

What about same-sex rape and sexual assault?

Although people typically think of a man assaulting a woman, rape and sexual assault occur between people of the same-sex as well. As with opposite sex sexual assault, the majority of same-sex sexual assault occurs between people who know each other or who are intimately involved. However, neither the perpetrators nor the survivors are always gay or lesbian. Furthermore, sexual assault can also be part of a bias or hate crime against someone perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered (the perpetrator(s) in this instance can be either the same or opposite sex as the survivor). Survivors of same-sex sexual assault face the same difficulties as other survivors, but they may also have to deal with additional issues. These include:

- Beliefs that a woman cannot rape another woman or a man cannot rape another man - these may make it harder for survivors to find someone to talk to, obtain services, or even believe themselves that they were raped.
- If the survivor was assaulted by a same-sex partner or date, they may face, or fear, homophobia and heterosexist attitudes when trying to report the assault or receive medical or psychological services.
- LGBT survivors may avoid coming forward because they fear losing their family, friends, job, or housing. Conversely, heterosexual survivors may fear others thinking that they are gay or lesbian if they report a same-sex assault.
- LGBT survivors who are not yet out may also fear coming out to family, friends, and coworkers, among others. Many survivors fear that their loved ones will blame the assault on the survivor's sexual orientation, especially if their family and friends are not supportive or knowledgeable about LGBT issues.
- Survivors of a sexual assault that was part of a hate crime may be traumatized not only by the assault itself, but also by the accompanying prejudice and hatred that motivated the crime.

Although many services are designed for female survivors of a sexual assault by a man, there are services available for all survivors of sexual assault, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, or the gender of their assailant. Many services are confidential and a number are anonymous as well, so that survivors do not have to fear being involuntarily outed or having others know more about the situation than the survivor would like.

What Can I Do?

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted, or if think you have been, but are not sure, it's important to talk to someone. Counselors are available at the Student Health Center on campus, as well as at many non-campus resources. These resources can help you recover from the assault and can assist you in finding legal services and pressing charges if you choose to do so. If you don't feel comfortable talking to someone face-to-face there are a number of anonymous hotlines available. Remember, these resources are not just available for women, or people of certain groups; no matter whom you are you have the right to talk to someone.