



THE SURVIVOR'S REPORT

LGBTQ Services for Survivors of Sexual Assault

When an individual is sexually assaulted, physical and emotional fear and discontent often surround the incident. One question survivors consider when deciding whether to pursue charges through the campus or community legal system is whether justice will be served. While it is possible to successfully file and defend charges against a perpetrator, there are also times when the accused walk away unscathed. No matter the outcome, the survivor is left with the emotional repercussions of processing the assault.

"LGBTQ survivors at JMU can expect to receive a fair trial, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity."

What happens when the survivor is a member of the LGBTQ population and a college student? Sometimes, depending on campus definitions of sexual assault and the stigma around an LGBTQ identity, it can be difficult for LGBTQ survivors to experience justice in the campus community (van der Voo, 2010).

According to van der Voo (2010), there is "a fear [by survivors] that gender identity will become a focus of

the investigation or perceived as the cause of the assault." There is also a fear that the accused assailant might be able to walk away from an assault and not be charged by the legal system. There are several different reasons as to why this may happen: lack of evidence; a tale of "he [she] said, she [he] said;" and often times, society tends to blame the victims for the assault.

Fortunately for the JMU LGBTQ population, the Judicial Affairs definition of sexual assault is very broad, and encompasses assault that can occur across any gender lines. For instance, circumstances such as unwanted touching are included in the definition. For more information about JMU's policy against sexual assault, see the Judicial Affairs webpage and/or the JMU Student Handbook. Of note, "to constitute lack of consent, acts must be committed by force, intimidation or through use of the victim's mental incapacity or physical helplessness" (JMU Student

Handbook, J34-100, 2010).

LGBTQ survivors at JMU can expect to receive a fair trial regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Rebecca Norman, a professional in Portland, Oregon reminds us that, "sexual assault in general is not about sex or sexual attraction at all. It's ultimately about power and control and violence. If you're looking at it like that, it doesn't matter what the gender of the victim and perpetrator or what sexual identity those people have" (van der Voo, 2010).

Many LGBTQ college survivors may also fear seeking services from their on campus counseling center. At JMU's Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC), the counselors are dedicated to providing the highest quality services to all members of the JMU community, and will not treat clients differently due to sexual orientation or the nature of the reason he or she is seeking services.

-Vanessa Olson

van der Voo, L. (2010). Sexual violence on campus: Not just a crime of men against women. *Investigate West*. Retrieved from <http://invw.org/node/941>



If you are considering seeking support or becoming involved, the following campus organizations may be able to help!

Active Minds

C.A.R.E.

Friends of Rachel

Global Non-Violence Club

Her Two Cents

JMU NOW

Madison Equality

One in Four

R.E.A.C.H.

Sister Speak

Take Back the Night Coalition

Through the Eyes of a Women

To Write Love

Sexual Assault Response Program News

✓The CSDC recently hired a new coordinator for Sexual Assault Response Services. Dr. Jenelle Boo joins the team from Ball State University. She has been working closely with CSDC staff to ensure services for JMU students are appropriate and timely.

✓The staff at the CSDC have been working on new ideas to reach out to the JMU community about their new Sexual Assault Response Services. Make sure to keep an eye out for flyers, brochures, handouts, or gadgets with the sexual assault services on them!

✓Sexual assault response staff members are currently collaborating with campus organizations to enhance services for students. For instance, Dr. Boo met with CARE, the on-campus sexual assault hotline for students, to provide information about CSDC services and to learn how CARE can be of assistance to the CSDC.



Counseling & Student Development Center
Varner House
MSC 0801
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

Phone: (540) 568-6552
www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/Services/SAS.html



Likely? Unlikely.

If you experienced a sexual assault and you tell a counselor about what happened, is he/she is required to tell the police or your parents what you experienced? This scenario is highly unlikely. All counselors are bound by a strict law of confidentiality. The only reasons that counselors have to break confidentiality is if there is imminent danger to yourself or someone else or if there is a case of child or elder abuse. It's safe to open up to your counselor!

Roger Williams University, 2010

You Ask, She Answers

I am a sophomore in college. Two nights ago, I was at a party with some friends, just hanging out like we always do. I think I may have had a little too much to drink because the next thing I know, I am in one of the bedrooms with this guy from my math class. He kept telling me how beautiful I looked in my new skirt, and how he had been waiting for this chance for a long time. I told him I didn't want to, but I let him have sex with me anyway because I was too drunk to try to push him away. Now I feel like the incident is all my fault. Like, I drank too much, and I was wearing a really short skirt. I feel gross. What can I do now, and how do I stop feeling like I violated my own body?

-Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

It is really important for you to know that you are not at all at fault for this event. Simply because you choose to drink does not mean that you lose

any rights as a person. You said "no," and that should have been the cue for this person to leave you alone. Even if you had not said "no," you didn't say "yes." By not leaving you alone, this person has committed a crime. He is subject to the legal system, should you choose to press charges. However, you are not obligated to do so. If you choose to press charges, you should go to the hospital as soon as possible for evidence collection. This will help your case in court.

The same goes for your choice of outfit for the night. Assaultants of sexual assault choose their victims based upon accessibility and vulnerability, not based on what you are wearing.

Also know that you are not alone in feeling guilty. An alarming 85-90% of survivors report that they knew the person who assaulted them. Many victims think "what if" and blame themselves.

I know some of this may be difficult to

Mythical Tales

Many college students may believe that women provoke sexual assault by the way they dress and put on makeup. College students may also be more likely to think that attractiveness is the cause of sexual assault, especially at a large colleges like JMU where there are tons of parties each weekend. A specific belief might be that girls who dress up for these parties and drink lots of alcohol are basically asking for guys to touch them.

These beliefs are very **FALSE**! Perpetrators of sexual assault and rape do not pick out their victims by how they look. They pick victims who seem vulnerable and accessible. Victims of sexual assault range in age groups from infants to the elderly, and occur in all ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations. Sexual attractiveness is not an issue. However, women ages 16-24 have 4 times the risk of being assaulted than any other age group. This means that college students in particular are especially vulnerable to assault.



hear, but it is important for you to understand that this was not your fault. You may want to visit the JMU Counseling & Student Development Center to take advantage of services they have for survivors of sexual assault. Seeing a counselor may help you sort out the feelings associated with the notion that you feel like you "violated your own body." The CSDC offers individual and group counseling for survivors. There is also an advocacy program to help you if you choose to take legal action against the person who assaulted you.

Kindly,
Answer Annie

Please be advised that this article is neither a crisis/emergency service nor a correspondence therapy service. If you need either immediate attention or ongoing therapy, call JMU Counseling & Student Development Center at (540) 568-6552.