

ACQUAINTANCE

RAPE

WHEN THE RAPIST
IS SOMEONE
YOU KNOW

Written and published
by the
Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault
1990



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INTRODUCTION

Acquaintance rape is forced sexual contact by someone who knows you. The rapist may be a date, neighbor, friend, boss, colleague, delivery person or repair worker. The risk of a woman being sexually assaulted by an acquaintance is four times greater than her risk of being raped by a stranger. Women ranging in age from 15 to 24 are the primary acquaintance rape victims. Recent studies show that junior high school girls are also at great risk. Date rape is the most common form of acquaintance rape.

Sexual assault, including acquaintance rape, also happens to men; men can be sexually exploited by other men or by women. Women can also be sexually exploited by other women. This brochure refers to the victim as "she" and the offender as "he" since most victims are female and most offenders are male. However, most of the information applies to male victims as well as female victims.

As with all sexual assault victims, the acquaintance rape victim suffers physical and emotional trauma. She has been physically and emotionally violated, and she needs support. Sexual assault centers help victims cope with medical, legal and emotional needs after sexual assault.

This brochure has been prepared by the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault to help you learn more about this crime and where to get help if you are a victim. There are sexual assault centers throughout the state of Illinois; the list on the last page tells where these programs are located.

WHAT IS ACQUAINTANCE RAPE?

Acquaintance rape is forced, manipulated or coerced sexual contact by someone you know. If someone has ever forced you to have sex, you are a victim of rape.

Acquaintance rape can happen to anyone at any time in any place. Cases reported to law enforcement show that acquaintance rape happens more often to college age students than to any other age group. Dr. Mary P. Koss, researcher at Kent State University, studied acquaintance rape on 35 college campuses. She found that one in four women were victims of rape or attempted rape; 84% of those women knew their attacker. Fifty-seven percent of those rapes happened on a date.

In the book, *I Never Called It Rape*, Robin Warshaw concludes: "Those figures make acquaintance rape and date rape more common than left-handedness or heart attacks or alcoholism."



WHAT IS THE LAW?

Under Illinois law, acquaintance rape is a crime. The law makes no distinction between sexual assault by strangers and sexual assault by acquaintances.

All forms of sexual violence are covered by the Illinois Criminal Sexual Assault Law. Forced sexual penetration is a crime. This includes forced intercourse, oral sex and penetration with an object. Forced sexual conduct (forced touching and fondling) is also a crime under Illinois law.

The sexual assault law gives the criminal justice system a full range of options for prosecuting sex offenders. An offender can be charged with sexual assault regardless of age, sex, or previous relationship with the victim. A sexual assault victim can talk with the police and State's Attorney about prosecution of an acquaintance rape case.



WHAT IF I AM A MALE VICTIM?

As a man, you can be sexually assaulted by an acquaintance. You can be pressured into unwanted sex by friends, relatives, dates and other acquaintances. If this happens to you, you are the victim of a crime.

As a crime victim, you are entitled to the same services and legal remedies as any other victim.

If you are sexually assaulted, you may fear that your masculinity is in question. You may doubt yourself and ask: Why couldn't I protect myself? Has this ever happened to any other man?

If the attacker is a female, you may fear that no one would believe your story. You may fear that your masculinity would be questioned or that you would be laughed at if you said a woman assaulted you sexually.

If you are assaulted, it is important to remember that sexual assault is a crime, and you are a victim. You are not at fault and the assault does not mean that you lack masculinity.

As a crime victim, you are entitled to medical care, legal assistance and counseling. You may want to call a sexual assault center to request assistance in getting these services.



WHAT CAN I DO IN CASE OF RAPE?

**If you have been raped, you may be confused.
Here are some things you can do.**

- Remember that it is not your fault.
- You may want to talk to a crisis counselor about the assault. Contact a sexual assault center for counseling and accompaniment to the hospital, police station and court appointments.
- You may want to get medical attention. If you go to a hospital emergency room within 72 hours, the hospital can collect evidence of the assault. Regardless of when you go to the hospital, you can be examined for injuries and tested for infections and pregnancy.
- You may want to report the crime to the police and follow through with prosecution.

**If you know someone who has been raped,
there are ways you can help.**

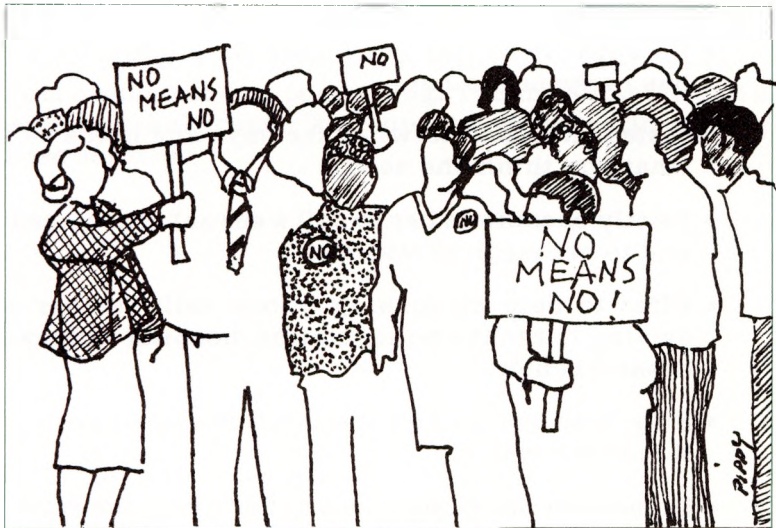
- Be supportive. Do not blame the victim for what has happened to her.
- Listen. Respond to what she says she needs — not what you think she needs.
- Gently encourage her to call a sexual assault center and to get medical attention.
- Offer to help by making phone calls for her and driving her to the police station, hospital and sexual assault center.
- Stay with her during the interviews and examination if she wants.
- Do not tell her when she will be “over” the rape.

WHY DOES ACQUAINTANCE RAPE HAPPEN?

There are many reasons why men rape. Men rape to control, punish, degrade and humiliate women. "All rape is an exercise in power," says Susan Brownmiller, author of *Against Her Will*. She goes on to say, "An imbalance of power exists between men and women. Men are socialized to be aggressive."

Some men think they have the right to force sexual intercourse on another person. Research by Dr. Mary P. Koss and others reveals that men who rape do not always consider forced sex to be a crime. They often believe they have a right to force sex with a woman they know, even if she says "no."

The belief that nice women don't say "yes" and real men don't listen to "no" contains double messages for both sexes. Furthermore, men often read sexual cues into conversation and behavior that a woman does not intend in a sexual way. Getting signals crossed in this way is dangerous when a man ignores "no."





HOW CAN COMMUNICATION HELP?

Communication between men and women can help stop acquaintance rape. Being aware of what you want, talking with each other, understanding each other's needs and respecting limits are all part of the struggle to stop sexual assault.

What women can do:

- Know your sexual desires and limits.
- State your desires and limits clearly.
- Be assertive.
- Be aware that your nonverbal actions may send messages that you do not intend to send.
- Pay attention to what is happening around you.
- Trust your intuition. If you feel afraid, say so and get out of the situation.
- Be aware that nothing you do is a guarantee against sexual assault.

What men can do:

- Know your sexual desires and limits.
- State your desires and limits clearly.
- Accept the woman's limits; listen to her and assume she means what she says.
- Do not assume that previous permission for sexual contact means she wants to have sex again.
- Understand that being turned down for sex is not a rejection of who you are as a person. It means your partner does not want sex with you at that time.

HOW DOES ACQUAINTANCE RAPE AFFECT THE VICTIM?

Every woman reacts differently to being raped. Some people think that rape by a stranger is more traumatic than rape by an acquaintance. Research has shown that this is not true.

Many victims may try to forget that they have been raped by an acquaintance. They may fear that they will not be believed if they tell someone, or they may not identify what happened as rape. Many victims are afraid to admit to an assault because they were drinking. Therefore, the victim often does not ask for support or counseling.

After the rape, a victim may feel invaded, isolated and violated. She may be afraid and feel that she has lost control over her physical safety. She may wonder why this happened to her and feel that she is to blame.

The victim may suffer sleeplessness, nightmares, poor concentration, anxiety, loss of appetite (or over-eating), loss of self confidence, stress-related illness, grief and despair. She may become depressed and withdrawn. She may experience fear and a generalized loss of trust. If she is a student, she may transfer to another school or drop out of school altogether.

In cases of acquaintance rape, the victim's trust in a person she knows has been destroyed; likewise, her trust in her own judgment about people is shaken. A victim may blame herself because she accepted a ride from a friend; because she attended a certain party; because she stopped for a casual conversation; or because she allowed someone into her apartment, dorm room or house.

This self-blame may cause the victim to focus on her own behavior instead of the crime committed against her. She asks: "How could I have prevented this from happening to me? Why did I let him in my house? Why did I let him kiss me? How could I have been so stupid?"

In fact, the person who committed the crime is at fault. Why did he ignore her when she said no? Why did he force her to have sex with him? Why did he think it was okay to overpower her in order to get what he wanted? The rapist is the person who committed the crime.



WHAT CAN MEN DO TO STOP ACQUAINTANCE RAPE?

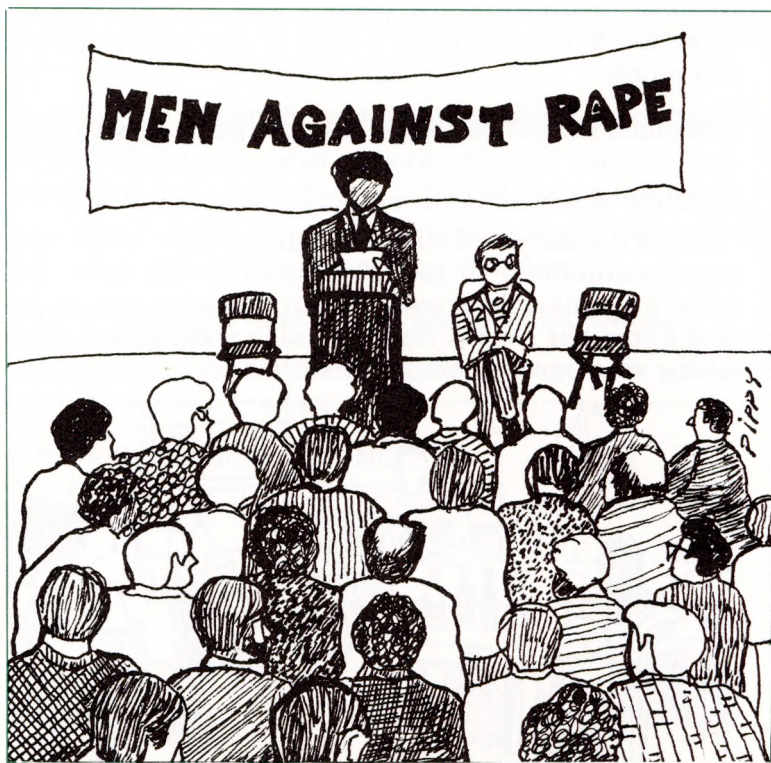
Men and women are socialized differently. Men are taught to be aggressive and competitive. They are taught to get what they want at all costs. They are encouraged to experiment with sex and to seek sexual satisfaction. Many men believe they have a right to have sex with a woman, particularly if they have had sex with her before or if they have spent money on her.

Many people still do not believe women have the same rights as men in terms of sexual exploration. "Real men get what they want, and nice girls say no" is a common attitude. Men may force sex on a woman because they think they are entitled to sex and they believe her "no" really means "yes."

Often, we assume that women are supposed to stop sexual assault. We expect them to change their behavior so they will be safe and to somehow prevent the assault. But increasingly, men and women are asking what men can do to make the world safer for women. Here are some ideas for men who want to help stop sexual assault.

- Recognize that secure men are sensitive to others. You do not have to use force to get what you want.
- Don't always assume that you have to initiate sexual activity. Don't initiate sex if you don't want to.
- Listen to your partner. Assume that "no" means "no." If you are right, you have not offended your partner. If she did not mean no, she can ask for further sexual activity.
- Ask yourself if you really want to have sex with someone who does not want to have sex with you.

- Interrupt woman-hating jokes, sexual harassment and any other form of sexual violence. Spread the message that violence against women is not okay.
- Use peer pressure to help stop abusive behaviors which may lead to acquaintance rape. For example, cut down on the use of drugs and alcohol at parties. Interrupt conversations that focus on sexual exploitation of women. Condemn the behavior of peers who brag about their sexual "conquests."



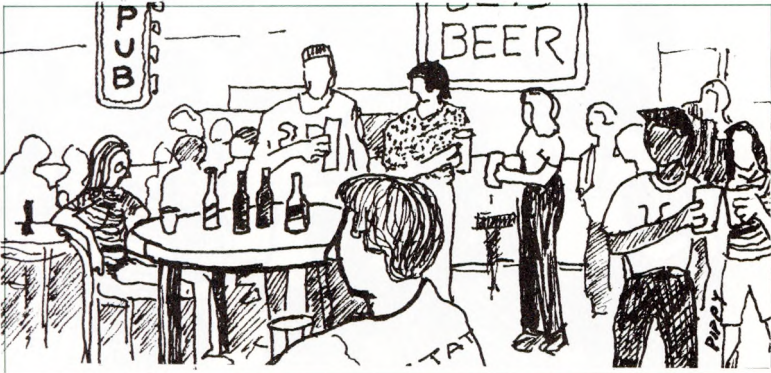
WHAT ABOUT THE ROLE OF ALCOHOL?

Alcohol and drugs can produce mood altering effects. Using alcohol and drugs can reduce men's inhibitions and help them excuse abusive behavior. It can make women more vulnerable to assault because reactions are slower and they are less able to resist.

Women's use of alcohol and drugs is judged to be different from men's use. If a woman is sexually assaulted at a party where she has had too much to drink, she is condemned for poor judgment. If she is under the legal drinking age, she may even be arrested. The rapist, on the other hand, is often not held accountable for his violent behavior; he uses drinking as his excuse: "I didn't know what I was doing." It may be wise for a woman to be aware if her date is drinking too much.

Women should be able to drink or go to a party without fear of rape. Women have the same right to go to a party, to go out alone, to go on a date and to drink as men.

Unfortunately, all of these things can make women more vulnerable to sexual assault. To be less vulnerable, a woman may want to cut down on her drinking and know her limits. She may also want to ask a friend along when going to a party or bar.



WHAT RIGHTS DO I HAVE IN A RELATIONSHIP?

- I have the right to an equal relationship with anyone I choose.
- I have the right not to dominate or be dominated.
- I have the right to act one way with one person and a different way with someone else.
- I have the right to change my mind whenever I want to.
- I have the right to reject unwanted attention.
- I have the right to start a relationship slowly.
- I have the right to say, “I want to know you better before I get more involved.”
- I have the right to be myself without changing to suit others.
- I have the right to change a relationship when my feelings change. I have the right to say, “We used to be close, but I want something else now.”
- I have the right to not want physical closeness.
- I have the right to dress and act seductively without promising to have sex.
- I have the right to say “**NO.**”

WHAT ARE THE STATISTICS ON ACQUAINTANCE RAPE?

Rape is the fastest growing crime in the nation. In the U.S., a woman is raped every six minutes; most of the time, she is raped by someone she knows.

An acquaintance rape victim may not know she has been the victim of a crime. A woman may answer "no" if you ask if she has ever been raped. The same woman may answer "yes" if you ask if an acquaintance or date has ever forced her to have sex against her will.

The following statistics indicate that acquaintance rape is widespread.

- In 33% of sexual assault cases, the assault occurs in the victim's home.
- 55% of women raped by strangers called the assault rape; only 23% of acquaintance rape victims considered the assault to be a rape.
- One in four women on college campuses were victims of rape or attempted rape. 84% of those were acquaintance rapes; 57% of the rapes happened on dates.
- The risk of rape is four times higher for women ages 15 to 24.
- 21% of women raped by strangers reported the crime to police; only 1.7% of acquaintance rape victims reported the assault.
- 28% of all acquaintance rape victims considered suicide after the assault.
- 12% of college males reported that they had physically restrained a woman to gain sexual advantage.

WHAT CAN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES DO TO STOP ACQUAINTANCE RAPE?

All of the following can make communities safer for women:

- Support the victim of acquaintance rape by believing her story and taking the crime seriously.
- Encourage police to take the crime seriously, arrest offenders and follow through with prosecutions.
- Encourage State's Attorneys to prosecute acquaintance rape cases to the full extent of the law.
- Encourage media coverage of sexual assault cases, including acquaintance rapes.
- Challenge the sex role stereotyping that perpetuates myths about rape.
- Conduct educational programs in schools to raise student awareness of myths about sexual assault, prevention strategies and the need for clear communication.
- Support your local sexual assault crisis center.

To set up an acquaintance rape education program for your school, church, civic organization or place of business, contact the nearest sexual assault center. A list of centers is printed on the last page of this booklet.



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- "The Date Who Rapes." *Newsweek*, April 18, 1984.
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• **NORTH**

Aurora

Mutual Ground
24 hrs. 708/897-8383

DuPage County

DuPage Women Against
Rape/YWCA
24 hrs. 708/971-3927

Elgin

Community Crisis Center
24 hrs. 708/697-2380

Kankakee

KcCASA
815/932-3322

Olympia Fields

YW C.A.R.E.S.
24 hrs. 708/748-5672

Quad Cities

Quad Cities Rape/Sexual
Assault Counseling Program
24 hrs. 309/797-1777

Rockford

Rockford Sexual Assault
Counseling
24 hrs. 815/964-4044

Rolling Meadows

NorthWest Action Against
Rape
24 hrs. 708/228-0990
or 708/228-0772

Sterling

YWCA/COVE
24 hrs. 815/626-7277

Waukegan

Lake County Council Against
Sexual Assault
24 hrs. 708/872-7799

• **CHICAGO**

Community Mental Health
Council
24 hrs. 312/734-4033

Edgewater Uptown Community
Mental Health Center
24 hrs. 312/769-0205

Harris YWCA
312/955-3100

Women's Services, Metro
YWCA
312/372-6600, ext. 301

Rape Victim Advocates
312/733-6954

• **CENTRAL**

Bloomington

Rape Crisis Center of
McLean County
24 hrs. 309/827-4005

Charleston/Mattoon

Sexual Assault Counseling and
Information Service
24 hrs. 217/348-7666 Charleston
24 hrs. 217/234-6405 Mattoon

Danville

YWCA Sexual Assault
Crisis Services
24 hrs. 217/443-5566

Decatur

Growing Strong: Sexual
Assault Center
24 hrs. 217/428-0770

Peoria

Tri-County WomenStrength
24 hrs. 309/691-4111

Quincy

Quincy Area Network Against
Domestic Abuse
24 hrs. 217/222-3069

Springfield

Rape Information and
Counseling Service
24 hrs. 217/753-8081

Urbana

A Woman's Fund/Rape Crisis
Services
24 hrs. 217/384-4444

• **SOUTH**

Belleville

Sexual Assault Victim's
Care Unit
24 hrs. 618/397-0975

Carbondale

Rape Action Committee
24 hrs. 618/529-2324

East St. Louis

Volunteers of America
618/271-9833

Edwardsville

Rape and Sexual Abuse
Care Center
24 hrs. 618/692-2197

Vandalia

Sexual Assault and Family
Emergencies
24 hrs. 618/283-1414



ICASA

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*For services and information in your community
concerning sexual assault or sexual abuse,
contact:*

