



INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au

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Yarrow Place is a community service of the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service

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What Is This Booklet About?

Every year, Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service receives numerous enquiries from students wanting information about rape and sexual assault and the services available for people who have been raped or sexually assaulted.

This booklet has been prepared to answer some of those inquiries.

Different students are interested in different topics. Some are doing health assignments and they are generally more interested in the impacts of sexual assault and the services available to people who have been assaulted. Others are doing legal studies and may be more interested in the law and criminal justice system. Others again might be more interested in causes of sexual assault or strategies to prevent it.

A short booklet like this cannot provide all the information for all those areas of interest. Instead, it provides:

- introductory information about some of the most commonly asked questions;
- information about where to find out more about each topic.

The booklet is not designed to help people who have been raped or sexually assaulted, or people who want to help someone who has been sexually assaulted.

If you want to talk to someone about something that has happened to you or to someone you know, check the list of services at the back of this book.

A Note on Language

Why use the phrase “rape and sexual assault”?

Rape is a legal term. It defines the actions and behaviours that constitute the ‘crime of rape’. Sexual assault is a broader term. It can range from sexual harassment to rape.

The word ‘rape’, used by itself, ignores the other offences and underestimates their significance to the people to whom they happen. Some people who have been raped, however, do not feel as though the term ‘sexual assault’ adequately describes what happened to them. In order to be inclusive, we use the term ‘rape and sexual assault’.

What do we call a person who has been raped or sexually assaulted?

The word ‘victim’ is a statement of fact from a legal point of view - the person is the victim of a crime. But it carries connotations of powerlessness, and like any label, it can influence both the way the person sees themselves and the way others see them.

Should we call the person a survivor? For many people rape is a life threatening experience. The term ‘survivor’ emphasises the strength and capacity for survival, and focuses more on the future than on the past – but it still defines the person in relation to the experience. It can also “feel untrue” to a person who does not feel as though they are surviving the experience particularly well.

In this booklet, we also use the term “person” to mean an individual who has been raped or sexually assaulted except where ease of reading/clarification dictates otherwise. In those circumstances, we use “victim/survivor”.

When the term 'adult' is used in this booklet, it is in the context of the eligibility criteria for Yarrow Place, which is 'people aged 16 years or over at the time of the rape or sexual assault'.

What do we call people who have committed a rape or sexual assault?

Dilemmas of labelling also exist in regard to people who perpetrate rapes and sexual assaults. Do we call the person a rapist? Some would argue 'yes' - that it is important to name the truth; to place the responsibility squarely where it lies. But there are two main arguments against it. One is that it excludes and minimises other forms of sexual assault. The other is about the impact of labelling.

The label influences the way the person sees themselves for example, a person who is innately like that and has no choice to act in any other way. This may influence the way they could act in future. The term "perpetrator" includes the whole range of sexual offences, but exactly the same arguments about labelling apply.

The language that both acknowledges the behaviour and leaves room for change is 'a person who has committed (or perpetrated) a rape or sexual assault', and we have used it where possible, however, in most cases we have used the term 'perpetrator' for ease of reading.

Using gender-neutral language

Most victims/survivors of rape and sexual assault are female and most perpetrators are male. Some people argue that it is important to use 'gendered language' ('she' for people who have been raped or sexually assaulted, 'he' for people who have committed the rape or sexual assault) in order to highlight the gendered nature of the crime.

The difficulty in using gendered language is that the experience of men who have been raped or sexually assaulted is overlooked. In the interests of inclusivity, we have tried to use gender-neutral language.

Culture

The issues relating to culture, language and rape and sexual assault are varied and can be quite complex. We can only hint at a few things that you might like to consider.

Cultural factors will apply to different groups. Different religions view sexual rights and responsibilities differently. Different ethnic groups have different understandings of what does and does not constitute rape or sexual assault and different traditions of dealing with it. Young people may have different perspectives than older people; and different sub-cultures (for example street-kids and university students) will have different ways of talking about it. All these cultural groups, however, are bound by Australian law.

Yarrow Place

Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service is the South Australian specialist health service for people aged 16 years or older who have been raped or sexually assaulted. Yarrow Place also offers a youth counselling service for people aged 12 to 18 who are under the Guardianship of the Minister and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Access to the youth team is by Families SA referral only.

Yarrow Place is a community service of the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service and has four main roles:

- providing services to people who have been raped or sexually assaulted and who were aged 16 years and older at the time of the assault;
- providing information, training and support to other agencies and workers to provide services to victim/survivors;
- developing co-operation in policy, planning and service delivery across Government and non-Government agencies (a 'lead agency' role); and
- working to prevent rape and sexual assault.

History of Sexual Assault Services in South Australia

Yarrow Place was established in July 1993, but it was not the first service for people who have been sexually assaulted in South Australia.

The Sexual Assault Referral Centre at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (SARC) was first established in the 1970's. It was staffed by female doctors who provided medical care and forensic examinations to victims of all ages and both sexes.

During the early 1980's, the Sexual Assault Referral Centre began to see increasing numbers of children, and increasing numbers of adults who had been sexually assaulted when they were children (known as 'adult survivors of child sexual assault'). Social workers were employed to provide counselling and practical support to victims.

In the mid 1980's, specialist Child Protection Services were established to deal with all forms of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, and so SARC stopped seeing child victims.

The Rape Crisis Centre also operated from the 1970's. It was a community based service operated by paid and volunteer women which provided assistance for women only. The Rape Crisis Centre did not provide medical services, but referred people to appropriate medical support. They provided information, support, counselling, and advocacy as well as undertaking research and campaigning for the rights of women who had been sexually assaulted.

In 1993, the funds from both services were amalgamated and Yarrow Place was established. Yarrow Place works with and for victims of both sexes who were over the age of sixteen at the time of the assault.

In 1995, a twenty-four hour Crisis Response Service was introduced to respond to victims/survivors of recent rape. Two workers - a doctor and a Crisis Response Worker - work together to support each client. This provides better support to the victim and improves the quality of forensic services.

In 1997 Yarrow Place adopted a new Strategic Plan, outlining its four key roles in service delivery, training and support to workers, prevention, and leadership. More information about those services is provided below.

Staffing

We have:

- a Director who is responsible for managing the service and for providing leadership in service development, policy, and prevention across the State;
- Medical Officers (doctors) who provide medical care, including collecting forensic evidence from people who want to pursue legal action. Yarrow Place doctors also provide specialised training and support to other doctors and health workers;
- Social Workers who provide counselling, training, group work and crisis response services during the day, and who provide specialised training and support to other counsellors and support workers;
- an after hours panel of Medical Officers and Crisis Response Workers who provide medical and crisis response services after hours, for recent assaults;
- Project Officers who work on specific projects;
- Administrative Officers who provide clerical support for all the staff.

All staff at Yarrow Place are trained to provide a sensitive and comprehensive response to rape and sexual assault.

Funding

Yarrow Place is a government funded health service of the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service. Some project funds are also received from other Departments and non-government sources.

Vision and Mission Statement

Yarrow Place does not longer develop their own strategic plan but is guided by the strategic plan of the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service. However, the vision and goals stated in the last Yarrow Place Strategic Plan remain relevant and are stated below.

Vision

Yarrow Place works towards a long-term vision, which is described in our Strategic Plan July 2003-June 2006 as:

South Australia will have a co-ordinated and comprehensive response to adult rape and sexual assault and will work towards a society free of sexual violence.

Mission Statement

The same Strategic Plan also describes how we work towards that vision and the goals that we are working towards. (Goals are more specific than the vision.)

Yarrow Place works to prevent adult rape and sexual assault in South Australia and to assist those affected to address the effects of rape and sexual assault.

We seek to achieve our mission through:

- a significant reduction in the impacts of adult rape and sexual assault;
- a reduction in the negative impacts that systems (e.g. the health system, the legal system) may have on people who have been raped or sexually assaulted;
- improved access to, and quality of, services and support for adults who have been raped or sexually assaulted;
- increased community awareness of rape and sexual assault and increased community support for people who have been raped or sexually assaulted;
- the challenging of attitudes and beliefs that support sexual violence;
- collaboration with a range of services and the community;
- the prevention of adult rape and sexual assault.

Key Understandings

These goals, and the ways in which we work, are based on the following beliefs:

1. Rape and sexual assault are crimes and violate basic human rights.
2. Rape and sexual assault cross a continuum of violent behaviours including sexual harassment, unwanted touching, coerced sexual activity, and rape with physical violence and/or threat to life.
3. Rape and sexual assault are predominantly perpetrated by men against women and children. Men are also victims of rape and sexual assault, usually perpetrated by men.
4. Rape and sexual assault are both consequences of, and reinforcers of, the power disparities in society, particularly those between men and women, and between adults and children.
5. There are never any excuses for sexual violence.
6. Rape and sexual assault have social, emotional, health, legal, economic and political consequences for the individual and the society

7. Recovery following sexual assault is possible.
8. People who have been raped or sexually assaulted have the right to quality care.
9. The violation of rights that victims have experienced demands a response that affirms their rights, dignity, humanity, and self-determination.
10. To achieve the best outcomes for victims, and to reduce the incidence of rape and sexual assault, it is necessary to work across the health and human services systems, the criminal justice system, the education system (which can contribute to prevention) and other relevant areas.

Services

Services provided by Yarrow Place in the Adelaide metropolitan area include:

- a crisis response service for recent rape or sexual assault. This can include medical services, crisis counselling, advocacy (standing up for what the person wants to have happen), and making sure that the person is safe;
- medical care for victims of rape and sexual assault. This can include treatment for minor injuries, health checks for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, and treatment for anxiety, sleeplessness, or other issues arising from the assault;
- forensic medical examinations for people who are considering, or want to take legal action. This means collecting evidence from the body of the person who has been sexually assaulted.
- counselling for people who have been sexually assaulted, either recently or in the past, so long as they were 16 years or older at the time of the assault;
- court preparation and support for people whose cases are going to court;
- information, support and short-term counselling for families and friends of people who have been sexually assaulted, so that they can work through their own issues and provide better support to the person who was assaulted;
- group work and seminar programs.

Yarrow Place services available across South Australia include:

- training programs for workers such as police, lawyers, doctors, nurses, social workers, youth workers and other health workers, and for tertiary students training to work in those areas;
- consultancy and support for other workers. In emergency cases, telephone advice can be provided 24 hours a day;

As well as these services, Yarrow Place undertakes projects in particular areas. Over the past years, these have included:

- projects to improve the quality of services in country areas;

- prevention projects;
- research projects;
- a project to develop accredited training for workers.

Further Information

Yarrow Place website

<http://www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au>

Rape and Sexual Assault and the Law

What the Law Says about Sexual Offences

This section outlines which Acts (laws) apply to sexual assault and information is provided about some sexual offences. Acts always have the date that they were first passed as part of the title. Most have been amended since then.

There are some important things to understand about these laws.

1. The laws apply equally to men and women, whether as victims or perpetrators of sexual assault.
2. The laws do not distinguish whether the offender was the same sex or the opposite sex as the victim - the offence is still the same.
3. The issue of 'consent' is not necessarily clear or easy. Consent to sexual activity must be 'free and voluntary'. A person does not have to physically resist to demonstrate that they did not consent.

Sexual Assault

The term "sexual assault" is not a legal term but covers a range of unwanted sexual behaviours such as comments, touching, fondling, fingering or masturbation to oral, anal or vaginal sex. Penalties for rape and sexual assault depend on the offence that is committed.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined under the South Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 and the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984. These Acts are administered by the South Australian Equal Opportunity Commissioner. Sexual harassment can include:

- intentional and unwelcome acts of physical intimacy;
- requests or demands (directly or by implication) for sexual favours;
- remarks with sexual overtones made on more than one occasion where, in the circumstances, it is reasonable for the person to feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Rape

Legal changes to the definition of rape in South Australia were proclaimed in December 2008. The laws have been strengthened to provide a clearer definition of offences and what constitutes consent.

Sexual offences committed since this date will be prosecuted under the Criminal Law Consolidation (Rape and Sexual Offences) Amendment Act 2008. Offences committed prior to the legal change will be prosecuted under the Criminal Law Consolidation Act (Sexual Offences) 1978.

The definition of rape under the Criminal Law Consolidation (Rape and Sexual Offences) Amendment Act 2008 is:

A person who has sexual intercourse with another person without consent of that other person:

- a) Knowing that that other person does not consent to sexual intercourse with him/her
- b) Being recklessly indifferent as to whether that other person consents to sexual intercourse with him/her
- c) Continues with sexual intercourse when consent is withdrawn

Shall (whether or not physical resistance is offered by that other person) be guilty of rape.

Sexual penetration can include any of the following:

penetration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Penetration of vagina, labia majora• Cunnilingus (oral sex of the vagina)• Fellatio (oral sex of the penis) • Penetration of anus	penetration by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Penis• Object• By any part of the body of another person or by an object
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Penetration can be to the smallest degree and ejaculation need not occur. Physical resistance is not necessary to demonstrate lack of consent. Submission as a result of force or threats is not consent.

Consent to sexual activity must be free and voluntary. It is not free and voluntary under the following circumstances:

- Use of force, fear
- Unlawful detention
- Asleep, unconscious, intoxicated to point of being incapable
- Afflicted by physical, mental or intellectual impairment of capacity to freely consent
- Unable to understand nature of activity
- Mistaken identity
- Mistaken re purpose of activity.

A person acts **recklessly indifferent** if:

- They are aware of the possibility of lack of consent but proceed regardless
- They are aware of the possibility of lack of consent but fail to take reasonable steps to ascertain consent before proceeding

- They do not give any thought to consent.

It is also an offence compelling a person to engage in:

- Sexual intercourse with another
- Sexual self penetration
- Bestiality.

When working with victims/survivors of rape and sexual assault you may sometimes be required to explain that people haven't said 'yes' to sex if, for example:

- They were asleep or unconscious, or had been drinking or taking drugs and were not aware of what was going on
- They are in a relationship and said 'no' to having sex
- Someone put drugs in their drink and they were not aware of what was going on
- The perpetrator used or threatened to use force against them or someone else
- The perpetrator bullied them, for example, by threatening to leave them in a deserted area at night
- They thought what was happening was for medical reasons, for example, if a health practitioner gave them an unnecessary and inappropriate examination
- The person held them against their will by taking them away, keeping them somewhere, or locking them in a room
- They were afraid of the person and what they might do to them or someone else.

Sexual offences that were perpetrated before December 2008 fall under the definition of rape under the Criminal Law Consolidation Act (SA 1935):

A person who has sexual intercourse with another person without consent of that other person:

- d) Knowing that that other person does not consent to sexual intercourse with him/her
- e) Being recklessly indifferent as to whether that other person consents to sexual intercourse with him/her

Shall (whether or not physical resistance is offered by that other person) be guilty of rape.

Rape is defined as sexual intercourse without consent or indifference to consent. The definition of sexual penetration has not changed – please refer to table on previous page.

The law also states that some people cannot give consent to sexual intercourse.

This includes:

- A person who has sexual intercourse with any person under the age of 14 years shall be guilty of an offence and liable to be imprisoned for life.
- A person who has sexual intercourse with a person under the age of seventeen years is guilty of an offence. Maximum penalty: Imprisonment for 10 years.
- A person who, being in a position of authority in relation to a person under the age of 18 years, has sexual intercourse with that person is guilty of an offence. Maximum penalty: Imprisonment for 10 years. The person in a *position of authority* could be a teacher, foster parent, step-parent, guardian, religious official or spiritual leader, medical practitioner, psychologist, social worker, person employed in correctional institution or training centre, or employer.
- Sexual intercourse with a person with intellectual disability, unable to understand the consequences of sexual intercourse.
-

Other sexual offences

In the Criminal Law Consolidation (Rape and Sexual Offences) Amendment Act 1935

Indecent Assault – Section 56

An indecent assault is touching (or threat of touching) without a person's genuine consent. What is and what is not indecent is a matter for the jury to determine.

Unlawful Sexual Intercourse – Section 49

This is the legal name for sexual intercourse with a person under the age of seventeen years, regardless of whether the person consented.

Acts of Gross Indecency – Section 58 (1)

Gross indecency is actual, physical, sexual activity. The act states that "Any person who, in public or in private-

- a) commits an act of gross indecency with, or in the presence of, any person under the age of sixteen years shall be guilty of indecency".

Incest – Section 72

A person who has sexual intercourse with a close family member is guilty of an offence, regardless of whether or not there is consent. Close family member means: parent, child, sibling (including half-brother or half-sister), grandparent, grandchild of the person.

In the Summary Offences Act 1953, Section 23

Indecent Behaviour/Exposure

"A person who behaves in an indecent manner –

- a) in a public place, or while visible from a public place or in a police station, or
- b) in a place, other than a public place or police station, so as to offend or insult any person,

is guilty of an offence." What is indecent will depend on the circumstances. Examples of this sort of behaviour are indecently exposing oneself or masturbating.

Other Relevant Acts

Other South Australian laws of importance in relation to rape and sexual assault include:

The Children's Protection Act 1993.

This law deals with all forms of child abuse, including sexual abuse. It also requires certain people (for example teachers, youth workers, police, and health workers) to notify the Department of Human Services if they believe that a child has been abused or is at risk of being abused.

The Guardianship and Administration Act 1993

This law deals with decision-making, rights, and protection for people with a mental incapacity. This might be because of an intellectual disability, a mental health issue, or an injury.

The Evidence Act 1929 Section 67E.

This law limits the situations in which communications with victims of sexual offences can be used in legal proceedings. Some communications, such as medical examinations, are not protected. Communication made in a therapeutic context is protected from disclosure in legal proceedings by public interest immunity.

The Equal Opportunity Act 1984

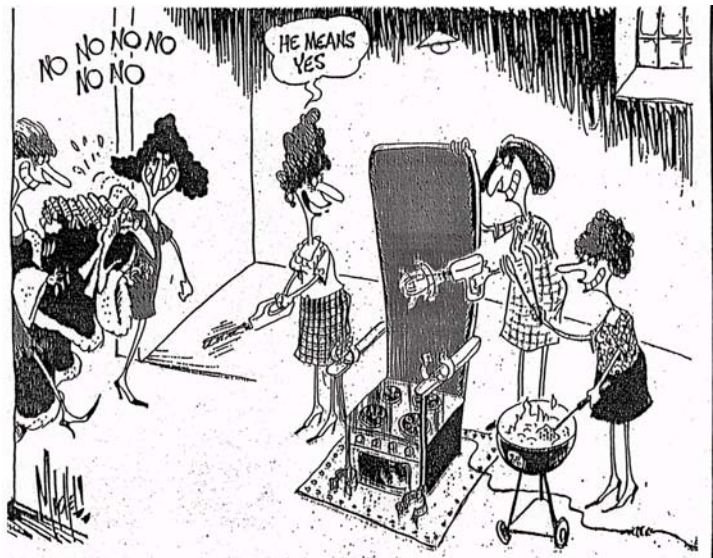
This law promotes equality of opportunity for all South Australians. It aims to prevent discrimination against people and to give them fair chance to take part in economic and community life. The Equal Opportunity Amendment Bill 2008 strengthens the law in relation to sexual harassment.

It is important to remember that laws are different in different States and Territories of Australia, and that laws change over time.

Rape and Sexual Assault and Justice

Victims/survivors pursue action through the criminal justice system for a variety of reasons. These may include:

- believing that the perpetrator should be made responsible for what he or she has done;
- feeling safer and protected from the perpetrator in the future;
- reporting the crime may help them to get back some sense of power and control;



Sunday Mail 23/5/93

- wanting to prevent the perpetrator from assaulting someone else; and
- knowing a crime has happened and wanting to report this to police.

The experience of victims/survivors with the legal system is varied. Some victims/survivors state that they received justice through this system, or that it provided them with the opportunity to be heard. Others describe their experience with the legal system with words ranging from unhelpful and appalling to feeling abused again.

The low conviction rate for crimes of sexual violence is evidence that few victims/survivors receive justice for this crime through the legal process. The legal filter illustrates this clearly:



Legal Filter

Rape of a person aged 17 years and over in South Australia in 2002

Estimated number of rapes = 1815 (this figure is based on 20% reporting rate)

Estimated number of rapes = 1815 (this figure is based on 20% reporting rate)

Number of rapes reported to police (SAPOL) = 363

Number charged = 35 (9.6%)

Number convicted from rapes reported to police = 6 (1.5%)

Reasons for poor outcomes in the legal process

(Office of 'Crime Statistics 2003a & 2003b).

1. *The nature of the crime*

Rape is a crime that is generally committed in private and it is unlikely that there will be witnesses to the event. This can make the crime of rape difficult to prove.

2. *Myths of rape*

Dominant cultural beliefs about the nature of rape minimise the extent and effects of rape and sexual assault, blame the victim and make excuses for the perpetrator's behaviour. This can have an impact on lawyers making decisions about the chance of a conviction and thus the chance of the case proceeding to trial, and on juries and judges when determining the guilt or innocence of the defendant. They also can discourage victim/survivors from reporting to the police.

3. *The nature of the legal system*

In Australia, there is an adversarial legal system. The system is combative with the outcome being that one side will be victorious. The prosecution has to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty of committing the crime as charged. The defence uses whatever tactics are necessary to introduce that level of doubt into the minds of the jury or judge so that the defendant is acquitted. These tactics are generally those that discredit the victim/survivor either personally or discredit their version of events.

4. *The nature of legal institutions*

Men hold most of the important positions in legal institutions. Feminist analysis asserts that the law is a patriarchal institution that upholds laws, processes and procedures that support and maintain the power of men. This means that men, who are largely the perpetrators of rape and sexual assault, are frequently not accountable for their violence against women, children and other men.

Police and court statistics for the rape of a female and male aged 17 years and over: Year 2004
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Rapes Reported to the police		Guilty plea		Trial (district or supreme court)			Major charge dropped	
		As charged	Other offence	Guilty Plea	Guilty other offence	Guilty As charged		Acquitted
Female	384	1	1	4	2	3	12	17
Male	43	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	427	2	1	4	2	3	12	17

(Office of Crime Statistics 2004)

There is wide recognition that legal reform is necessary. There have been some advances made already. The Model Criminal Code on Sexual Offences was developed in the 1990s to improve and unify the laws and sentencing around Australia. It reviewed the current laws in the different jurisdictions to develop best practice in dealing with

sexual offences. The states are responsible for adopting the changes outlined in the Model Criminal Code. These reforms have not been taken up in South Australia as yet. South Australia is however, currently undergoing a long overdue review of the sexual offences.

The South Australian Evidence Act was amended in 1993 to help vulnerable witnesses such as victims/survivors of rape, through court procedures. The aim of this amendment was to protect the witness from embarrassment or distress, to protect the witness from being intimidated by the atmosphere of the courtroom or for any other proper reason (Evidence Act SA 1929). The amendments included the use of screens, court companions and the use of closed circuit television to give evidence.

The reforms made to date have had little impact on the journey of the rape victim/survivor through the legal process. Major changes will need to take place to ensure that victims/survivors are treated fairly. This will involve both changes in the law and changes in community attitudes and understanding of rape.

Further information

The Law Handbook is produced by The Legal Services Commission of South Australia. It provides short explanations of a wide variety of crimes, including sexual offences. It also provides information about other aspects of the law and the legal system.

Many Acts are available over the Internet via www.sacentral.sa.gov.au

Community Legal Centres and the Women's Legal Service may be able to provide further information.

The Rights of Survivors of Rape and Sexual Assault

What are the rights of someone who has been raped or sexually assaulted? The idea of 'rights' is itself a bit complex. When we talk about people who have been raped or sexually assaulted, we may be referring to

- their legal rights;
- their human rights;
- their rights as a victim of crime;
- their rights as a user of a health service.

Legal rights are written into laws, or in other legal documents (such as the Constitution of a country). The term 'legal rights' is also sometimes used to refer to the rights a person has within the legal system.

Human rights are rights that everyone is thought to have. They apply to humans simply because they are human, regardless of who they are or where they live. They might not be written into laws.

Rights of victims of crime are one form of human rights. An agreement about the rights of victims of crime was established by the United Nations, and the Australian and South Australian Governments have agreed to follow those rights. In South Australia the Victims of Crime Act came into legislation in 2001.

Rights of users of health services are a combination of legal rights and human rights. They are drawn from many different laws at both State and Federal levels.

Yarrow Place has developed a service pamphlet for people who have been raped or sexually assaulted, which includes the rights that we believe our clients have.

Service users:

- will be listened to, believed and not blamed
- will be given information about their medical, legal and counselling options in a way that is understandable
- have their right to privacy and confidentiality respected. Any limitations to this will be discussed
- can receive services for recent or past rape or sexual assaults.

Yarrow Place clients also have the right to:

- *Information about service costs, availability and waiting times*
- *Know the name, position, experience and qualification of the worker assisting them*
- *Comment on or complain about services from Yarrow Place*

People who report a rape or sexual assault to the police have their rights outlined in the booklet "Information for Victims of Crime". This booklet is available at all police stations and provides comprehensive information about victim rights to fair treatment in the justice system, including a simple introduction to the legal process and information on support services.

Further Information

The **Yarrow Place Service Pamphlet** is available on our Website at:

<http://www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au>

A printed copy of the pamphlet can also be requested by contacting Yarrow Place.

'Rights and Responsibilities of Health Service Consumers' is published by the South Australian Health Commission. It provides more detail about the rights of users of health services and the laws on which they are based.

The **'Victims of Crime'** booklet is available from all police stations

Statistics on Rape and Sexual Assault

There are three main sources of data about rape and sexual assault.

Police statistics provide data about offences that are reported to police. Only a small proportion of sexual offences are reported to police so this provides an incomplete picture of the incidence of the crime.

Victim surveys ask a random sample of people whether or not they have ever experienced particular things, and make estimates for the whole population based on those samples. While these are not perfect, they provide a much more accurate idea of the actual number of sexual assaults than police data. Some of the most reliable victim surveys are conducted by major Government Departments, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the South Australian Department of Human Services.

Research projects provide statistics, usually about more specific topics. Care should be taken in interpreting these statistics because they may not apply to the whole population.

The data collected is often not comparable because of the way that questions about sexual violence are asked and the way in which the particular form of sexual violence surveyed is defined.

The statistics below are drawn from different sources of data and, depending on their research definitions, may measure different types of sexual violence.

It is very difficult to know the true extent of sexual violence. According to recent findings, reporting rates for sexual assault have increased from 15% (Australian Bureau of Statistics Women's Safety Survey, 1996) to 19% in the Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey 2005. However, this still means that 81% of sexual assaults are not reported. Lievore (2003) lists personal and justice system barriers as reasons for not reporting.

Personal barriers include victims thinking it was not a real crime, that they dealt with it themselves, that they regard it as a private matter, felt shame and embarrassment and did not want family or others to know. Fear of reprisal and self blame or blame by others for the attack also kept victims from reporting.

Justice system barriers are beliefs such as fear of being believed by police, thinking the police would or could not do anything, fear of the legal system, thinking there is a lack of proof that the incident happened and not knowing how to report.

Lievore (2003) further points out that minority population groups such as Indigenous and rural women face additional barriers to reporting.

Statistics show that females consistently record higher rates of sexual assault than males, irrespective of age. The majority of sexual assault victims are female (82% in 2003) and the highest victimisation rate for females is in the 15-19 year age group, followed by the 10-14 year age group (ABS Recorded Crime – Victims 2003).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Personal Safety Survey 2005 found that 126,100 women (1.6%) experienced sexual violence in the previous 12 months. Further findings from this study indicate that 1 in 5 women (1,469,500) experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. Overall 45% of women sexually assaulted since the age of 15 had been victims of more than one sexual assault (ABS Women's Safety Survey, 1996).

The ABS Personal Safety Survey further found that 1 in 20 men (408,100) experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 and 0.6% (42,300) men experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months. Males are most likely to be sexually assaulted below 9 years of age, followed by 10-14 year olds and then 15-19 year old young men (ABS Recorded Crime – Victims 2003). Statistics for the prevalence of male victimisation indicate that between 5 and 10% of all reported rapes in the US and the UK per year are male victims (Scarce, 2001). This coincides with South Australian data with 10% of reported rapes in the year 2000 relating to male victims (Office of Crime Statistics, 2001). It is also known that male victims are much less likely to report the rape to police than female survivors because of the social stigma (a result of myths and misconceptions) that are associated with male survivors of sexual assault in their lives since the age of 15.

Research consistently indicates that sexual violence is mostly perpetrated by men. The ABS Women's Safety Survey 1996 found that 99% of the perpetrators of sexual assault were male.

Sexual assault occurs overwhelmingly in the home environment. The Australian Institute of Crime report on Australian Crime found that 65% of sexual assault occurs in private dwellings (including garages, motels and hostels), 9% in other community settings and 7% of recorded sexual assaults in the street/footpath. (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2005). Similarly, the ABS Women's Safety Survey 1996 recorded over 55.5 per cent of sexual assaults in private homes, followed by 21% in and around licensed premises and 8.2 per cent in the workplace.

Most female victims (78%) knew the offender (ABS Recorded Crime – Victims 2003) and around one quarter of these women had experienced sexual violence from a former or current partner (ABS, 2005). This compares to only 47% of male victims knowing the perpetrator. (ABS Recorded Crime-Victims, 2003)

The 1996 ABS Women's Safety Survey found that 26 % of women were physically injured in the most recent sexual assault. Of the women who were sexually assaulted by a previous partner, 49% were physically injured while 8% of women sexually assaulted by their current partner were physically injured.

A Victorian study into the health costs of violence measured the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence (violence by a current or ex partner). The report found that intimate partner violence is the highest contributing factor to disease and premature death for Victorian women aged 15-44 years, higher than known risk factors such as high blood pressure, obesity, drinking and smoking (Vic Health, 2004).

Research indicates that female victims access support after sexual assault but findings vary. In the Crime and Safety study 87% of female victims of sexual assault indicated they accessed some form of support after the most recent incident. Of these, 68% spoke with a friend or colleague, 41% sought support from a family member and 39% accessed a professional or religious support person (ABS Crime and Safety, 2002). In

the 1996 ABS Women's Safety Survey 59% of women said they spoke to a friend or neighbour, 32% approached a family member and 8.1% contacted a crisis organisation.

Conviction rates for sexual assault continue to be low. Research reviewing the South Australian Office of Crime Statistics figures for 1981-1991 demonstrated that outcomes of guilty as charged for rape and attempted rape were low and falling as a proportion of these offences reported to the police. In 1991, the number of findings of guilty as charged was only 4% of the number of rape offences reported to South Australian police (Heath & Naffine, 1994). Conviction rates have fallen since this time. Over the decade 1993-2002 the rate of convictions as charged for rape and attempted rape has fallen from 3.1% in 1993 to as low as 1.6% of the number of offences reported in 1998 and 2001.

Unwanted Sexual Experiences Survey

The 'Unwanted Sexual Experiences Survey (Yarrow Place, 2000) was one component of the Young People's Rape Prevention Project conducted by Yarrow Place in conjunction with three inner city university campuses in Adelaide. The survey was used to gather data about the nature and incidence of sexual harassment, sexual coercion, sexual assault and rape for young people aged 18-25. 722 responses were obtained, of which 689 were deemed valid. Approximately two thirds of respondents were female and one third male.

Of the respondents:

- 83.8% of females and 47.4% of males reported at least one unwanted sexual harassment style experience;
- 59.3% of females and 25% of males reported at least one unwanted sexual assault style experience;
- 35.5% of females and 15.4% of males reported at least one unwanted penetrative sex experience;
- between 12.6% and 35.5% of women; and between 5.3% and 15.4% of men reported experiences when aged 16 or older which meet the legal definition of rape;
- The more serious the experience, the less likely it would be connected to, or to occur at, the university. Nonetheless, about 17% of unwanted penetrative sex experiences had some connection to the university and 7.2% occurred at or within 1km of the university;
- 40.2% of respondents who had had an unwanted experience told someone about the incident. Of those, 92.3% told a friend and only 6.4% told anyone else. Overseas students studying in Australia, people who live on their own or at a residential college were less likely to tell someone about the experience than other respondents;
- The more serious the nature of the experience, the closer the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim is likely to be.

Further Information

Australian Bureau of Statistics: www.abs.gov.au

Australian Institute of Criminology: www.aic.gov.au

Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault: www.aifs.gov.au/acssa

The Context of Rape and Sexual Assault

Historical Context

Women and Rape

Historically, violence against women has been associated with beliefs that women are not equal to men and therefore do not have the same rights. This was apparent, for example, in their lack of the rights to voting and education. In relation to marriage, women were regarded as property exchanged in marriage arrangements. Young women were seen as property of their father and when marrying, they became the property of their husband. Virginity was an integral part of this “property deal”. Until the fifteenth century, bride capture was seen as an acceptable way of acquiring a wife. After a man raped a woman he was able to take her as his wife. In ancient Babylonian society, the price of brides was lower if they were not virgins. If a daughter was raped before marriage, it was considered a crime against her father, as he would receive less money in the marriage deal.

The blame and responsibility that is frequently put on victims/survivors of rape and sexual assault can also be traced back to historical roots. Under Hebrew law, a woman who was raped within the city was stoned to death with the rapist, as the belief was that she could have escaped or screamed. If the rape occurred outside the city walls, it was assumed that her cries for help were unheard. Therefore the victim/survivor had to marry the rapist and her father was financially compensated. If she was already promised to another man, the rapist was stoned to death and the woman sold for a lower price. If the victim/survivor was married, it was considered adultery and she and the rapist were stoned to death.

Medieval common law in Britain had similar traditions: A woman who had been raped was required to cry and carry on and show torn clothing to men of good repute. If she failed to do this immediately, the allegation was dismissed and she was prosecuted for making a false allegation.

(Mason, 2001; Macleod, 2000; pubweb 1999)

As women were considered the property of their father, and upon marriage, their husband. Rape within marriage was not regarded as a criminal offence until recent times.

Under South Australian law, the legal definition of rape was that “of having sexual intercourse with a woman, not one’s wife, without her consent”. In 1976 changes were made to the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 of South Australia*. These changes made rape within marriage an offence and extended the definition of rape to include penetration of the anus of a man or woman without his or her consent. Current law includes penetration of other parts of the body and covers oral and anal rape. Although, in recent times, the law in relation to rape has changed, many myths and misconceptions are still widely held in the community. For example, victims/survivors do not need to demonstrate physical resistance for the assault to be legally defined as rape, but many people may think that “she didn’t fight back, so it couldn’t have been rape”, or “he didn’t have a weapon so it can’t be rape”.

Many of the beliefs underlying these historical traditions are still prevalent in our communities. Some people still believe that women cannot be raped. Many victims/survivors are blamed or held responsible for what happened. It is still very

difficult for victims/survivors to receive justice through the legal system. These traditions of thought serve to silence victims/survivors and make it hard for them to speak out and seek help. In addition, these traditions do not invite perpetrators to take responsibility for the crimes they have committed.

Men and Rape

As in female rape, the inequality in power is reflected in the history of male rape. In Greek mythology stories of the abduction of males for the purpose of sexual abuse are documented, for example, when Zeus the king of the Gods abducted Ganymede for sexual purposes. In other societies the rape of males who were defeated in battle was a common practice. Gang rape of men was committed by the Romans as the ultimate punishment and humiliation for adultery and by the Iranians for violation of the sanctity of the harem (<http://www.ai.mit.edu/people/ellens/SPR/docs/malerape.html>). During World War I, Lawrence of Arabia was raped by the Turks, who were well known for this custom. Until recent times the rape of men was not punishable under law as the definition of rape reflected a male perpetrator and a female victim. With the introduction of a broader definition of rape, in 1976 male rape was recognised as a criminal offence in South Australia.

Feminist Analysis of Rape and Sexual Assault

Feminist explanations locate the cause of this crime within society. They suggest that the crime of rape and sexual assault is a crime of power. Rape and sexual assault is an abuse of power, which:

- is a result of unequal power between perpetrator and victim;
- reinforces the inequality of power in this relationship; and
- reinforces the inequality of power between men and women.

Feminist theory focuses on the wider picture of women living in a society which is dominated by men. Rape and sexual assault is seen as one of the ways in which men enact their dominance in a violent way over women, children and other men. It rejects ideas that rape results from sexual attraction or from the way victims/survivors dress or behave.

When looking at our society, and indeed, globally, men are in the most powerful positions in social, political, legal, economic, military and religious institutions. The dominance of men leads to patriarchal societies in which men make the rules and the laws. These rules and laws are structured in ways that uphold the status quo and thus the powerful positions of men. As a result, there is systemic and structural discrimination of women and other vulnerable and marginalised groups in society. These inequalities lead to increased vulnerability and negative social, economic and health outcomes for marginalised and disadvantaged groups. In regards to rape and sexual assault, this means increased vulnerability to become a victim/survivor of rape or sexual assault and to disadvantages when dealing with health, legal and other social systems.

Sexual Entitlement

There is strong evidence that a significant proportion of men - and some women - still believe that it is alright for a man to force a woman to have sex, whether she wants to or not.

Three research projects have been carried out in different areas of South Australia, involving over 1000 young men. About one third of them could identify situations in which they believe that it is OK for a man to “force a woman to have sex”. The circumstances include:

- they have had sex together before;
- she has had sex with other men before;
- she has let him touch her ‘above the waist’;
- she has let him touch her ‘below the waist’;
- he has spent a lot of money on her.

(Family Planning South Australia, 1997)

These attitudes are often referred to as men’s sense of sexual entitlement. People who hold these beliefs may think it is their right to force a woman to have sex and they use these attitudes as excuses for their behaviour.

Socio-Political and Cultural Context of Rape

With changes in society, values, beliefs and practices about the nature of rape and responses to this crime change as well. The broader reformist and feminist movement in the 1970’s challenged traditional roles of women and, to a lesser degree, of men. Women began to actively participate in legal, health and political systems. Issues such as domestic violence and rape that used to be regarded as personal issues, were increasingly located in the political and societal context. Attitudes to seeking help changed with the growth of self help groups and services were developed to assist powerless and disadvantaged groups in society

Despite these developments rape and sexual assault is still a topic that is not openly talked about in our community. Many survivors find it difficult to tell friends and family for fear of being blamed. The media contributes to this silencing by writing articles or making comments that perpetuate myths and misconceptions that locate the responsibility for the rape or sexual assault with victims/survivors. The tensions in relation to this issue are also reflected in the struggle between silencing and acknowledgment of victims/survivors by public and religious institutions.

The cultural and linguistic diversity in Australia means that in addition to societal factors, cultural factors will need to be considered when exploring issues relating to rape and sexual assault. What is understood as rape and sexual assault varies in diverse communities. The understanding of the nature of rape and sexual assault in turn determines the responses of the specific community to victims/survivors, their families and perpetrators. The silence surrounding this crime is greater in some cultures, particularly when rape and sexual assault are perceived as bringing shame on victims/survivors and their families

Myths and Facts about Rape and Sexual Assault

Many myths and misconceptions exist about the nature of rape and sexual assault and, in particular, who is responsible for this crime. Myths have real effects on people's lives. These myths can add to the trauma for people who have been raped - sometimes because the person who has been raped holds some of these beliefs themselves, which makes it harder to deal with the assault; and sometimes because other people say things based on the myths.

As myths usually place the responsibility for rape and sexual assault on the victim/survivor, they are powerful mechanisms to silence people about their experience.

The historical, social and cultural context that impacts on attitudes and beliefs about rape and sexual assault has previously been mentioned. Some of the myths that have developed from this are specific about women, others relate to men and some to women and men. What they all have in common is their purpose: to shift responsibility away from the perpetrator and to blame the victim/survivor.

Myth	Fact
Women enjoy being raped.	Rape is a frightening and humiliating experience during which the woman has no control over what happens.
It is impossible to rape a man or woman unless the perpetrator has a gun or knife.	Perpetrators do not need a weapon to terrify victim/survivors into submission. Many are in fear of losing their lives or being hurt, regardless of whether or not the assailant has a weapon.
Nice girls don't get raped.	All women are vulnerable to sexual assault.
Most rapists are strangers.	Most perpetrators are known to the victim/survivor and include, partner, friend, neighbour, father, other relative, work colleague or boss.
Rapes occur at night in a dark alley.	Many rapes occur during the day. Almost half of the rapes reported take place in the victim/survivor's or perpetrator's home.
It is a man's right to have sex with his wife or partner whenever he wants to.	Forcing a person to have sex when she does not want is rape. A relationship does not imply consent.
Perpetrators are psychopaths	There is no typical perpetrator. Violent rapes by psychotic men are well publicised but in fact most perpetrators look and act like ordinary men and lead otherwise ordinary lives.
If a woman/man didn't scream or fight it couldn't have been rape. Men are always able to defend themselves.	Many people who have been raped are not able to struggle or scream. They have been threatened and some become paralysed with fear. There is also the fear that the attacker will become more violent if they struggle.
Women provoke rape by the way they dress or act.	Almost anything a woman does could be construed as being an invitation to rape, or asking for it. Women are supposed to be attractive, but if they are raped they are told they provoked the attack by the way they dressed. Women who are hitchhiking are asking for a lift, not to be raped.
People who are affected by alcohol or drugs are asking to be raped.	Being in a vulnerable position does not imply consent.
Men who are raped are gay.	Men who are raped are vulnerable because of their age, isolation or because they may seem to be different.
Men who rape other men are gay.	Men who rape other men often identify themselves as heterosexual. They rape other men as a part of an act of violence and the need for power and dominance.

Responsibility and Vulnerability

The common purpose of all these attitudes and beliefs is to shift the responsibility for the rape from the perpetrator to the survivor and suggest that people who are raped or sexually assaulted were somehow responsible for the assault.

Other statements like *“she shouldn’t have been dressed like that”*, *“she is my wife/girlfriend”*, *“he’s too young to have been out by himself that late”*; *“she shouldn’t have hitchhiked”*; *“he shouldn’t have had so much to drink”* suggest that the behaviour of the victim allowed the assault to happen.

Two different issues are confused. One is ‘vulnerability’, and the other is ‘responsibility’.

For Example

Kim has been drinking and a man s/he knows offers Kim a lift home. The man stops the car in a dark area and wants Kim to have sex with him. Kim is **vulnerable** because s/he has been drinking, is alone with the man, in a dark area, with nobody else around. If the man decides to respect Kim’s “no” to sex, Kim is safe. If he uses this situation to force Kim to have sex against Kim’s will, that’s rape. Kim is safe, or not safe, depending on what the man decides to do. He is **100% responsible** for his actions and whether or not Kim is safe or not safe.

There are factors that may make people more vulnerable. Some of these are more likely to be under their control (e.g. drinking less), others are not (e.g. being female, having a disability). It is possible to reduce some of the risk factors that are under people’s control. **However, it is important to remember that rape and sexual assault happens when the perpetrator exploits vulnerabilities and this does not make the victim/survivor responsible for the rape or sexual assault.**

Factors that may increase vulnerability:

Age: Children and young people are more often raped or sexually assaulted than older people.

Sex: Women and girls are more often raped or sexually assaulted than men and boys.

Disability: People with disabilities are more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than people without disabilities.

Isolation: Being a long way from other people and/or not having much contact with others can make it harder to escape, or harder to get help.

Being affected by drugs or alcohol: This may make it more difficult to be aware of what’s going on and to escape.

Mental Health: People with mental health issues are more vulnerable to rape and sexual assault.

Previous Child Sexual Assault: People who have been sexually abused as children are more likely to be sexually assaulted as adults.

The perpetrator is always responsible for the rape or sexual assault. Alcohol and drug use and inability to control sexual desires are some of the excuses the perpetrator may use to shift responsibility. Rapists do know what they are doing and are making choices to behave in that way.

It is important to remember:

- vulnerability is not the same as responsibility
- the offender is always responsible for the assault
- no-one asks to be raped or sexually assaulted
- no-one deserves to be raped or sexually assaulted
- rape and sexual assault is always an abuse of power.

Perpetrator Tactics

Perpetrators use many deceitful processes in their effort to commit rape and sexual assault. They may use these processes short term or over a prolonged period of time. Some of the tactics can include

- Setting up and preparing the environment , for example isolating the person physically from other people by offering them a lift home
- Gaining the trust of the person and/or those close to them for the purpose of sexual assault
- Using tactics that make it very difficult for the survivor to tell someone about the sexual violence.

Here is an example:

A View To A Rape

This chilling interview with a rapist shows the horrific ease with which he got away with raping young women. The interview was conducted by David Lisak, professor of psychology at the University of Massachusetts in the US.

“I was working hard at my uni degree and always looked forward to the parties my friends and I threw on the weekends. We’d always make sure we invited girls. The younger, more naïve ones were by far the easiest – they’d be drunk in minutes, and would be our targets. We’d allocate rooms in the house to bring girls up to once they were “ready”.

“One night, for example, I started making moves on this one girl who was really wasted. I took her up to a room, gave her another drink and sat her down on the bed. I started removing her clothes and at some point she started saying she didn’t want to do it right away – or something like that. I just kept working on her clothes. Then she tried to push me away with her hands, and I pushed her down. It pissed me off she played along with it the whole way and then decided to back out of it at the end.

“Eventually she stopped trying to weasel out of it, and I fucked her. I had my arm across the top of her chest the whole time and that’s how I did it. Then I got dressed and went back to the party”.

Further Information

Search literature on ‘Rape Myths’, ‘Myths and Facts’ about Sexual Assault. Most books written for survivors include chapters on this issue.

Impacts of Rape and Sexual Assault

People who have been raped or sexually assaulted may experience a range of feelings and reactions. Few would recognise these as normal reactions to a traumatic event and therefore may become very concerned about what is going on with them, or wonder whether they are going “crazy”. It is important for people to know that their reactions are normal and can be expected. They may need to know that trauma reactions can be experienced by victims/survivors of sexual assault on physical, emotional, social and ideological/spiritual levels. As mentioned before, for people who have been raped or sexually assaulted, the nature of this crime can add specific complexities.

They may struggle with the view society has of this crime, with possible feelings of guilt, shame, self blame, and/or with the relationship they have with the perpetrator.

Some of the reactions survivors may talk about include:

Physical:

- physical pain;
- feeling sick;
- headaches;
- tension;
- sleeping difficulties;
- unable to eat or wanting to eat all the time; and
- loss of enjoyment of sex.

Emotional

- feeling depressed;
- feeling suicidal;
- guilt;
- shame;
- self blame;
- relieved that the assault is over and they have survived; and
- feeling alone and that nobody understands them.

Social

- isolation from family/friends;
- needing company all the time;
- not being able to enjoy time with others;
- feeling fearful around other people; and
- too scared to go out.

Ideological / Spiritual

- thinking that the world has changed;
- doubting their spiritual or religious beliefs;
- having a black or white view of the world;

- not knowing who they are any more; and
- having altered perceptions of themselves in the world.

Some of these reactions may be affecting the person short term or over longer periods of time.

Minor injuries such as bruising or scratches may occur during the sexual assault and more severe injuries are less common. Women may become pregnant as a result of the rape and there is also a chance of contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections.

Depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and drug and alcohol abuse have all been associated with the experience of sexual assault.

People may take days, months, or even years to seek professional help after they have been sexually assaulted. Some survivors may have personal barriers preventing them from seeking professional help, while others may have difficulties accessing health services.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Research indicates that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) affects about 25% of people exposed to traumatic events with a higher prevalence in rape victims, with about one third of rape survivors developing PTSD (Keane, Weathers & Foa, 2000).

Characteristic symptoms of PTSD are grouped into avoidance, arousal and intrusion symptoms. Intrusion may include re-experiencing the event and having flashbacks of some of the event. Avoiding stimuli involved with the event can mean stopping to go to particular places or not listening to specific music. Arousal can include a constant level of anxiety and alertness.

Recovering from Rape and Sexual Assault

Survivors speak of many ways of healing from rape and sexual assault. Some people may see a doctor, a counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist or other health practitioner. Others get support from family or friends. Survivors may also find that their pet was important in their healing and some work through the impacts for themselves. Self help books can also be important tools for recovery.

Regardless of how survivors work on their healing, helpful responses from other people are instrumental for recovery. Victims/survivors of rape and sexual assault may find some of the following responses helpful:

- believe them;
- assist them to feel safe;
- let them know they are not to blame;
- accept their experience and the feelings they have;
- inform them that their feelings and reactions are normal;
- don't judge them or ask "why" questions;
- assist them to feel safe;
- acknowledge that rape or sexual assault can be a life threatening experience;
- assist them to regain control over their life by providing information and letting them make their own decisions, whenever possible; and
- let them know it is okay to seek help and support.

Crisis Responses at Yarrow Place

People 16 years and older who have been sexually assaulted within the last week can receive a crisis response service from Yarrow Place. Crisis response services are available 24 hours, seven days a week and can include counselling and medical services. Victims/survivors who have been sexually assaulted within the last 72 hours will usually be seen within a few hours of service contact. Those sexually assaulted between the last 72 hours and one week will receive an appointment for the next daytime service. During the day crisis response services are provided by the duty worker and a Yarrow Place doctor. After hours staff is on call and clients will be seen by a Yarrow Place crisis response worker and a doctor. Some Yarrow Place doctors are male and clients have the right to request a female doctor.

Crisis Intervention

From a counselling perspective, providing a crisis intervention service is different to therapeutic work with clients. A crisis is a brief, non-illness response to severe stress. Most crises are part of the normal range of life experiences that most people can expect and can recover from without professional intervention. Sexual assault can be understood as a complex crisis. This means an event that is not part of our everyday experience or shared accumulated knowledge, and therefore often harder to cope with.

When people have just been through a traumatic and de-powering experience such as sexual assault, timely and appropriate support that restores their power is required.

Crisis Intervention is:

- clearly distinct to other forms of counselling
- prompt
- time limited – working to contain rather than to extend and to explore
- focused on current issues
- focused on safety – in relation to perpetrator and in relation to client risk of harm to self or others
- worker role is more active, sometimes even directive.

Worker tasks are clearly defined as:

- believe, don't blame
- re-connect client with sense of hope and confidence
- provide space for expression of emotions, normalise and validate these
- restore client ability to problem solve/cope again
- use expertise to provide client with facts to enable choices
- assist the client so see things clearer
- break up problems into smaller, more manageable parts or assists looking at it from a different perspective
- engage other services or people from personal network of clients for support
- work out who is doing what
- ensure client is clear of outcome and who will carry out which task(s).

Ongoing counselling at Yarrow Place

Victims/survivors of sexual assault can access Yarrow Place counselling services any time after rape or sexual assault. Some people contact immediately, others may not seek Yarrow Place support until many years after the sexual assault.

What is counselling?

Counselling is one of the ways that people can get support for themselves following a rape or sexual assault. In most services counselling is provided by workers who have been trained and have experience in helping and supporting people. Some people decide they want to talk to someone straight away, others leave it for months or even years after a rape or sexual assault. Other people don't want to talk about it at all.

When can counselling help?

Counselling can be helpful when:

- Victims/survivors feel confused and the more they think about things, the more confused they get;
- an issue is seriously impacting on their day to day life;
- people feel alone and as if nobody understands them;
- most days, life seems really hard and they can't cope any more; and
- people have strong feelings like anger, self blame or depression and nothing seems to help.

The role of the counsellor is to:

- provide a safe place away from other demands in life to think about issues in their life;
- enable victims/survivors to explore their thoughts and feelings at their own pace;
- focus on their needs;
- assist in exploring options/solutions regarding difficulties they may be experiencing; and
- assist to monitor how things are going.

The main aims of counselling are to help victims/survivors to:

- feel more in control of their life;
- find solutions they haven't tried yet; and
- become clearer about their strengths and supports and how to use them to their best advantage.

Is counselling important after a rape or sexual assault?

Help and support can be really important after a rape or sexual assault. Whether or not victims/survivors want counselling may depend on:

- how they are feeling;
- how things are going for them;
- what they need to know in relation to what happened;
- whether there is a trusted person who will listen, understand and support them; and
- whether they feel "stuck" on a certain issue or on a thought that's always there.

What may be the consequences of seeking counselling?

- Seeking professional counselling and support from others at the time of the trauma enables the person to deal with the immediate impact
- Rape and sexual assault is a traumatic experience and people may need support to move on.

Do people who have been raped or sexually assaulted need to talk about details of the rape or sexual assault in counselling?

That depends on what works for them. Some people find it helpful to talk about what happened, others don't. If they don't want to talk about the details, that's okay. What's important to talk about is how the rape or sexual assault is affecting them and what they would like to do to manage those impacts.

Is there a cost for counselling at Yarrow Place?

Yarrow Place services are free.

What counselling framework is used by Yarrow Place counsellors?

The broad framework for counselling at Yarrow Place is provided in Judith Herman's book "Trauma and Recovery". According to Herman recovery from trauma develops in 3 stages: 1)Safety, 2)Remembrance and Mourning and 3)Reconnection. These stages provide more of a conceptual understanding of the main themes in healing, an attempt to bring understanding into the complexity of trauma responses and subsequent healing. Healing does not naturally progress from stage to stage. Even though one stage may be more prominent at certain times, there will always be aspects of the other stages present.

Herman emphasises the importance of the client-counsellor relationship. She understands the core experiences of psychological trauma as disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery requires the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections and this is only possible within the context of relationships (2001, p.133). For Herman, a crucial tenet of this relationship is the ideological orientation of the counsellor in relation to the crime committed against the client. She states:

"working with victimized people requires a committed moral stance. The therapist is called to bear witness to a crime. She must affirm a position of solidarity with the victim. This does not mean a simplistic notion that the victim can do no wrong; rather, it involves an understanding of the fundamental injustice of the traumatic experience and the need for resolution that restores some sense of justice."

(2001, p.135)

Stage 1 – Safety

The physical and psychological safety of survivors needs to be established before any further therapeutic work is undertaken. Restoring safety also means restoring a sense of power and control. Establishing safety can include:

- Creating a safe physical environment
- Building social supports
- Getting in touch with positive coping strategies
- Establishing or returning to a daily routine
- Minimising destructive coping strategies

Stage 2 – Remembrance and Mourning

By retelling the trauma the survivor can transform the traumatic memory and integrate it into their life story. The challenge for client and therapist is to find a space between

avoiding to think and talk about the event and recalling it in a way that is re-traumatising for the person. To create this space, the client is encouraged to speak about their life before the trauma in an effort to create a context and connection with subsequent events. Retelling the trauma can evoke intense grief as life changes and losses are realised. Over time the survivor is supported to work through the traumatic experience, making sense of their memories, emotions, understandings and meanings of the event. Eventually the survivor will be able to speak about the event without arousing such intense reactions and the experience will take its place alongside other life experiences of the person.

Stage 3 – Reconnection

The survivor is supported in reconciling with themselves and reconnecting with others. With a sense of integration and acceptance of the traumatic event clients can re-focus on themselves. They work towards the person they want to be now and the life they want to have now. They are supported to build their self esteem and their trust in themselves, to believe in their own agency and to acknowledge their strengths.

From this inner strength reconnecting with others becomes possible. The counsellor assists clients in their ability to set and keep boundaries, in assessing trustworthiness, in establishing and maintaining relationships. New possibilities may open to the survivor, such as a new career, different leisure activities or an interest in social action. Herman suggests that there is never a complete resolution but clients will take pleasure in their life, their relationships and they will live in the present and the future rather than in the past.

Yarrow Place counsellors are eclectic in their approach. This means that they may draw on a variety of therapeutic approaches and techniques in their counselling. Some of these including Feminist ideas, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Narrative ideas, Ego therapy, Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprocessing (EMDR). Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), Creative Visualisation and Art and Drawing therapy.

Group work at Yarrow Place

Yarrow Place offers a range of group programs and seminars. One of the groups, regularly offered to women survivors of sexual violence, is an 8 week ‘Discovering Your Strengths’ course. ‘Discovering Your Strengths’ is a group which aims to provide women who have experienced sexual violence with the opportunity to meet with others in a supportive environment. The group is not only about sharing the effects of sexual violence but has a strong focus on working towards empowering women to take control of their lives and move on.

Further information

Refer to books in section “Reference” and “Further readings” sections

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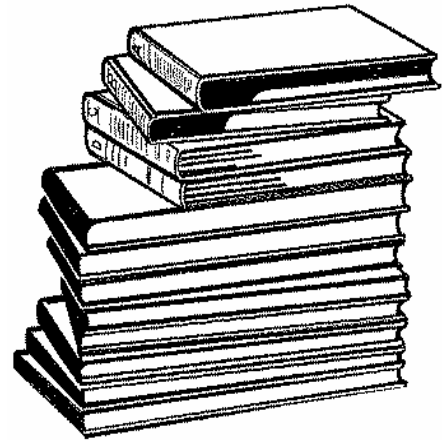
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Internet Sites

Yarrow Place

<http://www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au>

Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA)

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa>

Centres Against Sexual Assault

<http://www.casahouse.casa.org.au/>

South East Centre Against Sexual Assault

<http://www.secasa.com.au/>

For gay and bisexual survivors of sexual abuse

[http://www.links.infoxchange.net.au/group/ixlinks/Gay and Sexuality Issues/](http://www.links.infoxchange.net.au/group/ixlinks/Gay_and_Sexuality_Issues/)

For lesbian survivors of violence and abuse in relationships

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~dvirc/Lesbian%20DV.htm>

Sexual Crime Investigation Branch

<http://www.police.sa.gov.au>

Victims Rights

<http://www.voc.sa.gov.au>

Websites for young women and men about Date Rape

<http://www.aboutdaterape.nsw.gov.au/>

When love hurts – A guide to love, respect & abuse in relationships

<http://www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/index.htm>

World Health Organisation Sexual Violence Research Initiative

<http://www.svri.org>

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

