



C.A.R.A. - COALITION AGAINST RAPE AND ABUSE, INC.

After Sexual Assault

Immediate options for safety, medical care, advocacy, evidence, reporting, and healing.

Safety note: If someone may be monitoring your phone, computer, accounts, or printer, consider using a safer device. Downloads, browser history, messages, and print activity may leave traces.

What happened was not your fault. There is no “correct” way to feel or respond after sexual assault. You may want medical care, an advocate, a forensic exam, law enforcement, counseling, none of these right now, or different options at different times. Your choices matter.

First: safety and support

- Get to a place where you feel safer. If you are in immediate danger or need emergency medical help, call **911**.
- Call C.A.R.A. for confidential support. An advocate can explain local options and can support survivors at hospitals, police stations, and court proceedings.

Medical care is an option

- A healthcare professional can check for injuries and discuss care related to pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, medications, and follow-up needs.
- In New Jersey, eligible survivors can access Sexual Assault Response Team services, including a forensic nurse examiner and a confidential sexual violence advocate. Survivors can choose which SART components they want to use.
- **If you experienced strangulation or smothering, seek medical attention even if you do not see an injury.** Internal injuries may not be visible.

If you may want a forensic exam

- If it feels possible, avoid washing, brushing teeth, changing clothes, or cleaning the area before speaking with a medical provider. Place clothing or other possible evidence in a **paper bag**, not plastic.
- **Already showered, changed, or cleaned up?** You can still seek medical care and ask about your options. Do not delay urgent medical attention in order to preserve evidence.

Reporting and healing

- You can ask an advocate to explain reporting and legal options without making the decision for you. Some situations involving minors or vulnerable people may have mandatory reporting requirements.
- Trauma responses can include numbness, fear, anger, confusion, sleep changes, difficulty concentrating, or feeling “fine” for a while. There is no timetable for healing.

You are not alone

C.A.R.A. supports survivors of sexual violence in Cape May County. You can call to talk, ask questions, request advocacy, or learn about services - even if you are unsure what you want to do next.

Guidance sources: New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (njcasa.org); RAINN (rainn.org); National Domestic Violence Hotline (thehotline.org). Reviewed July 2026. This resource is general information and not medical or legal advice.