Sexual violence is a form of sexual harassment that includes physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person when they have not given consent or are unable to give consent due to the use of drugs and/or alcohol or an intellectual or physical disability. Sexual violence includes a spectrum of behaviors such as rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion.

Sexual violence is an act of power and control. It can happen anywhere, at any time, and to anyone, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or culture. And it is often committed by someone known to the victim/survivor—a partner, acquaintance, or friend.

**Consent**

Sexual activity requires consent.

- Consent consists of mutually understandable words and/or actions that indicate that an individual has freely chosen to engage in sexual activity. In the absence of such words and/or actions, consent does not exist.
- Consent may not be inferred from silence, passivity, lack of physical resistance, or lack of verbal refusal alone. Consent should not be inferred from the absence of a “no.”
- Consent to one form of sexual activity does not automatically imply consent to other forms of sexual activity, and previous relationships or prior consent does not imply consent to future sexual acts.
- Consent cannot be obtained by force, threat of force, or coercion. Agreement given under such conditions does not constitute consent.
- An individual who is incapacitated (including due to the use of alcohol and/or other drugs) is unable to give consent.
- Consent must exist from the beginning to end of each instance of sexual activity, and for each form of sexual contact.
- Consent may be withdrawn by either party at any time.

**Communicate Effectively**

Healthy sexual relations involve respectful communication. Communication involves attention to words and/or actions. Some things to remember are:

- Silence is not consent.
- Coerced sex is not consensual sex.
- If you hear someone pressuring another, speak up and intervene.
- If you are unsure of a partner’s messages or feel like you are getting mixed signals, stop and clarify.
- Attention to non-verbal language is very important.
- Never assume you know what someone wants. Ask them instead.
- Encourage respect of other people’s desires and sexual boundaries.

**Sexual Violence Affects Everyone**

Sexual violence impacts everyone in a community. Bystander intervention is an opportunity for community members to change the culture on campuses by demonstrating an intolerance for sexual violence. The more active bystander intervention within a community, the less likely it is for violence to occur. Bystanders have the power to make a difference.

**What Bystanders Can Do**

The following are some ways you can get involved as a bystander:

- Have a conversation with friends about sexual violence.
- Use your classroom as an opportunity to talk about sexual violence.
- Let others know that jokes that promote sexism or violence are not funny and are unacceptable.
- Organize a seminar on sexual violence for your residence hall or student group.
- Call out behaviors that perpetuate sexism and violence.
- Be proactive and respond when you see a friend or someone else in a vulnerable situation that might result in sexual violence.
- Volunteer at a rape crisis center or join a student organization that speaks out against sexual assault.
- Diffuse a potentially dangerous situation by intervening in a safe manner.
- Call the police if you see a potentially dangerous situation.

**What You Can Do If You Experience Sexual Violence**

- If possible, go to a safe place.
- Seek medical attention at your campus health center or a hospital. A sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) or other provider may be available in your area to provide a forensic medical exam (sometimes called a “rape kit”) to collect potential evidence.
- Do your best to avoid showering, bathing, cleansing, eating, drinking, going to the bathroom, or brushing your teeth after the assault so that evidence may be more likely to be present upon exam.
- Preserve all physical evidence, such as clothing and bedding. If you bag it, use paper, not plastic—plastic bags could potentially destroy DNA evidence by trapping moisture within the bag.
- Call someone you trust.
- Contact your campus violence resource center or local rape crisis center (contact the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE [4673] or www.rainn.org).
- Consult a health care provider about appropriate preventative (prophylactic) medications for possible exposure to sexually transmitted infections.
The term “sexual assault” often conjures the notion of a stranger jumping from the bushes or much physical force/violence being used, when in the majority of the cases, this is not so. Often, sexual assaults are committed by someone who is known to the survivor and do not always involve physical violence.
For More Information
Contact your campus health center, campus counseling center, campus violence resource center, police department, campus Title IX compliance officer, or a rape crisis hotline. The resources below can also assist you in getting answers and finding local support.

**Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)**
24/7 National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-4673
Online Hotline: www.rainn.org

**Rape Treatment Center**
Information and support for sexual assault survivors
www.911rape.org

**Bedsider.org Emergency Contraception Locator**
www.bedsider.org/where_to_get_it

**Anti-Violence Project**
24/7 Crisis intervention and support hotline for LGBTQ+ survivors of violence, English and Spanish:
212-714-1141
www.avp.org

**GLBT National Help Center Hotline**
888-843-4564
www.glnh.org/hotline

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**
24/7 Hotline: 800-799-7233
www.thehotline.org

**Department of Defense Safe Helpline**
24/7 Crisis intervention for military service members
887-995-5247
www.safehelpline.org

**Not Alone: Together Against Sexual Assault**
Online resource for students and institutions of higher education
www.notalone.gov

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**American College Health Association**
(410) 859-1500 | www.acha.org

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