



Talking about sexual violence isn't easy, and it may make you uncomfortable. Sexual violence is NOT about sex. It's not about what a victim looks like, how they acted, or even how much they had to drink.

Sexual violence is about power and control. Unfortunately, many people buy into harmful stereotypes about sexual violence that only transfer blame from the offender to the victim. Learning the truths about sexual violence can empower you to make a difference in someone else's life – either as an active bystander or supporting a victim of sexual assault.

TRUTHS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence can happen to anyone, anywhere, anytime.

People can be victims of sexual violence regardless of age, income, race, or social standing. By the time they turn 18, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be the victim of sexual violence. Although statistically, women are more likely to be victimized, men are also victims. It's also important to be aware that although the majority of offenders are men, that doesn't mean the majority of men are offenders.

Most people who are raped or sexually assaulted DO NOT report to law enforcement.

One of the most common fears victims have is that no one will believe them. Victims often experience many different emotions that directly impact IF they decide to tell someone about the assault and WHO they decide to tell. It may be through sharing their experience with another person that they decide to report to law enforcement. Victims with past negative experiences with law enforcement or other agencies face additional barriers to reporting.

Despite common stereotypes, most acts of sexual violence are committed by someone the victim knows or trusts in a location known to the victim.

Sexual violence is not a crime of lust or uncontrollable sexual urges. It is a crime of power and control. The truth is that anyone can be an offender: family, friends, a dating partner or spouse, or someone you met last weekend. More than 90% of sexual assaults in North Dakota involve someone the victim knows. When the victim is under 18 years of age, the percentage is more than 95%. Many sexual assaults occur in the home of either the victim or the offender.

Sexual Violence IS Your Business

Sexual violence isn't just a "women's issue" or something people start caring about after someone close to them is directly affected. Sexual violence is a human issue – one that hurts victims, their families, friends, and communities. Through increasing awareness, practicing bystander intervention, and calling out victim-blaming attitudes sexual violence can be prevented.

RETHINKING RAPE CULTURE: WHAT IS "ENTHUSIASTIC CONSENT"?

Sex is never an obligation – and only YES means YES.
"Wait" means NO.
"Maybe later" means NO.
"Not now" means NO.
"Let's just go to sleep" means NO.
Being asleep or unconscious means NO.
And most importantly, silence means NO.

If you adopt this idea of "enthusiastic consent" and teach it to those around you, soon it will become a shared value.

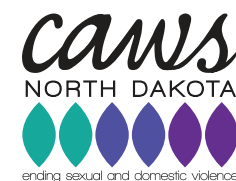
Remember, consent must be:

- **Informed**
- **Freely, actively given**
- **Mutually understandable words or actions**

Rape culture: Being surrounded by images, language, laws, and other everyday phenomena that not only allows but justifies sexual violence. "Living in a rape culture" means that we are continually exposed to advertising, film, TV, music, video games and online content that sexualizes and trivializes violence, especially violence toward women and girls. Sexual coercion and control seem so "normal" that people don't view rape as a shared problem to solve, but "just how things are."

Victim blaming: A cornerstone of rape culture, this common tendency relies on society's inclination to find excuses for the offender's behavior, usually by blaming the victim. Through comments about the victim being "dressed like that" or how much they had to drink, attitudes of victim blaming tend to reinforce faulty beliefs. One example of such beliefs is most rapes are false accusations made by someone like a revengeful ex.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



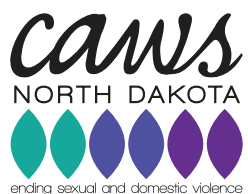
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Understanding Sexual Violence



ending sexual and domestic violence

SEXUAL VIOLENCE DEFINED

Sexual violence is unwanted, forced or coerced sexual contact. It is also sexual violence when a person is unable or unwilling to give consent. It can be in the form of:

- Rape (*stranger or non-stranger*)
- Sodomy
- Incest
- Statutory Rape
- Sexual exploitation
- Sex trafficking
- Sexual and street harassment
- Dating Violence
- Alcohol and drug-facilitated sexual assault
- Child sexual abuse
- Stalking
- Indecent exposure
- Unwanted touching (*i.e. fondling or molestation*)
- Voyeurism ("*peeping tom*")

KNOW WHAT CONSENT IS

Defining consent is easy. Without active consent, a sex act is a sexual assault. "Enthusiastic" consent is the idea that all partners are actively into and agree to sex acts. Consent can be granted (*and removed*) at any time – it's everyone's responsibility to seek a definite "yes" rather than looking for a "no."

There's no such thing as "legitimate rape" and expecting victims to physically resist in order for the sexual assault to be valid is another form of victim blaming. Often victims appear to "go along" with the assault or don't "fight back" as a survival mechanism. Everyone reacts to trauma in different ways. A victim may succumb to the violence because of fear, confusion, or an inability to resist. They know they must do whatever is necessary to survive or to lessen the potential for greater violence.

Aside from being 18 or older, remember that under the law your potential partner must be mentally competent to understand what is happening. If your partner is substantially impaired, you can't get consent.

CONSENT AND MINORS IN NORTH DAKOTA

In North Dakota, a person can be charged with a serious crime if they engage in a sexual act or sexual contact with a minor (*anyone under 18*). The seriousness of the crime and the penalties are even greater if the minor is under the age of 15. Even if a minor person has consensual sexual contact with someone younger than 15, they can be charged with gross sexual imposition (*the legal term for rape in North Dakota*) in juvenile court. If the case is transferred to adult court, the defendant will be treated as an adult sex offender and will be subject to the same penalties as an adult. (*Adapted from "What Teenagers Need to Know About Sex Offenses" by North Dakota Office of Attorney General*)



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10 WAYS TO HELP END SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. Assess your own actions

Do your own actions, attitudes, or beliefs help support the objectification and de-valuing of women and girls? Don't join in on behavior that makes light of sexual violence – and let others know that sexist jokes and language aren't acceptable.

2. Speak up and speak often

Sharing how you feel is important because silence affirms and supports sexual violence. Being open about what you think can influence and change attitudes, especially of those close to you. Sexual violence isn't OK – so stand up and say so!

3. Ask how you can help

It's not easy or even popular to stand against violent actions or behavior. Ask how you can help if you suspect abuse, harassment, or an assault. And if you are abusing other people in ANY way, stop immediately and seek professional help.

4. Help create a culture shift

Listen to and learn from women – don't be afraid to help create a culture shift that doesn't tolerate disrespect or devaluing of women. Don't objectify women or act in ways that make them feel uncomfortable. If you're unsure, ask!

5. Be a positive example for young people

Aside from being a healthy role model, teach youth that "no" means "no" and "stop" means "stop." Help boys understand that "being a man" means treating women with respect. Help young people understand that only THEY have the right to make decisions about their body and those decisions should be respected.

6. Always hold the offender accountable

Avoid making excuses for the offender's behavior or buying into the argument that sexual violence is caused by substance abuse, mental illness, lack of anger management skills, or stress. By making excuses, you diminish the offender's responsibility for their actions and blame the victim for the sexual assault.

7. Remember no one "wants" to be sexually assaulted. Never voice, believe, or support the idea that the victim "wanted it." Sexual assault is a violent crime that no one asks for – one with an extensive recovery and healing process.

8. Communicate with your partner

Make sure you find out what your partner wants – never assume. If you think you're getting mixed signals, talk to your partner. If they say they aren't sure, wait until they're sure. Remember that consent isn't automatic. Respect your partner's right to say "no" or change their mind at any time. And most importantly, treat your partner with respect and dignity – never pressure, coerce, or force them to have sex.

9. Be a source of support for people in your life

Let your friends and family know you're someone they can talk to about sexual violence or abuse. If someone discloses a sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, or abuse of any kind, let them know you believe them and connect them to a local crisis intervention center.

10. Get help for yourself

If you are the victim of sexual violence, the most important thing to know is that it isn't your fault. Emotional support is very important – who are people you can talk to and who will support you? Preserve evidence by not showering, bathing or douching, eating, changing clothes, or altering the environment where the assault took place. Getting connected to a confidential victim advocate can help you think about options for reporting, medical care, counseling services, safety planning, as well as your rights and legal options.

GET CONNECTED

For more info or confidential help with a crisis 24 hours a day, call 1-800-656-HOPE.

