



Sexual Violence
APPENDIX F – Helpers Information

1. **See yourself as a caring first line of help**, not an ongoing support. Remember you are a supporter and not a trained therapist.
2. **Listen** deeply and think about how they are feeling right now. What have they experienced? How would you feel if you were in their place?
3. **Believe them.** The greatest fear survivors have is that they will not be believed. Be their safe place where they are believed without question.
4. **Keep your personal feelings, and opinions to yourself.** Do not judge or turn the focus on yourself by sharing your personal experience.
5. **Comfort them.** Try to calm them. Help to ground them if they're anxious or upset. Do this in a soothing – not disapproving way. Get them a cup of tea, a blanket or sit in a comfy chair...
6. **Encourage them to treat their medical needs.** If they agree to medical attention, offer to go with them to the hospital, clinic, or doctor's office. Offer to stay during the examination.
7. **Communicate the following messages:**
 - "I believe you."
 - "It's not your fault."
 - "I'm sorry this happened to you."
 - "You are not alone. This happens to many people."
 - "There are people who can help."
8. **Validate** their feelings and concerns. Let them know that whatever they are feeling (embarrassment, anger, sadness, and fear) is normal and okay.
9. **Ask how you can help.** Ask if there is something in particular they need from you.
10. **Let them make their own decisions** and believe in their ability to make the best decision. Don't tell them what they should do. Don't tell them what you would do.
11. **Encourage them to preserve evidence.** Let them choose to report or not, but also tell them that the sooner they report, the more likely evidence could be presented to help support a police investigation, should that occur in the future.
12. **Provide security.** Help them feel safe. Help them find a secure place to sleep and companionship when they return to their home. Help them create a network of support and referrals.
13. **Refer them** to local resources (a counsellor, a medical referral, a support group...). Offer alternatives, rather than just one choice.
14. **Guarantee confidentiality** (unless they are under 19 – because reporting is required by law). Tell them that you will not repeat this conversation, and don't.