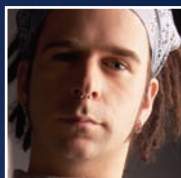
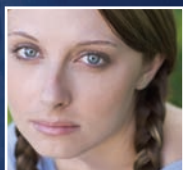


Information Guide for Sexual Assault Victims



This guide is a project of the *Table de concertation sur les agressions à caractère sexuel de Montréal* (a Montreal coordinating group on sexual assault).



TABLE DE CONCERTATION
SUR LES AGRESSIONS
À CARACTÈRE SEXUEL
DE MONTRÉAL

EDITORIAL AND WORKING COMMITTEE

Diane Vallée, West Island CALACS

Nathalie Brault, *Clinique pour victimes d'agression sexuelle* / Hôpital Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal | CHUM

Marie-Hélène Blanc, *Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes* (a victims' rights group)

Dèby Trent, Montreal Sexual Assault Centre

Yvonne Séguin, *Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail de la province de Québec* (a help and information centre on sexual harassment in the workplace)

RESEARCH, WRITING AND EDITING

Cynthia Pouliot, M.A., Clinical Sexologist and Psychotherapist

TRANSLATION

Debra Galarneau, Glyphex Services

REVISION

Cynthia Gates

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Maryse Boutin, Turbinegraphique.ca

PRINTING

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Preface

If you are a victim of sexual assault, this guide is for you.

The information it contains will be useful for you and for your family and friends, whether the sexual assault occurred recently or a number of years ago.

This guide is intended for all women and men, regardless of their ethnic origin, culture, age, religion, sexual orientation, or physical and mental abilities.

The guide provides information on:

- The definitions and various forms of sexual assault
- Myths and prejudices surrounding sexual assault
- Statistics on the victims and perpetrators of sexual assault
- The possible effects of a sexual assault
- Deciding to talk about a sexual assault
- The role of family and friends
- Assistance available to victims of sexual assault: medico-social, psychological, and financial
- The law and the judicial process

Please note that the use of the feminine gender in this document in no way excludes male victims of sexual assault.

What is a sexual assault?

“A sexual assault is an act of a sexual nature, whether or not it involves physical contact, carried out by an individual without the consent of the person to whom it is addressed or, in some cases, notably those involving children, by manipulation of feelings or blackmail.

“It’s an act that aims to impose the assailant’s own desires on another person through the abuse of power, through the use of force or constraint, or through implied or explicit threats.

“Sexual assault interferes with fundamental rights, notably the right to bodily security and inviolability, and to physical and psychological security.”

Sexual assault can take many different forms, depending on the act itself or the degree of violence involved.

Any individual, male or female, may be the victim of sexual assault during childhood, adolescence or adulthood.

Sexual assault may be committed by...

- a friend
- a spouse
- an acquaintance (for example, the friend of a spouse, the brother of a friend, or someone met at a social, cultural or sporting event)
- a professional whom you are consulting
- a co-worker
- an employer
- a fellow student
- a neighbour
- a family member
- a client
- a patient
- a stranger

A sexual assailant's behaviour can include:

Emotional manipulation

"If you really loved me, you would do what I want you to do."

Promises of material gain

"If you to bed with me, I'll buy you all the clothes you want."

Intimidation

"I've been working here for a long time — who do you think they'll believe?"

Threats

"If you don't cooperate, your kids will get hurt."

Blackmail

"Let me touch your breasts or I'll see that you lose your job."

Verbal, physical or psychological violence

"Even if you do tell, no one will believe you."

"If you try to stop me, I'll hit you."

"If you say a word to anybody, it'll be worse next time."

Acts and behaviours of a sexual nature

- Kisses of a sexual nature
- Touching: breasts, thighs, buttocks, penis, vulva or anus
- Masturbation of the victim by the assailant and vice versa
- Oral-Genital Contact:
 - **Fellatio:** introduction of the assailant's penis into the victim's mouth, or of the victim's penis into the assailant's mouth
 - **Cunnilingus:** oral contact with the genitals of a woman or girl
- Penetration: penetration of the vagina by the penis, penetration of the anus or vagina using fingers or objects, sodomy
- Other sexual behaviour: producing or watching pornographic material
- Sexual harassment: all forms of unwanted sexual attention or advances that cause discomfort or fear and threaten a person's well-being. This form of sexual assault can include looks, words, acts, touching, threats, propositions, jokes or the exhibition of pornographic material.
- Exhibitionism: the behaviour of someone who shows his genitals in public.
- Frotteurism: the behaviour of someone who seeks physical contact with non-consenting persons in a public place. An example would be trying to rub one's sexual organs against strangers on the subway.
- Voyeurism: "voyeuristic" behaviour or tendencies, based on a desire to look at the naked body or watch the intimate behaviour of another person or group of people.

These various acts and behaviours are all considered to be sexual assaults when they occur **without the consent** of the victim because they threaten a person's physical and psychological well-being, self-image and perception of her environment.

kissing
touching
masturbation
oral-genital contact
penetration
other sexual behaviour
sexual harassment
exhibitionism
frotteurism
voyeurism



Sexual assault is an act of violence, not one of sexual impulsiveness.

Myths and prejudices

The myths and prejudices surrounding victims of sexual assault are numerous and persistent.

Victims may be confronted with many prejudices.



Myths about women

Here are some of the most common myths about women:

It is impossible to sexually assault a woman against her will.

FALSE Women do not ask to be sexually assaulted, humiliated or debased.

This myth perpetuates the idea that the woman is responsible for the attack. Sexual assailants use violence or threats, and in some cases medications, drugs or alcohol, to force compliance. Many women remain passive during an assault in order to minimize their injuries. It is possible to sexually assault a non-consenting woman.

Women lay charges for no good reason.

FALSE Various studies have shown that less than 25% of sexual assaults are reported to the police.

Women's behaviour and way of dressing are a provocation to sexual assault.

FALSE One of the most frequently heard myths is that sexual assault is due to provocation by women's behaviour, attitude or appearance. Hitchhiking, being out late, drinking or doing drugs, dressing seductively, wanting a relationship or wanting to go home with a man, — none of these constitute an invitation or a provocation to sexual assault.

Myths about sexual assailants

Sexual assailants, like their victims, are the subject of many myths.

Sexual assailants are strangers.

In 70 to 85% of cases reported to the police, the attacker is known to the victim.

FALSE In fact, the attacker is usually someone known to the victim, someone who takes advantage of a position of trust or authority to sexually assault the victim. Generally, a sexual assailant is someone who has a life partner and the opportunity to express his sexuality actively and regularly. A sexual assailant might also be a professional such as a therapist, a doctor, a psychiatrist, a coach or a teacher.

All sexual assailants have mental health problems.

FALSE Sexual assault is not a crime of the mentally ill. Nearly 80% of victims know their alleged attacker — most of the time a member of their immediate or extended family, or an ordinary acquaintance in good mental health.

All men who sexually assault boys are homosexuals.

FALSE Men who sexually assault young boys are not necessarily homosexual any more than men who assault young girls are necessarily heterosexual. There are sexual assailants who have preferences as to the sex or age of their victims. Most men who sexually assault boys are heterosexual.

Myths about children and teenagers

Sexual assaults against children and teens are also the subject of a number of myths.

Victims must hate their attacker.

FALSE It is wrong to assume that the victim always detests the sexual assailant. In an incestuous situation, for example, the victim is torn between feelings of betrayal and love. This gives rise to feelings of ambivalence. A teen who is attacked by a friend with whom she has a loving relationship can also experience feelings of ambivalence.

Children and teens who become sexually aroused or have an orgasm during a sexual assault must have consented, because they experienced pleasure.

FALSE It is possible for a male child or teen to have an erection following stimulation of the genitals, even during sexual assault. Many children and teens who are victims of sexual assault feel guilt and shame: they wrongly believe that their physical reaction must mean that they consented to the assault.

Sexual assaults against children are an abuse of trust and power.



A boy who has been sexually assaulted will become a homosexual.

Over the past several years, a growing number of men have revealed that they were sexually assaulted in their youth.

FALSE Many boys who have been sexually assaulted wrongly believe that there must be something about them that attracts men and that they must be homosexual or effeminate. A sexual assault will not determine a victim's sexual orientation.

The child, teen or adult victim of sexual assault is not responsible for the behaviour of the attacker.

These various myths tend to blame the victims of sexual assault and justify the behaviour of their attackers.

Statistics

Who are the victims of sexual assault?

- **1** woman in **3** has been the victim of at least one sexual assault from the age of 16.
- **1** man in **6** will be sexually assaulted over the course of his life.
- **68%** of victims are under 18 years of age.
- **83%** of sexual assault victims are women (of whom **53%** are girls and **30%** are adults).
- Over **75%** of Native girls under 18 have been sexually assaulted.
- **40%** of physically handicapped women will be sexually assaulted at least once during their life.
- **39** to **68%** of mentally handicapped women will be sexually assaulted at least once before the age of 18.
- **1** woman in **7** has been sexually assaulted at least once by her spouse.
- Slightly more than **8** in **10** victims know their attacker.
- Close to **7** in **10** victims were sexually assaulted in a private residence.
- Up to **90%** of sexual assaults are not reported to the police.

All of these statistics (pages 14 – 15) are taken from:

Ministère de la Sécurité publique, *Statistiques 2008 sur les agressions sexuelles au Québec* (2008 statistics on sexual assault in Québec), Québec, MSP, 2010.

Government of Quebec, *Orientations gouvernementales en matière d'agression sexuelle* (Action plan for the setting up of governmental guidelines in matters of sexual aggression), Québec, 2001.



Sexual assailants

- In **98%** of reported cases, the attacker is male.
- **20%** of assailants are under the age of 18.
- In **2%** of cases, the assailant is female.

A sexual assailant may be a spouse, a friend, an acquaintance, a professional, a colleague, an employer, a fellow student, a neighbour, a family member, a client, a patient or a stranger.



The assailant may be very clever in subtly obtaining what he wants from the victim.

Possible effects on victims

If you have been the victim of a sexual assault, you may experience various reactions at different stages of your life. These effects can vary based on your age, the connection between you and the attacker, the nature of the assault, the duration and frequency of the sexual assaults, the degree of violence involved, the reactions of those around you to revelations of assault, and the help available to you.

Many women and men are constantly striving deal with the effects of sexual assault, whether the assault occurred recently or in the past.

The effects described here could apply in your situation, regardless of whether you are a woman or a man.

Signs of the effects of sexual assault

Whether a sexual assault happened recently or many years ago, it has certain effects. Some of these effects are shared by a majority of the victims, while others are more specific to each victim's situation.

You may experience:

- Physical problems such as headaches, fatigue, sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, injuries.
- Psychological problems such as sadness, depression, guilt, feelings of anger and rage, fears, low self-esteem, shame, despondency, suicidal thoughts, and self-mutilation.
- Sexual problems, such as lack of desire, hypersexuality, pain during intercourse, or sexual disgust.
- Difficulty in relationships with your spouse, friends and family.
- Frustration and anxiety provoked by the judicial process, the trial and court testimony.
- Economic, social or family problems: difficulty at work, rejection by friends, a stay in a shelter or crisis centre, loss of income.
- Dependency problems — drugs, alcohol, gambling or medication.
- Eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia.

These symptoms, which can occur over a long period of time, may begin immediately after the assault or many years later.

Effects of a recent sexual assault

After a recent sexual assault, you may experience reactions unique to you. Different factors can influence these reactions: your age, your personality, the form of the assault, your connection to your assailant, whether you were ever sexually assaulted as a child, the degree of violence of the assault, the reaction of those around you if you reveal or talk about the assault, and the presence of other stress factors in your life.

It is important for you to know that the short term effects do not always occur in the same order or in the same way for all victims.

The different stages in the reactions and consequences related to a recent sexual assault are a collection of all the possibilities that you might experience.

The short-term effects can be divided into three stages:

1. Initial shock
2. Adjustment
3. Reintegration

Each of these stages is associated with certain physical and psychological reactions, and with certain behaviours that you may already have experienced, are currently experiencing, or may experience later.

1. Initial shock

This stage is generally the most intense, occurring during the first few days following the sexual assault. You may feel that your life has been completely shattered.

In the hours following the sexual assault, your feelings may be very intense, ranging from depression to euphoria.

During these first few days, you may experience the following reactions and feelings:

- anger and aggression, often directed towards friends and family for no apparent reason
- intense fear
- shame and humiliation
- depression
- sadness
- moodiness
- feelings of being misunderstood and of being alone with your problem
- lower tolerance for situations perceived as a threat to your safety and security (not wanting to be touched, freezing if a stranger asks you the time)
- feelings of guilt for what you did (accepted an invitation, opened the door to a stranger) or did not do (didn't scream or fight back)
- feelings related to your inner self: feeling dead inside, feeling a loss of purity or integrity, or feeling tainted, like something inside you has been broken
- confusion, anxiety

You may also have physical symptoms:

- generalized or specific pain
- nightmares and sleep disorders
- loss of appetite, stomach pain, nausea

Your behaviour, like your thoughts, may not follow your normal pattern. You try, without success, to ward off overwhelming and ever-present thoughts about the sexual assault you have been through.

You may constantly replay the assault in your mind, wondering what you could have done or said, and why you were the one attacked.

You may no longer recognize yourself, may suffer from moodiness, or overreact. You may feel you are losing touch with reality and are no longer aware of what is happening around you during this period.

You may want to be alone, not want to go to work or see others. You want to hide, to stay in bed. You may be uneasy in group situations. You might have a strong emotional reaction to seeing people who resemble your attacker.



You may feel extremely calm and in control, preferring to hide your emotions, or you may want someone to be with you all the time.

You may want to avoid being alone and be eager to return to your normal activities as soon as possible.

During the period of initial shock, even though you are emotionally distraught, you must deal with certain practical issues. You may need to go for a medical exam, decide whether or not to report the assault to the police, recover from your physical injuries, and explain your absence from work or school, if necessary.



2. Adjustment

Little by little, you emerge from your state of shock and want to return to your normal routine. So begins the process of reorganizing your daily life. This phase generally begins a week after the sexual assault and continues for several weeks.

You feel ready to take up your usual activities. You want to forget the assault and focus on the aspects of your life that you have been neglecting. You feel relieved to be less obsessed by what happened to you. You are now ready to transfer the energy you were using to deal with your emotions to taking care of yourself. You have a less urgent need to talk about the assault and your feelings all the time. You may even tend to deny that the sexual assault is still bothering you.

Often, during this period, you may continue to have nightmares or violent dreams based on the sexual assault, with attempts to escape resulting in failure. This may change over time, however: your dreams may remain violent, but your reaction will change. For example, you may be ready to defend yourself and retaliate against your attacker.

You may be startled if someone enters the room or touches you unexpectedly.

The defining characteristic of this stage is “activity.” You’re ready to try to take charge of your own life once again so that you can feel good about yourself. You might change your telephone number, change jobs, or move away altogether. You might feel the need to get as far away as possible, or you might want to take up your life right where you left off and get back to normal.

You may become fearful or develop phobias that may have first appeared during the initial state of shock:

- fear of remaining inside
- fear of crowds
- fear of being alone
- fear of people who look like your attacker
- fear of certain smells or other sensory stimuli, like objects, sounds, textures or places that remind you of the assault
- fear of sex

During this period, you may have difficulty returning to your usual level of functioning.

Talking about what happened and getting support can help you.

3. Reintegration

Now you are able to carry out your day-to-day activities. You have, for the most part, recovered your peace of mind. You may feel the need to think about the assault in order to gain insight into questions or emotions that continue to bother you. The period of reintegration may last several months.

During this time, you try to reconcile the thoughts and emotions related to the sexual assault. Frustration, anger and guilt may resurface whenever you think about it. Although you may have resolved certain aspects of the sexual assault at a rational level, certain emotional aspects may still remain.

This is a period of introspection during which you may feel very apart from others. You may feel the need to be completely alone in order to reflect on what has happened to you. You may be angry at people around you who do not seem to understand or who treat you unfairly or with indifference. You may also feel a need to talk to someone who could help you shed some light on certain points.

You might feel discouraged by the persistence of nightmares and fears, such as the fear of being alone, or an inability to enjoy sexual relations. During this period, some of the progress you have made may seem uncertain.

You may also express anger toward your assailant and maybe even toward your close friends and family. You may question some of the decisions you made when you needed to feel safe (moving in with family or friends, for example). This uncertainty arises from a need to feel free again; in fact, it is the beginning of your return to independence.

COURSES IN SELF-DEFENCE

Some organizations offer self-defence courses.

These courses can help you reduce your fears and regain control of your life.

Find out more from one of the resources for victims of sexual assault.

It doesn't matter whether you are a woman or a man; you can ask for help.

There are trained professionals who are ready to help you, and resources are available in every region.

Consequences of revealing a childhood sexual assault

The reactions and consequences of a recent sexual assault are also experienced by people who were sexually assaulted in their childhood.

These consequences evolve over time and are unique to each victim.

If you decide to reveal a sexual assault that took place when you were a child, you may react in unexpected ways. Some victims of childhood sexual assault may spend many years feeling that the experience did not particularly mark them. When they actually reveal the attack, their reaction can be similar to those experienced by the victim of a recent sexual assault.

As an adult revealing a childhood sexual assault, you may once again feel the full effect of past emotions and long buried memories that may now resurface.

Talking about your experience and seeking assistance can help you. Please see the section on *Medico-social, psychological and financial assistance* on page 34 for a list of available resources.

Male victims of sexual assault

Some men who were sexually assaulted in childhood or adolescence try to understand and analyse the situation through adult eyes.

As a child, you did not have the means to defend yourself or prevent the sexual assault.

If you felt sexual pleasure and arousal during the assault, you may believe that you actually consented to it.

All men, regardless of their age, can react physically to any form of stimulation of the penis, testicles or buttocks, and can have an erection and ejaculate. If you felt sexual pleasure, had an erection or ejaculated in the course of a sexual assault, this was simply a normal bodily reaction, not excitement signifying your consent to sexual activity.

If you were sexually assaulted by a woman during your childhood, adolescence, or adulthood, you may not even consider it sexual assault.

In 2% of cases, the assailant is female.

Men believe that if they were sexually assaulted by a woman, it was not really a sexual assault. They sometimes perceive the event as a sexual initiation. If your assailant was a woman, it can be difficult for you to discuss in terms of an assault. You may be afraid of being judged, or of not being believed. It is important to understand that it does not matter whether your assailant was a man or a woman: if you did not consent, it was a sexual assault.

If you were sexually assaulted by a man,
you may believe you are homosexual.



You may question your own sexual orientation. Many male victims of sexual assault wrongly believe that there is something about them that attracts men, and that they must be homosexual or effeminate. This is false. Sexual assault is a statement of power and has nothing to do with attraction or seduction.



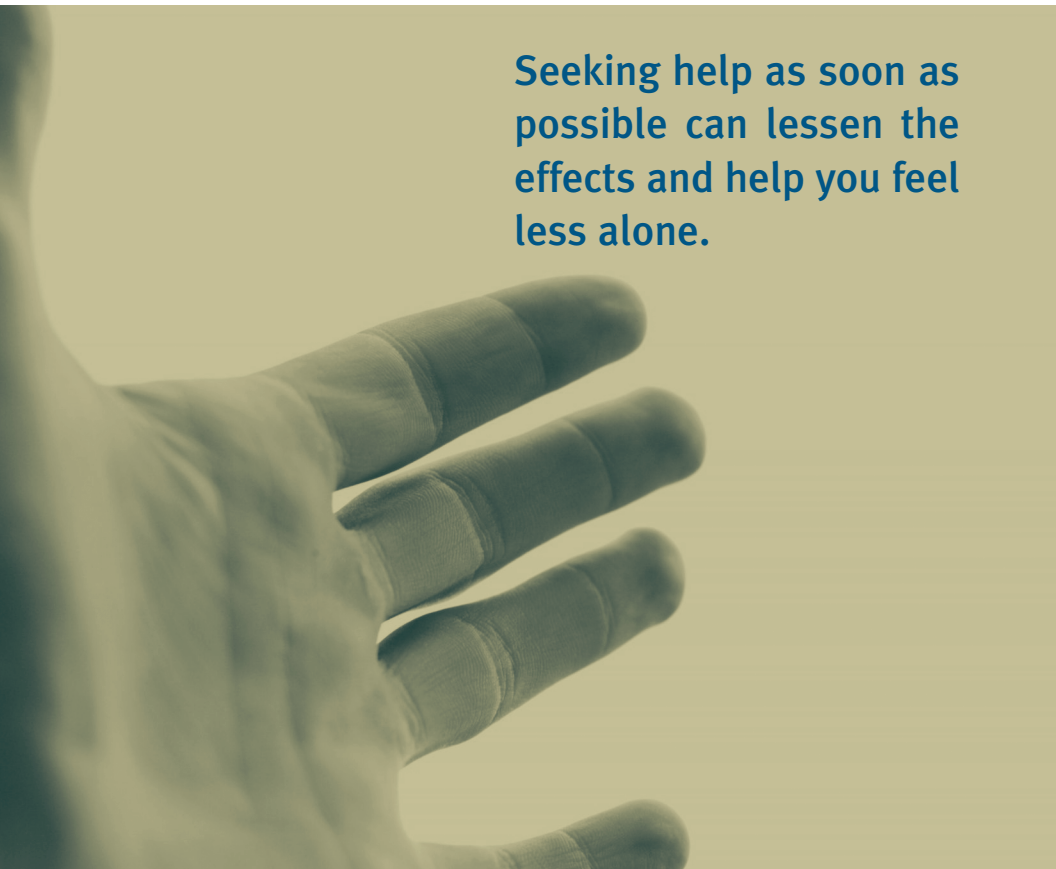
The reactions of men who
are victims of sexual
assault are similar to
those of female victims.



Please read the section on
Consequences on page 25.

The consequences of sexual assault evolve over time, and are different for every victim.

Seeking help as soon as possible can lessen the effects and help you feel less alone.



Deciding to talk about a sexual assault

Not an easy decision

You may be wondering, “Should I talk about my sexual assault?”
“Whom should I talk to about it?” or “What will happen if I talk about it?”

Revealing that they were sexually assaulted is not an easy decision for most victims.

There are many reasons that prevent victims from revealing a sexual assault and that can keep them silent about it for many years.

Sexual assault is a crime that is hidden and perpetuated by a code of silence.

You probably...

- are afraid of the assailant and fear reprisals
- feel that you are the only person this has ever happen to
- feel guilty
- are ashamed
- fear unpleasant remarks
- fear you will not be believed
- feel responsible for what happened
- sometimes have conflicting feelings about the attacker
- are fearful of legal proceedings
- are afraid to upset your friends and family
- are fearful of the reactions and remarks of your family, friends and colleagues

Choosing to break the silence...

- allows you to overcome the shame of the secret that isolates you from others.
- lets you move forward, work through your denial, and face reality.
- opens the door to understanding and help.
- allows you to share your experience with compassionate people who will acknowledge what happened to you.
- lets you get in touch with your emotions.
- gives you the tools you need to lessen the impact of sexual assault.

It doesn't matter if you are a woman or a man, you can ask for help. There are trained professionals who are ready to assist you. Please see the section on *Medico-social, psychological and financial assistance* on page 34 for more information on the resources available to you.

How do I talk about it?

When you do decide to talk about what happened to you, you are sharing a personal experience with another person. This can be a difficult process, even if you talk to someone close to you whom you trust.

Talking about sexual assault that happened to you as a child, teen, or adult, can be very difficult because it puts you in a vulnerable position.

You may be afraid that no one will believe you, or that you will not have the ability or strength to talk about what happened to you. You might also be worried that you will not be able to overcome the repercussions of the sexual assault, or that revealing it will lead to all sorts of unpleasant consequences.

Here are a few ideas that can help you clearly express your needs.

You need:

- to be believed and listened to.
- to have your emotions validated.
- to be respected for having survived by whatever means (remember that those strategies were what enabled you to survive the sexual assault).
- to feel that the person in whom you are confiding believes in you.
- to feel that you are not being judged or blamed.
- to be encouraged in your search for help.
- to obtain information on the healing process.
- a listener who does not sympathize with or defend your attacker.

You may have other needs apart from those mentioned here. Add them to your list and express them.

You can choose
to speak to
someone you trust.

The role of close friends and family

The support of family and friends plays an important role in your healing process, whether you were sexually assaulted recently or years ago.

It is important that your friends and family members understand what can

trigger a reaction in you following the sexual assault, and that they understand your needs. The people around you have to understand that there is a connection between your current difficulties and the sexual assault you experienced.

You may wish to have your family and friends read the following:

Your support and understanding has an important place in the process of healing for a victim of sexual assault. It is important that you seek support, become informed and adopt attitudes that will help the victim.

Here is some information that may help you know how to react when someone confides in you that they have been sexually assaulted.

Harmful reactions

Judging

Asking the victim tactless questions. Trying to extract details from the victim. Talking incessantly.

Doubting

Showing scepticism, questioning what the victim has told you.

Trivializing, minimizing, or dramatizing events

Helpful reactions

Listening

Listen in a non-judgmental way to what the victim has to say. Let her express herself in her own words, in her own way, and at her own pace.

Believing

Believe what the victim says. She is the one who experienced the attack. Start by focussing on what she is saying and what she is going through.

Accepting

Simply accept what the victim says without minimizing or dramatizing the facts, emotions or consequences.

Harmful reactions

Finding fault

Pointing out her weaknesses, what she could have said or done.

Ignoring the issue

Refusing to have anything to do with the matter on the pretext that it is no concern of yours, that it is not your problem. Ignoring a request for help.

Blaming

Blaming the victim for what she did not do. Acting as if she somehow provoked the attack, as if she is somehow responsible for what happened to her.

Overprotecting

Smothering, overprotecting the victim by keeping her from going out, from seeing friends, or from sleeping away from home.

Turning the page

Preventing the victim from expressing negative emotions under the pretext that it does no good to live in the past, that it is not good for her to dwell on the situation.

Helpful reactions

Encouraging the victim to be strong

Help her to feel good about what she has done right. Point out her strengths, her courage in talking about the assault.

Supporting

Be available to talk to or to accompany the victim. If you feel unable to help, it is important to tell her so, and to help her find someone else who is up to the task.

Alleviating guilt

Help the victim understand that it is not her fault she was sexually assaulted, that the assailant is completely responsible for his actions, and that her responsibility is to take care of herself.

Encouraging independence

Be there for the victim and help her re-establish power in her own life. Give her room to breathe and help her return to her usual level of functioning.

Validating the victim's emotions

Help the victim to express what she feels by recognizing that her reactions, emotions and feelings (anger, resentment, guilt, low self-esteem) are normal.

Excerpt from the companion guide to the video "*J'appelle pas ça de l'amour...*", Laval University, 1994.
Adapted by Chantal Dubois of CALACS-Laurentides.

If you find it difficult to maintain your emotional distance when hearing about a sexual assault and what the victim has experienced, do not hesitate to seek support from a professional who specializes in helping victims of sexual assault.

Medico-social, psychological and financial assistance

If you were recently the victim of a sexual assault, you are undoubtedly worried about many things.

- You wonder if you should go to the hospital even though you have no physical injuries.
- You want to get psychological help and think that the hospital is not the best place to look.

The designated centres for victims of sexual assault, which are often located in hospitals, health and social service centres (CLSCs) and clinics, offer various medical and psychological services.

You can go to the hospital even if you have no obvious physical injuries.

All the regions of Quebec have designated centres that offer services to victims of sexual assault 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The services offered in these designated centres are designed especially for victims of sexual assault — children, teens, women and men — who require a health assessment, a medical exam or a forensic interview.

In designated centres, there are medico-social teams that include personnel with training in counselling, as well as nurses and doctors with special training in helping victims of sexual assault.

Medico-social assistance

There are different stages of medico-social assistance.

Medico-social assistance is available to all victims of sexual assault, regardless of age or gender.

When you arrive at your local designated centre, you will be cared for by a team of professionals trained to work with victims of sexual assault. You will have an opportunity to talk, to express your needs and emotions, and you will be listened to.

The team is there to support you in what you decide to do. They will need to ask you several questions. It is important for the team to know how much time has passed since you were sexually assaulted, and whether you have decided to report it to the police.

After the interview, the team will decide, with your help, what type of examination will be done. In every case, your consent is necessary.

The medical examination consists of:

- checking the general state of your health,
- treating your injuries,
- detecting any sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection (STBBI), and
- preventing an unwanted pregnancy.

A gynaecological and genital examination may be done during the course of the medical examination. Certain samples may be taken and various treatments provided.

A medical exam is crucial to your health and well-being, whether you decide to report the assault or not.

The **forensic examination** is a medical examination that includes the taking of samples that will be used for forensic purposes if you decide to report the assault to the police.

A **forensic evidence kit** is used during this examination. This kit standardizes the information gathered and the samples obtained in order to provide objective scientific proof. The purpose of these samples is to try to find biological traces of the assailant on your body or your clothing—traces such as sperm, saliva or blood. DNA obtained from these specimens can establish a genetic profile of your attacker. Since every person's genetic or DNA profile is unique, it can be used to connect a suspect to a victim. Genetic profiles of suspects are sent to Canada's National DNA Data Bank. The Data Bank looks for matches with the DNA profiles of known offenders (previously convicted of other crimes) or with genetic profiles taken from other unsolved crimes. So, even if the victim does not know the identity of her assailant, the forensic evidence kit can lead to the identification of a suspect.

You can have the forensic examination even if you have not yet decided whether you will report the assault to the police. The designated centre will keep it for 14 days. If you decide to make a police report, the counsellor at the designated centre will hand the kit over to the investigator. The kit is sent to the *Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale* (the province's forensic science and forensic pathology laboratory), where specialists analyze it in various ways. Toxicology screening may also be done on your blood and urine samples if you were unable to consent to sexual activity because of mental or physical incapacity. The results are written up in the form of expert reports which are given to the investigators. The forensic evidence kit is therefore an important part of the evidence in a police investigation.

You will receive the psychological support of a multidisciplinary team the whole time you are being treated at the designated centre. The professional staff will inform you of certain symptoms that may appear following a sexual assault, such as nightmares, fear, insomnia, fatigue and anxiety.

Following the medical and forensic examinations, a counsellor can accompany you if you decide to report the assault to the police. Any documents required to justify your absence from work or school will be provided. You will also be given a list of organizations that can provide support.

A few weeks later, you will return for a **medical follow-up** to assess your physical and psychological health, determine if you are pregnant, and detect any sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs).

A **psycho-social follow-up** will also be recommended in order to help you, and those close to you, deal with reactions to and complications from sexual assault. Please refer to the *Psychological assistance* section on page 38 to learn more about available resources.

A medico-social intervention at a designated centre is offered to all victims of a recent sexual assault, male or female, **regardless of whether the victim decides to report the assault to the police or not.**

Psychological assistance

If you were sexually assaulted—either recently or a number of years ago—and would like to get help in overcoming the consequences of the assault, there are various resources that can help you, depending on your needs.

Toll-free provincial helpline for victims of sexual assault:
1-888-933-9007

This new information and referral helpline for sexual assault victims, their loved ones, and workers provides bilingual, confidential assistance.

A specially trained team of women receives your call, finds out what you need, and tells you what to do next. Using a list of provincial services, they guide you to the nearest resource for help and protection.

This toll-free line is in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all across Quebec.

For listening or referrals, call 1-888-933-9007,
or 514-933-9007 in Montreal.

Designated centres

The various designated centres throughout Quebec offer psychological help to victims of a recent sexual assault.

To find the **designated centre** nearest to you, contact a **Health and Social Services Centre** (CSSS - *Centre de santé et de services sociaux*) or your local police.

Community support centres for victims of sexual abuse

These are separate, specialized community resource centres for victims of sexual assault. Many of these centres, such as the *Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel* (CALACS), offer assistance specifically to women and teenage girls 14 and over, while others offer services to men and children.

These resources can

- offer psychosocial support to victims and help them overcome the consequences of sexual assault
- inform victims of possible forms of legal recourse
- help them regain control of their lives
- provide support and guidance throughout any process they choose to undertake (medical, legal or other)

To contact the organization nearest you, call the provincial helpline at **1-888-933-9007**, or visit the www.msss.gouv.qc.ca website under the “Social problems / Sexual assault” tabs.

To contact a CALACS, call the Regroupement québécois des CALACS in Montreal at **514 529 5252**, or toll-free at **1-877-717-5252**, or visit their website at www.rqcalacs.qc.ca. These services are free of charge and confidential.

CAVAC – Crime Victims Assistance Centre

(Centre d'aide aux victimes d'actes criminels)

These centres, located all over Quebec, are non-profit organizations offering help to anyone who is the victim of a criminal act.

A CAVAC can

- offer you support and a sympathetic ear, either over the telephone or in person
- provide you with information on legal procedures, your rights and possible forms of recourse
- support and accompany you in your dealings with the community, private or public sectors (including court proceedings)
- guide you to the appropriate legal, medical, social and community resources.

The Crime Victims Assistance Centres (CAVACs) offer free services and guarantee confidentiality.

To contact your local **CAVAC**, call **1-866-532-2822**. You can also visit their web site at www.cavac.qc.ca

Other professional services

Certain professionals (psychologists, social workers, sexologists) are trained to work with victims of sexual assault and can help you overcome the effects of a sexual assault.

You have the right to choose a professional with whom you feel comfortable. To locate one in your area, contact the professional association concerned.

To contact the **professional association of Quebec psychologists** (*Ordre des psychologues du Québec*), call **1-800-363-2644** or visit their web site at **www.ordrepsy.qc.ca**

To contact the **professional association of Quebec social workers**, (*Ordre professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec*), call **1-888-731-9420** or visit their web site at **www.optsq.qc.org**

To contact the **professional association of Quebec sexologists** (*Association des sexologues du Québec*), call **514-270-9289** or visit their web site at **www.associationdessexologues.com**

Note that if you consult a professional in private practice, you will have to pay for his or her services.

In some cases, these professional fees may be covered by a program called Crime Victims Compensation (IVAC - *Régime d'indemnisation aux victimes d'actes criminels*), which provides compensation for victims of crime, or by your own private insurance. You can also check whether psychological help is available through your employee assistance program, if applicable.

Financial assistance

Crime Victims Compensation — IVAC

(Indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels)

The IVAC program's mission is to help Quebec victims of crime by offering them financial support and compensation.

If you are a victim of sexual assault, you can apply for compensation. If your application is accepted, you will be reimbursed for various expenses: transportation, clothing, moving, lost time at work, and other costs. You may also be given compensation for damages, either physical or psychological. IVAC may also cover payment of fees for psychological consultations.

You can apply for compensation whether or not criminal proceedings have been instituted against the assailant, and whether or not he has been found guilty.

If you were sexually assaulted outside of Quebec, you are not eligible for IVAC. Other Canadian provinces offer services similar to the IVAC program, however.

To contact **IVAC**, call **1-800-561-4822**
or visit their web site at www.ivac.qc.ca

Private Insurance

Check with your personal insurers, as some cover various psychological services.

Employee Assistance Program

Many workplaces have employee assistance programs that usually offer psychological assistance. Check with your employer or your human resources department.

Terminating a lease

Our home is usually the place where we feel safe and content. If this sense of security is threatened by a spouse, ex-spouse, or some other person, through conjugal or sexual violence, the law allows you to terminate your lease by sending a notice to your landlord. Along with this notice, you must send attestation that your safety is threatened.

The law stipulates only one condition: that your safety, or that of a child living with you, is threatened by:

- violence on the part of your spouse or ex-spouse or
- a sexual assault, or the fear of a sexual assault (including by someone other than a spouse or ex-spouse).

To learn more about terminating a lease, visit www.fede.qc.ca, the web site of the *Fédération des ressources d'hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté du Québec*, the Quebec association of women's shelters for victims of violence and women in difficulty.

You can obtain the form for termination of a lease from the police, health and social service centres (CLSC), and certain other organizations. Please see the section on *Medico-social, psychological and financial assistance* on page 34 for more information.

Regardless of the nature of the act, a sexual assault is a **CRIME** that can be reported, regardless of **how much time has passed** since the assault.

Legislation and the judicial process

Sexual assault is a crime in that acts or behaviour of a sexual nature have taken place without your consent. If you are under 16 years old, you cannot legally consent to sexual activity. The law stipulates that a person under the age of 16 is not competent to consent to acts of a sexual nature.

Your consent is valid only if it has been freely given. If you were paralyzed by fear or afraid to defend yourself, there was no consent on your part. Furthermore, even if you kissed or caressed someone, it does not automatically mean that you consented to other sexual acts with that person. Nobody has the right to have any type of sexual relations whatsoever with you against your will. You always have the right to say NO.

If you had no choice but to do what the assailant demanded, your consent was not freely given.

In short, the law says that a person must give her consent, through her words or through her behaviour, to any sexual act. Consent ends as soon as the person expresses her lack of consent, through her words or through her behaviour, even if she previously gave her consent.

There can be no consent if the person is not capable of consenting to sexual relations. A temporarily incapacitated person (who is unconscious or asleep, for example) cannot consent to sexual acts. A person under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medication may also be considered incapacitated if she is too intoxicated to consent to sexual activity.

Everybody has the right to say “NO.”

If, during a struggle, you struck or injured the assailant, you will not be accused of assaulting him. In cases of assault, the law authorizes you to use the force necessary to defend yourself. This is what is known as legitimate self-defence.

The question of self-defence is always a complex issue in the case of sexual assault. Every situation is different; no one reacts in the same way. The fact that you did not resist or defend yourself does not mean that you consented to the sexual assault.

Men as well as women can freeze in the face of a threat, sudden danger, or the unknown. This reaction is sometimes the best one as it can prevent injury or even save your life.

The *Criminal Code* of Canada contains the sections of the law that pertain to sexual assault.

In the legal sense, any sexual assault is an assault as defined in Section 265 (1) of the Criminal Code.

A person commits an assault when

(a) without the consent of another person, he applies force intentionally to that other person, directly or indirectly;

(b) he attempts or threatens, by an act or a gesture, to apply force to another person, if he has, or causes that other person to believe on reasonable grounds that he has, present ability to effect his purpose; or

(c) while openly wearing or carrying a weapon or an imitation thereof, he accosts or impedes another person or begs.

Sexual assault is an act of assault that is sexual in nature; it is an attack on a person's sexual integrity. As it does for assault, the Criminal Code defines several crimes of sexual assault in Sections 271 through 273.

Sexual assault (Section 271)

Simple sexual assault causes no bodily injury, or almost none, to the victim.

Sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm (Section 272)

This type of sexual assault involves one or other of the following aggravating factors:

1. carrying, using or threatening to use a weapon or an imitation of a weapon;
2. threatening to cause bodily harm to a person other than the victim;
3. causing bodily harm to the victim; or
4. being a party to the offence with any other person.

Aggravated sexual assault

(Section 273)

This type of sexual assault involves wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of the victim.

Incest (Section 155)

Every one commits incest who, knowing that another person is by blood relationship his or her parent, child, brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister, grandparent or grandchild, as the case may be, has sexual intercourse with that person.

Sexual interference (Section 151)

Every person who, for a sexual purpose, touches, directly or indirectly, with a part of the body or with an object, any part of the body of a person under the age of 16 years commits sexual interference.

Invitation to sexual touching

(Section 152)

This offence is committed by any person who, for a sexual purpose, invites, counsels or incites a person under the age of 16 years to touch, directly or indirectly, his or her own body or the body of someone else (including the body of the person who so invites, counsels or incites) with a part of the body or with an object.

Sexual exploitation of a young person (Section 153)

Every person who is in a position of trust or authority towards a young person* or is a person with whom the young person is in a relationship of dependency and who:

- a) for a sexual purpose, touches, directly or indirectly, with a part of the body or with an object, any part of the body of the young person, or
- b) for a sexual purpose, invites, counsels or incites a young person to touch, directly or indirectly, with a part of the body or with an object, the body of any person, including the body of the person who so invites, counsels or incites and the body of the young person,

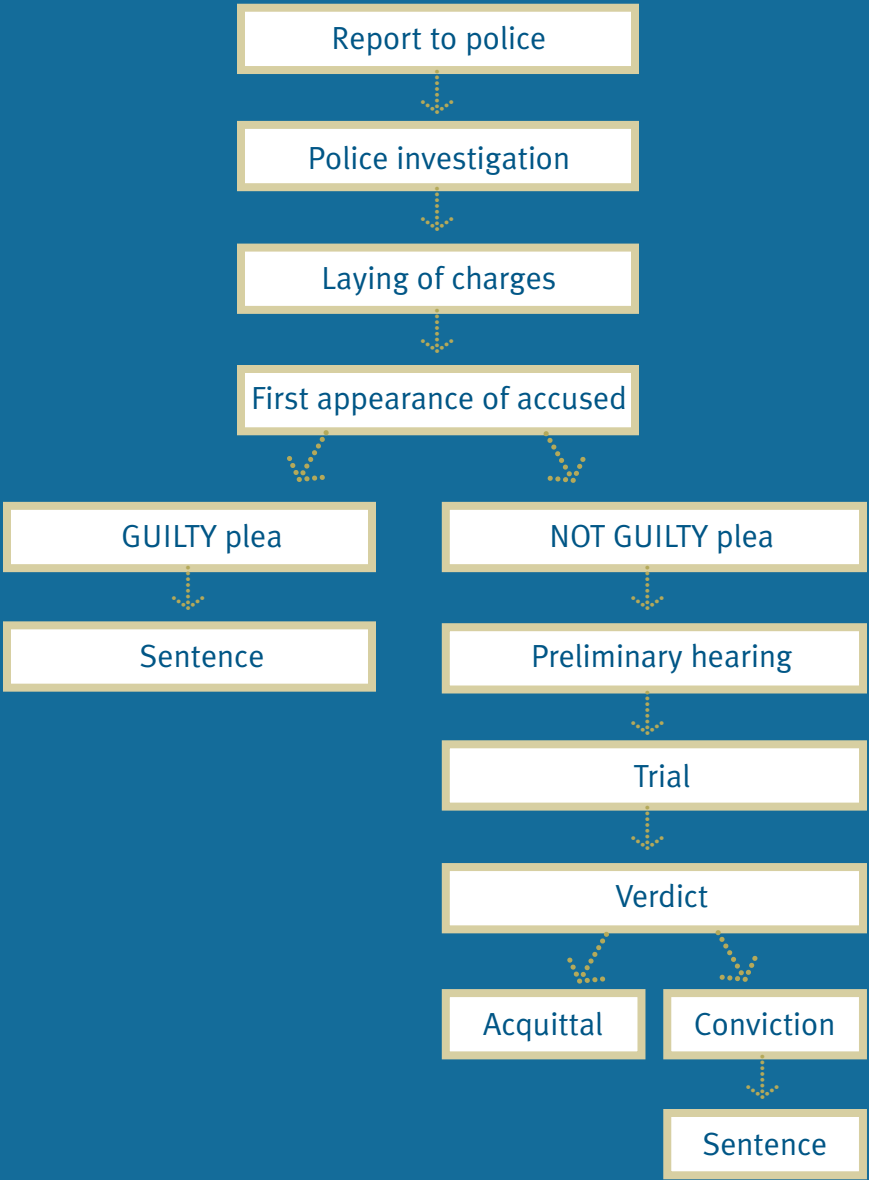
is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

*Definition of "young person" — In this section, "young person" means a person 14 years of age or more but under the age of 18 years.

Sexual exploitation of a person with a disability (Section 153.1)

Every person who is in a position of trust or authority towards a person with a mental or physical disability or who is a person with whom a person with a mental or physical disability is in a relationship of dependency and who, for a sexual purpose, counsels or incites that person to touch, without that person's consent, his or her own body, the body of the person who so counsels or incites, or the body of any other person, directly or indirectly, with a part of the body or with an object, commits this offence.

Diagram of the judicial process



This diagram is taken from *Les Agressions sexuelles, Femmes et Justice, Le guide de l'usagère* published by the Sherbrooke CALACS (Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel), 1995, page 3.

Steps in the judicial process

What follows is a summary of the possible progression of a report of sexual assault, from beginning to end. (You may also refer to the diagram on the previous page).

Laying a complaint with the police

This is the first step in the judicial process. If you decide to report the assault, you must go to the police station in the city where the assault occurred (if possible), or call 911. An incident report will be made. You can take this step right away or years after the sexual assault actually occurred.

Reporting the sexual assault to the police does not automatically mean that you will have to go to court. At this stage, you can choose to either terminate or continue the process.

The incident report will be the basis of the police investigation. It is important that you note the number of your incident report so that you can refer to it in future communications.

You will be asked some preliminary questions so that the police can write the report. Some examples:

- When did the sexual assault take place?
- Where did the sexual assault take place?
- Is there any possibility of recovering evidence — such as fingerprints, blood, sperm, soiled clothing?
- Is the assailant known to you?
 - If so, you will be asked for information on his whereabouts, his physical description, and his clothing.
 - If not, you will be asked to give a description, both physical and of his clothes, in the event you could recognize him.
- Were there any witnesses?

You will be relieved to know that you can be accompanied by a person of your choice when you go to file a complaint.

At this stage in the process, many emotions may resurface. You may be afraid you will not be believed. You may be intimidated at the prospect of revealing a part of your life that is intimate and personal. You may be very hesitant to report your assailant if he is someone you know well. You may be afraid of how the people around you will react to your decision to report the assault. You may feel harassed by all the questions you are asked.

If you lay a complaint in Montreal, an investigator from the Sexual Assault Squad of the Montreal Police Services will meet with you.

If you live outside of Montreal, the police inquiry may be conducted by an investigator responsible for this type of inquiry.

The police investigation

Following your complaint, the investigator will take charge of your file. He will take your statement, as well as those of any other witnesses, in writing. He will ask you to describe what happened, to give details of the acts, to describe the assailant, and to give any other information considered relevant. This information will be included in a statement that you must sign.

You will then probably be asked to identify the assailant. If he is not known to you, you will be asked to try to identify him from photographs. If you are unable to identify the assailant, the file will remain open and charges may be laid later if other information becomes available. If you *do* know the assailant and he cannot be found, a warrant may be issued for his arrest if a Crown Prosecutor authorizes charges to be laid against him.

Do not hesitate to contact the investigator for information on how the investigation is progressing, or to add information to your file.

If you receive threats from your assailant or someone associated with him, call 911 and inform your investigator.

Once your complaint has been made and the investigation has begun, if you decide to withdraw your complaint or if the investigator decides that there is insufficient evidence, the process may be terminated at this point. If the judicial process comes to a halt, you may feel angry: misunderstood, alone and powerless.

If the police inquiry is unsuccessful or difficult, you may feel angry and frustrated. You may feel extremely anxious that your attacker is free. Whether you know your attacker or not, fear of reprisal is very real. You may become afraid to leave home for fear of meeting him again, or afraid to answer the door or telephone. It is important for you to know that very few cases of revenge are reported after a complaint has been laid with the police.

There are many resources specializing in matters of sexual assault that can offer you support and guidance throughout this process. Please see the section on *Psychological assistance* on page 38.

Charges

Once the investigation is complete, the investigator submits his report to the Crown Prosecutor, who makes sure that your file contains enough evidence to support legal proceedings. If everything is in order, the Crown Prosecutor will authorize the police officer to begin proceedings against the sexual assailant.

The assailant will then be arrested and interrogated. Depending on the circumstances, he may be held until his court appearance, or set free.

First appearance

Once charges have been laid, the next step is for the suspect to make a court appearance. This means that the assailant will be brought before a judge to be informed of the charges against him. You do not have to be present at this stage, but you may be present if you so desire.

The suspect may have been detained or at liberty prior to this court appearance. If the suspect has been detained, he must appear before a judge within 24 hours of his arrest. The charges will then be read to him and he must then enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. After this court appearance, the judge may order the accused held until the preliminary hearing or may set him free under strict conditions, such as ordering him not to communicate with you either directly or indirectly.

If the accused pleads guilty, there will be a hearing to determine his sentence. At this hearing, the prosecutor and the defence lawyer will present the facts of the case along with their recommendations as to sentencing. The judge will then pronounce sentence or set a date when he will hand down a sentence. You may be called on to give evidence at the sentencing: to relate certain facts or tell the court how the assault affected you. These proceedings always end with the sentencing — there is no trial.

On the other hand, if the accused has entered a plea of not guilty, the judge will set a date for either a preliminary hearing or a trial, as applicable. Not all accused persons are entitled to a preliminary hearing, only those who choose such a hearing if the nature of the charges against them permits it. You should be aware that, in most cases, the accused will choose the type of trial that allows for a preliminary hearing. For example, an accused person who requests trial by judge and jury has the right to a preliminary hearing.

During the court appearance, the judge must also decide on whether or not the accused should be at liberty. The prosecution may oppose the release of the accused, but it must present serious reasons for anyone to be detained before being proven guilty. The Crown Prosecutor must prove that detention is justified. The reasons generally advanced are the probability that the accused will not appear at his trial if released beforehand, and the fact that detention is necessary for the protection or safety of the public, or that there is a risk of him re-offending, especially if there is a risk of his committing another serious crime.

After hearing the lawyers' arguments, the judge will rule on the release or detention of the accused. If the accused is released, the Crown Prosecutor may request that certain conditions be imposed. You have the right to be informed of this. The Crown Prosecutor may request that the accused have no contact with you. If you subsequently feel that the assailant is not respecting the conditions of his release, you must notify the police.

Preliminary hearing

If the accused remains at liberty, the preliminary hearing will take place several months after his court appearance. If the accused is detained, however, the preliminary hearing will be held as soon as possible.

The purpose of the preliminary hearing is to determine if there is sufficient evidence to bring the accused to trial. The prosecution discloses the evidence against the accused to his lawyers so that they can better prepare his defence. Your testimony will most likely be required at this stage. You should be aware that, after being questioned by the Crown Prosecutor, you will be cross-examined by the defence lawyer.

During this stage in the process, you may be accompanied by a person of your own choosing.

During this hearing, you will have to identify the accused as your assailant, answer various questions put to you, and relate the facts of the sexual assault as faithfully as possible.

At the preliminary hearing, you may be accompanied by a person of your own choosing.

Plea bargaining

It is important to know that the accused can plead guilty at any time, from the moment of his first appearance in court up to the end of the judicial process. In fact, even if he has pleaded not guilty at his first appearance, the possibility of later changing his plea remains open to him and he can plead guilty to the crime with which he is charged.

Plea bargaining between the defence lawyers and the Crown Prosecutor is current practice. Negotiations can begin at the first appearance and continue up until the trial.

It is important for you to understand that once the parties reach an agreement, the process is at an end and there will be no trial. These negotiations can sometimes render a trial unnecessary and lead the accused to plead guilty.

INFOVAC-plus program

This program enables victims of criminal acts to be kept informed throughout the stages of the judicial process. From the time they lodge a complaint, the victims receive information on the case, the judicial process, their rights and available recourse, as well as information on support services.

Victims also receive a Victim Impact Statement form, which they are asked to complete in order to make the court aware of the effects that the crime has had on their life. Victims who wish to do so may also present their statement to the court.

When a victim is called to testify, she will receive information on her responsibilities as a witness, the conduct of the hearing, and her role in the proceedings.

At the end of the judicial process, the victim will receive a letter informing her of the decision of the court and the sentence, as applicable. She will also receive a document containing general information on sentencing and conditional release.

The documents provided through the INFOVAC-plus program are available at:

<http://justice.gouv.qc.ca/english/publications/generale/proc-peines-a.htm>

For further information on the **INFOVAC-plus** program, please call your local **CAVAC** at **1-866-532-2822**.

Trial

This is the last step in determining that the accused did indeed commit the crime with which he is charged. During the trial, you may be accompanied by the person of your choice (relative, friend or counsellor).

This step in the process may occur several months after the initial court appearance. The Crown Prosecutor will meet with you before the trial to prepare you to testify. He or she will usually have you re-read the testimony you

gave at the preliminary hearing. You can ask the Crown Prosecutor any questions you may have. You can also arrange a meeting before the trial to discuss any points you feel are important.

The trial usually proceeds as follows: the prosecution presents evidence, the defence has the option of presenting its evidence, and the lawyers argue their cases.

Verdict

The verdict is the judge's decision regarding the guilt or innocence of the accused. The verdict may be handed down immediately after the trial, or may be reserved. This means that the judge is giving himself more time to consider his decision. The judge will then set a date for delivery of the verdict. You will not have to come to court on that day if you do not wish to.

If the accused is being tried by a jury, the judge will give instructions to the members of the jury. He will explain the applicable rules of law and the criteria the jury must use to weigh the evidence. It is then up to the jury to decide whether the accused is innocent or guilty. The jurors leave the courtroom and deliberate in private, in complete isolation, until they reach a unanimous decision. All the members of the jury must agree on the verdict.

When the verdict is pronounced, the accused may be found not guilty and acquitted of the charges against him, or he may be found guilty and sentenced.

A verdict of not guilty does not mean that you were not the victim of a sexual assault.

Once the verdict has been pronounced, you have the right, as the victim, to address the court in person to explain the effects the sexual assault has had on your life.

Or, you prefer, you can have the Crown Prosecutor address the court on your behalf.

For more information on this right, please read the section on the INFOVAC-plus program on page 57.

Additional information on the law and the judicial process in matters of sexual assault may be obtained from:

**Your local CAVAC
(Crime Victims Assistance
Centre) at 1-866-532-2822**

**The Quebec Coalition of Sexual
Assault Centres (CALACS) in
Montreal at 514-529-5252,
or 1-877-717-5252 (toll-free)**

You may also contact the **provincial helpline for sexual assault victims at 1-888-933-9007 or 514-933-9007 (in Montreal).**

Sentencing

The judge will take several factors into consideration in determining the sentence, in particular:

- the seriousness of the crime
- mitigating circumstances: family environment, remorse, age of the accused
- aggravating circumstances: previous convictions for similar crimes, premeditation, trauma to and age of the victim, abuse of power and authority
- the accused's potential for rehabilitation
- the usual penalties for a similar crime
- the probation officer's recommendations
- the evidence
- the effects of the sexual assault on the victim.

The sentence may be a pardon, a fine, a suspended sentence with probation, a conditional sentence (served in the community), or an unconditional prison sentence.

Victims and the correctional system

When the assailant is incarcerated, you may receive information on the date of eligibility for parole, the date of release, and on decisions of the federal (sentences of 2 years or more) or provincial (sentences of 6 months or more) parole boards. For sentences of six months or less, the information is sent to the victims by Quebec correctional services. You can also make a presentation on the impact of the crime and your concerns about the release of the criminal.

If your assailant is serving a sentence of two years or more, you must register with the Parole Board of Canada (PBC) in order to receive certain information on the offender who harmed you (this is known as victim notification). You may also ask to attend the parole hearing as an observer, read a written statement or submit a statement in writing or a video recording, or request a copy of PBC decisions from its Registry of Decisions.

For more information

Sentences of **2 years or more**

The National Parole Board
Toll-free: **1-866-789-4636**
www.pbc-clcc.gc.ca

Sentences of **2 years or less**

The Parole Board of Quebec
Toll-free: **1-866-909-8913**
www.cqlc.gouv.qc.ca and
www.securitepublique.gouv.qc.ca

Sexual assault is a painful experience that can strike at the very core of our identity and well-being.

Every victim tries to get through this ordeal using with his or her own strengths, skills and beliefs.

If you are a victim of sexual assault, you can obtain help. A number of resources are available to guide you in the choices that must be made. Every person is unique; every experience is unique. Have faith in yourself: it is possible to regain a normal life in the aftermath of a sexual assault, in your own way and at your own pace.



We hope that this guide has answered some of your questions. Above all, do not hesitate to contact the appropriate resource services: they are there to help you.

Sexual violence is a social problem. Victims are in no way responsible for it.

The Working Committee of the Information Guide for Sexual Assault Victims

Resources that can help you

For listening and referrals

- Provincial helpline: bilingual, free of charge, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
1-888-933-9007 (or **514-933-9007** in Montréal)

For guidance and support

- Community organizations that assist victims of sexual assault:
To find an organization in your region, call **1-888-933-9007**
or **514-933-9007** (in Montréal)
- Sexual Assault Centres — CALACS
(Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel)
1-877-717-5252 (or **514-529-5252** in Montréal)
www.rqcalacs.qc.ca
- Your local health and social services centre (CLSC)
- Crime victims assistance centre — CAVAC
(Centre d'aide aux victimes d'actes criminels)
1-866-532-2822 (or **514-277-9860** in Montréal)
www.cavac.qc.ca

If you have been a victim of sexual harassment in the workplace

- Help and information centre on sexual harassment in the workplace
(Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement au travail)
514-526-0789 | **www.gaihst.qc.ca**

To lay a charge

- Call **9-1-1**.
- Contact your local police department.

To apply for victim compensation

- Crime victims compensation: *Direction de l'indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels* (IVAC)
1-800-561-4822 | **www.ivac.qc.ca**

For more references

- Victim services: *Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes* (AQPV)
514.526.9037 | **www.aqpv.ca**

Notes

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