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Dear Survivor,

This booklet provides information that may be helpful as you begin the recovery process. Unfortunately, there is nothing anyone can do to erase what has happened to you. However, with support and information, you can regain your strength and control over your life.

Sexual assault happens to women, men, and children. It happens to young and old. It can happen anytime of the day and any place. The perpetrator can be anyone – stranger, family, partner, spouse, acquaintance, co-worker, neighbor, date, classmate, etc. Most survivors of sexual assault do not tell anyone for fear of what people will say or think about them. Therefore, most sexual assaults go unreported to the police, and many survivors do not get the help and support they so need.

*You are not alone.*

*In hope and healing,  
The Staff of Sanctuary, Inc.*

## *Reactions Following an Assault*

You will experience a wide range of emotions, some of them conflicting, but over time they will become more manageable and occur less often. It is important to remember your reactions are normal and do not mean you are “going crazy.” You may have some or all of the following reactions, as well as some not listed:

### *Emotional Reactions*

- anxiety
- fear, fear of being alone, isolation
  - depression
  - irritability, anger, rage
  - mood swings
- embarrassment, humiliation, shame, guilt
  - grief

*You are not to blame.* You may feel dirty, ashamed, guilty, humiliated, or responsible. It is normal to experience these feelings, but the assault was *not your fault.*

### *Physical Reactions*

- nausea, headaches
- changes in eating and / or sleep
  - change in menstruation
- increased vulnerability to colds, flu, etc.

### *Behavioral & Thinking Reactions*

- inability to concentrate or relax
- avoiding places, people, or thoughts which remind you of the assault
  - forgetting details of the incident or remembering much later
    - thinking “if only I hadn’t ...”
      - loss of interest
    - decreased ability to trust

You have experienced loss through being sexually assaulted, and you will experience grief of that loss. *You can heal.*

## *A Note to Family and Friends*

It is normal for you to feel angry, confused, and unsure of the best way to help your loved one. You may have questions you do not wish to acknowledge. You may want to make decisions for the survivor, hurry the healing process, or be overprotective.

Some of your own feelings will be confusing to you. You may feel embarrassed, guilty or responsible. You may feel anger toward the survivor, rage toward the perpetrator, and consider actions that are out of character for you.

All of these reactions are understandable. It is important for you to also seek support for yourself during this time. You can be most helpful to your loved one by listening, caring and believing. Do not make decisions for the individual. Your support and information can be encouraging, but the decisions need to be made by the survivor. She or he needs to feel in control of the situation as much as possible.

Unfortunately, there is no set time limit on recovery. It may take months or years to recover. It is very important to allow the survivor to express emotions as needed but remember, the only person responsible for the assault is the perpetrator. Neither you nor your loved one is to blame.

If you find that you need support in order to better cope with the trauma experienced by your loved one, Sanctuary can assist.

*You have been a victim of  
a violent crime,  
now you are a survivor.*

*Healing is possible.*

## *Healing and Recovery*

Just as with any injury, the healing takes time. There are some things you can do to lessen the pain and help yourself regain control.

- Remember your attacker chose to commit this crime. Try not to punish yourself. It is *not your fault*.
- Realize your reactions are normal, and try to be honest with yourself about the thoughts and feelings you are experiencing.
- Talk with people you trust. Ask for help when needed from family, friends, police, doctors and counselors.
- Take care of yourself – get rest, plan comforting activities, and avoid excessive use of alcohol and drugs.
- It is best to follow through with suggested medical care.
- You only have to share what you are comfortable sharing, and you only have to tell the people you choose to tell.
- If the pain becomes too great, or you feel you are not adjusting well, you may want to seek professional support. *Sanctuary* is here to help.

## *Relationships*

It is common to feel hesitant about resuming dating, socializing, and intimacy following a sexual assault. There is no need to force yourself into intimate social situations too quickly. Delaying this may allow you to gradually reintroduce yourself to safe, enjoyable and healthy relationships.

If the assailant is someone you know, you may feel your trust in others has been destroyed, as well as trust in your own judgement about people in general. You can learn to trust your instincts again with time.

Feeling safe and comfortable is important in any relationship, especially those in which you are sexually intimate. Healing will happen most quickly if you are careful to choose experiences and situations that feel comfortable for you. You are the only one who can determine what is right for you.

## *Flashbacks*

Flashbacks are a common experience following a sexual assault. Flashbacks are powerful feelings, thoughts, or images that make it seem as though you are re-living the assault. These can be triggered by sounds, smells, touches, or sights. Flashbacks are frightening and overwhelming at times, but they will pass. Even though it may seem counter-intuitive, you may find it is better to allow the memory to come and go naturally rather than try to shut it out. If you find that flashbacks are significantly interfering with your daily life, you may want to consider seeking professional support. *Sanctuary* is here to offer counseling, information, and 24-hour support.

## *Medical Exam and Follow-up*

The initial medical exam provides immediate medical care by treating injuries and offering information on sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and pregnancy. The Sexual Assault Forensic-Medical Exam (SAFE) serves as a means of collecting forensic evidence for possible future prosecution. It is important to continue with medical follow-up care after your initial exam. Testing for STI's should continue over the next year as recommended. Consult with your doctor if any symptoms develop. HIV testing can be conducted confidentially at your local health department.

## *SAFE Exam Compensation*

KRS21B.400(9) states that "No charge shall be made to the victim for sexual assault examinations by the hospital, the sexual assault examination facility, the physician, the pharmacist, the health department, the sexual assault nurse examiner, other qualified medical professional, the victim's insurance carrier, or the Commonwealth."

You should not be billed for charges related to the Sexual Assault Forensic-Medical Examination (SAFE Exam) conducted by the hospital, examining physician or Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). However, at this time, there is a possibility that your insurance or medical card will be billed. If you receive any billing for outstanding charges for these, please do not ignore these bills. Rather, contact the hospital billing office and reference the regulation stated above.

## *How to Contact Us*

For more information about any of the services offered at Sanctuary, Inc., please call any of our locations:

**For 24 - Hour Support:**

**Call (270) 886-8174 or (800)766-0000**

*To Schedule Legal Advocacy,  
Counseling, or Therapy in:*

Caldwell County

Christian County

Crittenden County

Hopkins County

Livingston County

Lyon County

Muhlenberg County

Todd County

Trigg County

**Call 1-800-766-0000**

*Sanctuary, Inc.* is a non-profit agency committed to the provision of preventative and restorative services to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Since 1982, we have been providing caring, comprehensive support to women, men and children who have experienced interpersonal violence in the nine-county area of the Pennyrile Area Development District, including: Caldwell, Christian, Crittenden, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Muhlenberg, Todd and Trigg.

### *How We Can Help*

24-Hour Crisis Line  
(270) 886-8174 or (800) 766-0000

Provides crisis intervention, information, referrals for services, and support for you and your family and friends 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### *Hospital Advocacy*

Provides an advocate to be with you during the emergency room exam to answer questions and provide support.

### *Legal Advocacy*

Provides a Victim Advocate to explain the legal options available to you. The Victim Advocate is not an attorney, but can accompany you to all proceedings to answer questions and provide support.

### *Crisis Counseling*

Helps you determine what it is you need most right now and how to meet those needs. Includes safety planning, coping techniques, and referrals.

### *Therapy*

Helps you look at the way sexual assault is affecting your life and helps you through the healing process.

### *Family and Friend Support*

Designed to give your family and friends information and support to help them better understand sexual assault trauma.

If you feel you need assistance with this matter, contact *Sanctuary, Inc.* to speak with an advocate. *\*Please note you will be responsible for medical treatment of any injuries treated or other necessary testing during your hospital visit.*

### *Victims' Bill of Rights*

According to KRS 421.500 victims of crime have the right to be:

- Informed of emergency services, crime victim compensation, community treatment programs and the criminal justice process.
- Notified when the accused is arrested
- Informed about protection from harassment, intimidation and retaliation
- Notified of important occurrence in their case
- Consulted on any plea bargain agreement
- Assisted in contacting employers when prosecution requires time away from work
- Given back their property held as evidence as soon as possible
- Heard by means of a written impact statement to the court describing the effects of the crime on the victim before sentencing of a defendant
- Heard by means of a victim impact statement to the parole board and notified of any hearing or release
- Notified by the Attorney General's Office if a conviction is appealed and of any decision by the court

### *Legal Options*

It is your decision whether or not to file a police report, even if law enforcement has already been notified of the crime. If you decide not to file a police report, there are other civil legal remedies you may wish to pursue. Sanctuary's Victim Advocate can explain all of your legal options and describe what you might expect from each option. If you are involved with any legal proceeding related to the assault, Sanctuary's Victim Advocate can assist and offer support.

## *Prosecuting*

If you decide to report the assault, the police can begin to investigate the crime. Whether or not to prosecute is up to the discretion of the prosecuting attorney. Your case becomes a crime against the Commonwealth of Kentucky and you become the primary witness. However, the case could proceed without your cooperation if the prosecutor is so inclined. You need to be aware that even if you choose to cooperate with prosecution, the prosecutor, grand jury, or judge can still decide there is not enough strong evidence to proceed with a trial. This does not mean they do not believe you, nor does it mean the assault did not occur. It only means there are limitations within the legal system.

There are two types of courts in Kentucky which handle criminal cases: Circuit Court has jurisdiction of felonies, and District Court has jurisdiction of felony preliminary hearings, misdemeanors, juvenile matters, and traffic offenses. Felony cases begin in District Court and progress to Grand Jury and then proceed to Circuit Court

### DISTRICT COURT

Arrest  
Arraignment  
Preliminary Hearing

### GRAND JURY HEARING

### CIRCUIT COURT

Arraignment  
Pre-trial Conference  
Jury Trial      Guilty Plea  
Sentencing  
Prison      Probation

## VINE

### *(Victim Identification and Notification Everyday)*

VINE is a free, anonymous, computer-based service that will tell you if an offender is in jail or prison and will give you other important custody information. VINE will also let you provide a phone number and/or an e-mail address where you can be notified automatically when that offender is released, transferred, escapes or has an upcoming parole hearing. To register with VINE call 800-511-1670.

### *Victims Compensation Fund*

This fund is available to victims to compensate for costs (e.g. lost wages, medical bills, counseling, etc.) other than damaged property. The crime must have been reported to the police within 48 hours of the incident (unless delay is justified) and claims must be filed within 5 years. For information and an application call (502) 564-2290 or write Victims Compensation Board 115 Myrtle Avenue, Frankfort, Kentucky, 40601.