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0234





Storage courtesy of our generous and caring Friends in Riverwood and a big thanks to Martin for keeping us supplied with children's books & games.

Thanks to the GFWC Punta Gorda Woman's Club members who collected and donated diapers and pajamas for the kids at C.A.R.E.



Alexis at Shipwreck Saloon in El Jobean using Sexual Assault Awareness Month coasters.



WHAT IF *from page 1*

explain why it is important and what options are available. Advocates are trained to help a traumatized and scared person deal with the aftermath of the violence. Advocates assure the survivor she/he is believed. They will hold a hand in comfort, remind a survivor it was not their fault, and will reassure a survivor with safety planning.

So what should you do if you know someone who has survived a rape or sexual assault?

- 1. Believe them** – people rarely lie or exaggerate about sexual assault.
- 2. Be there and give comfort** – be patient and don't rush the healing process. Everyone is different.
- 3. Resist seeing the survivor as a victim** – see her/him as a strong person reclaiming her/his life.
- 4. Accept the survivor's choice of what to do about the assault** – it is a personal decision.
- 5. Respect the privacy of the survivor** – she/he decides who to tell, and when.
- 6. Listen and remain as a friend** – encourage the survivor and help find support services.

Reactions to Trauma After Sexual Assault

After experiencing one of the most violent crimes people react from fear on 3 levels: physically, mentally and behaviorally. Anxiety may occur separately, but most often occur simultaneously interacting with each other. For example, experiencing a flashback (mental reaction) about the traumatic assault will usually trigger a physical reaction such as rapid breathing or increased heart rate. Typical normal responses to sexual assault may include:

- Feeling like you are losing control of your life or your mind
- Re-experiencing assault over and over again through flashbacks
- Problems concentrating and staying focused
- Guilty feelings
- Developing a negative self-image
- Depression
- Disruptions in close relationships
- Loss of interest in sex
- Fear and anxiety

7. Educate yourself about sexual assault and the healing process; www.carefl.org or www.rainn.org

8. Share information about the help and resources available for survivors at C.A.R.E.

Here is what not to do!

1. Don't push for information.
2. Don't shame/blame her or him – NO ONE deserves to be sexually assaulted.
3. Don't badger the survivor with questions.
4. Don't tell the survivor what she/he needs to do to – you were not there.

Advocates at C.A.R.E. are ready to help survivors deal with the trauma and after-effects. They are able to connect survivors with the resources they need to pursue their personal healing journeys. C.A.R.E. Advocates do not judge or tell survivors what they should do – they present an array of survivor services and options and provide a support system to enable healing. Advocates believe survivors and share strategies to deal with trauma, anxiety, and fear. People can and do survive sexual assault. Be the supportive friend or family member who can be trusted. Be the one who is understanding of their individual healing process. Be the one who shatters rape culture!

Contacting C.A.R.E. for help and working with an advocate can help you identify and understand these reactions. One technique an advocate may share with a survivor is to use grounding strategies using our 5 senses to move out of the traumatic flashback back into the here and now where they are not being hurt. To overcome the anxiety and fear:

1. Stop and name 5 things you can see.
2. Name 4 things you can feel.
3. Name 3 things you can hear.
4. Name 2 things you can smell.
5. Name 1 thing you can taste – tip is to keep a small dish of candy for the taste.

C.A.R.E. Advocates are always ready to help you. Call the Helpline at 941-637-0404 anytime!

C.A.R.E. offers group counseling services, where you can be with others who have gone through similar experiences and a lot of survivors take comfort in being able to talk about what happened to them with other survivors. If you are interested in learning more just give us a call.

C.A.R.E. 24-HOUR HOTLINE NUMBERS

Port Charlotte/Punta Gorda 941-627-6000

Englewood 941-475-6465

Helpline 941-637-0404

Text 941-499-8534

Online Chat at www.carefl.org

TDD Users may call through Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8771