

Safety

Protective Orders and Peace Orders

You can apply to the courts for either a peace order or a protective order to keep the perpetrator away and receive other types of help. You can apply for a protective order from the District or Circuit court and you can apply for a peace order from District Court. A final protective order lasts for up to one year and a final peace order lasts for up to 6 months.

- Protective orders are useful for victims of sexual assault. You may be eligible to file for a protective order if: you are the spouse, former spouse, or family member of the perpetrator; you have a child in common with the perpetrator; you are an adult who lacks the ability to take care of your daily needs; if you have had a sexual relationship with the perpetrator within 1 year of filing for the petition; or if you are filing based on a sexual assault that occurred within the past six months.
- Protective orders can temporarily help with family matters, such as custody, visitation, emergency support and other relief such as removing the perpetrator from the home.
- You may file for a peace order if you do not fall under one of the protective order categories AND you have experienced stalking, harassment, revenge porn, or other qualifying acts. You have 30 days from the time of the incident to seek a peace order and you must prove to the Court that the act of abuse is likely to occur again.
- If you filed criminal charges or might do so, you should consult with a lawyer before seeking a peace or protective order.

Criminal Cases and Safety

- Defendants in criminal cases are often released on bail until the trial. Perpetrators of sexual assault should be ordered to stay away from you as a condition of release. Talk to the prosecutor’s office about this.
- If you would be in danger if the defendant knew your address, your address can be kept confidential.

Safety Planning

- Make a plan about what to do if the perpetrator approaches or contacts you.
- Carry a charged cell phone.
- Tell people where you will be.
- Call your local rape recovery center for more help with safety planning.

Survivors of sexual assault need more than prosecution of offenders.

The Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) provides legal advice, representation and referrals for survivors of sexual assault.

SALI is committed to survivor-centered advocacy and respect for client decision-making.

SALI also provides legal education, technical assistance and information for professionals working with survivors.

For more information, contact:



P.O. Box 8782, Silver Spring, Maryland 20907
301-565-2277 | 877-496-SALI
fax: 301-565-3619

For information on crime victims’ rights, see:
Criminal Justice Issues for Victims
of Sexual Assault:

Rights of Sexual Assault Survivors in Maryland

This project was supported by Grant No. 15JOVW-24-GG-00083-LEGA, 2003-WL-BX-0054, 2005-WL-AX-0091 & 2010-SW-AX-0037, awarded by the the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. The Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) funded this project under subaward number SASP-2009-1007. All points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of any State or Federal agency.
5/2025

Identifying
Legal Issues
for Victims of
Sexual Assault

A CHECKLIST FOR SURVIVORS
IN MARYLAND



Survivors of rape and sexual assault often face more than criminal justice issues – they may have other legal problems resulting from the crime. Common legal issues that confront victims involve safety, employment, family law, financial, housing, immigration, privacy, or educational concerns.

This brochure is designed to help survivors identify what non-criminal legal issues might affect their situation. The Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) has attorneys to help victims with these and other issues related to sexual violence.

Call 301-565-2277 or
877-496-SALI for help.

Sexual assault is a form of oppression, as well as a crime. It is an abuse of power that uses violence and coercion to control, silence, and deny people their autonomy and dignity. Sexual violence thrives when people who have power in society use that power to commit violence against vulnerable individuals. We must all work together to end these forms of violence.

Employment

If you need time off from work or cannot work because you were assaulted, the law may give you a right to:

- Disability benefits
- Time off under the Family Medical Leave Act

Sexual assault that happens in relation to your work may be a form of Sexual Harassment that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Title VII claims can be filed with the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), any County Human Relations Office, or the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights. There are deadlines for filing, especially if you work for the government.

Housing

Private and Public Rental Housing

- Maryland law allows tenants the right to end a lease because of a sexual assault IF you provide written 30-day notice and a copy of a peace or protective order. If you are working with a physician, psychologist, case worker, or rape crisis center, you can request a report from them to provide to your landlord, instead of a peace or protective order. See section on Safety for more information on Protective Orders.
- Victims of violence in private housing have been evicted because the perpetrator was their “guest” or lived with them. Contact a lawyer immediately if you are facing this situation.

Public Housing

- If you are a victim of domestic violence — including domestic sexual assault — you may be eligible for priority when applying for public housing.

Health

Abortion and Reproductive Care

- Abortion is legal in Maryland up until fetal viability, or about six months.
- Patients, providers, and individuals providing abortion support cannot be extradited for abortion care provided in Maryland.
- Patients seeking abortions are protected by confidentiality.
- Maryland residency is not required to receive abortion care in Maryland.

Financial

Criminal Injuries Compensation

You may be eligible to have expenses and lost wages paid by the Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board if you:

- Had to spend at least \$100 of your own money on assault-related expenses or lost at least \$100 in earnings or support.
- File a claim within 4 years of the assault. You may file later if you show good cause for why you couldn’t file sooner. For claims related to child abuse, you may file at any time.
- Beginning July 1, 2024, you may request reimbursement even if you did not report the sexual assault to police, without having to show good cause.

For claim forms call 888-679-9347 or go to <https://goccp.maryland.gov/victim-services/cicb>.

Restitution as Part of a Criminal Case

- If the perpetrator is prosecuted and convicted, they can be ordered to pay for your expenses. Talk to your attorney or the prosecutor about this before the trial ends.

Suing the Perpetrator

In a “civil tort lawsuit,” a victim hires an attorney to sue someone for damages (money) for the physical and emotional harm inflicted or damage done to their property. If you have been sexually assaulted, you may be able to sue either:

- The perpetrator or
- A third party (For example; the perpetrator’s employer, your landlord, your university, etc.).

Economic Stability

You may face legal challenges to your economic stability as a result of the assault, such as landlord-tenant matters, consumer issues, or bankruptcy. A lawyer can help resolve related legal concerns.

Immigration

Sexually Assaulted Family Members and Self-Petitions

Sexually assaulted family members of U.S. citizens or green card holders (lawful permanent residents) may be able to ask the government for their own green card without the abuser’s help or knowledge. This process is called self-petitioning. You can ask for your green card if you are:

- A sexually assaulted spouse of a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident. Unmarried children under the age of 21 may be included in your request for permanent residence.
- Married to a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident who sexually assaulted your child.
- A sexually assaulted child (unmarried and under 21 years old) who has been assaulted by a parent who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident.

Sexually Assaulted Victims May Be Eligible for U or T Visas

U visas give authorization to live and work in the U.S. You may be eligible for a U visa if:

- You are a non-citizen;
- You have suffered great physical or mental abuse resulting from criminal activity, including rape, human trafficking, incest, sexual assault, abusive sexual contact, prostitution, or sexual exploitation; and
- You help with the investigation or prosecution of the crime.

T visas allow victims of human trafficking to remain in the U.S. You may be eligible for a T visa if you help federal authorities in the investigation and prosecution of a human trafficking case.

School

If you were assaulted at school by another student or by school personnel, then you may have legal needs related to your education. For example, a student victim may wish to seek a peace or protective order to keep a perpetrator away from school (see section on Safety).

Schools are required to:

- Tell you where to go for help if you are sexually assaulted.
- Give you a copy of the school’s policy regarding sexual assault.
- Notify you of the outcome of the school’s investigation and what punishment the perpetrator received for assaulting you.

Sexual assault or sexual harassment that happens at school or at school events may be a form of Discrimination under Title IX of the Civil Rights Act. Your school may be liable in court if:

- The harassment is so severe and offensive that it detracts from your education; and
- You are denied equal access to the school’s resources and opportunities.

There are deadlines for filing a complaint, so it is important to consult an attorney if you believe your rights have been violated.

Family Law

- Sexually assaulting a spouse may be grounds for divorce in Maryland as “irreconcilable differences.”
- If you have a child in common with the perpetrator, or your child was sexually assaulted by the other parent, it is important to get legal advice about custody.
- If you are pregnant with a child conceived through rape, consult a lawyer before filing any legal case.

Privacy

- Ask who will have access to information before telling the court, law enforcement, or anyone else your whereabouts or other personal information.
- Prosecutors represent the State of Maryland, not the victim. Consult your own attorney about protecting your privacy. Find a lawyer immediately if your private records are demanded by the court (subpoenaed).

