



# Options after a sexual assault: Police and SARC

Some people are clear that they want to report the sexual assault to police. Others are clear that they do not want to involve the police. Some people are undecided. It is an individual decision for you to make.

## Options for reporting to police

- Choose not to report to the police.
- Speak to the police informally, either on the phone or in person. The police will tell you about your options, but they will not do anything unless you want them to. You do not have to give your name if you don't want to.
- Make an informal report to police. A police officer will write down what happened, and you sign a statement saying that you do not want the matter investigated.
- Make a formal statement to police. This involves telling the police all the details from the assault that you can remember. They will also ask you questions. The details will be typed into a statement which can take several hours to complete. You can have a support person with you if you choose. You then read the statement and sign it when you are satisfied with what has been written. You will be given a copy of the statement.

There is no set timeframe in WA for reporting a sexual assault to the police. However, the sooner a report is made, the easier it is for the police to investigate. Forensic evidence can be collected from your body, but only soon after the assault. It is best if the evidence can be collected within three days if possible, but sometimes up to seven days, depending on what has happened. This evidence can be an important part of supporting what you say.

## It's important to know

- SARC works with the police but not for the police.
- Not all cases will go to court and not all cases that go to court will end with a conviction.
- It can be an upsetting and confusing time and you may need extra support from close family, friends, and/or support services.
- Making a report to the police does provide information to help make our communities safer. You can report anonymously, especially if you are worried that it will happen again - [crimestopperswa.com.au/make-report](https://www.crimestopperswa.com.au/make-report)
- Reporting to police and going to court can make you feel empowered, even if it seems daunting at the time.

## What SARC can offer

- SARC is available to support you.
- Your consent (permission) is needed before SARC do anything.
- After a sexual assault (within two weeks), a SARC doctor and counsellor can see you together (in Perth). The doctor can do medical tests and collect forensic evidence. The counsellor can support you with coping after the experience. Longer term counselling is also available at SARC.
- If you plan to report to police, it is important to contact SARC as soon as possible so that forensic evidence can be collected.
- If you are undecided, evidence can be collected and stored to give you more time to decide if you want to report to police.
- If you are injured, or if pressure was applied to your neck (strangulation), you may need a medical check. SARC doctors can give advice on where to go for this to happen.



***SARC staff will respect and support your decision to report to police, or not.***

***They can assist you to make a report to the police if you choose to do so.***



## The process after a formal statement is made to police

- The police will start an investigation. If a suspect is identified, the police and lawyers (who work for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions or DPP) determine if there is enough evidence to press charges against the accused person. This will differ in each case.
- In WA, sexual assault is regarded as a crime against the state. You become a witness to the crime.
- If the police do not lay charges it does not mean that they do not believe you. Sometimes there is not enough evidence for charges to be laid, or they cannot find the suspect.
- If the matter goes to court, a trial will take place in the District Court (or the Children's Court if people under 18 years are involved). The police will keep you updated.
- At the trial there will be lawyers on both sides - the prosecution and the defence. You may be asked to give evidence in court and say what happened. You may be asked questions by the defence lawyer. The police and DPP will let you know more about this at the time.
- Cases end with a decision (verdict) with the accused person being found guilty or not guilty. Regardless of the outcome of the trial, people often feel better knowing that they were able to speak out about their experience and be heard.

**The Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)** is a free 24-hour emergency service providing medical and counselling services for people who have experienced a recent (within 14 days) sexual assault. Counselling for any sexual assault/abuse experienced recently or in the past is also available to people of all genders aged 13 years and above. Call SARC on (08) 6458 1828 or Freecall 1800 199 888.

Sexual assault can be reported to police at your **local police station**, or by calling 131 444, or reporting online through the **Crime Stoppers Safe2Say website** (anonymously if you prefer).

**Victim Support Service:** A free service available at all courts in WA to support victims of crime. Call **9425 2850** or **1800 818 988**. Refer to the website for further information.

Search online for these services to find out more.