



# **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

**A Resource Handbook for our Community**

**24-Hour Crisis Support Line  
905-682-4584**

**Niagara Sexual Assault Centre**

**43 Church St., Suite 503**

**St. Catharines, ON**

**L2R 7E1**

**[NiagaraSexualAssaultCentre.com](http://NiagaraSexualAssaultCentre.com)**



**The Niagara Sexual Assault Centre (NSAC) is a non-profit organization that responds to the needs of survivors of sexual violence and through public education, increases understanding and awareness of sexual assault-related issues.**

**We provide a variety of counselling, support and emergency services to survivors and their families.**

**We understand that this is an extremely hard time for you.**

**The Niagara Sexual Assault Centre is here to provide help and resources to make this journey easier.**

**IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT AND YOU ARE  
NOT ALONE**

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# WHAT WE DO AT THE NIAGARA SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

## 24-HOUR CRISIS LINE

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence recently or in the past, speak directly to a trained support counsellor who will offer you non-judgmental support, information and options specific to your concerns. This 24/7 crisis line can be accessed at **905-682-4584**.

## HOSPITAL RESPONSE TEAM

NSAC has a specialized response team designed to respond to recent victims of sexual violence. If you have been assaulted, go to the St. Catharines General Hospital, Emergency Department located at **1200 Fourth Ave., St. Catharines**. You will be treated by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and offered the following choices at the **Sexual Assault Domestic Violence (SADV) Treatment Centre**. When you arrive, you will be asked if a hospital response worker from NSAC can be called. These specially trained workers will be there to provide support and advocacy answering questions for you and any family members or friends in attendance. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

## PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

We provide public education programs to help increase understanding and awareness of sexual-assault related issues. Speakers are available for elementary and high school students, post-secondary students, business and professional groups as well as community groups (i.e., persons with disabilities, youth at risk, parenting groups, seniors, and new immigrants). Please contact NSAC to book a presentation or for more information.

## **COUNSELLING SERVICES**

NSAC offers free, confidential counselling to survivors of sexual violence aged 16 and above. You will be eligible for up to 30 sessions with a Masters-level trained therapist who specializes in trauma care. Self-referrals are required – simply call to inquire. We will work collaboratively with you to support you in facilitating change. Some of the counselling-related services we provide include:

- Individual assessment and counselling
- Outreach counselling at various locations in the Niagara Region
- On-site counselling in high school settings
- Pre-screening for groups
- Group counselling for men and women (separate groups)
- Family member support and education
- Referrals
- Professional consultation and training

## **ANONYMOUS THIRD-PARTY REPORTING (ATPR)**

ATPR allows adult survivors (16+) of sexual violence the ability to report details of their assault to police through NSAC or the Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Unit at the St. Catharines General Hospital. A trained staff member will meet with you either in person or via Zoom. You will remain completely anonymous and identified only by a number. The report is forwarded to the police, who will enter the information into the National Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System Database. This information will be compared to other entries to assist in identifying repeat sex offenders and to determine trends. It is not a substitute for calling 911, nor is it considered a formal investigation. The crime cannot have been previously reported to police. Please call NSAC or the SADV for more information.

# WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT

According to the Government of Canada, sexual assault is an assault committed in circumstances of a sexual nature and where the sexual integrity of the victim is violated. It can include many types of touching or activity, from kissing to sexual intercourse. Sexual violence can happen to anyone, of any gender, sexual orientation, race or economic status. It can occur at home, work, online, in public or private. Sexual violence can result in trauma, unpleasant thoughts, feelings and emotions during and after the assault. The responses are different for each person. Whatever your response **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**.

## WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is a voluntary, active agreement, given by all parties, to engage in a specific sexual activity. It means that you understand what you are agreeing to and any consequences that might occur. You can also change your mind. Just because you agreed in the past, does not mean you consent to any other sexual activity.

The age of consent in Ontario is 16 years old. There are a few exceptions to this. If someone is 14 years old, they can legally consent to sexual activity with someone less than 5 years older than them. Someone aged 12-13 can consent to sexual activity with someone who is less than 2 years older than them.

However, 18 years old is the age of consent when the sexual activity involves prostitution or pornography or if it occurs in a relationship of trust, dependency, or authority (such as a teacher or babysitter).



## **CONSENT CANNOT BE GIVEN IF A PERSON IS:**

- Unconscious
- Incapacitated by alcohol or drugs
- Afraid of the consequences if they don't consent
- Threatened or intimidated
- Made to feel guilty if they don't consent
- Coerced by intimidation, threats, misuse of authority, bribes, manipulation
- Physically forced to comply
- Verbally or physically saying "NO" or physically signalling (kicking, crying, putting clothes on etc.)
- Not able to consent because of a physical or mental disability
- Withdrawing their consent at anytime

## **MEDICAL CONCERNS**

Survivors of sexual violence may present a number of health issues. Physical injuries occur in at least 60% of assaults. These include bruising and genital injuries, sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. Psychological effects also include depression, confusion, sleep disturbances, erratic mood swings, eating disorders, anxiety/panic attacks, sexual dysfunction, flashbacks, alcohol and drug abuse.

## **BEING DRUGGED AND SEXUALLY ASSAULTED**

Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA) occurs when alcohol or other drugs are used to sedate or incapacitate a person to facilitate a sexual assault. Consent can't be given if the person is not capable of consenting (i.e., they are drunk, stoned, or unconscious). There are two types of DFSA:

- Proactive – a perpetrator puts a drug into a victim's drink or keeps giving them alcohol until they become drunk and incapacitated.
- Opportunistic – A perpetrator targets a specific person that is incapacitated or intoxicated.

The most common drug used in DFSAs is alcohol. However, other drugs used include marijuana, cocaine, MDMA/MDA, rohypnol, muscle relaxants, pain medication, anti-depressants, GHB and antihistamine.



## **SIGNS OF DRUG FACILITATED SEXUAL ASSAULT**

Most people who have been drugged and assaulted often report having amnesia or partial amnesia of the incident. Many people report losing consciousness, experiencing hangover symptoms, confusion, dizziness, drowsiness, nausea and/or vomiting. Sometimes victims will feel that something sexual happened or might wake up with no clothes or partial clothes on. If you have any of these reactions/feelings, go directly to the nearest hospital emergency department to receive medical help. Ask for a urine test to detect the presence of drugs as soon as possible, as evidence disappears within hours. If possible, bring a sample of the beverage for analysis.

## **SEX WORKERS AND SEXUAL ASSAULT**

We know that sex trade workers have an increased risk of experiencing sexual violence. If you did not give consent to a sexual act, it **IS** sexual assault. If you are a victim of a sexual assault while working in the sex trade, you will not be arrested. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

## CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

A child cannot give consent to sexual activity. Child sexual abuse is when a child is used for sexual purposes by an adult or adolescent. Sexual abuse can include sexual intercourse, fondling, forcing a child to look at or be part of pornographic videos or pictures, child sex trafficking, text messages and obscene phone calls.

**Signs of child sexual abuse include** bedwetting, nightmares or disturbed sleep patterns, changes in behaviour and/or school performance, frequent sore throats or urinary tract infections, sexually transmitted infections, overt sexual behaviour, fear of touching, poor self-image reflected in choice of clothing, cleanliness, overall appearance, changes in appetite, constant sadness and crying for no apparent reason, self-harm, fear of sleeping alone and coming home with presents/toys etc.

Child sexual abuse does not usually involve violence because violence is not needed to get them to cooperate. In most cases (over 85%), the offender is someone the child knows. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse as they simply do not have that kind of knowledge. Sexual abuse is usually not a one-time occurrence. In most cases, it is a progressive process which can occur over several years. Children who are assaulted by a stranger (without violence), will recover better than a child assaulted by a trusted family member.

If you suspect a child is being exploited or abused, immediately contact Family and Children's Services, the police department, the sexual assault centre or the distress centre.

# MEDICAL OPTIONS AFTER YOU HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

If you have experienced a sexual assault, you have medical options available. It is your decision to make, and there is no right or wrong choice.

**HOSPITAL CARE:** The SADV treatment program provides emergency services, sexual assault evidence kits, follow-up healthcare and counselling to both female and male survivors of recent sexual assaults and intimate partner violence.

**SEXUAL ASSAULT EVIDENCE KIT (SAEK)** can **ONLY** be done at the **St. Catharines General Hospital**, at its **Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Unit**. If you decide you do **NOT** want a SAEK done, you can go to any **Emergency Department** in the region for treatment. The SAEK is a way of collecting evidence from your body after an assault. There is a greater chance of collecting physical evidence within **72** hours after an assault as evidence degrades over time. However, you can still collect evidence up to **12** days after the incident. If you do plan on completing the kit, try not to shower, urinate, drink, brush your teeth or change before going to the hospital.

The exam is performed by a specially trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. Your physical condition will be evaluated. A large sheet of paper will be placed down while you undress to collect hairs and other fibres. Your clothes will be put in an evidence bag for forensic testing. Any bruises, cuts or other physical injuries will be noted and photographed.

An internal examination (vaginal, penile and/or anal swabs) will be completed. Hair, blood, urine, saliva, and fingernail swabs will also be taken. This evidence will be used to determine the time the assault occurred and to help identify the perpetrator and provide evidence for any future court proceedings. You will also be offered testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, testing for drugs that might have been used to commit the assault and emergency contraceptive options.

If you decide on police involvement, they will pick up the SAEK and give it to a Forensic Identification Officer. This officer will contact the Center of Forensic Sciences in Toronto, to submit the SAEK for analysis.

If you decide **to not** report the sexual assault to the police at that time, your kit will be stored at the hospital for one year. After that, it will be destroyed. If you decide to report to the police, your kit will be given to the police and stored indefinitely.

**You do NOT have to agree to the entire SAEK. You can also choose certain parts, or you can refuse the entire process. You can also stop the examination/kit at any time.**

## **THESE ARE AVAILABLE OPTIONS TO YOU**

**PHYSICAL EXAMINATION ONLY:** A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner can perform a physical examination, provide STI and pregnancy testing and treatments even if you choose to decline the SAEK.

**ASK QUESTIONS:** You can simply go to the hospital and ask questions of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. You can decide to decline any medical attention and leave. It is always YOUR choice.

**SEXUAL HEALTH CLINIC:** You can go to a Sexual Health Clinic where several options are available. These include testing for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (including Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS).

**FAMILY PHYSICIAN:** You can go to your family doctor to have a complete physical performed.

**WALK-IN CLINIC:** You have the choice to go to a local Walk-In Clinic.

**YOU CAN DO NOTHING. IT IS YOUR DECISION. THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG.**

## **POLICE INVOLVEMENT AND REPORTING OPTIONS**

There are several options available to you with regard to reporting sexual assault. The main thing is to ensure you are safe. If you feel threatened or at risk, call 911 immediately. If you decide you would like to report, you can opt for:

### **POLICE INVOLVEMENT**

If you decide to make a statement, call the police (905-688-4111) and inform them that you would like to report a sexual assault. They will arrange to have a uniformed officer meet you. If you are at the hospital, you can have the police come to the hospital, to your home OR it can be done at the Niagara Sexual Assault Centre. A Hospital Response Worker can be present to support you while you make your statement. The officer will ask basic questions about the incident. They will advise you of different community support options such as victim services, counselling etc. They may also ask about other evidence such as videos, cell phone and social media messages and more. This can be used to help in an investigation. Your case will be turned over to a specially trained officer who is part of the Sexual Assault Unit. They will oversee a full investigation and ensure you understand the process and keep you up to date. They can try to arrange for you to speak to an officer of your preferred gender. You also have the right to complete a Victim Impact Statement. A member of the Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) will follow up with you to help prepare you for court.

## **ANONYMOUS THIRD PARTY REPORT**

This option allows survivors to report details of an assault to the police anonymously. You can meet a trained staff member of the Niagara Sexual Assault Centre OR the Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Unit (at the St. Catharines Hospital). They will take a report that details the assault. It is only identified by a number and only the agency that completed the report will have access to your identity. The report is forwarded to police and entered in the National Violent Crime Linkage System Database (VICLAS) and compared against all other sexual assaults in an attempt to identify serial sexual offenders.

## **DECIDE TO WAIT**

There is no time limit for reporting a sexual assault in Canada. If you choose to report your assault from 40 years ago, you have that right.

## **YOU CAN DO NOTHING**

**IT IS YOUR DECISION.** If you decide on this option, support services are still available to you. Please call the Niagara Sexual Assault Centre for information. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

## SUPPORTING A SURVIVOR

When someone discloses they have been sexually assaulted, it can be hard to know what to say. It's important for them to feel supported, safe and believed. A few things we recommend:

- Let the survivor decide what to tell at their own pace. Don't probe for details. They will tell you what they need in their own time. They need to know they are in control, whatever that looks like for them.
- Tell them you believe them and ask what the best way to help them at that moment. Everyone is different. Some want someone to listen, some want to be distracted
- Remind them that it's not their fault. Keep telling them this.
- Assure them they do not have to deal with this alone.
- Do not talk about the assault to anyone without the survivors' permission. This is their story to tell.
- Don't make threats against the perpetrator. This can make the situation more stressful for the survivor.
- Do NOT pressure them to act or feel a different way. There is no "right way" to react after a sexual assault.
- Look out for signs of depression, suicidal ideations, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, flashbacks.
- Educate yourself on the issue. There are several websites that have excellent information. These include The Niagara Sexual Assault Centre - [www.niagarasexualassaultcentre.com](http://www.niagarasexualassaultcentre.com), the Canadian Women's Foundation [www.canadianwomen.org](http://www.canadianwomen.org), the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund - [www.leaf.ca](http://www.leaf.ca) If you have any questions, call the Niagara Sexual Assault Centre's 24/7 Crisis Line at 905-628-4584.



# COMMUNITY HELP AND RESOURCES

## CRISIS NUMBERS:

### **Niagara Sexual Assault Centre**

- 24-hour confidential crisis support line 905-682-4584,
- Hospital response team, counselling services, support groups, public education, anonymous third party reporting
- Phone: 905-682-7258
- Website: [NiagaraSexualAssaultCentre.com](http://NiagaraSexualAssaultCentre.com)

### **Birchway Niagara**

- Emergency shelter for women and children.
- Phone: 905-356-5800
- Website: [Birchway.ca](http://Birchway.ca)

### **Gillian's Place**

- Provides safe refuge and support programs for those experiencing abuse. Provides phone and in-person support for women, children, including LGBTQQIA2S+ individuals. Inclusive shelter welcoming all women, two-spirit, genderqueer, trans and non-binary people facing violence.
- Phone: 905-684-8331
- Website: [GilliansPlace.com](http://GilliansPlace.com)

### **Pathstone Crisis Support Services**

- For children and youth up to the age of 18 and their families. Receive immediate telephone counselling. It operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Phone: 1-800-263-4944
- Website: [PathstoneMentalHealth.ca](http://PathstoneMentalHealth.ca)

## **Distress Centre Niagara**

- Skilled responders will respond to every person in need and support the safety and emotional wellness of clients.

Available 24/7

- St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Area Call: 905-688-3711
- Port Colborne, Wainfleet and Area Call: 905-734-1212
- Fort Erie and Area Call: 905-382-0689
- Grimsby, West Lincoln Call: 905-563-6674
- Email: [DistressCentreNiagara.com](mailto:DistressCentreNiagara.com)

## **Talk Suicide Canada**

- Call 1-833-456-4566 (24/7/365) or text 45645 (4 p.m. to midnight, ET) to connect to a crisis responder to get help without judgement.

## **Kid Help Phone**

- Call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868 to receive support for kids, teens and young adults. Services offered in English and French.

## **Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST)**

- Canadian Mental Health Association Call 1-866-550-5205 to receive outreach and support. Services are available to Niagara residents who are in crisis with mental health issues.

## **Mental Health & Addictions Access Line**

- The access line will connect you with mental health and addictions services in Niagara. Call 1-866-550-5205 or visit [AccessLineNiagara.com](http://AccessLineNiagara.com)

## **Fem'Aide**

- Call 1-877-336-2433 pour les services en français, veuillez appelez FEM'AIDE (Ligne de soutien pour femmes violentées)

## **Trans Lifeline**

- In Canada call 1-877-330-6366. Offers peer support run by trans people for trans and questioning peers.

## **Centre de Sante (French)**

- Health, mental health and wellness centre for individuals requiring French services
- 905-734-1141
- website: Cschn.ca

## **CRISIS NUMBERS:**

### **Family and Children's Services**

- Services include child protection, fostering, adoption, youth services and childcare.
- Call 905-937-7731
- Website: FACSNIagara.on.ca

### **The RAFT (Resource Action for Teens)**

- Helps kids living on the street and those at risk of being on the street. Provides resource drop in, hostel, after school programs and more.
- Phone: 905-984-4365
- Website: TheRaft.ca

## **PECAN**

An online resource hub in the effort to end child abuse.

Website: EndChildAbuseNiagara.com

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

### **Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Program (NHS)**

- Offers medical treatment, forensic evidence collection (Sexual Assault Evidence Kit) counselling services, and anonymous third party Reporting.
- Call: 905-378-4647, extension 45300

### **Niagara Region Sexual Health Centres**

- Services offered include birth control, unplanned pregnancy and morning after pill. Testing for sexually transmitted infections, outreach nursing for residents who have challenges with traditional health care, sexual orientation support.
- Call 1-800-263-5757

## **POLICE SERVICES**

### **Niagara Regional Police**

- The Sex Assault Unit investigates crimes of a sexual nature.
- Call 905-688-4111
- Website: [NiagaraPolice.ca/en/what-we-do/sexualassault.aspx](http://NiagaraPolice.ca/en/what-we-do/sexualassault.aspx)
- Guide for Sexual Assault Survivors: [NiagaraPolice.ca/en/who-we-are/resources/A-Guide-for-Sexual-Assault-Survivors-NRPS.pdf](http://NiagaraPolice.ca/en/who-we-are/resources/A-Guide-for-Sexual-Assault-Survivors-NRPS.pdf)

### **Victim Quick Response Program (VQR+)**

- Provides short-term assistance to victims of sexual assault who report to police, a sexual assault centre, hospital and/or other community agency. For more information or to review eligibility guidelines please contact Victim Services Niagara
- [VictimServicesNiagara.on.ca](http://VictimServicesNiagara.on.ca)
- Call: 905-682-2626.

## **Victim Services Niagara**

- A non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to helping survivors of crime. They focus on restoring and enhancing the survivor's quality of life and preventing re-victimization. They are available 24/7 and will connect you to agencies and resources in your area for counselling, advocacy, violence prevention, safety services and outreach.
- Address: Niagara Regional Police Services HQ 5700 Valley Way, Niagara Falls
- Call: 905-682-2626 (24-Hour Emergency Referral Line)
- Website: [VictimServicesNiagara.on.ca](http://VictimServicesNiagara.on.ca)

## **Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP)**

- Provides information, assistance and support with respect to the court process for all survivors and witnesses of crime. The VWAP is located within courthouses across the province. To find the closest courthouse with a VWAP office, check the telephone book (all courthouses are listed in the blue pages under "Courts").
- You can also check the Ministry of Attorney General website [Ontario.ca/attorneygeneral](http://Ontario.ca/attorneygeneral)

## **LEGAL SERVICES**

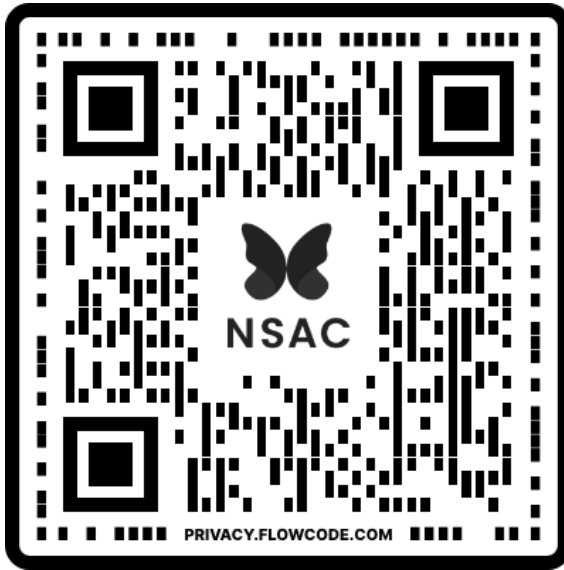
### **Independent Legal Advice (FREE)**

- Survivors of sexual assault living in Ontario can receive up to four hours of free independent legal advice.
- For more information call 1-855-226-3904
- Visit [Ontario.ca/page/independent-legal-advice-sexual-assault-victims](http://Ontario.ca/page/independent-legal-advice-sexual-assault-victims)

## **Civil Sexual Assault Lawyer**

- Lawyers who focus on survivors of childhood sexual abuse and adult sexual assault.
- The purpose of obtaining a Civil Sexual Assault lawyer is for financial compensation.
- You can sue the offender and you can sue an institution if one was involved. If you would like to contact a lawyer, you can refer to any of the resources listed in this booklet or contact the agencies listed below.
- If the accused is found not guilty in the criminal process, you can still proceed with a civil lawyer for financial compensation. You can call either:
  - **The Law Society of Upper Canada** - The Lawyer Referral Service
    - 416-947-3330 or 1-800-268-8326 (toll-free)
    - ISUC.on.ca
  - **Ontario Trial Lawyers Association**
    - 905-639-6852 or 1-800-567-3047 (toll free)
    - OTLA.com

# NIAGARA SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE



## NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE A GUIDE FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS



