

## Survivors with Low Socioeconomic Status

A common barrier and concern for sexual assault survivors who live in a low socioeconomic status is a means to locate and pay for resources that may benefit them. Some survivors may experience a sense of hopelessness and avoid looking for available services because they may feel that they are nonexistent. However, there are services available for survivors who meet this description, such as counseling agencies that provide counseling services with a sliding scale payment option.

**Survivors or assailants of sexual assault can cross all lines of ethnicity, sexuality, gender and religion.**

## How Can I Help?

- Believe the person who tells you that he or she has been assaulted and remember that it is NEVER the survivor's fault.
- Realize that people of all shapes, sizes, races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses can be affected by sexual assault.
- Educate yourself on different stereotypes and myths surrounding sexual assault.
- Recognize that degrading sex-role stereotypes and misconceptions about sexual orientation may make it difficult for individuals of diverse populations to disclose their experiences.
- Encourage the individual to seek additional services such as counseling, legal help, familial support, etc.

## Quick Statistics in Virginia

The following report experiencing rape in their lifetime:

- 3% of men (13% experience sexual assault);
- 18% of Hispanic women;
- 27% of African American women;
- 28% of White women;
- 29% of women identified as Asian, Pacific Islander, Hawaiian, mixed race or other ethnic group.

## Local Resources for Diverse Populations

Counseling & Student Development Center

[www.jmu.edu/counselingctr](http://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr)

The Collins Center

(540) 434-2272

## National Resources

FaithTrust Institute (all religions and ethnicities)

[www.faithtrustinstitute.org/](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/)

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

[www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org)

National Organization on Male Sexual Victimization

[www.malesurvivor.org](http://www.malesurvivor.org)

Pandora's Project

[www.pandys.org](http://www.pandys.org)

Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER)

<http://safercampus.org/>

*For a complete list of references for all materials in this brochure, please visit our website found below.*

Varner House

MSC 0801

(540) 568-6552

[www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/Services/SAS.html](http://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/Services/SAS.html)



# Multicultural Survivors of Sexual Assault



**Sexual Assault Response Services**

## LGBTQI Survivors

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and intersex individuals may experience additional difficulties and fear in the event of sexual assault than heterosexual individuals. Reporting an incident may involve disclosing one's sexual orientation and thereby create fear of alienation, misunderstanding, or exposure to assumptions and judgments. Additionally, since numerous LGBTQI communities can be very close, survivors may fear losing friends or facing avoidance from other community members. Transgender individuals may experience additional discrimination during reporting if anatomy and/or appearance do not match stereotypical gender norms.



## Male Survivors

If a male survivor was under the impression that sexual assault only happened to women, he may feel isolated and alone. Due to societal standards in Western cultures, male survivors may feel emasculated. If the assault was perpetrated by another man, the survivor may struggle with confusion relating to sexual orientation. Men may avoid disclosing their assault, seeking services, or choosing legal prosecution because of assumptions that may be made about them, their gender role, or their sexuality. Male survivors may also assume that there are no resources available for men who have suffered from sexual assault. Fortunately, this is not the case. See the back page for resources.

## Racial and Ethnic Minority Survivors

As seen with other types of diverse populations, racial and ethnic minority sexual assault survivors face unique barriers and difficulties. Sometimes the issue of racism becomes evident in assaults and survivors may need additional resources to cope with this additional trauma. In some cultures, seeking help is not easy or even acceptable. These cultures often place value on relying upon family members, community, church, or God(s) rather than upon outside support. With the notion that they may be frowned upon for seeking additional help, or contacting legal assistance, some survivors may not disclose the assault and attempt to deal with the trauma on their own. An additional struggle is fear of scrutiny and misunderstanding from potential service providers due to



## Survivors with Religious Affiliations

Individuals from religious backgrounds may also face unique struggles after a sexual assault. In some religious affiliations, sexual assault survivors seek support within their organization and look to their faith in order to help them cope with the trauma. Alternatively, some religious cultures place high value in chastity and wholeness. To have engaged in sexual activity, regardless of how or why, may be considered sinful or shameful. Survivors who are members of these religious organizations may experience fear in disclosing the assault as well as shame and a perception of responsibility for the events.

.....  
*To receive help after an assault: contact the local police; go to a safe place; confide in a trusted individual, and/or seek services at the JMU Counseling & Student Development Center.*



## College Student Survivors

Although college students may identify with one or more of the categories described here, they also have distinctive struggles related to their life stage and development. Unfortunately, many colleges and universities have alcohol driven cultures in which sexual assault is all too common, making this population at especially high risk for unwanted sexual contact. In fact, at least fifty percent of college students' sexual assaults are associated with alcohol use and ninety percent of campus assaults are committed by an acquaintance of the victim.

Since many college students move away from home, sexual assault survivors may feel isolated and alone in their pain. This reaction may be even more acute if the survivor is in a new location and he or she may be unaware or unfamiliar of the support services available in the area.

A fear of academic failure may also consume survivors who are in college. Depressed feelings, isolation, and feelings of helplessness may prevent the survivor from engaging in school work. Time away from school for legal purposes connected with the assault may create additional stress. Completing assignments late, taking time off, or delaying graduation may become considerations. Survivors have a need to take control of



their lives and college students may disregard emotional feelings to complete school work.