

# Sexual assault of older people: Information for clients and victims

## What is sexual assault?

Sexual assault includes any behaviour of a sexual nature which:

- makes you feel uncomfortable or afraid OR
- is unwanted OR
- occurs without your consent

This may include

- Putting a penis, object or other body part in your vagina or anus, or any contact between mouth and genitals.
- Touching, fondling or kissing or being forced to touch someone
- Being made to look at, or pose for, pornographic photos/videos.
- Being watched while you are made to perform sexual acts.
- Being forced to watch anyone perform sexual acts.
- Unwanted sexual talking or language suggestive of sex.

## Your rights and reporting

Everyone has the right to feel safe and if someone's sexual behaviour is making you uncomfortable you should make this known. If the behaviour continues, then what you are experiencing is sexual assault.

You should talk to someone you trust and you also have the option to report this to police. Sexual assault can be reported at any time, but the sooner it is reported the easier it is to investigate.

## Examples of people you can talk to

- Family members you trust
- Carers and residential care workers
- Doctors or healthcare workers
- SECASA counsellors
- Police officers

## Myths about older people and sexual assault

- That you should be ashamed of your sexuality because sexuality is only experienced in youth
- That you are not entitled to the same level of privacy and care around sensitive issues as younger people
- That older people make up stories or easily get confused, so you may not be telling the truth

## Seeking help

There are services available to you if you wish to seek help or talk about your experience. Remember, the first step is always the hardest.

You can contact your local Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA), as they can provide you with further information and support and refer you to the services you need including:

- Immediate care
- Crisis counselling
- Long-term counselling
- Advocacy
- Confidential advice
- Information on contacting the police if this is requested
- Legal information and support in court if required
- Forensic medical examinations

## Frequently asked questions

*I've been sexually abused but I don't want to get the police involved. What can I do?*

If you contact SECASA, we can offer you completely confidential support, counselling and information. There is no obligation to report the abuse to the police and you will not be forced to take any further action. The focus will be placed on supporting you and your needs.

*What if I've told someone I have been abused and they didn't do anything?*

Sometimes people may not believe what they are hearing, or they don't really understand what you are trying to tell them. It is important that you get the support you need, so you may need to tell someone else you trust or you can contact SECASA yourself.

*What if my carer or my legal guardian is abusing me?*

If you are assaulted by someone who you rely on to make decisions and manage your affairs, you can protect yourself by contacting the Office of the Public Advocate. They can provide you with an administrator to make financial and legal decisions for you if you no longer trust your current guardian.

*What will happen if I'm living in residential care and I am sexually assaulted?*

If you are assaulted in residential care, it is important that you tell someone you trust. Your care facility will have guidelines on responding to sexual assault and supporting victims. If you don't get the help you need you can make a confidential complaint to the Victorian Health Services Commissioner and you can contact SECASA yourself.

## Contacting support services

- **SECASA crisis line (24 hrs):** 9594 2289
- **Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACL):** Call 1800 806 292 (Freecall Victoria)  
[www.sacl.com.au](http://www.sacl.com.au)
- **Victims of Crime Helpline:** Freecall 1800 819 817, TTY: 133 677
- **Victims Referral and Assistance Service:** Call 1800 819 817 (toll free)  
[www.victimsupport.org.au](http://www.victimsupport.org.au)
- **Office of the Public Advocate:** Freecall 1300 309 337, TTY: 1300 305 612
- **Victorian Health Services Commissioner:** Freecall 1800 136 066, TTY: 1300 550 275