

## What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual Assault is a crime. It can happen to anyone. The Department of Defense defines sexual assault as "intentional sexual contact, characterized by the use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent."

After a sexual assault occurs, some people may want to question what someone did before, during, or after the sexual assault, which can lead to "victim blaming." The person who was assaulted is never to blame for what happened to them. Nothing they did (or did not do) makes them responsible for the assault.

### What Is Consent . . .

Consent is given with words or overt acts indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual contact by a "competent" person. You are considered "incompetent" if you are sleeping or incapacitated, due to alcohol or drug use, mental incapacity, or age.

### What Is NOT Consent . . .

Lack of verbal or physical resistance is not consent. Neither is submission, cooperation, compliance, or coercion. When someone is under threat, in fear, sleeping, or incapacitated, there is no consent. Also, a current or previous dating relationship and manner of dress at the time do not mean consent. A person cannot consent if someone makes a false representation that the act serves as a professional purpose or creates a belief that the subject is another person. Someone's previous sexual acts, experiences, and/or history does not constitute consent. For the full legal definition of consent, please see Marine Corps Order 1752.5C.

There are a few important things to remember about consent. You should never make assumptions or guesses about what the other person is thinking or feeling. If there is any doubt at any point, either ask if the person you are with is okay with what is happening or just back off. Consent is active and ongoing, which means at any point consent can be withdrawn. Consent is required for all sexual encounters, but it is the bare minimum, not what someone should be striving for when it comes to sex. Talking about each other's sexual boundaries then respecting the other person's boundaries are key elements in making sure everyone has an enjoyable experience whether it is a one-time thing or in a long-term relationship.

### What Offenses Are Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault includes a broad category of sexual offenses, including rape, forcible sodomy (oral or anal sex), and other unwanted sexual contact that is aggravated, abusive, or wrongful (including unwanted and inappropriate sexual contact) or attempts to commit these acts.

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## Related Articles

- [Reporting Sexual Assault: Know Your Options](#)
- [How 24/7 Support Lines make a difference](#)
- [What do I do if I'm Sexually assaulted?](#)