

Everyone reacts to violence in a different way: healing and coping look different for everyone. There are several ways in which you can help the victim-survivor through their individual healing journey. **Trauma-informed care** is an approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives.

- Validate their feelings (anger, pain, sadness, fear, shame). Young children may have difficulty using words to express their emotions and may “act out” by being aggressive, withdrawing, or showing age-inappropriate sexual behavior. Punishing children for this behavior will not be effective in changing it. Saying things like, “It’s okay to be angry” or other validating statements let them know you’re listening.
- Know your own biases or feelings about sexual trauma and abuse, and further, understand how this can affect the victim-survivor’s experience.
- Allow the victim-survivor to take the lead in their recovery. Let them talk about the incident on their own time and in their own way.
- Trauma survivors sometimes present as “difficult” clients (i.e. hesitancy to trust people, using drugs and alcohol or self-harming as coping methods, disconnection from their body and other emotions). These “difficult behaviors” have probably served the survivor well in the past. It is hard to give up a behavior that you believe has kept you safe.
- Understand that everyone heals differently, at their own pace and their own time. There is no “right” or “wrong” way for a survivor to respond after experiencing abuse or assault.
- Avoid “count your blessings” statements that may be heard as judgmental and possibly trivialize what has just happened such as “it could have been worse” or “you’re lucky you weren’t hurt badly”, etc.
- Ask before you touch. Don’t assume that physical contact, even in the form of a gentle touch or hug, will be comforting. Try your best not to take it personally and give them the space they need.
- Encourage the youth to get the help *they* feel they need—whether that’s by reporting the crime or seeking out counseling—and help them understand what’s in their control and what isn’t. Support them in identifying other safe adults in their life who can help with this process.

Considerations for Mandated Reporters

Know the specific rules, regulations, laws, policy, etc. that require you to report

- Know specifically when you are mandated to report
- Know specifically to whom you are required to report
- Know specifically what information you are required to report

Recognize when someone believes they are speaking to you in confidence and use that as an opportunity to clarify your role or your policies.

Make sure the youth or care-giver knows you are a mandated reporter.

Involve a youth and/or care-giver in making a child abuse report when safety allows for this.

Understand that reporting abuse may be dangerous for a child or family, and that making a report may cause a child or care-giver to distrust you.

Encourage them to call The Care Center if they would prefer to speak anonymously over the crisis line.

Personally contact The Care Center, if you have specific questions or need resources to provide support to victim-survivors.

The Sexual Trauma & Abuse Care Center services

All services are free and confidential for people of all ages and genders who have been affected by sexual trauma & abuse in Douglas, Jefferson, and Franklin Counties.

Counseling: Individual and group trauma-focused counseling. The Care Center counselors offer therapy to individuals as well as their family, friends, and loved ones.

Advocacy & Response: Advocates are available 24/7 on our Support Line as well as for medical advocacy during forensic exams and assistance with police reports, protection orders, and other court proceedings.

Education: Adults & youth education, awareness, and professional trainings on topics ranging from sexual trauma & abuse, consent, rape culture & more.

Need More Support? Contact The Care Center
24/7 at **785-843-8985**.

This project is supported by subgrant number 15-VAWA-04 awarded by the Kansas Governor's Grants Program for the STOP Formula Grant Program. The opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication, program, or exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office of the Kansas Governor or the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.