

## Rape: How Can I Reduce My Risk?

### Overview

Sexual assault is any non-consensual sexual activity. It is an act of aggression and anger. Force used may be physical such as hitting, restraining, or threatening. It can also be emotional or psychological, such as being pressured into sex through guilt, money, or gifts in exchange for sex, or being taken advantage of while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

More than 85% of sexual assault victims are assaulted by someone they know, such as a family member, friend, date, acquaintance, or neighbor. Anyone can be a victim of sexual assault.

Most acquaintance rapes are opportunity driven and often involve consumption of alcohol and/or drugs. Offenders who are prone to committing such offenses may seek out victims who they believe are easy targets because of their vulnerability.

### Suggestions for Deterring Rape

The following are some suggestions to deter rape:

- Be careful of your use of alcohol and drugs. Vulnerability increases when one is intoxicated or high. The majority of rapes involve use of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Do not leave beverages unattended or in the care of someone other than a trusted friend.
- Know your sexual intentions and limits. You have the right to say "no" to any unwanted sexual contact.
- Communicate your limits clearly. Be firm and direct. You have the right to expect your limits to be respected.
- Listen to your feelings. If you feel uncomfortable or think you may be at risk, leave the situation immediately and go to a safe place.
- Don't be afraid to "make waves" if you feel threatened. If you are being pressured or coerced into sexual activity against your will, don't hesitate to state your feelings and get out of the situation. Better a few minutes of social awkwardness or embarrassment, than the trauma of a sexual assault.
- Attend parties with friends you can trust. Agree to look out for one another. Try to leave with a group rather than alone or with someone you don't know well.

- When starting to date, have the first few dates in a public place. Avoid becoming isolated with someone you don't know well.
- Sometimes offenders use the "you owe me" line to try to guilt someone into sex.
- As a relationship progresses, avoid becoming physically, emotionally, or socially isolated from friends and family. Sexual assaults do happen within ongoing relationships.

## **Remember**

Even if we take many precautions or steps to make ourselves less vulnerable, there is no guarantee we can prevent a sexual assault. Remember:

- Sexual assault is never the victim's fault.
- Victims do not cause their assaults.
- Offenders are responsible for their actions.

## **Getting Help**

Always call 911 to report a sexual assault. If you or someone you know is a victim of a sexual assault, there are people and programs who can help. For information about the sexual assault program in Ramsey County, call **Sexual Offense Services (SOS)** at (651) 643-3006