



*“This is one experience that one does not plan for, is not prepared for, has no knowledge of who or where to turn.”*

*- A survivor’s testimony before the President’s Task Force on Violent Crime.*

*“In the beginning I felt angry and helpless. I didn’t know what to say or what to do around my partner. I just wanted it all to go away.*

*I went to the Parents and Partners group and found out that I wasn’t alone.*

*I was able to learn how to be supportive and help my partner and myself through the healing process.”*



# Locations

*For more information about services offered at The Center, please call any of our locations or visit our website.*

## **KENTUCKY**

**Kentucky Campus**  
**Open 24 Hours**  
P.O. Box 2048  
Louisville, KY  
**(502) 581-7273 Rape Crisis Line**  
**(800) 656-HOPE Rape Crisis Line**  
**(502) 581-7242 TDD**

**West Louisville Campus**  
**(502) 775-6408**

**Mt. Washington Office**  
**(502) 538-0212**

**Shelbyville Office**  
**(502) 633-7800**

## **INDIANA**

**Southern Indiana Campus**  
**Open 24 Hours**  
New Albany, IN  
**(812) 944-6743 Crisis Line**

**Corydon Office**  
**(812) 734-0280**

**Marengo Office**  
**(812) 365-2338**

**Scottsburg Office**  
**(812) 752-7996**

▼ **(877) 803-7577**  
**Toll Free Crisis Line • 24 Hours**  
**www.thecenteronline.org**

*The Center for Women and Families is committed to creating an environment in which diversity is valued and assures no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, subjected to discrimination under, or denied employment on the basis of race, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, handicap, disability, veteran status, familial status, or political opinion.*

These programs are funded, in part, by the following: U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Dept. of Justice (OVC), U.S. Department of Labor, Kentucky Justice Cabinet, Kentucky Housing Corporation, Dept. of Mental Health/Mental Retardation Services, Kentucky Domestic Violence Association, Kentucky General Assembly, Indiana Family & Social Services Admin., Community Foundation of Southern Indiana, Metro Louisville City Government, Metro United Way, United Way of Scott County, Harrison Co. Community Foundation, Scott County Community Foundation, Floyd County General Fund, Indiana Criminal Justice Institute, Preventative Health & Health Services Block Grant, Fiscal Courts of Spencer, Shelby, Trimble, Oldham, Bullitt, and Henry Counties in Kentucky, Younger Woman’s Club of Louisville, Target Caesars Riverboat Casino Foundation, UPS Foundation, General Mills, and other grants received from local businesses, foundations, and contributions.

# Parents and Partners



Information from



**THE  
CENTER  
FOR  
WOMEN  
AND  
FAMILIES**

## Starting the Healing Process

If someone close to you has been raped or sexually assaulted, they have experienced a frightening, life threatening trauma. You, as a secondary victim, have also experienced a frightening trauma.

It is important to remember:

- Your loved one is not to blame. The rapist is solely responsible.
- Rape is a violent crime involving power, anger and control. Survival means the victim did the right thing.
- Manipulation and intimidation are just as powerful tools in rape as is physical force. The victim did not have to fight back in order for it to be rape.
- No one asks or deserves to be raped.
- Your loved one has the right to experience any and all feelings they have.
- When someone we love is traumatized, it is normal for our own past trauma to resurface. Be sure to get support for yourself.

**The FBI places rape as the second most feared crime. Murder is the first.**

## How Can I Help?

### Believe the survivor.

Even if they sometimes doubt themselves, even if their memories are vague, even if what they tell is upsetting, you are willing to enter those difficult places with them and to receive their words with respect.

### Educate yourself about sexual abuse/rape and the healing process.

If you have a basic idea of what the survivor is going through, it will help you to be supportive. The crisis line at the Rape Crisis Program is available 24 hours a day, (502) 581-7273. Trained staff and volunteers are available to answer questions and help you to understand the trauma your loved one may be experiencing. Also, the Rape Crisis Program offers a group, Parents and Partners, especially developed for your needs at this time. Call (502) 581-7273 or (800) 656-HOPE for more information.



### Validate the survivor's feelings: anger, pain and fear.

These are natural, healthy responses. They need to feel them, express them and be heard.

### Join with the survivor in validating the damage.

All sexual abuse and rape is harmful. Even if it is not violent, overtly physical, or repeated, all rape has serious consequences. There is no positive or neutral experience of sexual abuse or rape.

### Don't sympathize with the offender.

The survivor needs your absolute loyalty.

### Express your compassion.

If you have feelings of outrage, compassion, pain for their pain, do share them. There is nothing more comforting than a genuine human response. Just make sure your feelings don't overwhelm theirs.

### Listen.

Listen without criticism, judgment or condemnation. Patience and love have healed many wounds.

### Respect the time and space it takes to heal.

Healing is a slow process that can't be hurried.

### Encourage the survivor to seek professional support.

Some experiences, like rape, are traumatic for virtually anyone, no matter how well adjusted they are. Studies have shown that talking about stressful events speeds up recovery if people are allowed to talk at their own pace. Let them know you're willing to listen when they are ready to talk.

### Reaffirm their course of action during the assault.

Freezing, submitting and fighting are all natural responses to being attacked. Since your loved one survived, they did the right thing. Survivors must use their instinct to either fight or submit; neither is wrong.

### Don't blame yourself.

Victims often blame themselves. Many partners and family members also insist on blaming themselves. In fact, sexual assault is no one's fault except the offender.

### Don't minimize their feelings.

For many reasons, sexual assault is a very big deal, even for sexually active individuals, even if it happened many years ago. Rape is not an aggressive form of sex, it is a sexual form of aggression.

### Accept that there will very likely be major changes in your relationship with the survivor as the healing occurs.

They are changing, and as they do, you may need to change in response.

## What the Victim Feels

Below are some common reactions experienced by rape survivors. They are normal and temporary. Victims may not experience all of them, and perhaps may have a reaction that isn't included. This information is to assure you that this is an example of a healthy person having healthy reactions to a very serious crime.

**Emotional** - depression, guilt, shame, grief, anger, mood swings.

**Behavioral** - inability to concentrate or relax, avoiding places, people, thoughts or feelings, loss of interest.

**Physical** - nausea, headaches, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, or menstrual cycle.

They may feel dirty, ashamed, guilty, humiliated or responsible. It is normal to experience these feelings, but it is not the victim's fault.

If the assailant is someone known to the victim, the victim may feel the trust in that person has been destroyed. The victim may question their own judgement about people in general.

These reactions may be more difficult to handle on holidays, the anniversary date of the assault, or an event that reminds them of the rape.

Victims have experienced a loss and will be grieving that loss.

## What You Might be Feeling

- Pain, sorrow, disgust, or self-blame
- Sympathy for the survivor
- Anger at the rapist(s), wanting revenge against the rapist(s)
- Preoccupation with sexual aspects of the rape, seeing the rape as sex, not violence
- Protectiveness toward the survivor
- Impatience with the recovery process

It is normal for you to feel angry, confused and unsure of the best way to help your loved one. You may have questions you don't wish to acknowledge, such as wondering if the survivor could have prevented the attack. You may find it difficult to listen to the "story", hoping that silence will make it go away. At other times, you may want to hear about everything that happened.

Some of your own feelings will be confusing to you. You may be embarrassed, wanting to keep the assault a secret for fear of what others may think. You may feel guilty or

responsible, feeling you should have been able to prevent it. There may be feelings that if your advice had been followed, this would not have happened. You may feel anger toward the survivor, rage towards the perpetrator, and consider actions that are not normally in your frame of reference.

Some spouses or sexual partners may want more physical intimacy while others feel distant. You may not be able to read your partner's cues regarding sexual activity. You may have a difficult time understanding the sense of violation and deep emotional pain that follows a rape.

