



PAAR

**Pittsburgh Action
Against Rape**



**Help and
Healing Guide**



Sexual violence can affect anyone.

PAAR services are available at no cost to you.

If you are the victim of sexual assault, abuse, exploitation, or trafficking – or want to help someone who has been – PAAR is here. Our experienced advocates, case managers, and counselors provide confidential services.

HELPLINE AVAILABLE

24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK

CALL OR TEXT: 1-866-363-7273

JOIN AN ONLINE CHAT: www.paar.net



81 South 19th Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203

www.paar.net

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PAAR Services

24-Hour Helpline

PAAR provides confidential information and support, 24 hours a day through our Helpline. Helpline counselors and staff are available to talk with survivors, their families and friends, and community providers about sexual violence and available resources.

Connect with our Helpline in 3 ways:

1. Place a phone call, 24/7 at 1-866-363-7273
2. Send a text message to 1-866-363-7273
3. Join an online chat: www.paar.net

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Clinical Services



For an immediate need – like navigating a recent victimization or for emotional support in the moment – **contact our 24-Hour Helpline at 1-866-363-7273 to speak with a Sexual Assault Counselor.**

GETTING CONNECTED

If you are looking to connect with non-immediate services at PAAR, our Client Navigation Team will guide you in the right direction. **Contact PAAR's office at (412) 431-5665 and select option 2 at the prompt for Intake and Scheduling.**

1. Initial Phone Call (15 – 20 minutes)

You will begin by completing a brief intake over the phone. During this call, we will ask basic information about you and what prompted you to seek services. This is to better understand what you are looking for, and if PAAR can meet those needs.

2. Clinical Intake Assessment (1 hour)

We will schedule a more detailed assessment, which takes place over the phone. This is a longer appointment, about one hour, that **is necessary for accessing all clinical services at PAAR.**

3. Once the Clinical Intake Assessment is complete, the information will be reviewed to determine if PAAR is the right fit.

If so, you will be placed on a waitlist until you can be scheduled with an appointment matching both your availability and needs.

CLINICAL SERVICES FOR MINOR CHILDREN (UNDER AGE 18)

In Pennsylvania, a **client age 14 and above** will provide consent to their own mental health treatment. **In order to seek clinical services at PAAR, the child will need to agree to complete the Clinical Intake Assessment and join the appointment themselves.** The right to consent to voluntary mental health treatment – or to decline it – cannot be overridden by a parent or legal guardian.

Child **clients age 13 and younger** require a parent or legal guardian to consent to their mental health treatment. If there is a custody order in place, both parents and/or legal guardians will be required to consent to treatment, and will be asked to provide custody documentation or a court order. The Clinical Intake Assessment appointment will be completed by a parent/legal guardian – the child client could choose to attend along with the parent/legal guardian, but this is not required.

Reference: Act 65 of 2020: Section 1.1 *Consent to Mental Health Treatment for Minors*

CHILD AND FAMILY CENTER

The Child and Family Center at PAAR has provided specialized trauma treatment services to child and adolescent survivors of sexual trauma and their families for over 50 years. Our clients range from 3 to 18 years of age. The Child and Family Center at PAAR provides trauma-informed and evidence-based treatment to children and adolescents. Our short-term weekly therapy utilizes modalities and interventions that are both engaging to the child and individualized to therapeutic needs. Some of these modalities and interventions may include: Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Eye-Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Trauma Art Narrative Therapy (TANT), art therapy interventions, play therapy interventions, and sand tray therapy interventions.

The Child and Family Center at PAAR is the first and only location in Allegheny County to offer SMART. **Sensory Motor Arousal Regulation Treatment, or “SMART,”** is a therapeutic modality created by trauma professionals and occupational therapists to manage dysregulation in traumatized children and their families (Warner, Westcott, Cook, and Finn 2020).

SMART's therapeutic process consists of three goals: Somatic Regulation, Trauma Processing, and Attachment Building for individuals with complex trauma symptoms. SMART utilizes various sensory inputs (vestibular, proprioceptive, and tactile) to assist in regulation of the child's traumatized states and to move toward an integrated state, where their trauma can be reprocessed, and healthy boundaries and healthy attachments can be established.

Regardless of treatment modality, PAAR believes that caregivers play an active role in a child's healing and should be included in the treatment process when appropriate.

More information: www.paar.net

Reference: Warner, E., Westcott, A., Cook, A., & Finn, H. (2020). *Transforming trauma in children and adolescents: an embodied approach to somatic regulation, trauma processing, and attachment building*. North Atlantic Books.

FIRST STEPS PROGRAM

PAAR's First Steps Program assists survivors to begin their healing journey using a trauma-informed and needs-based process. Abraham Maslow (1948) identified 4 needs that must be met to achieve one's full potential and become the best version of oneself:

- **Physiological** (survival needs, including nourishment and shelter)
- **Security** (overall safety, including physical and emotional safety)
- **Social** (belonging, safe relationships, mutuality with others, and love)
- **Esteem** (accomplishments that support emotional well-being, strength, and freedom)

PAAR's First Steps Program strives to meet these needs by providing holistic engagement founded on evidenced-based therapeutic interventions. The goal of the First Steps Program is to promote safety by addressing immediate physical and emotional needs, and to create person-centered future goals in collaboration with the survivor. Clients will receive case management services alongside trauma-focused individual counseling to manage symptoms of traumatic stress. This is accomplished by learning to identify emotions, gain insight into negative cognitions, identify trauma triggers, and successfully utilize coping strategies.

Therapeutic needs triangle



CLINICAL THERAPY FOR ADULTS

PAAR offers trauma focused therapy for individuals who have experienced sexual trauma at any point in their life. Services are offered at no cost to the client regardless of an individual's insurance status.

Clients receiving trauma processing therapy meet with their therapist once per week in PAAR's South Side location or virtually. Treatment is meant to be short-term and focused on sexual trauma, typically lasting 8 to 16 months. Therapists at PAAR utilize a variety of trauma-informed, evidence-based treatment modalities to meet the unique needs of clients receiving trauma processing therapy at PAAR.

All therapists are trained in:

- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Internal Parts
- Sensory Motor and Arousal Regulation Treatment (SMART)
- Trauma Art Narrative Therapy (TANT)

Our therapists may also be trained in:

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Narrative Therapy
- Emotionally Focused Individual Therapy (EFIT)

Therapists at PAAR consistently meet with professional consultants and engage in training to ensure a high level of quality of care for all clients.

GROUPS AND WORKSHOPS

Groups and Wellness workshops are offered through PAAR's clinical team as an alternative and supplement to the individual services we provide.

Wellness Workshops are offered to the community as an opportunity to engage in workshops and activities that serve an individual holistically. To participate in Wellness Workshops, you do not need to have experienced any form of sexual violence or be a client with PAAR.

Various groups are offered both at PAAR and throughout the community that are psycho-educational and/or therapeutic in nature. Most groups run on a 10-week cycle and meet once a week. Group availability and scheduling may change. To see current offerings use the link below.

In-person and virtual groups include:

- Coping Strategies for Trauma Group
- Men's Virtual Support Group
- Trauma Processing Group
- College Student's Virtual Support Group
- LGBTQ+ Virtual Support Group
- Trauma Informed Caregivers Group

Wellness Workshops include:

- Empowerment Based Self Defense
- Trauma Informed Yoga
- Ongoing art programs



More information:

www.paar.net/get-help/group-support



Advocacy Services

MEDICAL ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

PAAR is available 24/7 to meet survivors in area emergency departments. Medical Advocates provide information and support as you navigate the medical setting, including information about your rights in evidence collection and anonymous reporting. To request accompaniment in the hospital, contact PAAR's Helpline.

COURT ACCOMPANIMENT AND SUPPORT

PAAR provides information about a survivor's rights and options in the aftermath of sexual violence, including what it looks like to report to law enforcement or seek a protection order. Our non-attorney legal advocates provide support and accompaniment as you navigate the judicial system or an investigation process. Advocacy and accompaniment services are available in criminal proceedings – in a college/university investigation or hearing process – and in protection orders and civil* proceedings.

**Excluding custody and family law*

VICTIMS COMPENSATION

The *Victim's Compensation Assistance Program* provides financial compensation to assist with the out-of-pocket costs related to a crime. Contact PAAR to request an application and to receive assistance in filing a claim.

Walk-in Services

Available every Wednesday from 9:00am – 5:00pm

PAAR provides confidential walk-in services **every Wednesday from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm**. Community members can walk into PAAR’s South Side location or register for a one-hour virtual appointment on the PAAR website.

WALK-IN SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Emergency case management
 - Crisis counseling
 - Connection to community resources
 - Intake for additional PAAR services
 - Access to **PAAR’s Drop-in Center**, a safe, secure location equipped with computer lab, Wi-Fi, and phone access – creative arts, games, and activities – and access to emergency items including food, clothing, and hygiene.
 - Free, rapid **STI and HIV testing services** through Allies for Health + Wellbeing – including screening for HIV, Hepatitis C, Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Chlamydia.
- No insurance or appointment is required.**

Prevention and Education

Prevention and education are the first steps in stopping sexual violence. PAAR's dedicated team serves individuals, communities, businesses, schools, volunteer groups, and more.

Our prevention programs, educational programs, and training are provided to audiences including:

- Community members
- Parents and caregivers
- Service Providers
- School personnel and educators, K–12
- Professionals working with youth and youth-serving agencies
- College and University students, staff, and faculty

PAAR training is customizable for audiences and time constraints. Training topics may be developed or combined upon request. To request additional information about prevention programs, education, or training, contact PAAR at (412) 431-5665.



More information: [www.paar.net/
education-prevention/trainings-programs/](http://www.paar.net/education-prevention/trainings-programs/)



Project RISE

RESILIENCE.
INDEPENDENCE.
STRENGTH.
EMPOWERMENT.

Project RISE addresses the unique and practical needs of people who experience commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking, with services to help them move from surviving to thriving.

Sex Trafficking is when someone engages in commercial sex acts – the exchange of sex for something of value like money, food, or a place to stay – by force, fraud, or coercion. Or, when the person engaging in the sex act is a minor.

To connect with Project RISE, contact (412) 431-5665 x3

CASE MANAGEMENT

The Case Managers in Project RISE provide survivor-centered case management services to support clients in addressing basic needs and working on their short- and long-term goals. Services are available in-person and virtually.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND CASE CONSULTATION

For many, it may be surprising that sexual exploitation and trafficking occur in Allegheny County. PAAR engages community members and providers to educate and bring awareness about human trafficking through webinars, training, presentations, conference workshops, and resource fairs.

The staff in Project RISE also provide case consultation services. If you know a person who may be experiencing exploitation or trafficking, we can help brainstorm intervention strategies, link them to resources, and offer safety planning.

PROJECT RISE DROP-IN CENTER



81 South 19th Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203

Monday – Thursday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

No appointment needed

Our drop-in center is a safe, secure place for youth and adults of all gender identities. Whether you want to simply talk about your situation, need support, or need to take action to remove yourself from a person or situation, we are here every step of the way.

The drop-in center provides:

- Supportive Counseling
- Individualized Case Management
- Emergency Shelter Coordination
- Emergency items including hygiene, clothing, and food
- Computer lab, Wi-Fi, and phone access
- Creative arts, crafts, games, and activities
- Psychoeducational Groups

Know the Signs

WARNING SIGNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- Showing signs of physical or sexual abuse (bruises, cuts, burns, scars)
- Unexplained absences from school/truancy
- Avoiding eye contact, social interaction, and authority figures or law enforcement
- Seeming to adhere to coached, scripted, or rehearsed responses in social interactions
- Working excessive, long hours
- Living at place of employment
- New tattoos (may be used to brand or control a victim)
- Untreated sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- Frequent pregnancy concerns
- Security measures that seem to keep people inside (barbed wire inside a fence, bars covering the inside of windows)
- Unable to speak alone, or a third party insisting on speaking or translating for them
- Lack of control over their own identification documents, money, or bank account

The warning signs are adapted from information provided by the Polaris Project and The National Human Trafficking Resource Center.

More information:

<https://paar.net/get-help/project-rise/know-the-signs/what-is-sexual-exploitation-sex-trafficking>

To connect with Project RISE, contact (412) 431-5665 x3

Resources

Common Reactions



For confidential information and support, contact our **24-Hour Helpline at 1-866-363-7273.**

It can be difficult to think clearly if you or someone you know has been the victim of sexual violence and abuse.

Remember that whatever you are feeling is normal, and you are not alone.

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The Healing Process

Sexual violence and abuse can bring up uncomfortable feelings. These feelings are normal reactions, but you may feel as if you are alone. Knowing the stages of the healing process may help you better understand how and what you are feeling. While healing from sexual violence does not follow any certain time schedule or pattern, many survivors experience similar reactions and feelings:

STAGE 1

- Shock: *“I feel so numb, I can’t cry.”*
- Disbelief: *“Did this really happen to me?”*
- Shame: *“I feel like it was my fault. I feel dirty.”*
- Guilt: *“If only I had...”*
- Anger: *“I want to get even with them.”*

STAGE 2

As time passes, you may be returning to your regular routines. You might start to think you should be “over the assault.” You may have some of these feelings:

- Depression: *“I feel tired and hopeless.”*
- Powerless: *“Will I ever have control again?”*
- Re-triggering: *“I keep having flashbacks and nightmares.”*
- Anxiety: *“I’m a nervous wreck. I can’t sleep.”*

STAGE 3

You may begin to acknowledge your feelings and learn what you might need to heal. You may start to regain power/control and begin functioning again as you routinely did prior to the assault.

Taking care of yourself:

- Try not to make any major life decisions or major life changes right away. This is not a time to put pressure on yourself. Concentrate on taking care of yourself.
- Ask a friend, family member, or supportive person in your life to keep you company. Tell them you may not feel like talking, but it helps to be with someone who cares about you.
- Get plenty of rest when you are tired.
- Allow yourself to cry, be angry, and express your feelings. There is no “wrong” feeling.
- Talk to your doctor if you are not feeling like yourself. They can help if you notice changes in your eating, sleeping, ability to work/take care of your children or family, etc.
- Make time for activities that feel enjoyable.
- Remember, sexual assault and abuse is never your fault.

Sometimes, survivors have difficulty with **daily routines** and getting connected back to their life. Some may turn to **alcohol or other substances** to numb feelings and escape the pain of victimization. Working through your feelings can help you feel more like yourself and regain your life. It is not uncommon for survivors to also struggle with setting **sexual limits and boundaries**. Negotiating with your partner(s) about birth control and sexual activity can be difficult after sexual violence, but it is an important part of healing. PAAR’s counselors and therapists can help you work through the healing process.

Flashbacks: What are they?

Flashbacks are a common reaction to a traumatic event – Flashbacks flood the brain with images, physical sensations, and a sense of re-living the trauma. Because flashbacks can be triggered by a smell, sound, or sight, it is not uncommon to avoid certain places or activities that you associate with a memory.

Flashbacks can:

- Be unexpected
- Feel like you are re-living the event
- Make your heart race or make it hard to breathe
- Cause overwhelming emotion

MANAGING A FLASHBACK

Flashbacks can be overwhelming and make it difficult to navigate everyday life. Finding ways to manage flashbacks, and seeking support like counseling, can help reduce the frequency.

Read through the following list and choose a few items that may work for you. Remember to practice these skills **when you are relaxed and not having a flashback.**

While actively having a flashback, it can be hard to remember what to do:

- Take a few deep breaths
- Place your feet flat on the ground to remind yourself that you are safe
- Look around the room and say out loud what you see and hear
- Name what is happening: “I am having a flashback, this isn’t happening now.”
- Try eating a mint or sour candy (you may want to keep one with you once you find something that works)
- Try not to stare, rock, or hum
- Make a list of people you could reach out to in the moment – include a resource or hotline that is available 24/7



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can occur after experiencing or witnessing traumatic events. PTSD can interfere with daily living and interrupt the healing process. Symptoms could last a short period of time, or occur over time. Not all symptoms will begin right after the event – it could be months or even years later.

PTSD may cause you to relive the event through:

- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling alone

Sometimes, PTSD-related symptoms are severe and occur over a long period of time. You may notice that PTSD-related symptoms are impacting your daily life or your physical health.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

Talk with your doctor about any symptoms you are experiencing – and contact PAAR to learn more about healing from sexual violence.

To complete an intake or for more information about PAAR services, call (412) 431-5665 and select 2 at the prompt.

The checklist on this page could be helpful in identifying PTSD-related symptoms and in talking to your doctor and/or counselor:

I RELIVE THE TRAUMATIC EVENT BY:

- Having bad dreams or nightmares
- Behaving or feeling as if the event were actually happening again
- Feeling overwhelmed with emotion when I am reminded of the event
- Having physical sensations when I am reminded of the event (eg. racing heart; difficulty breathing; feeling dizzy; sweating)

I HAVE NOTICED THAT SINCE THE EVENT HAPPENED:

- I have lost interest in things that used to be important to me
- I feel detached from people or find it hard to trust them
- I feel emotionally numb
- I have difficulty falling or staying asleep
- I have difficulty with anger
- I am jumpy or always on guard/on edge

I AVOID REMINDERS OF THE TRAUMATIC EVENT BY:

- Avoiding thoughts, conversations, or feelings that remind me of the event
- Avoiding people, places, or activities that remind me of the event
- Having difficulty remembering some important part of the event

I HAVE THE FOLLOWING MEDICAL OR EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS:

- Stomach or gastrointestinal
- Gynecological
- Weight gain or loss
- Chronic pain (eg. back, neck, pelvic area)
- Headaches
- Irritability
- Nightmares
- Depression
- Lack of energy
- Using alcohol or other substances
- Anxiety or panic attacks

OTHER THINGS I HAVE NOTICED:

Coping Skills and Techniques

THE 5 4 3 2 1 TECHNIQUE

SIT comfortably and take a couple of deep breaths.

BREATHE in slowly for a count of (3) and then out slowly.

LOOK around the room, or the space you are in.

NAME OUT LOUD:

5

things
you can



SEE

4

things
you can



FEEL

3

things
you can



HEAR

2

things
you can



SMELL

1

thing
you can



TASTE

BREATHE in slowly for a count of (3) and then out slowly.

SETTLING BREATH

Take a few breaths, in and out. Don't try to change your breath or judge it.

Just notice yourself breathing. Now, try to make your exhale longer than the inhale.

Breathe in, then breathe out (holding that breath longer).

LION BREATH

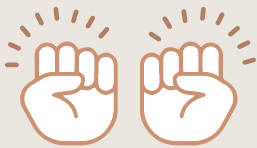
Deep exhale with a roaring breath, which can reduce negative energy, stress and anger through the active release of tension on the exhale:

Take a few slow, deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth. **Deepen your breath** (the slower and deeper you breathe, the better).

Make sure your shoulders are relaxed and your body loose. Inhale deeply through your nose and open your mouth as you exhale.

Stick out your tongue and stretch the muscles in your face as you exhale, making the sound “haaaaaah.” Your mouth should be as open as possible. **Think of a lion roar.** Do the lion breath three or four times, then take a slow, deep breath a few times.

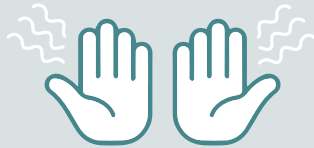
HOLD AND RELEASE



Make fists with your hands.

Focusing on your clenched fists, bring to mind the negative thoughts/energy you are feeling.

Notice the contraction of your muscles. Feel your fingernails dig into your skin.



Start to slowly and mindfully let go.

Notice your fingers uncurling and feel the trickle of letting go all through your arms, up to your shoulders.

Feel the sensation of letting go.

BODY SCAN MEDITATION

The “body scan” is a mindfulness technique during which you bring attention to your body, noticing different sensations as you mentally scan from head to toe.

Begin by closing your eyes or lowering them to a single point of focus in the room. **Bring awareness to your body** as you breathe in and out, noticing where your body makes contact with your seat or the floor.

When you are ready, **intentionally breathe in, thinking about bringing in oxygen**. Exhale, thinking about relaxing your body.

Starting at the top of your head, mentally “scan down” your body:

- **Bring your awareness to your head, jaw, and neck.** Notice if you feel any sensations or discomfort. Does that area feel relaxed or tense? Comfortable or uncomfortable? Energetic or tired?
- **Repeat this scan for your shoulders, arms, hands, back, stomach, legs, and feet** – taking a moment to focus on each body part. When you notice tension in a certain area during the scan, focus on breathing.
Try to visualize the tension leaving your body.
- **Notice your whole body being in the chair.** Take one more deep breath. When you are ready, open your eyes.

BUTTERFLY HUG



Cross your arms across your chest, placing each hand on the opposite shoulder.

Slowly start tapping, alternating from the left to the right side.



Continue to tap slowly as you bring up an image that evokes feelings of peace and safety.

GROUNDING FOR ANXIETY



DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE

Notice your breathing. Inhale. Exhale.



USE WATER

Run your hands under the faucet. Change the temperature and pressure. Notice how it feels.



DO SOMETHING REPETITIVE

Think of a hobby or chore that is familiar – do the dishes, knit, color.



WRITE IT OUT

Try not to worry about grammar or style – write what comes into your mind.



THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Grounding may not always be calming and quiet – turn on some loud music and dance.



GO FOR A WALK

Go outside if you can. Count your steps. Listen to the noises around you.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Our anxiety can make us overly critical – say out loud to yourself: “I am ok. I am enough. I can do hard things.”



Mental Health

It is very common and normal for survivors of sexual trauma to experience mental health symptoms, including self-injurious behavior and suicidal thoughts. This looks and feels different for everyone, but can include feeling: empty, trapped, alone, more anxious or agitated than usual, depressed, numb, overwhelmed, or unable to keep living.

If this is your experience, it is okay – and you are not alone.

It may be helpful to develop a **safety plan** for yourself, for times when you are navigating thoughts about suicide and/or engaging in self-injury. **Safety Planning** is a way to plan what to do, where to go, and who to talk to. You can ask a person you trust to help you develop the plan.

On the following pages, you will find a template that may help in making your own safety plan – or it may help you provide support to someone you know who would like to make a safety plan.

More Resources:

- **National Suicide and Crisis Hotline:** 988
- **Resolve Crisis Services:** 1-888-796-8226
- **Trans Lifeline:** 1-877-565-8860
Call Monday – Friday from 1:00pm to 9:00pm to access peer support and crisis support meant for the trans community
- **THRIVE Lifeline:** text 313-662-8209
24/7 text-based support for mental health and/or identity – provided by, and for, multiple marginalized individuals
- **StrongHearts Native Helpline:** 1-844-762-8483
24/7 hotline providing crisis support related to intimate partner and sexual violence for Native American and Indigenous People



Safety Plan Template

STEP 1

Warning signs that a crisis may be developing (thoughts, images, situations, mood, behavior):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

STEP 2

Internal coping strategies – Things I can do to relax or distract myself (grounding technique, favorite activity, hobby, being in nature):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

STEP 3

People and social settings that provide distraction:

1. Name: _____

Phone: _____

2. Name: _____

Phone: _____

3. Name: _____

Phone: _____

STEP 4

People in my life that I can talk to:

1. Name: _____

How are they helpful: _____

Phone: _____

2. Name: _____

How are they helpful: _____

Phone: _____

3. Name: _____

How are they helpful: _____

Phone: _____

STEP 5

Professionals or agencies I can contact during a crisis:

1. **Clinician Name:** _____

Phone: _____

Hotline or Emergency #: _____

2. **Clinician Name:** _____

Phone: _____

Hotline or Emergency #: _____

3. **Urgent Care Services:** _____

Resolve: 1-888-YOU-CAN, 1-888-796-8226

988 Lifeline: Call/text 988, or chat online: www.988lifeline.org

STEP 6

Making the environment safe:

1. _____

2. _____

**SOMETHING THAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME
AND WORTH LIVING FOR:**

Medical Care and Sexual Assault

We recommend receiving immediate attention and care in the emergency department following a sexual trauma. In the emergency department you can receive care and complete evidence collection, regardless of whether you report to police or not.

In the emergency department, you have access to:

- Checking for injuries and receiving medical attention
- Completing a sexual assault exam to collect evidence
- Receiving emergency contraception and prophylactic medication to prevent STIs and HIV

It is important to follow up with your primary care physician or an outpatient clinic. If you would like help in connecting to a provider, **contact PAAR: 1-866-363-7273.**

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

Emergency Contraception (EC) is a safe way to prevent pregnancy following a sexual assault, after unprotected sex or when a contraceptive method may have failed (eg. a condom breaking or missing two or more birth control pills).

Important Information:

- EC prevents pregnancy before it occurs.
- The earlier you take EC, the more likely it is to work – it is recommended to use EC within 5 days.
- EC will not end an existing pregnancy.
- EC does not work if you are already pregnant.
- EC is not as effective in preventing pregnancy as a birth control method used consistently and correctly.
- EC may be prescribed to keep on hand before you need it.

More information: www.plannedparenthood.org

PLANNING FOLLOW-UP TESTING SERVICES

The risk of acquiring an STI or HIV following sexual violence is low – but, it is important to receive testing and to know your status. If you received care in the emergency department following a sexual assault, the chart below may be a resource in planning follow-up STI and HIV testing and treatment.

You can receive STI and HIV testing even if you did **not** receive medical care in the emergency department. The resources below are available for testing services.

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Emergency Contraception	Recommended within 3 to 5 days.			
STI testing with prophylaxis/antibiotics	Recommended if you develop symptoms of an infection...	... or, if you want to get tested.		
STI testing without prophylaxis	2 – 4 weeks <hr/> (date)	3 months <hr/> (date)	6 months <hr/> (date)	
HIV testing with PEP <i>7 days of medication, or “starter pack”</i>	Within 7 days, receive remaining medication (28-day course) <hr/> (date)	4 to 6 weeks <hr/> (date)	3 months <hr/> (date)	6 months <hr/> (date)
HIV testing without PEP	1 – 2 weeks <hr/> (date)	3 months <hr/> (date)	6 months <hr/> (date)	

FOLLOW-UP TESTING SERVICE PROVIDERS

KEY:

*Gender Affirming

^Adolescent Care

- *^ **Allies for Health and Wellbeing**
(412) 345-7456
- * **Center for Inclusion Health at AHN**
(412) 359-4649
- * **Central Outreach**
(412) 515-0000
- *^ **Child and Adolescent Medicine, Oakland**
(412) 692-6677
- *^ **Planned Parenthood**
(412) 434-8971
(412) 257-9880



Victim's Compensation Assistance Program

Compensation is available to victims of crime and their families through PCCD (Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency). The Victims Compensation Assistance Program can help cover out-of-pocket costs related to a crime.

YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE IF:

- The crime occurred in Pennsylvania
- The claim is filed within 5 years of the crime
- The out of pocket costs are at least \$50
- The crime was reported to “proper authorities” including a hospital, healthcare provider, Children Youth and Families (CYF), Adult Protective Services, police, campus police, military police, probation/parole, or a protection order was filed*

**This is not required when the victim is/was a child at the time of the crime.*

THE REIMBURSEMENT COULD INCLUDE:

- Medical bills
- Counseling
- Travel costs, including mileage to counseling and/or court proceedings
- Lost wages
- Child care
- Relocation

To **request an application** and to receive assistance submitting a claim, **contact PAAR at (412) 431-5665** or **contact the Victims Compensation Assistance Program at 1-800-233-2339**.

In 2022, the Victims Compensation Assistance Program was updated through Act 77. The changes to eligibility and reimbursement are not retroactive, but instead apply to crimes that occurred after September 8, 2022. For more information about eligibility and the application process, contact PAAR.

The Legal System

THE LEGAL SYSTEM INDEX

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Civil Justice

Civil cases are filed by an individual and the defendant (the person who committed the crime) is held accountable directly to the victim. In the civil justice system, you would be seeking accountability through monetary resources and not a criminal outcome like jail time or probation. The civil court will determine whether the defendant or a third party is liable for harm as the result of the crime. Civil justice may provide accountability, monetary resources to aid in rebuilding your life, or could lead to policy/ change at a broader level to prevent further harm. In civil cases, the victim will control how the case moves through the civil process – it is the victim who decides whether or not to file a case, accept a settlement, or go to a hearing.

Civil cases must be proven by a preponderance of the evidence, or “more likely to have occurred than not.” Meaning, the evidence for the victim is more persuasive than the defendant – the burden of proof in civil cases is lower than the “proof beyond a reasonable doubt” that is required for a conviction in a criminal case. Therefore, it may be possible to find the defendant liable in a civil case even though the criminal case had a verdict of “not guilty.” You may choose to pursue only a civil case, or there could be both a civil and criminal case.

For more information, or to ask about legal representation, contact:
Sexual Violence Legal Assistance Project

(717) 901-6784

www.pcar.org/help-pa/sexual-violence-legal-assistance-project

**The National Crime Victim Bar Association, a program of the
National Center for Victims of Crime:**

(202) 467-8701

www.victimbar.org

Statute of Limitations

Victims who were **over the age of 18** at the time of the crime have (2) years to file a civil case. Victims who were **under the age of 18** at the time of the crime have until their 30th birthday to file a civil case.

We suggest speaking with an attorney to determine the statute of limitations that applies to your case, and to talk through how to protect your rights.

For more information, or to ask about legal representation, contact:
Sexual Violence Legal Assistance Project

(717) 901-6784

www.pcar.org/help-pa/sexual-violence-legal-assistance-project

**The National Crime Victim Bar Association, a program of the
National Center for Victims of Crime:**

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The Criminal Legal System

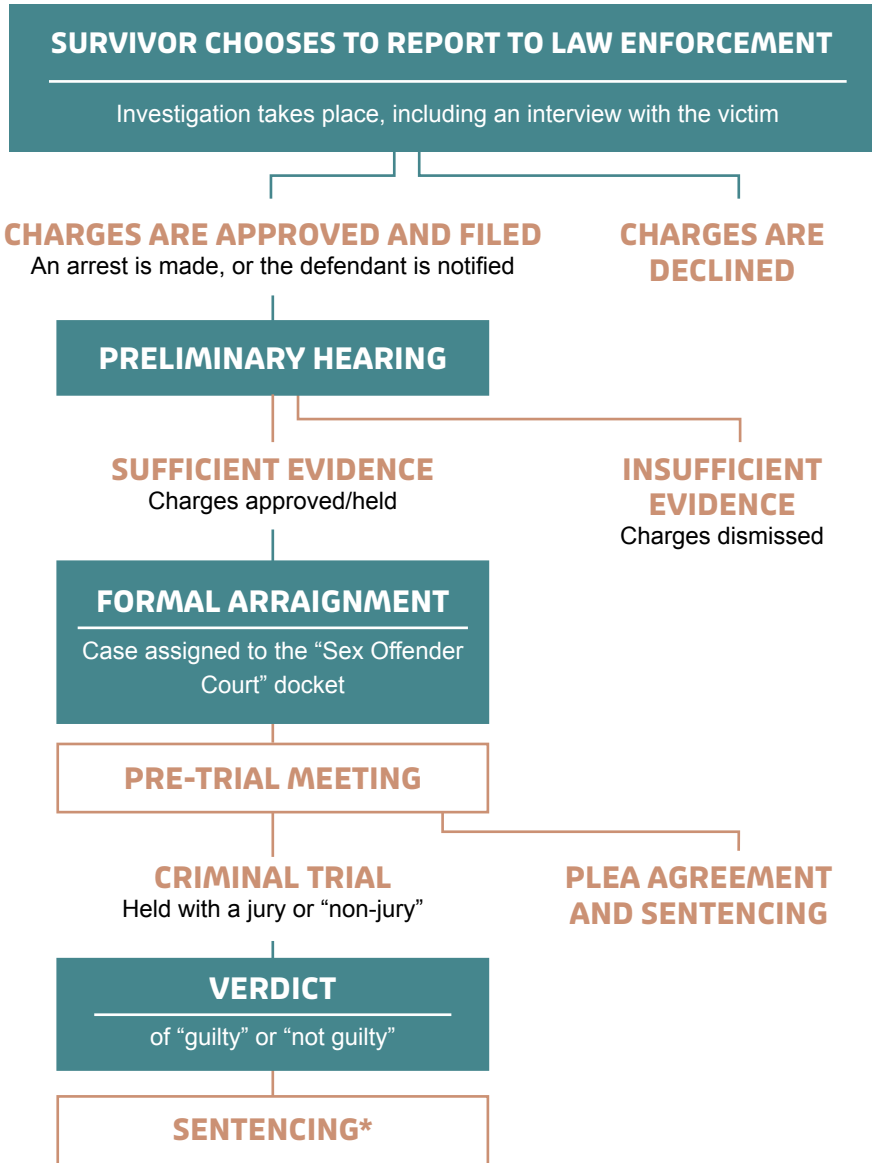
Our non-attorney legal advocates (sometimes referred to as “victim advocates”) provide support and accompaniment as you navigate an investigation or court proceeding.

To request an advocate – or for more information about the criminal legal system – **contact our 24/7 Helpline: 1-866-262-7273.**

The following pages provide an overview of the process in **criminal court** and **juvenile court**:

- The **criminal court process** applies to cases filed against a defendant who is age 18+
- The **juvenile court process** applies when the crime was committed by a juvenile (under age 18)

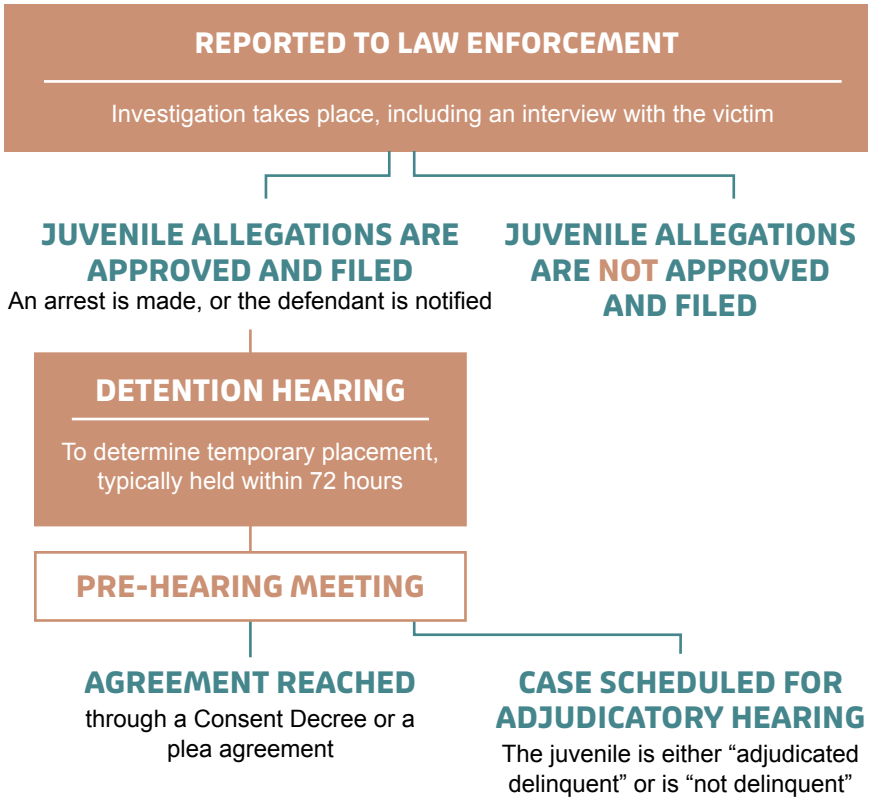
The Criminal Court Process



OVERVIEW: CRIMINAL COURT

1. Begin by reporting the crime to law enforcement in the appropriate jurisdiction.
2. Law enforcement will investigate, including interviewing the victim—in cases that involve a child victim, the interview is held at a Child Advocacy Center (this is called a “Forensic Interview”).
3. Law enforcement will refer the case to the Allegheny County District Attorney’s Office to determine if prosecution will occur. The person who committed the crime will be arrested if probable cause can be determined.
4. When charges are filed, the criminal case begins with an arraignment and a “Preliminary Hearing.” The victim may be able to provide input on bond. During the Preliminary Hearing, the victim is typically asked to testify in front of a magistrate. The victim becomes a “witness” for the commonwealth and an Assistant District Attorney is assigned to the case.
5. When charges are approved at the Preliminary Hearing, the case is referred to the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas and a trial date is scheduled.
6. The Assistant District Attorney assigned to the case will talk with the victim and their advocate and may schedule a “Pretrial Meeting” to talk through the case timeline, potential outcomes, and to prepare for trial. The victim will provide input, but ultimately decisions about the case are made by the District Attorney’s Office.
7. The case will likely have continuances and postponements, which lengthen the court process. Some cases will have a “plea agreement,” while others will proceed to trial. During the trial, the victim will testify alongside other witnesses. The defendant will be found guilty or not guilty of all or some of the charges.
8. During sentencing*, the victim has the right to provide a “Victim Impact Statement” to inform the judge how the crime has impacted their life physically, emotionally, and financially.

The Juvenile Court Process



OVERVIEW: JUVENILE COURT

The crime was committed by a juvenile under age 18

1. Law enforcement will investigate, including interviewing the victim—in cases that involve a child victim, the interview is held at a Child Advocacy Center (this is called a “Forensic Interview”).
2. Law enforcement will refer the case to the Allegheny County District Attorney’s Office to determine if the case will proceed to Juvenile Court.
3. When a juvenile allegation is filed, a probation officer is assigned, and a Detention Hearing is held to determine where the juvenile will be placed.
4. The victim is assigned an advocate to help them navigate through the court system.
5. Most cases will end with a plea or a consent decree.
6. The Juvenile Probation Office and the court will determine sentencing after delinquency is determined.
7. You can register to receive notification about the case status throughout the probation period.

Protection Orders

You may be eligible to file a protection order to help ensure your safety if you have experienced sexual violence or intimidation.

PAAR provides advocacy and accompaniment in the PFA process – To request a non-attorney legal advocate, or for more information about protection order eligibility, **contact our 24/7 Helpline: 1-866-262-7273.**

SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROTECTION ORDER (SVPO)

Sexual Violence Protection Orders are available to people who have experienced sexual violence **and** who don't have a "family or household member" relationship with the person who committed the harm. To be eligible, you do not need to report the incident to law enforcement. You will have to show a continued risk of harm in addition to the initial incident.

PROTECTION FROM INTIMIDATION (PFI)

Protection From Intimidation orders are available to minor children who have experienced intimidation, including harassment and stalking. To be eligible, the incident must involve a victim under age 18 **and** an adult (age 18+) who committed the harm – without a "family or household member" relationship.

PROTECTION FROM ABUSE (PFA)

Protection From Abuse orders are available to people who have experienced violence and have a "family or household member" relationship with the person who committed the harm – including a current/former spouse, current/former sexual or intimate partner, a parent and child, siblings, or other relationships by blood or marriage.

TYPES OF RELIEF INCLUDE:

- Ordering them to stop violent or abusive behavior and to refrain from further contacting, harassing, or stalking you.
- Excluding them from your place of residence, place of work and/or school.
- Establishing temporary custody and visitation rights.
- Ordering them to relinquish weapons, ammunition, and firearms to law enforcement.
- Prohibiting direct or indirect contact with other designated people.

Minor victims – a parent, adult household member, or guardian may seek an order on behalf of a minor child.

FILING A PROTECTION ORDER

You may file a petition in the county where you reside or work – in the county where the incident occurred – or in the county where the defendant will be served.

To file a Temporary Order in Allegheny County, you will go to the Family Court building located at: **440 Ross Street (Suite 3030), Pittsburgh, PA 15219.**

Emergency Orders are available when Family Court is closed (evenings, weekends, and holidays). To file an Emergency Order, you will go to a **Magisterial District Judge's Office or Allegheny County Night Court, located at 660 First Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.**

Notification Services

Under the Pennsylvania Crime Victims Act, crime victims have the right to know about the incarceration and status of the defendant (the person charged with the crime) once an arrest is made.

More information about the rights provided to crime victims under the [Pennsylvania Crime Victims Act \(18 P.S. § 11.0101\)](#):

[www.ova.pa.gov/AboutOVA/CrimeVictimsRights/Documents/crime_victims_act\[1\].pdf](http://www.ova.pa.gov/AboutOVA/CrimeVictimsRights/Documents/crime_victims_act[1].pdf)

BOND NOTIFICATION

Under Act 71 of the Pennsylvania Crime Victims Act, a crime victim has the right to receive notice of any bail/bond hearing, and to provide comment to the court prior to bail being set or modified.

To request notification of court proceedings related to bond, contact the PAAR Helpline: 1-866-363-7273

VINELink

VINELink is an online portal and automated notification service that provides timely information when the defendant is transferred between correctional institutions, or released. The defendant must currently be in custody in a jail or prison in order to register. Once you register with VINELink, you will receive automated notification by email, text, or phone call. Or you can check a defendant's status online at any time.

To register, contact the PAAR Helpline: 1-866-363-7273 or register online: www.vinelink.com

POST-SENTENCING NOTIFICATION

You have the right to receive notification – and to provide comment – on post-sentencing decisions including parole, pardons and clemency, and medical or compassionate release. “Post-sentencing” rights apply after sentencing is complete and the defendant is serving a state prison or parole sentence.

In order to receive the range of rights available post-sentencing, you must register with the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA).

To register: www.ova.pa.gov/SafetyandSupport/Registration/Pages/default.aspx

Victim Rights

Victims of crime in Pennsylvania have rights throughout various stages of the criminal justice process under the **Pennsylvania Crime Victims Act** (18 P.S. § 11.0101):

VICTIMS OF CRIME HAVE THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS:

1. To receive basic information concerning the services available for victims of crime.
2. To be notified of certain significant actions and proceedings within the criminal and juvenile justice systems pertaining to their case. This paragraph includes all of the following:
 - i. access to information regarding whether the juvenile was detained or released following arrest and whether a petition alleging delinquency has been filed.
 - ii. immediate notification of a juvenile's pre-adjudication escape from a detention center or shelter facility and of the juvenile's subsequent apprehension.
 - iii. access to information regarding the grant or denial of bail to an adult.
 - iv. immediate notification of an adult offender's pretrial escape from a local correctional facility and of the offender's subsequent apprehension.
3. To be accompanied at all criminal and all juvenile proceedings by a family member, a victim advocate, or other person providing assistance or support.
4. In cases involving a personal injury crime or burglary, to submit prior comment to the prosecutor's office or juvenile probation office, as appropriate to the circumstances of the case, on the potential reduction or dropping of any charge or changing of a plea

VICTIMS RIGHTS INCLUDE THE RIGHTS TO:



Receive
information
about services



Be notified
of court events
and proceedings



Be accompanied
to court
proceedings



Be notified of a bail
or bond decision

in a criminal or delinquency proceeding, or, diversion of any case, including an informal adjustment or consent decree.

5. To have opportunity to offer prior comment on the sentencing of a defendant or the disposition of a delinquent child, to include the submission of a written and oral victim impact statement detailing the physical, psychological, and economic effects of the crime on the victim and the victim's family. The written statement shall be included in any predisposition or presentence report submitted to the court. Victim impact statement shall be considered by a court when determining the disposition of a juvenile or sentence of an adult.
6. To be restored, to the extent possible, to the precrime economic status through the provision of restitution, compensation and the expeditious return of property which is seized as evidence in the case when in the judgment of the prosecutor the evidence is no longer needed for prosecution of the case.
7. In personal injury crimes where the adult is sentenced to a state correctional facility, to be:
 - i. given the opportunity to provide prior comment on and to receive state post sentencing release decisions, including work release, furlough, parole, pardon, or community treatment center placement;

The Legal System

- ii. provided immediate notice of an escape of the adult and of subsequent apprehension; and
- iii. given the opportunity to receive notice of and to provide prior comment on a recommendation sought by the Department of Corrections that the offender participate in a motivational boot camp pursuant to the Motivational Boot Camp Act.

8. If, upon the request of the victim of a personal injury crime committed by a juvenile, the juvenile is ordered to residential placement, a shelter facility or a detention center, to:

- i. receive prior notice of the date of the release of the juvenile, including temporary leave or home pass.
- ii. be provided with:
 - a. immediate notice of an escape of the juvenile, including failure to return from temporary leave or home pass; and
 - b. immediate notice of reaprehension of the juvenile.
- iii. be provide with notice of transfer of a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent from a placement facility that is contrary to a previous court order or placement plan approved at a disposition review hearing and to have the opportunity to express a written objection prior to the release or transfer of the juvenile.

VICTIMS RIGHTS INCLUDE THE RIGHTS TO:



Provide input or “prior comment”



Receive restitution



Limit your identifying information in the media



File a complaint if your rights are violated

9. If the adult is subject to an order under 23 Pa.C.S. Ch. 61 (relating to protection from abuse) and is committed to a local correctional facility for a violation of the order or for a personal injury crime against a victim protected by the order, to receive immediate notice of the release of the adult on bail.
10. To receive notice if an adult is committed to a mental health facility from a state correctional institution and notice of the discharge, transfer or escape of the adult from the mental health facility.
11. To have assistance in the preparation of, submission of and follow-up on financial assistance claims to the bureau.
12. To be notified of the details of the final disposition of the case of a juvenile consistent with 42 Pa.C.S. § 6636(f) (relating to conduct of hearings).
13. Upon the request of the victim of a personal injury crime, to be notified of the termination of the court's jurisdiction.

More information:

<https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/ova/crime-victims--rights.html>

VIOLATION OF VICTIM RIGHTS

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) is the state agency with the duty and authority to advocate for the individual and collective rights and needs of crime survivors.

If you believe your rights as a crime victim have been violated, you can submit a complaint to OVA:

www.pa.gov/en/agencies/ova/crime-victims--rights.html



Knowing Your Media Rights

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT:

- To say “no” to an interview
- To select the spokesperson or advocate of your choice
- To select the time and location for an interview, and avoid a press conference atmosphere by only speaking to one reporter at a time
- To say “no” to an additional interview even though you have previously allowed an interview
- To release a written statement (instead of an interview) through a spokesperson or advocate
- To exclude children from an interview
- To decline answering a question
- To request a correction when inaccurate information is reported
- To conduct a television interview using a silhouette – or a newspaper interview without including your photograph
- To file a formal complaint against a journalist
- To be treated with dignity and respect by the media



Medical Care and Evidence Collection

SEXUAL ASSAULT TESTING AND EVIDENCE COLLECTION ACT

The *Sexual Assault Testing and Evidence Collection Act* (SATEC), also known as Act 27, was enacted in 2015 to provide certain rights to victims of sexual violence regarding evidence collection.

Under SATEC, victims have the right:

- To the confidential support of a counselor from a rape crisis center at the hospital and afterward;
- To not be billed or charged for the costs of the forensic exam or sexual assault evidence kit;
- For the sexual assault evidence kit to be collected and tested even if the exact location of the crime cannot be provided;
- To have a sexual assault evidence kit collected and tested anonymously without notifying law enforcement, if the victim is an adult (age 18+);
- For evidence to be kept according to the statute of limitations; and
- To receive notification and information about evidence, if notification is requested and contact information is provided.

NOTIFICATION OF ANONYMOUS EVIDENCE

SATEC requires that victims are informed of timelines and testing results if they have a sexual assault evidence kit collected and decide to remain **anonymous**. This allows you time to decide about pursuing an investigation with law enforcement.

Law enforcement will take custody of anonymous kits and are required to collaborate with a sexual assault advocate/counselor to notify a victim of the following information:

- When the evidence is submitted to the crime lab for testing;
- When the crime lab has received a request to compare the evidence collected to an existing profile in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) or another federal DNA database;
- If a match is found by comparing evidence collected from the victim to an existing profile in CODIS or another federal DNA database;
- Of intended destruction or disposal of the sexual assault evidence kit – this must occur at least 60 days prior to the date of destruction and the victim must request this notification in writing. This notification may occur after a number of years because evidence will be kept for the full duration of the statute of limitations.

NOTIFICATION OF EVIDENCE THAT IS NOT ANONYMOUS

Under SATC, Pennsylvania is required to have a comprehensive process for the testing of evidence and for victim notification –

- Requires health care facilities to use a kit that meet the *Department of Health (DOH) Minimum Standard Requirements*
- Requires health care facilities to notify law enforcement within 12 hours of evidence collection for law enforcement to take possession of the evidence
- Requires law enforcement to take possession of evidence within 72 hours of receiving notice from health care facilities
- Requires law enforcement to submit evidence within 15 days to an approved laboratory, which would have to complete testing of the evidence within six months
- Mandates annual reports on testing backlogs, and permits authorities to upload testing results into databases to help solve related sexual assault cases

Allegheny County developed a portal with information about sexual assault evidence and the status of the laboratory testing. To access information about your evidence, click on the link to the portal and submit a data request:



www.alleghenycounty.us/Government/Police-and-Emergency-Services/Medical-Examiner-ACOME/Allegheny-County-Sexual-Assault-Kit-Initiative-SAKI

Please be aware that the portal cannot provide information about anonymous kits. To obtain information about evidence that was collected anonymously, please contact the PAAR Helpline: 1-866-363-7273.

Client Information

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Confidentiality

The information contained in your client record is protected by state confidentiality laws (42 Pa. C.S.A. Section §5945.1 and 23 Pa. C.S.A. Section §6102). Both the law and professional standards require that PAAR maintain service records with confidentiality and respect.

PAAR is not permitted to disclose information from your client record to a third party without your written consent. This includes your protected health information and any personal information that identifies who you are. Written consent is documented by you signing an *Authorization to Release Information Form*. Verbal consent for limited release of information may be necessary in special circumstances.

For clients who are under age 14, written and verbal consent is provided by a legal caregiver.

In certain situations, PAAR may have a legal obligation to report information:

- All PAAR employees and volunteers are mandated reporters of child abuse, and any suspicion of child abuse will be reported to Childline.
- Safety is a priority at PAAR – PAAR employees will take action to prevent harm if you disclose a plan to harm yourself or someone else. To maintain safety, PAAR staff may disclose the relevant information to the appropriate law enforcement, medical, and/or mental health professionals.
- In the event that a PAAR employee believes that you, or someone else, might be in immediate danger of being harmed, PAAR reserves the right to call Resolve Crisis Network or 911 to help you obtain the appropriate level of care.
- When a valid court order is issued for records, PAAR will make every attempt to quash the subpoena. However, if this is not successful, the agency is bound by law to comply with the request.

CLIENT RECORDS

Although the records containing your information are the physical property of PAAR, the information belongs to you. To request a copy of your records, please submit your request in writing or call the main office:

(412) 431-5665

81 South 19th Street

Pittsburgh PA 15203

For additional information pertaining to confidentiality, please reference the *Consent to Counseling Services and Notice of Privacy Practices* document and/or the *Confidentiality and Consent Form* provided to you.

RIGHT TO FILE A COMPLAINT

You have the right to file a “grievance” or “complaint” if you believe your privacy rights have been violated, or if you want to report a problem with how PAAR has used or disclosed protected health information. PAAR cannot retaliate against you for filing a grievance or a complaint.

You have the right to file a “complaint” if you have a concern about the quality of services received. PAAR cannot retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

To file a grievance or complaint, you may contact:

**Director of Human Resources and Operations
Pittsburgh Action Against Rape
81 South 19th Street, Pittsburgh PA 15203
(412) 431-5665**

PAAR observes the following process to resolve a complaint or grievance:

1. All PAAR employees are prepared to receive grievance or complaint concerns from survivors enrolled in services. If the grievance or complaint cannot be resolved verbally between the PAAR staff and the survivor, an official Client Grievance and Complaint Form will be provided.
2. The survivor will then be asked to complete the Client Grievance and Complaint Form. Survivors may request this form from the staff member involved with services or directly from the above contact person, Lisa Kadlecik.
3. PAAR will address the grievance or complaint with the staff member involved and their supervisor to determine the appropriate resolution. This decision will be communicated within (10) working days of PAAR receiving the documentation.
4. If the decision does not resolve the situation to the satisfaction of the survivor, a meeting will be scheduled with the survivor. This meeting will take place within (5) working days of receiving notice that the official PAAR decision was unsatisfactory. If the grievance or complaint is resolved during the meeting,

a PAAR supervisor will provide the survivor with a written copy of the agreed upon resolution within (5) working days following the meeting.

5. If the grievance or complaint remains unresolved, all documentation of the process to date will be turned over to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will conduct the needed investigation and respond in writing within (5) workdays of receiving the grievance or complaint.
6. If a resolution has not been reached following the above process, survivors may pursue resolution by contacting the state coalition, PCAR.
 - i. Once written consent from the survivor is presented to PAAR's Executive Director, they will send all documentation of the grievance and complaint process to PCAR. This will be completed within (5) working days following receipt of the signed consent form.
7. If PCAR is unable to resolve the grievance or complaint, survivors may appeal the decision to:

Department of Public Welfare: Health and Welfare Building
Room 533, PO Box 2675, Harrisburg PA 17105

Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
Office of Victim Services, PO Box 1167, Harrisburg PA 17108

Pennsylvania Office of the Victim Advocate
1101 South Front Street, Suite 5200, Harrisburg PA 17104

Supporting a Survivor in Your Life

SUPPORTING A SURVIVOR IN YOUR LIFE INDEX

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Responding to a Disclosure

Many survivors of sexual trauma struggle with feelings of guilt, shame, and sadness. Providing comfort and support to a survivor may look like listening without judgement and without asking questions.

Knowing what to say can help reassure the survivor that their feelings and reactions are appropriate and normal:

- Say “I believe you”
- Validate their feelings by saying “It’s ok to feel _____”
- Remain calm
- Use active listening and remain in the moment
- Be nonjudgemental
- Don’t try to fix it – they may not want advice
- Provide space for their feelings and use your empathy

- Be ok with silence
- Remain grounded – try taking deep breaths together
- Normalize that trauma and healing are hard
- Remind them that they are not alone
- Say it wasn't their fault, no matter what
- Ask what would be helpful
- Be transparent and honest about what you can/cannot provide
- Provide choice and control when you can

PROVIDING SUPPORT

You can listen

Let the survivor talk and communicate their feelings in their own time. Do not push them to talk, but instead remind them that you are there to listen when they are ready.

You can believe

Remind the survivor that you believe them. If you are talking to you about the traumatic event, it likely means they trust you. You can believe and support them without judgement by asking things like:

- “I believe you and I am sorry that happened to you.”
- “Thank you, I know it took a lot of courage for you to share that with me.”

You can empower

It is important for the survivor to make their own choices – this can help restore a sense of power and control:

- “Do you know what might feel helpful?”
- “You get to decide who you talk to and what you are comfortable saying.”

Supporting a Survivor in Your Life

WELLNESS AND SELF-CARE

Remember that you may need time and support for yourself. Take time to engage in activities or hobbies you enjoy. Practice grounding. Talk with a counselor of your own. Support is available as you navigate trauma and healing with a survivor in your life.

Contact PAAR for 24/7 confidential information and support:
1-866-363-7273.

GROUNDING FOR ANXIETY



DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE

Notice your breathing. Inhale. Exhale.



DO SOMETHING REPETITIVE

Think of a hobby or chore that is familiar – do the dishes, knit, color.



THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Grounding may not always be calming and quiet – turn on some loud music and dance.



USE WATER

Run your hands under the faucet. Change the temperature and pressure. Notice how it feels.



WRITE IT OUT

Try not to worry about grammar or style – write what comes into your mind.



GO FOR A WALK

Go outside if you can. Count your steps. Listen to the noises around you.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Our anxiety can make us overly critical – say out loud to yourself: “I am ok. I am enough. I can do hard things.”



Children and Trauma

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Childhood Sexual Abuse

Many survivors of sexual trauma struggle with feelings of guilt, shame, and sadness. Providing comfort and support to a survivor may look like listening without judgement and without asking questions.

Knowing what to say can help reassure the survivor that their feelings and reactions are appropriate and normal:

- Say “I believe you”
- Validate their feelings by saying “It’s ok to feel _____”
- Remain calm
- Use active listening and remain in the moment
- Be nonjudgemental
- Don’t try to fix it – they may not want advice

Supporting a Child Survivor

- Provide space for their feelings and use your empathy
- Be ok with silence
- Remain grounded – try taking deep breaths together
- Normalize that trauma and healing are hard
- Remind them that they are not alone
- Say it wasn't their fault, no matter what
- Ask what would be helpful
- Be transparent and honest about what you can/cannot provide
- Provide choice and control when you can

Childhood sexual abuse can take many forms including inappropriate touch, sexual acts, sexualized grooming, images of child sexual abuse (“child pornography”), sexual exploitation, internet-based child sexual abuse, and sexual harassment.

Childhood sexual abuse can involve grooming behavior, bribes, abusing a position of authority, coercion, physical force, or threats of violence. Most children seek approval from adults and authority figures, and therefore will do what they are told.

BREAKING THE SILENCE AND BUILDING STRENGTH

Childhood sexual abuse can have a long-lasting impact, not only on the child but on the entire family the Child and Family Counseling center provides trauma-informed and evidence-based treatment to children and adolescent survivors of sexual abuse and their families.

The therapists at PAAR are trained in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR), and other evidence-based and trauma-informed modalities. The Child and Family Counseling Center utilizes mind-body based interventions as well as other creative art interventions to promote the processing of trauma and development of healthy coping skills.

COMMON REACTIONS

Children/Adolescents who have experienced sexual trauma are affected emotionally and behaviorally in a variety of ways. No two children/adolescents react to trauma in *exactly* the same way. However, the following signs and symptoms are *often** observed in children/adolescents after they have experienced a sexual trauma:

- Becoming withdrawn, isolating from others, and/or losing interest in hobbies (not wanting to play with friends, refusing attend activities, staying alone in their room)
- Changes in appetite (eating too little or too much)
- Emotional outbursts and sudden mood swings (seemingly unexplained anger, tantrums, crying)
- Regressive behaviors (toileting accidents, bed-wetting, thumb sucking, separation anxiety)
- Changes in sleeping patterns (sleeping more or less than usual, increased nightmares, fear of sleeping alone)
- Physical symptoms (stomach aches, headaches, digestive issues, body pain)
- Self-Injurious behaviors (head-banging, biting, scratching, cutting)
- Hyper-sexualization and/or Problematic Sexual Behavior (increased sexual activity, sexualized play, sexual discussion, and sexual knowledge outside of the average developmental age)
- New loss of trust/fears related to familiar places, people, and events
- Avoiding reminders of the trauma (associated people, places, and things)
- Sudden memories of the trauma and/or re-experiencing of the trauma
- Feeling numb and indifferent
- Poor concentration
- Decrease in self-esteem and self-efficacy



**Of note, these signs and symptoms can be related to a variety of problems and difficulties children/adolescents experience. If your child has a sudden onset or is experiencing any of the above signs and symptoms, it is recommended they receive an evaluation from a healthcare professional.*

TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD

Children/Adolescents who have experience sexual trauma need:

- To know that the sexual trauma is not their fault
- To know that they did nothing wrong
- To be reassured that they were right to tell someone what happened to them
- To be supported unconditionally
- To be provided with age-appropriate trauma psychoeducation

Here are examples of ways you can communicate the above information to children and adolescents:

You can say...

- “I believe you and I’m glad you told me”.
- “I’m proud of you for telling me”.
- “You did the right thing by telling me”.
- “Thank you for trusting me. You did the right thing”.
- “I’m really sorry that happened to you”.
- “I want you to know it is not your fault”.
- “You did not do anything wrong”.
- “You are not bad or in trouble”.



Coping and Mindfulness Techniques

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness can be a useful tool for decreasing anxiety in children of all ages. Mindfulness can help parents and caregivers, too, by promoting calm and relieving stress. To get the most impact, take a few minutes each day to practice mindfulness. For parents and caregivers, the best way to teach a child to be mindful is to do it with them!

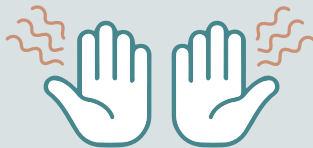
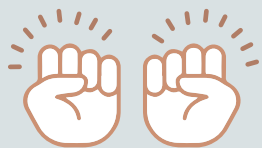
THE POWER OF BLUE – TO CALM AND MANAGE FEELINGS

- Sit with your spine straight and body relaxed. Close your eyes.
- Breathe in and picture a blue ball of light pushing inside your forehead. Imagine it calming your thoughts.
- Breathe out and picture the blue ball of light dropping into your throat. Imagine it clearing out unkind thoughts and words.
- Breathe in and see the blue light glowing brighter. Breathe out and picture it dropping into your heart. Imagine it soothing hurt feelings.
- Breathe in again and picture the blue filling your body. Breathe out and feel it down to your toes.
- Sit with the blue light for a moment and let it glow inside you. You can take it with you when you are done.

DEEP BREATHS BEFORE BED – TO HELP WITH SLEEP

Take a deep breath in through your nose. On the exhale, chant out loud “three” (three). Take another deep breath and on the exhale, chant “two” (twwooo). Take one more deep breath and on the exhale chant “one” (onnee). Relax for a few breaths. Repeat.

FIST SQUEEZE – TO LET GO OF ANGER



- Stand, sit, or lie down and relax your arms by your sides. Take three soft, slow, mindful breaths. Pay attention to what you are thinking and feeling.
- Imagine those thoughts and feelings gathering like red-hot energy in your hands. Breathe in and squeeze your fists as tightly as you can.
- Breathe out and open your hands, soft and loose. Imagine the red-hot energy flying away like sparks.
- Breathe in and squeeze your fists again. Let the energy build.
- Breathe out, open your hands and let the energy go.
- Repeat until you feel calmer. When you are done, swing your arms gently side to side to loosen up.

FINGER COUNTING BREATHS – TO CALM PANIC OR ANXIETY

Make a gentle fist with your hands. With each breath, uncurl a finger from your palm. For example, on the first exhale, open your left thumb from your fist. Pause and inhale. On the next exhale, open your left index finger. Pause and inhale. Continue until you have two open palms.

FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

For parents and caregivers, it is normal to feel upset, uncertain, or anxious. The mindfulness exercise “STOP” can be a helpful tool:

STOP

Take a moment to pause, no matter what you are doing. It can wait.

TAKE A BREATH

Feel the sensation of your own breathing, which brings you back to the present moment.

OBSERVE

Notice what is happening, good or bad, inside you. Notice what is happening, good or bad, around you. Notice it without judgement.

PROCEED

You have checked in with yourself. You are grounded in the present moment. What do you feel? How do you want to respond?



REMEMBER:
HEALING TAKES TIME.
BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF.

Communication and Safety with Children

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN:

- The basic and accurate vocabulary of their body parts.
- To respect their own boundaries. They decide who touches their body – Don't make kids hug or kiss people if they feel uncomfortable.
- To trust their own feelings about touch.
- That it is not fair for an adult to make you keep a secret about a touch that is uncomfortable.
- How to be assertive, say “no,” and ask for help in a loud, strong voice.
- That an uncomfortable touch is not their fault.

Keep communication open with your children. Tell them that they can come to you whenever they need to talk. Don't assume they know.

Read books about children's self-esteem, child sexual abuse, and children's rights.

Listen to your children completely, do not interrupt them when they are talking. Be in control of your reactions if a child tells you something upsetting. Children look to parents for their reaction, and they may have more to say that you haven't heard yet.

If a child discloses sexual abuse, tell them you believe them even if you have questions and doubts. Tell the child you are glad they talked to you and that you will help them.

Pay attention to your own reactions and emotions. Seek support from a counselor or other adults in your life.

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

While it is important to empower our children to trust their own boundaries and to talk about abuse, we must always remember that it is our responsibility as adults to keep children safe:

- Be involved in communication with all the adults in your child's life.
- Question questionable behavior. Don't just talk to your child, but also question the adult.
- Tell the adults in your child's life that you are aware of what goes on with them.
- Don't assume that traditionally safe people are actually safe.
- Understand that people who groom children will also groom and manipulate the adults in the child's life.

Family Resources

FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Books

- ***Healing Honestly: The messy and magnificent path to overcoming self-blame and self-shame***
by Alisa Zipursky
- ***The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma***
by Bessel van der Kolk
- ***My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies***
by Resmaa Menakem
- ***Written on the Body: Letters from trans and nonbinary survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence***
by Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- ***We Believe You: Survivors of campus sexual assault speak out***
by Annie E. Clark and Andrea L. Pino
- ***Know My Name***
by Chanel Miller
- ***Shout***
by Laurie Halse Anderson
- ***A Memoir of (My) Body***
by Roxane Gay

PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Books

- ***Helping Your Child Recover from Sexual Abuse***
by Caren Adams and Jennifer Fay
- ***When Your Child Has Been Molested: A parent's guide to healing and recovery***
by Kathryn Brohl and Joyce Case Potter

Websites

- ***The National Traumatic Childhood Stress Network***
www.nctsn.org
- ***Sesame Street in Communities: Activities and Tips for Families***
www.seasamestreetincommunities.org/topics/traumatic-experiences

CHILDREN

Books

- ***Amazing You***
by Gail Saltz – recommended age 3+
- ***My Body Belongs to Me!***
by Larissa H. Rhone - recommended age 3+
- ***My Body Belongs to Me***
by Jill Starishevsky - recommended age 5+
- ***Let's Talk about Body Boundaries, Consent, and Respect***
by Jayneen Sanders - recommended age 5+

Sexual Health Resources

RESOURCE

You can ask anything and – in real time – a sexual health educator or a chat box will answer your questions about your sexual health: www.plannedparenthood.org

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- STIs can happen to anyone.
- You can get an STI from any type of sex – including vaginal, anal, and oral sex.
- There are many different types of STIs, which are caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi. Some STIs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomonas, herpes, HPV, and HIV/AIDS.
- Condoms and barriers are not effective against all STIs.
- You can have an STI (and give it to someone else) without having any symptoms.

ENGAGING IN SAFER SEX

- Communicate with the person you are going to have sex with about consent, safe sex, personal limits, and the potential emotional consequences of having sex.
- Practice safer sex – use condoms (rubbers), latex oral dams, or gloves.
- Get tested regularly and encourage anyone you have sex with to get tested.
- Most STIs are treatable – see your doctor or go to a clinic for treatment.
- Get vaccinated – there are vaccines available for hepatitis B, monkey pox, and HPV.
- Only use water-based lubricants during sex.
- Talk to your doctor, parents or a trusted person about getting birth control.
- Consider pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) if you are at risk for HIV.
- Be aware that alcohol and drug usage can lead to an increase in risky sex behaviors.
- If you are worried about consent or are seeking support, **talk to someone you trust or call the PAAR Helpline: 1-866-363-7273.**

More information: Allies for Health + Wellbeing
www.alliespgh.org/services/testing-education

Let's talk about consent!

FREELY GIVEN

Consent should be given willingly and without pressure or coercion. It should not be obtained through manipulation, intimidation, or threats.

REVERSIBLE

Consent can be withdrawn at any time. Just because someone consents initially doesn't mean they have to continue or consent to further activities. Everyone has the right to change their mind.

INFORMED

Consent requires that all parties involved understand the who, what, when, where, why, and how of what they are consenting to. This includes understanding the potential risks and consequences of the activity.

ENTHUSIASTIC

Consent should be enthusiastic and positive. It should be clear that all parties involved are excited and genuinely want to participate. Silence, being passive, or lack of resistance does not imply consent.

SPECIFIC

Consent should be specific to the activity or activities agreed upon. Consent to one activity does not imply consent to another. Each new level or type of activity requires its own explicit consent.



Source: Planned Parenthood

Resources

Community Resources

- **A Child's Place**
(412) 232-7200
www.achildsplace.org
- **Child Advocacy Center at UPMC Children's Hospital**
(412) 692-8747
www.chp.edu
- **Allegheny Link**
Emergency shelter and housing programs
1-866-730-2368
- **211**, Resource database for Allegheny County
Phone: 2-1-1

Mental Health Support

- **Resolve Crisis Network**
24-hour telephone and walk-in crisis support; mobile crisis unit;
community referrals
1-888-7-YOU CAN
1-888-796-8226
- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**
24-hour support: call/text 9-8-8 or
chat online: www.988lifeline.org/chat
- **Women's Center & Shelter**
Intimate partner and domestic violence program
Hotline: (412) 687-8005

Reporting Resources

- **Childline**
1-800-932-0313
- **Allegheny County Police**
875 Greentree Road
10 Parkway Center
Pittsburgh, PA 15220
(412) 473-3000
- **City of Pittsburgh Police**
1203 Western Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
(412) 323-7141
- **Information about Evidence**
Submit an online request form to get information about sexual assault evidence and the status of laboratory testing:



www.alleghenycounty.us/Government/Police-and-Emergency-Services/Medical-Examiner-ACOME/Allegheny-County-Sexual-Assault-Kit-Initiative-SAKI

- **Sexual Violence Legal Assistance Project**
Confidential legal advice and short-term legal representation
(717) 901-6784
- **The National Crime Victim Bar Association**
Local referrals for legal representation in civil cases
(202) 467-8753
Online request form: www.victimbar.org/attorney-referral-request-form



Latinx Community Resources

- **Casa San Jose**
Resource center for the Latino community
(412) 343-3111
www.casasanjose.org
info@casasanjose.org
- **Latino Community Center**
Resource center and programs for the Latino community
(412) 335-7446
www.latinocommunitycenter.org
info@latinocommunitycenter.org



Immigration Resources

- **Immigration Law Clinic: University of Pittsburgh**
(412) 648-1300
- **Jewish Family and Community Services**
Immigration Legal Services
(412) 904-5966
www.jfcsppgh.org
immigration@jfssd.org

HELPLINE AVAILABLE

**24 HOURS A DAY,
7 DAYS A WEEK**

CALL OR TEXT:
1-866-363-7273

JOIN AN ONLINE CHAT:
www.paar.net

**PAAR services are available
at no cost to you.**

Speak with a Sexual Assault Counselor

If you are the victim of sexual assault, abuse, exploitation, or trafficking – or want to help someone who has been – PAAR is here. Our experienced advocates, case managers, and counselors provide confidential services.



81 South 19th Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203

www.paar.net