

INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS: HOW TO MAKE A POLICE REPORT (Handout)

This handout explains:

- the basic steps to take when you make a report to the police,
- what to expect when you make a report to the police, and
- some helpful things to know.

You can:

- make a report directly to your local police agency, or
- contact a community organization first and have a victim service worker help you arrange a police interview. To find a local organization, **contact VictimLink BC at 1-800-563-0808** or send an email to **VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca**. VictimLink provides service in 150 languages.

Your local police agency will investigate the offence. Depending on where you live, this is the municipal police force (for example, the VPD) or the RCMP.

See <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/bcs-criminal-justice-system/if-you-are-a-victim-of-a-crime/coming-forward/reporting-a-crime> for useful information on how to report a crime in BC.

Call for Help

In case of emergency (if you're being assaulted or you feel you're in immediate danger), call 911 and ask for the police. If you're hurt, you can ask for an ambulance.

Calling 911 can help:

- to prevent injury or other harmful outcomes;
- you get medical or other help quickly;
- to stop threats, more harm or damage from being done; and
- the police interrupt a crime or respond quickly to:
 - save evidence,
 - identify and get information from victims, witnesses, and bystanders about the incident, and
 - identify and arrest a suspect if necessary.

If it's not an emergency, call or have a trusted person call either the **non-emergency number** or **victim services** of your local police office in the appropriate location.

This will give you a chance to talk to someone and ask questions like:

- Which police office do I go to?
- Is there free public parking?

- Where do I go when I come into the office?
- Do I need to bring anything with me?
- Can I bring a support person with me?
- Will I have to wait?

Calling ahead is extra important if you have special needs. If you tell the police or victim services about your special needs ahead of time, they'll be better able to help you when you arrive.

Some points to keep in mind:

- Call the central office for your police agency. This might not be the closest detachment to you.
- Ask to speak to an officer who specializes in sexual offences. Some detachments don't have this type of officer, but ask anyway.
- You'll have a first interview and then a formal police interview to make a statement (give all the details about what happened). The formal interview might happen on a different day.
- On the day of your formal interview:
 - If you have physical evidence of the offence, such as threatening text messages, photos, recordings, bring it with you.
 - You can bring a support person or victim support worker with you.
 - You can ask to make your statement to a female police officer if you prefer.
 - Your interview will be video-recorded and audio-recorded.
 - Be as detailed and open as you can with the police agency. Holding back details that you think aren't important or don't help your case isn't a good idea. If the court thinks you haven't been honest, it could damage your case. You might feel embarrassed about what's happened but remember that you haven't done anything wrong.
 - Try to be as accurate and thorough as you can about what happened
 - Focus on your direct knowledge rather than things you heard other people say. If you do repeat something someone else said, explain who told you.
 - If you can remember, repeat specific words (the exact words) that the suspect used.
 - The police might ask you to list witnesses who could corroborate the facts (confirm) you tell the police officer.
- Often the police will need to have more than one interview with you. They'll likely attend the crime scene, check for forensic evidence (evidence of the crime), take photographs, seize exhibits (things that can be used as evidence in court), and interview other people who might have evidence about what happened.

You can also make a report to a community agency (third party) and remain anonymous. If you're 19 or older, you can report a sexual crime indirectly to the police by speaking to a person at a community-based victim services program. They'll give information about your report to the police without giving your name. Call VictimLink BC at 1-800-563-0808 or send an email to VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca to find a community-based victim service program. This is called making a Third Party Report.

A Third Party Report isn't the same as calling 911 or the non-emergency police number. And it won't start a police investigation. Criminal charges won't be laid against the suspect unless:

- you later decide to speak to the police, or
- other people make reports about the same person.

The police will contact the service organization if during an investigation they find out information such as the identity of the alleged assailant, additional witnesses or victims of the same suspect. These options allow a victim to remain anonymous to the police and the suspect (if the suspect doesn't already know the victims).

How Your Police Statement Will Be Used

Your recorded statement can be used in a few different ways:

- The interviewer uses the information to tell other investigators what they must do to help with the case.
- The police use it to write their report to Crown counsel. In their report they recommend charges, and your statement might have information that's helpful to the Crown.
- The Crown listens to and reads the statement to decide if there will be charges and what offences will be on a form called the Information.
- The police might ask questions about your sexual history. The defence has to make a successful application to talk about this in court.
 - The Crown, Defence, and Court must "ensure that evidence is not elicited that encourages stereotypical myths. This means that a woman's sexual history isn't relevant or helpful to determine her credibility (decide how believable you are) or whether she consented to the act in her complaint.
- If the Crown approves charges, it relies on your statement to provide conditions for release of the suspect in a bail hearing.
- The defence gets your statement and the recordings of it as well as a summary, description, and copies of all statements, reports, photos etc. Sometimes, private things that aren't connected to the investigation will be blacked out.
- The statement might show that third parties (people not involved in your case) have private documents, such as diaries or medical records. The court has to decide if the defence can see these documents. The defence has to make an

- application to ask to see them. If this happens, you'll get a lawyer free of charge to represent your interests for this part of your case only.
- You'll look at and read the statement with the Crown before the trial. There might be spelling mistakes or more serious mistakes that you can correct and/or explain.
 - You can read the statement before you testify outside of court to refresh your memory about what you said.
 - If you can't remember a detail when you're testifying (telling the court what happened), the Crown will show you the relevant part of your statement. You can read the content in silence, put the statement down, and answer the question again with a refreshed memory.
 - When the defence lawyer is asking you questions (cross-examination), they'll ask leading questions related to the statement.
 - Other witnesses might be asked about what you say in your statement both during the investigation and in court.
 - The Crown and defence lawyers might ask an expert witness (someone who has special knowledge of a certain topic) to speak or write a report. The expert might refer to your statement in their report or testimony.
 - If the suspect pleads guilty, the Crown will present facts from your statement and might show the video that was made during your police interview to draw attention to especially bad events.
 - The judge might refer to your statement when they accept the suspect's guilty plea and sentence them.
 - Corrections personnel will refer to your statement when they are making certain decisions about the offender, including programs for the offender, release date and conditions, if this applies,
 - Parole personnel will also look at your statement, if applicable.