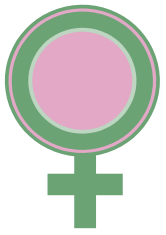


Dealing with Sexual Assault Disclosures:

**Creating an Emotionally Safe Response
when somebody tells you they have been
sexually assaulted**

Funded by:

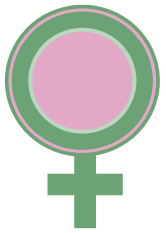




Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): What will you learn in this training module?

2

- 1. Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC)**
 - Who We Are
 - Ontario's Sexual Violence Action Plan
 - OCRCC Activity highlights
- 2. What do Ontario Sexual Assault Centres do?**
- 3. Sexual Violence Facts:**
 - Canadian statistics on sexual violence
 - Common reactions to sexual violence
 - Sexual violence: Definition
 - Consent: Definition
- 4. Sexual Assault Myths & Facts**
- 5. Receiving Sexual Assault Disclosures**
 - Things to Consider
 - How to Create an Emotionally Safe Response
- 6. Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres: Contact us**

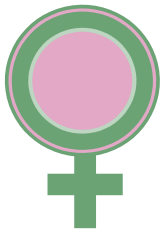


Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Who Are We?

3

The Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres(OCRCC) is a network of women from rape crisis/sexual assault centres.

- ✦ There are currently 24 OCRCC-member rape crisis centres across Ontario
- ✦ We work for the prevention and eradication of all forms of sexual violence
- ✦ We promote legal, social and attitudinal changes regarding sexual violence



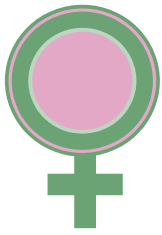
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Developing Ontario's Sexual Violence Action Plan

4

✦ In 2010, in partnership with the Ontario Women's Directorate, consulted with survivors of sexual violence for the purpose of informing the Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan (SVAP). Survivors of sexual violence attended consultation meetings in **Guelph, Peel, Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury, Kenora and Sarnia**. The survivor consultations were integral to a survivor-focused and informed Action Plan

✦ OCRCC also took part in many other aspects of the development of the Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan:

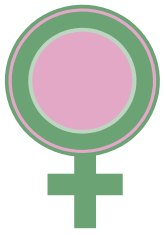
- Contributing to the development of the SVAP vision and principles (2010)
- Consulting with the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) staff at several planning meetings
- Participated in a pre-consultation meeting with provincial violence against women stakeholders across the province (2010)
- Hosting a consultation with OCRCC membership rape crisis and sexual assault centres (2010)
- Participating in a consultation session on Campus Safety (2010)
- Participating in a consultation session on Public Education High School (2010)
- Participating in a consultation session on Training Needs for Professionals (2010)
- Participating in a consultation session on Trafficking Consultation (2010)



Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Other Activity Highlights

5

- ✿ OCRCC website: www.sexualassaultsupport.ca (launched in 2010)
- ✿ Contributed to the Expert Review on workplace violence resources, Bill 168 on Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act (Violence and Harassment in the Workplace) (2010) and Mental Health and Addictions Women's Strategy (2009)
- ✿ Presentation at 3rd Ibero-American Congress's Child Sexual Abuse Conference in Bucaramanga, Colombia. Topic – Child Abuse: Prevention & Intervention (2010)
- ✿ Facilitation of training for all Ontario Women's Directorate staff, Ministry of the Attorney General and other professionals concerning sexual violence and systemic barriers impacting survivors (2008)
- ✿ Presentation at *PsychOUT: A Conference for Organizing Resistance to Psychiatry*, entitled “From Survivors’ Stories to Feminist Organizing – The Continuum of Psychiatric Resistance in the Anti-Rape Movement”. May 2010, Toronto (2010)
- ✿ “I’m Not That Kind of Girl”: White Femininity, the Other and the Legal/Social Sanctioning of Sexual Violence Against Racialized Women. *Women Resisting Rape, special issue. Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme*. (Publication November 2010)



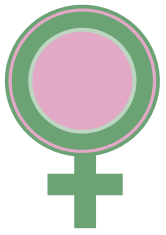
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): What do Sexual Assault Centres Do?

6

All centres provide counselling, information and support services to survivors of sexual violence, including recent sexual assault, sexual harassment, childhood sexual abuse and incest.

All centre services are free and confidential.
Services include:

- Face-to-face counselling
- A 24-hour crisis line
- Group Counselling
- Hospital, Police reporting & Court accompaniment
- Social Activism
- Information on the legal system and other community resources
- Information and support for partners, families and friends of survivors
- Public Education: on sexual assault, harassment, healthy relationships and more



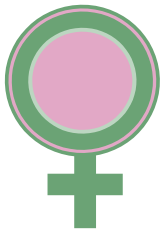
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Community-based Work

Community links are very important to doing sexual assault work. Community workgroups, committees and partnerships that sexual assault centres participate in include:

- ✚ Regional domestic violence coordinating committee
- ✚ Partnerships with sexual health, medical and mental health service providers
- ✚ Partnerships with school-based workers

We also work with underserved or isolated populations, and populations that may have special access or service needs. For example:

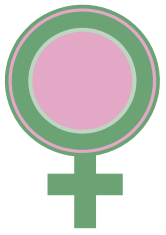
- ✚ Youth groups and youth-serving organizations
- ✚ Aboriginal groups and Aboriginal-identified organizations
- ✚ LGBT groups and LGBT allies
- ✚ Groups that support women living with disabilities
- ✚ Newcomers to Canada



Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Why Are We Here?

8

Sexual Violence: Some Facts

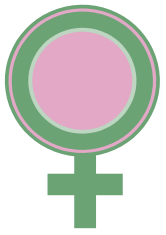


Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Why Are We Here?

9

- **51% of all Canadian women** have experienced at least one incident of sexual or physical violence. Close to 60% of these women have survived more than one incident of violence. (Statistics Canada, 1993)
- Young **women under 25 show the highest rates** of sexual assault and criminal harassment (Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006, Statistics Canada)
- Women and young women from marginalized racial, sexual and socioeconomic groups are **more vulnerable to being targeted** for sexual harassment and sexual assault (Wolfe and Chiodo, CAMH, 2008)

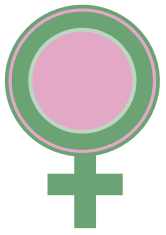
In a Canadian survey of female post-secondary students, **25% of participants** identified that they had been physically and/or sexually assaulted by a male date or boyfriend (H. Johnson, 1996, Dangerous Domains: Violence Against Women in Canada)



Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Why Are We Here?

10

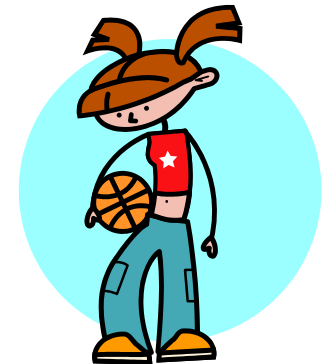
- In cases reported to police, **80% of sexual assault survivors knew their abusers** (Statistics Canada, 2003, The Daily, 25 July)
- The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women found that **38% of sexually assaulted women were assaulted by their husbands, common-law partners or boyfriends**. Although illegal in Canada since 1983, few of these assaults are reported to police.
- According to Statistics Canada, **only 6% of all sexual assaults are reported to police**.
- The Canadian criminal justice system – a system based largely on verbal testimony and physical evidence – commonly proves inaccessible or disappointing to survivors of sexual assault. **Of the 6% of sexual assaults that are reported, only 40% result in charges being laid**; and of those cases where charges are laid, just two-thirds result in conviction.
(www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english/publications/sexual-assault/reporting.htm)



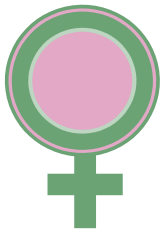
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Common Reactions to Sexual Violence

11

- Anxiety
- Dissociation
- Eating problems
- Substance use
- Self-harm & high-risk behaviors
- Self-blame
- Difficulty trusting others
- Depression



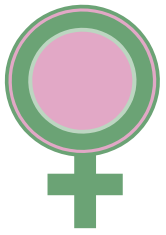
(from Canadian Mental Health Association: Violence and Trauma -- Impact of traumatic events upon women's mental health)



Sexual Violence: Definitions



Keetin blew the whistle on all the
cat calls and harassing jeers.

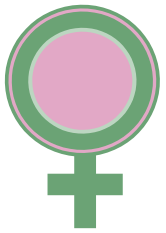


Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): What is Sexual Violence?

13

Sexual violence is any violence, physical or psychological, carried out *through sexual means or by targeting sexuality*. Includes:

- Sexual abuse and sexual assault
- Rape
- Incest
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Rape during armed conflict
- Sexual harassment
- Indecent or sexualized exposure
- Degrading sexual imagery
- Voyeurism
- Cyber harassment, luring or abuse via digital/cyber means
- Trafficking and sexual exploitation

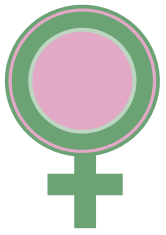


Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): What is Sexual Assault?

14

Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual act or sexual act where someone is unable to give consent:

- Unwanted touching or grabbing
 - Forced oral sex
 - Rape
- Being forced to touch or look at someone's private parts (genitals)
- It is sexual assault even if the person who does it is a person you know – for example, your boyfriend, girlfriend, date, neighbour, co-worker, friend, or roommate.



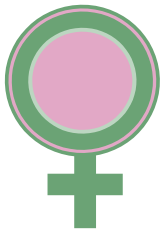
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): What is Sexual Consent?

15

Consent means saying YES to sexual activity – for example, kissing, touching, intercourse – with another person.

Some examples of NO consent:

- You were too scared to say NO.
- You said yes, but then you changed your mind.
- You were bullied, threatened or tricked until you said Yes
 - You were really drunk or high.
 - You were asleep, blacked-out, or unconscious.
 - You don't remember what happened.



Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Sexual Assault Myths

16



Myth: Women provoke sexual assault by their behaviour or the way they dress.



Fact: No behaviour or manner of dress justifies an assault. Such a belief takes the onus off the offender and places it on the survivor.

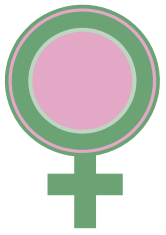
Myth: Some women are not targeted for sexual assault, or cannot be sexually assaulted: for example, lesbians, women with disabilities, and sex workers.



Facts: Many of the above mentioned groups are at higher risk for any type of violence, including sexual violence:



- Women and young women from marginalized racial, sexual and socioeconomic groups are more vulnerable to being targeted for sexual harassment and sexual assault (Wolfe and Chiodo, CAMH, 2008, p. 3.)
- 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime. (L. Stimpson and M. Best, 1991, *Courage Above All: Sexual Assault against Women with Disabilities*)
- In a study by Prostitution Alternatives Counselling and Education (PACE), one-third of the women surveyed said they had survived an attack on their life while working on the street as a sex worker in Canada (Amnesty International, 2004)



Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Sexual Assault Myths

17



Myth: Women lie about sexual assault to get back at a man for something, or to cover up a consensual sexual encounter that she regrets.



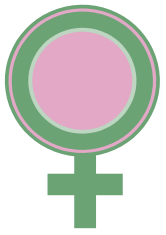
Fact: Sexual assault is actually one of the most under-reported crimes. A Canadian statistic tells us that victimization surveys show that less than 10% of women who are sexually assaulted report the assault to the police; most women do not report due to humiliation or fear of re-victimization in the legal process.
(Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002, *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile*, p.19).

Myth: Women can prevent sexual assault by avoiding strangers and dangerous public places after dark.



Facts: Offenders are most often know to the victim. In cases reported to police, 80% of sexual assault survivors knew their abusers (Statistics Canada, 2003, *The Daily*, 25 July). In fact, the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women found that 38% of sexually assaulted women were assaulted by their husbands, common-law partners or boyfriends. Although illegal in Canada since 1983, few of these assaults are reported to police.





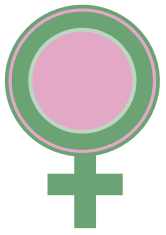
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): Why is it important to acknowledge Sexual Assault Myths?

18

Sexual Assault Myths play a significant role in how sexual violence is understood by those who have experienced sexual violence, helping professionals such as yourself, and the public.

For example:

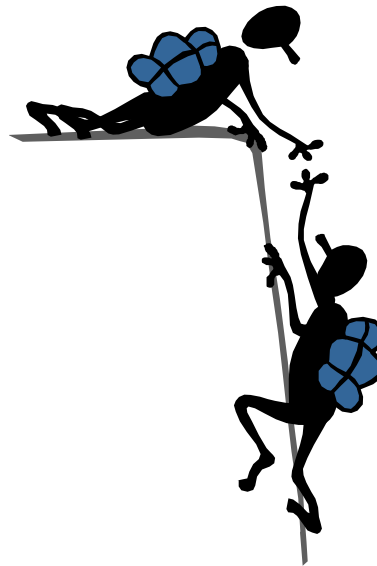
- ✓ Sexual Assault myths can make it more difficult for survivors of sexual violence to understand that they are not responsible for unwanted sexual advances.
- ✓ Sexual Assault myths can cause survivors of sexual violence to delay or avoid reporting their experiences to the police.
- ✓ Sexual Assault myths can cause survivors of sexual violence to delay or avoid reporting their experiences to friends, families and others close to them.
- ✓ Sexual Assault myths can elicit victim-blaming and judgemental responses from professionals who believe them.

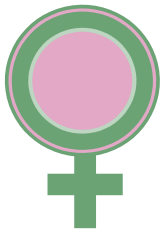


Why should you know about Sexual Violence?

19

If you have a helping role in your community, chances are fair that at some time, someone who has experienced sexual violence will disclose to you.



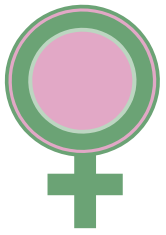


When Hearing a Disclosure about Sexual Violence: **Consider...**

20

- What are the challenges?
 - What helps?
 - What does not help?
- What Can You Do to Create A Safe Response?





Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): What Can You Do?

21

DON'T react with disbelief, disgust or anger at what she tells you.

DON'T do/say nothing.

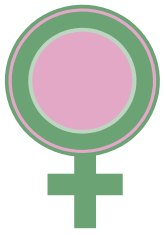
DO NOT give advice:

- "If I were you, I'd..."
- "You have to tell your room-mate/parents/police/other person what happened..."
- "If you don't charge this guy, he'll just do it again..."

DO NOT insist or coax her into any course of action. If there is a course of action you are legally obligated to take, explain what this is and why.

DO NOT call the police against her wishes unless you are mandated to do so. Know your professional responsibilities around child protection and the protection of other vulnerable persons. Not all sexual assault disclosures must be reported by you. In many cases, survivors have the right to choose to report or not to report.

DO NOT conduct an "investigation" into her story or grill for details.



Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC): What Can You Do?

22

DO believe her.

DO tell her that it's not her fault. Nobody invites sexual assault or wants to be sexually assaulted.

DO know your professional responsibilities around responding to sexual assaults perpetrated by other professionals. **DO** support survivors in responding to and reporting these incidents in a transparent and consistent manner.

DO refer to a hospital, clinic or doctor that can provide medical help and testing for unplanned pregnancy, HIV and sexually-transmitted infection.

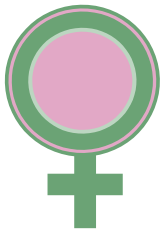
DO refer to colleagues in the community who are able to assist further. Visit www.sexualassaultsupport.ca to find a sexual assault centre near you.

DO protect her confidentiality.

DO tell her about any limits to your confidentiality, under what circumstances, and why.

www.sexualassaultsupport.ca

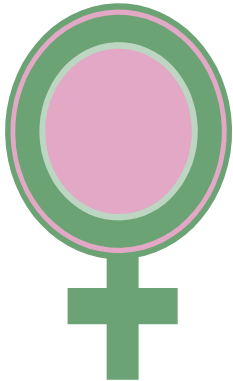




Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC):

24

OCRCC is an equity-seeking network of women from autonomous rape crisis/sexual assault centres committed to leading social transformation that prevents and eliminates sexual violence.



Questions?
Please contact Nicole at
ocrcccoordinator@hotmail.com
or 905-299-4428

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