

Help is Available if you Experience Sexualised Violence

Sexualised violence can happen anywhere! Wherever and whenever it happens, it is an injustice. The weltwärts organisations are actively committed to combatting sexualised violence.



weltwärts 

Does my experience really count as sexualised violence?

The term 'sexualised violence' is used to cover:

Rape (or attempted rape): the (attempted) undesired insertion of any part of the body or any object in any bodily orifice.

Sexual coercion (or attempted sexual coercion): using violence or the threat of violence to force somebody into sexual activity (or attempting to do this).

Sexual abuse: sexual activity with people who are unable to make their own decision, due to dependency on the perpetrator (child or legal ward), or protect themselves (physically, mentally or due to the influence of substances such as KO drops).

Sexual harassment:

- undesired physical touch of a sexual nature
- obscene looks, words or gestures, undesired sexual suggestions, including by telephone, SMS/text or e-mail.

The decisive criterion is the perception of the person affected: their feeling that their personal boundaries have been violated.

The aggression always comes from the perpetrator. Those affected by sexualised violence are not guilty of anything.

Impacts on physical and mental health

Psychological consequences:

- strong decrease in confidence; the question of whether we did something wrong; feelings of guilt and shame
- withdrawal: the attempt to forget, and to cope with the experiences by ourselves; self-doubt and self-hate
- self-harming (for example, scratching), which uses pain to resolve inner tension
- psychological traumatisation: fear and anxiety, anger and irritability, sleep disturbances and nightmares, dependency and apathy, flashbacks (reliving the violent situation in our mind).

These are normal reactions to an abnormal experience!

Possible physical consequences of rape:

- injuries
- unwanted pregnancy
- infection with HIV, sexually transmitted diseases or hepatitis
- menstrual cycle disturbances.

Quick action is required

After rape, rapid medical care is important. HIV post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and emergency contraception (“morning-after pill”) both need to be administered within 48 hours. Emergency contraception is not abortion: it is the prevention of pregnancy since it prevents any fertilised egg embedding itself in the womb. Any existing pregnancy is not interrupted or harmed.

Forensic evidence: Traces of the act can usually only be demonstrated within 24 hours – but forensic evidence can then be preserved for longer. Securing forensic evidence is important for a prosecution, but there is not always an obligation to press charges.

**To prosecute, or not to prosecute:
It is your decision!**

Whether you report the (attempted) rape, sexual coercion or harassment to the police and then pursue a prosecution is your decision, and your decision alone. Nobody should be allowed to pressurise you one way or the other.

Taking this decision is not always easy. So we encourage you to seek advice from the organisations listed below.

With regard to the legal situation in Germany, both women and men can seek information from local women’s organisations, for example. Generally speaking, in Germany you are protected from discrimination due to your gender or sexual orientation by the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG). In Germany, sexual assault is a punishable crime. Reports will be followed up by the police.

Seek out support!

In unfamiliar surroundings, such as those during volunteer service in Germany, it can be particularly difficult to deal with this type of experience. Possible people to turn to include your contact person at the local host organisation, your place of assignment or your sending organisation. Larger organisations have an Equal Opportunity Officer (German: *Gleichstellungsbeauftragte*), who can be the first point of contact regarding, for example, harassment at the workplace.

- The host organisation can put you in touch with local (women's) organisations for comprehensive advice.
- The statutory health insurance in Germany will cover the costs of psychological and medical assistance. Your host organisation will assist you.

When something like this happens, including sexual harassment, it is important to report it to the host and sending organisations, so they can act to protect you.



Possibilities for free anonymous advice

Furthermore, there are also possibilities for free anonymous advice:

Advice by telephone

Hilfetelefon 24 hours: 0800 1160 16

BIG-Hotline: +49 (0)30 611 0300 (8.00 am – 11.00 pm)

Advice online by e-mail or chat

www.hilfetelefon.de

<https://big-hotline.beranet.info/e-mailberatung.html>

Counselling points in Germany

General:

www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de/organisationen.html

For men:

www.tauwetter.de or ask the BIG Hotline

For trans* people:

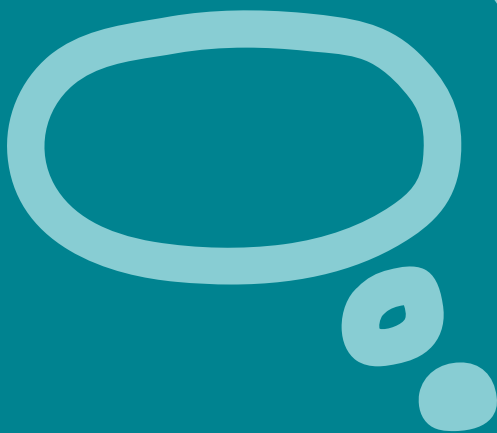
www.trans-nrw.de

Counselling points worldwide

www.hotpeachpages.net

If you do not feel like speaking to anyone at first

Take care to ensure you feel safe in your surroundings. Seek out contact with trustworthy people and remember what helped you well in any previous situations where you experienced difficulties. If you do not feel significantly better within four weeks, then you need to seek out psychological counselling.



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