

Form for Evaluating Police Response to Sexual Assault

Introduction: The following form is designed for use by victims of rape and sexual assault, for use by advocates, and by law enforcement. It's designed to help evaluate the police response to individual rape or sexual assault cases. Advocates can use it to provide feedback to **your** police departments and communities concerning how police response to rape and sexual assault can be improved.

The questions in the form are divided into three parts: The Initial Police Response, The Victim Interview, and The Investigation Follow-Up. The majority of questions focus on the police interview of the victim. This is because, compared to other crimes, the investigation of sexual assault relies more heavily on the victim interview. If done properly, the victim interview can serve as a solid basis for arresting and prosecuting the perpetrator. In addition, many of the questions address the victim comfort and safety in the investigation process. This is because careful attention to a victim's comfort and safety is essential for obtaining a complete and comprehensive victim statement. It is always worth the effort for victims and their advocates to evaluate the police response and victim interview as soon as possible, and then seek to get needed corrections.

The form does not cover all aspects of police response to rape and sexual assault. Instead it aims to touch on key topics that should help guide law enforcement in a more thorough evaluation. Also, some of the questions may not pertain to a victim's particular experience. Investigation procedures will vary depending on the individual circumstances of the cases and on the different investigatory approaches employed by one agency to the next.

This tool was developed by the Women's Justice Center in Santa Rosa, California.
They can be reached through their website at www.justicewomen.com

Evaluating Police Response to Sexual Assault

Please read the following notes before using this form.

- **You don't have to answer any question(s) you don't want to answer**, and of course, you don't have to answer questions that don't pertain to your situation.
- If more than one officer responded to your call, you can choose to answer in regard to just one officer, or you can answer in regard to both, referring to them as officer #1 and officer #2.
- Feel free to put your comments, explanations, and things you want to remember, in the spaces between the questions or in the space provided at the end of the form.

Date _____

Crime Report # _____

Date and Approximate Time of Call to Police _____

Name of Police Department _____

Your Name _____

PART I: THE INITIAL POLICE RESPONSE – OFFICER(S) TO WHOM YOU FIRST REPORTED THE ASSAULT

Did the responding officer try to make you feel safe and comfortable reporting the assault (were you given enough time, privacy, encouragement, or whatever else you needed in order to explain what happened to you)?

Yes____ No____

If you reported to police within 72 hours of the assault, did the officer offer for you to have a medical rape exam?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply____

Did the responding officer inform you of your right to have a victim advocate and a support person present with you during the medical exam and during the interview with detectives?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply____

If English is not your first language, did the officer offer you a professional translator (either a fully bilingual officer or a telephone translator - not a family member or neighbor)?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply____

Did the responding officer clearly explain to you what was happening at each step of his or her response?

Yes____ No____

Did the officer ask if you had any questions or concerns?

Yes____ No____

Do you feel the responding officer answered your questions and concerns as you needed?

Yes____ No____

Did the responding officer give you his or her contact phone number?

Yes____ No____

Did the responding officer give you complete information about what would happen next, when it would happen, and who you could contact at the police department in the days to come?

Yes____ No____

Do you feel that the responding officer in any way judged your behavior, or blamed you for the attack, or disbelieved you?

Yes____ No____

Explain: _____

Did the responding officer, in any way, discourage you from reporting the attack or ask you to sign a "Do Not Investigate" Form?

Yes____ No____

Explain: _____

If you knew someone who wanted to report a rape or sexual assault to the police, would you recommend them to this particular officer?

Yes____ No____

Why or Why Not? _____

Part II: The Victim Interview

In making arrangements for the interview, did the detective or investigating officer offer to do the interview at a location that was comfortable for you?

Yes____ No____

In making arrangements for the interview, were you informed of your right to have a victim advocate and a support person of your choosing present during the interview by the detective or investigating officer?

Yes____ No____

In making arrangements for the interview, did the detective or investigating officer ask if you had any questions?

Yes____ No____

If English is not your first language, were you asked if you would feel more comfortable doing the interview in your native language?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply ____

If you wanted or needed a translator, did the detective or investigating officer have a professional translator available for you at the interview?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply ____

Before beginning the interview, did the detective or investigating officer ask if you felt comfortable and safe?

Yes____ No____

Before the interview, did the detective or investigating officer ask you if you had fears or concerns about reporting the crime or about prosecuting the perpetrator?

Yes____ No____

If you expressed concerns about reporting the crime (such as fear of retaliation, fear of people finding out, fear of problems with family members, housing, job, school, or problems with the law, etc.) did the detective or investigating officer offer to help you deal with these problems?

Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer answer all your questions to your satisfaction?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply____

Was your advocate or support person made to feel comfortable and welcome at the interview by the detective or investigating officer?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply____

Was the interview recorded (either audio or video tape?)

Yes____ No____

Were you informed that the interview would be recorded?

Yes____ No____

Were you told that you could stop the interview at any point to take a break or to ask questions?

Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer ask you detailed questions about the perpetrator's pre-rape behavior? (Any unusual pre-rape behavior by the perpetrator can be important evidence, such as the rapist's pre-rape attempts to isolate you, to close off escape routes, to get other people out of the way, or to give bazaar explanations of things to you or others, etc.)

Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer get complete information from you on how to contact people who may have witnessed the rapist's pre-rape behavior?

Yes____ No____

Were you asked for a complete description of any weapons that were used in the assault?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply____

Did the detective or investigating officer ask you for complete details about the sexual assault itself?

Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer seem comfortable in asking you detailed questions about the assault?

Yes____ No____

NOTE: In order to prosecute a sexual assault, the authorities need to show how you were forced to have sex or how you were unable to give consent. So the detective or investigating officer needs to get an accurate statement from you describing exactly what accounted for you feeling forced to have sex.

If no form of physical force was used in your assault (i.e. if there were no weapons or physical restraints) did the detective or investigating officer ask exactly what the suspect said or did that made you feel forced to have sex?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply____

If you didn't physically resist, did the detective or investigating officer ask you to describe what you thought might happen if you had resisted or if you refused to submit to the sexual contact?

Yes____ No____ Doesn't Apply____

Did the detective or investigating officer ask you to describe your fears before and during the rape?
Yes____ No____

Were you asked if you recalled any marks, tattoos, or scars on the perpetrator's body?
Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer ask you for any and all statements made by the perpetrator during the attack?
Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer ask you about any and all threats made by the perpetrator at any time?
Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer ask you detailed questions about your behavior after the assault? (Any change in your routine behavior following the rape can be important evidence - changes such as missing work or classes, changing locks, avoiding specific people or groups, seeking counseling, making unusual excuses for your behavior, canceling scheduled activities, etc.)
Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer ask you for complete information about how to contact all the people you told about the assault and the people who witnessed your post-rape behavior?
Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer ask you to try and think about any others who might also be a victim of the same perpetrator?
Yes____ No____

If you knew the perpetrator, did the detective ask if you wanted to make a pretext call? (A pretext call is a phone call, tape recorded by police, made by you to the perpetrator with the goal of tricking the perpetrator into talking about the crime.)
Yes____ No____

Did you do a pretext call?
Yes____ No____

Did you feel the detective or investigating officer prepared you well for the pretext call?
Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer ask you to keep thinking about what might be additional evidence or who might be additional witnesses in the case?
Yes____ No____

Were you asked by the detective or investigation officer to contact him or her immediately if you were being harassed, intimidated, or threatened in any way by the suspect or by others?
Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer explain to you that it is a crime if any one tried to get you to change your story or to not testify, and that you should report it to police immediately?
Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer give you his or her work phone number?
Yes____ No____

Did the detective or investigating officer tell you when he or she would get back in touch with you?
Yes____ No____

Do you feel that the responding officer in any way judged your behavior, or blamed you for the attack, or disbelieved you?
Yes____ No____

At any point, did the officer's questions feel hostile to you?
Yes____ No____

Explain: _____

Part III: Investigation Follow-Up

Were you kept informed about the progress of the investigation and the status of the case by the detective or investigating officer?
Yes____ No____

Were all the witnesses you know of interviewed by the detective or investigating officer?
Yes____ No____

Were your phone calls to the detective or investigating officer returned by the officer in a timely manner?
Yes____ No____

Do you feel the detective or investigating officer was concerned about your safety throughout the investigation?

Yes ____ No ____

If the perpetrator was not arrested soon after the assault, or was never arrested, did the detective give you a careful explanation of why the suspect wasn't arrested?

Yes ____ No ____

If you knew someone who wanted to report a rape or sexual assault to the police, would you recommend them to this particular detective or investigating officer?

Yes ____ No ____

Why or Why Not? _____

Part III: Additional Comments

Please use the empty space below for any comments you wish to make regarding the general feeling of the experience of reporting the crime, specific comments to your case, things that the responding and/or investigating officer did that helped you, or suggestions on how law enforcement officials can improve to responding to, investigating, and meeting the needs of victims of cases involving rape and sexual assault.)