

## Article: Helping Victims of Sexual Assault

Would you be prepared if a sexual assault victim came to you for help? What if you felt that someone was in danger of being sexually assaulted? Or if you witnessed an attack? Would you know what to do?

This article will teach you appropriate methods of interceding to prevent sexually violent situations and responding when someone else has been sexually assaulted.

### What do I do if I witness a sexual assault?

If you witness an assault or a potential assault, become an **active bystander**—look for safe and effective ways to intervene. If you are in a situation to act, remember these ABCs:

- **Assess the situation for safety:** Ensure the victim's safety and your own. Avoid violence. Call the police if the situation is too risky to intervene—they are specifically trained for such situations.
- **Be with others:** Don't intervene alone. Approach both the victim and offender in a courteous manner but be firm. By working with others, you will have greater influence over the outcome, as well as increased safety.
- **Care for the victim:** Even if you perceive a behavior as an assault, be sure to verify this perception by asking the victim how they feel about the behavior. Also ask whether they need medical care, want to talk to an Employee Assistance Program Coordinator (EAPC)/Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), or need help getting home.

### What are examples of actions I can take as an active bystander?

Here are actions you can take to prevent behavior that could lead to an assault or get involved when one does occur:

- Make up an excuse to give a potential victim a reason to separate himself or herself from a potential perpetrator.
- Let a bartender or host of a party know when someone has had too much to drink.
- Talk to the victim or potential victim to make sure he or she is okay.
- Address any disrespectful behavior in a manner that is courteous but firm to avoid violence.
- Call the police.
- Distract those engaged in sexist behavior (for example, if a man on the street is harassing a woman, you could ask him for directions or the time).

### What do I do if someone tells me that they've been sexually assaulted?

If someone tells you that they have been sexually assaulted, take the following actions:

- Make sure that the victim is safe.
- Ask the victim if he or she needs medical care.
- Transport the victim to receive assistance (such as to the Employee Assistance Program Coordinator (EAPC)/Sexual Assault Program Coordinator (SARC) or to medical care), if requested.
- Contact an EAPC/SARC, a Family Advocacy Specialist (FAS), a Health Care Provider (HCP), or a Victim Advocate (VA).
- Offer to stay with the victim.
- Listen to the victim.
- Ask what you can do to help.

#### Did You Know?

Confronting offenders respectfully, rather than reacting in anger, will discourage violence that would put you, the victim, or others at risk.

#### Did You Know?

Sexist behavior can lead to assault or to tolerance of forceful sexual acts. If you witness such behavior, intercede.

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## What if I'd like to be more involved in assisting sexual assault victims?

A volunteer opportunity as a Victim Advocate (VA) may be an option for you. A Victim Advocate is a trained volunteer that gives support and information to victims, acts as a companion during a victim's recovery and during medical and investigative processes, and ensures the victim's safety.

Interested? If you have no unresolved issues with sexual assault, show the maturity to maintain confidentiality, demonstrate good communication and interpersonal skills, and have at least one year remaining at your unit, contact an EAPC/SARC for details.

