

## *How Rape Crisis Centers Can Help*

There are 51 rape crisis centers located through Pennsylvania, serving 67 counties in the state. Rape crisis centers provide a range of services to victims, survivors, significant others and communities of all genders, races/ethnicities, abilities, incomes, sexual orientation and ages. Services include individual and group counseling; crisis intervention, hospital, police and court accompaniments, prevention education, community outreach and training, referral services and system advocacy.

### **How Rape Crisis Centers can Support Mental Health Providers:**

Advocates from rape crisis centers can work with mental health providers and clients on sexual violence.

They can facilitate support groups and provide counseling to clients on-site.

Advocates from rape crisis centers can provide trainings to mental health providers regarding sexual violence.



Your local center information.



[www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org)  
1-800-692-7445



## Sexual Violence and Mental Health:

How Rape Crisis Advocates  
and Mental Health Providers  
Can Work Together  
on Behalf of Victims

*Sexual Assault and  
the Mental Health Connection*



## Sexual Violence Definition

Sexual violence violates a person's trust and feeling of safety. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced, and/or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity. (Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape). Sexual violence includes but is not limited to:

- Rape (stranger/non-stranger)
- Marital and partner rape
- Incest
- Indecent/sexualized exposure
- Sexual harassment
- Stalking
- Statutory Rape
- Exposure to sexualized images/pornography
- Ritual abuse
- Voyeurism
- Sexual exploitation
- Abuse
- Trafficking
- Blocked access to birth control and protections from sexually transmitted diseases
- Forced abortions and/or sterilization

## Sexual Violence and Mental Health Connections

Research suggest a strong connection between sexual violence and mental health. Individuals with mental health issues are often victimized multiple times over the course of their life.

- Women who have a history of being abused are at an increased risk for lifetime mental health problems.<sup>1</sup>
- 80% of those in psychiatric hospitals have experienced physical or sexual abuse, primarily when they were children.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 90% of women who are homeless and who also have a mental illness experienced severe abuse as both children and as adults.<sup>3</sup>
- The likelihood of a woman developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after being raped is between 50% and 95%.<sup>4</sup>
- Rape survivors are 13 times more likely to attempt suicide and 6.4 times more likely to use hard drugs than non-crime victims.<sup>5</sup>

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G. Roberts, G. Williams, J. Lawrence, B. Raphael, "How Does Domestic Violence Affect Women's Mental Health?" *Women and Health*, Vol. 28, 1.

Ann Jennings, PhD., "The Damaging Consequences of Violence and Trauma: Facts, Discussion Points, and Recommendations for the Behavioral Health System," (Washington, DC: National Association of State Mental Health, National Technical Assistance Center for State Mental Health Planning, 2004).

Presentation by A. Kathryn Power, M.Ed. Director Center for Mental Health Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Dare to Act Conference, 1 December 2004.

"Ending Violence Against Women," *Populations Reports*, 2000 <<http://www.infoforhealth.org/pr/11edsum.shtml> (6> May 2009).

D.J. Kilpatrick, et al, *Rape in America: A Report to the Nation* (Arlington VA: National Victim Center, 1992).

## What Mental Health Providers Can Do

Mental health providers play a critical role in identifying and responding to sexual violence within their client population. Often, after trust and relationships have been developed, victims and survivors may choose to disclose their experiences to their mental health provider. How any disclosure is handled is paramount to the victim's journey.

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### What Mental Health Providers Can Do:

1. Screen individuals for sexual violence.
2. Partner with local rape crisis centers to identify common ground and potential collaborations.
3. Provide consultation and expertise to local rape crisis centers in addressing mental health issues.
4. Provide trainings to local rape crisis centers about mental health, agency services and efforts.
5. Examine and revise mental health policies and protocols to prevent and respond to sexual violence.
6. Believe victims and respond with empathy, information and support.
7. Assist individuals in accessing rape crisis centers.