



BROOMFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

Personal Safety Tips for the Prevention of Sex Assault

Please be aware that there are no perfect protection strategies. There is no way to predict all possible situations. These tips are intended to reduce, not eliminate, the risk of assault.

- **The primary responsibility for any sexual assault rests with the offender and not the victim.** Unfortunately, you can take all the reasonable measures to reduce your risk and still be assaulted.
- **Knowledge is power.** Though many sex offenders are NOT known to law enforcement, you can educate yourself about those known offenders who reside in the community by contacting the Broomfield Police Department at 303-438-6400.
- **Remember that most sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows.** The stranger does not pose the highest risk to you. 78 - 90% of sex offenders are known to their victims and include relatives, friends, and authority figures. If you feel uncomfortable in someone's presence, trust your instincts and take steps to distance yourself from him or her. Don't be afraid to make a scene, if necessary. Tell someone!
- **Societal myths** are beliefs that contribute to the continuation of sexual assault and abuse. Understand the current rape myths and help debunk these myths for others.
- **Avoid high-risk situations.** Be observant and aware of your surroundings. Avoid poorly lit areas where an attacker might hide. Identify safe people in your neighborhood that you or your children can go to if help is needed. Be thoughtful and use good judgment in choosing your friends and partners. Be careful of your use of alcohol and drugs; you are more vulnerable to attack if you are intoxicated. Do not leave your food or drink unattended at a party or in a public place. Don't be embarrassed to use security staff at work or when shopping to walk you to your car. Do not pick up hitchhikers or stop to help a stranger in a stalled vehicle - use a phone in a safe location to call for help. Be cautious about making personal contact with those you meet on the Internet or in other similar environments.
- **Do not harass the offender.** The purpose behind community notification is to reduce the chances of future victimization of persons by this offender. The information presented through this notification should assist you and your family in avoiding situations that allow easy victimization. Initiating contact with the sexually violent predator can increase the risk of you or your family being victimized. It may also drive the offender underground, placing others at greater risk.

WHAT CAN I TELL MY CHILDREN?

- **Avoid scary details.** You know more than your child needs to know. Use language that is honest and age-appropriate (e.g., "there are people who do bad things to children.") Include general information, as this may protect them from others who would try to harm them as well. If your child is likely to have contact with the sexually violent predator or other registered sex offenders, you should show your child the sex offender's photo. Instruct them to avoid contact with the offender and encourage them to tell you if he or she initiates any contact. In general, all supervised sex offenders are prohibited from initiating any contact with children and any contact should be reported to the supervising officer.
- **Teach your child.** DON'T take rides from strangers; DON'T harass or visit any sex offender's home or yard; DO tell a safe adult if anyone acts inappropriately toward them (e.g., creepy, too friendly, threatening, offering gifts in a secret way, or touching them); DO RUN, SCREAM, and GET AWAY if someone is bothering them; DON'T keep secrets; DON'T assist strangers; DON'T go places alone; DO ask questions; and DO talk about any uncomfortable feelings or interactions.
- **Make it a habit to LISTEN to your children and to believe them.** If a child is listened to and believed about small everyday things, they are more likely to share the big, scary things with you. Be sensitive to changes in your child's behavior. Pay attention to your child's feelings and thoughts.
- **Role play with your child.** Act out scenarios of various dangerous situations and teach them how to respond (e.g., home alone and someone comes to the door; separated from mom or dad in the toy store and a man comes up to talk to them; or chatting on the Internet and they are asked for their home address).





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SEX OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

- Most offenders commit multiple crimes against multiple types of victims with whom they have varying types of relationships (adults, children, males, females, unknown, and known). This behavior is known as crossover behavior.
- Sex offenders rarely commit just one type of offense. Many offenders have NO criminal history or sex crime history of any kind.
- There is no such thing as a "typical" sex offender, however, all tend to be manipulative, deceptive, and secretive. Sex offenders come from all backgrounds, ages, income levels, and professions.
- The majority of sex offenses (80 - 95%) are committed by someone the victim knows.
- Sexual deviancy often begins in mid to late adolescence (Abel, 1995).
- Sex offenders do not usually commit their crimes impulsively. They usually employ careful planning and preliminary steps that, if interrupted, can prevent an actual crime (CSOM).
- The vast majority of sex offenders are male; women commit 20% of child sex offenses (ATSA 1996).

FACTS AND STATISTICS ABOUT SEX OFFENDING

- In 1994, there were an estimated 234,000 convicted sex offenders in the United States.
- There are approximately 10,488 registered sex offenders in Colorado.
- Each year, approximately 65% of persons convicted of sex offenses are placed on probation, 35% placed in prison, and a small percentage go to community corrections programs.
- Most victims of sexual assault do not become sex offenders.
- In the first year of the Community Notification Program, 16 sexually violent predators were identified and 15 were sentenced to Department of Corrections (DOC).
- Offenders may be caught for one type of sex offense and be at a high risk for another type.
- Conviction of a crime is only one indicator of risk. Risk assessment always includes consideration of multiple factors.
- The majority of sex offenders are not caught or detected.
- Less than 16% of sexual assaults are ever reported to law enforcement.
- 1998 Colorado Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Study is an ongoing telephone survey which showed:
 - 1 in 50 women and 1 in 830 men in Colorado had experienced a completed or attempted sexual assault in the past 12 months.
 - Approximately 16% of these assaults were reported to police.
 - 1 in 4 women and 1 in 17 men in Colorado had experienced a completed or attempted sexual assault in their lifetime.

IMPACT ON VICTIMS OF SEX OFFENSES

- Overwhelming experiences such as sexual assault or abuse create significant stress responses.
- There are many different responses to trauma that victims of sexual assault can exhibit. Generally, people respond to trauma in one of two ways - **expressed** and / or **controlled**. The same person may experience both reactions at different times.
 - Victims experiencing the **expressed** response may be crying, visibly frightened, angry, or otherwise very emotional. They may talk about what happened to them, sometimes repeatedly. They may attempt to process the violation and pain they have experienced by expressing extreme fear or anger. Another reaction may be to attempt to protect themselves against further harm by keeping others at a distance, either verbally or physically. These are normal protective behaviors in response to abnormal life events.





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- Victims experiencing the **controlled** response tend to be very quiet and tense. It may be a tremendous effort to answer questions or to give even simple one-word answers. They are responding to trauma by conserving their energy and pulling inward. They may experience feelings of numbness or extreme emotions of terror or anger inside, but not exhibit it on the outside. It may appear they are not being cooperative with helpers around them; however, they are simply coping with the trauma the best way they know how.
 - Either reaction or a combination of both reactions is normal. One reaction is not more "credible" than another!
- Sexual trauma inflicted by a **known perpetrator** tends to create a more difficult recovery than sexual trauma inflicted by a stranger. The victim must also deal with betrayal by someone they formerly trusted.
- Sexual trauma can create **post-traumatic stress disorder** or other clinical reactions. Nearly 1/3 of all rape victims develop rape-related PTSD according to the National Center for Victims of Crime.
- **Long term damage** to the victim may take the form of some or all of the following symptoms: depression; chronic anxiety; feeling of dissociation (not feeling connected to oneself); flashbacks to the traumatic event; avoidance of anything that reminds them of the traumatic event; intrusive thoughts; relationship disruptions, such as increased conflict or divorce; loss or diminishment of sexual interest or responsiveness; loss of concentration; heightened fears; chronic sleeping or eating problems; exaggerated startle response; irritability; suicidal thoughts; or a diminished interest in living and an inability to enjoy previously enjoyed life activities.
- **Male victims** of sexual assault and abuse are more likely to develop antisocial disorders and substance abuse problems.
- **Female victims** are more likely to develop depression and substance abuse problems.
- The above-mentioned responses are minimized and recovery is enhanced when a victim is **believed and supported** and has access to victim advocacy and treatment services.
- Many social myths continue to support the act of rape. The most common myths (or sociocultural misconceptions) about rape are:
 - **(Myth)** She asked for it. **(Reality)** No woman asks to be raped or sexually assaulted. The victim's behavior or appearance is not the issue in question. Consent is the issue.
 - **(Myth)** It can't happen to me. **(Reality)** Anyone is a potential victim, irrespective of age, race, educational background, or income level.
 - **(Myth)** The primary motive for rape is sex. **(Reality)** Power, anger, and control are the motives for rape - not sex.
 - **(Myth)** Rape occurs only among strangers. **(Reality)** Only 22% of rape cases involve strangers. The rest - 78%, are committed by individuals the victim knows well - a spouse, father, boyfriend, relative, friend, or neighbor.
 - **(Myth)** Rape does not happen in marriages. **(Reality)** One aspect of domestic violence is marital rape. When a spouse is forced or coerced into having sex, it is rape.
 - **(Myth)** No woman can be forced to have sex against her will. **(Reality)** A woman can be coerced by physical force or threat of injury or death. Almost half of all rape victims fear serious injury or death during a rape.
 - **(Myth)** Most rape victims suffer visible physical injuries during an attack. **(Reality)** The fact is that over two-thirds of rape victims, fearing injury or death, do not resist an attack and, hence, do not sustain any bruises, marks, or other visible injuries.
 - **(Myth)** A woman who says "no" usually means "yes." **(Reality)** "No" means no. Nonconsensual sex is rape.

It is rare that an individual files a false report of rape or abuse. In fact, it is estimated that less than 16% of all sexual assaults are ever reported. Reporting an assault can be humiliating and difficult.

Additional resources:

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: www.ncmec.org

Blue Sky Bridge, Child Advocacy Center: www.blueskybridge.org

Colorado ICAC—Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force: www.coloradoicac.com



Broomfield Police Department
Non-Emergency 303-438-6400
Emergency 9-1-1