

# REGIONAL GUIDE

## Durham

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Community-specific resources for survivors of gender-based violence and their supporters.



VESTA

[www.vestasit.com](http://www.vestasit.com)

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# This Guide is For You

**Welcome. We believe you. We believe them.**

This guide is for you and anyone who needs it. You have a friend and you're worried about them. They might be in a bad situation. You're pretty sure things aren't good and they're getting worse.

What do you need? Information. Resources. Things to do right now.

**This guide is a list of resources that you can share and take action on, if you or they choose to.** It has been written and sourced specifically for the Durham region. We created this guide for survivors of sexual violence and for those who want to help them. Maybe your friend needs support. Maybe you are a survivor and you never want to see another go through what you've experienced.

Sexual violence is a prevalent, intersectional and multi-factor issue affecting all communities. Its complexity makes it impossible to tackle alone. It takes every person who has endured gender-based violence standing up and refusing to let it happen to another.

**Thank you for taking the initiative.**



# What Are We Talking About?

Before we get into the details, let's talk about some important definitions.

**Gender-based violence (GBV)** is violence that is directed at people because of their gender. GBV covers many forms of violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and domestic violence.

**Sexual Assault** is any non-consensual sexual act. Anyone can experience sexual assault, including spouses, significant others, and partners who live together. We often think that sexual assault and rape are the same thing, but sexual assault is a bigger category that includes non-penetrative sexual activity, including touching, fondling and molestation.

# What Are We Talking About?

**Rape** is about non-consensual penetration. Whether it's an object or a body part, rape means they have experienced unwanted penetration of the vagina or anus. Rape also includes having their mouth penetrated with someone's sex organ without consent. Even if they consented to earlier sexual activity, rape can still happen.

**Sexual Harassment** is about unwanted words and sexual behaviours that could include sexual assault and rape. Sexual harassment may include comments on how someone is dressed, on their body or looks, and these comments could be negative or positive. Sexual harassment has nothing to do with whether or not the person doing the harassing is 'just joking' or 'trying to give them a compliment'. It's about how the survivor feels about the behaviours, how severe it is, and how often this is happening.

# What About Consent?

Everyone talks about 'consent' these days. But what exactly does consent mean? According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, only **28% of Canadians feel confident they understand what consent means**. So, let's talk about that.

Consent means that you're actively saying that you're into sexual activity with someone. Any sexual activity without your active consent is sexual assault. Don't forget that you can't give consent if you're drunk, high, sleeping or underage.

Tricking, manipulating, or pressuring someone into sexual activity is called **sexual coercion**.

When we ask 'did they consent?' what are we really asking?

Back in the day, it was trendy to stand by the 'no means no' idea. We assumed that if they didn't like what was happening sexually, they would say no and likely push away or fight back.

Then we learned that survivors of sexual assault and gender-based violence may not be able to speak up. Fear, flashbacks, and trauma can make it impossible to speak, or even move. Survivors reported staying silent or just laying still until it was over and their silence was argued to be consent.



# What About Consent?

Today we know that consent is always ACTIVE and verbal. We're looking for an enthusiastic 'Yes!' because 'yes means yes'.

Not sure how to consent without ruining the mood? How about...

- **What sounds like fun?**
- **Does that sound good?**
- **What excites you?**
- **Is that good?**
- **What would turn you on?**
- **How does that feel?**



Want to know more? Check out the [Consent 101 video series by Planned Parenthood](#) and [our blog post on consent.](#)



# Is This Abuse?

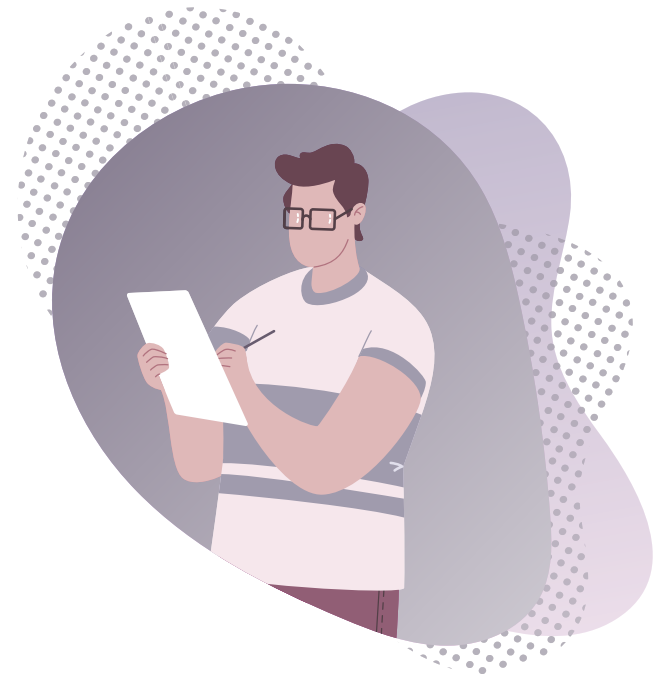
It wasn't anything you could put your finger on. Maybe someone was telling you a story, almost like it was a joke, but something in their tone caught your attention and made your stomach knot up.

You don't know what it is exactly that's making your stomach knot up or making you feel or think that something isn't quite right. It may not feel right to ask outright if everything is ok or if someone is hurting them. They might not realize it themselves. so how do you know?

There are signs. Gender-based violence follows pretty standard patterns because abuse isn't about love or jealousy. It's always about power and control.

Abuse and gender-based violence doesn't always start with physical violence. It often begins with emotional, sexual, financial or spiritual abuse that slowly cuts the survivor down, makes them feel alone, and like no one else will love them.

The following pages will outline common signs of abuse. Not all of these signs constitute abuse or violence. Some people may exhibit some of these and some may not - every situation is different. This is why people need help and guidance and even legal support.





# Signs to Look Out For

Here are some common signs\* to look out for:

**The other person is just plain mean.** Your friend has told you (or you've seen) them be humiliated or be made fun of by their partner. They may say things like "we're just joking", but it doesn't feel like teasing or joking.

**They've told you stories about having to have sex just to make the other person happy.** Your friend may have told you stories about having to have sex just to make the other person happy. They might be making it seem like a normal part of a relationship, but something seems off and you suspect that you're not hearing the worst parts.

**One person is doing things that they don't want to do just to make the other person happy.** In any relationship, you might notice that one person is always partaking in things that make them uncomfortable or unhappy, such as drugs, stealing, drinking, or any kind of dangerous activity.



\*Source: [Canadian Women's Foundation](#)

# Signs to Look Out For

**One person is always texting, calling, and showing up uninvited.** They have to know where the other is all of the time. Sometimes, they don't let the other person leave the house or they will hide their belongings, such as their phone or their wallet.

**One person in the relationship controls all the money and spending.** The other person can't make any decisions around money and their financial situation is kept a secret. You may also suspect that one person is stealing money from the other.

**One person uses physical force (push, punch, slap, choke, shake, used objects/weapons) and you know that they've hurt other people (children, pets, family members, friends, neighbours).** They may have even destroyed household items. The stories you hear make it clear that this person is threatening violence, and sometimes those threats aren't words – there may just be glares or other non-verbal cues that threaten physical assault.

**One person is manipulating the other with religion and using it to justify hurting them.** Or one person is being forced to practice religion (or not not being allowed to practice religion at all).

**When one person is called out on their behaviour, they say it was because they love the other person.** It may get better for a little while, but then the same behaviours start up again.

**When one person is called out on their behaviour, they blamed the other person and said it was all their fault.**

**One person threatens to kill themselves or someone else if the other person says they'll leave them.**

# Now What: How to Help

Here is a quick list of do's and don'ts:

## DO

1. **Listen if they want to talk.** Don't judge and don't offer solutions. Just listen closely.

*"I believe you."*

*"Thank you for telling me. I know this is hard to talk about."*

2. **Tell them that you love and support them.** Whatever they want to do, you support their decision.

*"There's nothing you did (or didn't do) that makes this your fault."*

*"I hear you and I totally support you."*

3. **If they ask for help, offer resources.**

*"I'm here for you. What can I do to help?"*

*"You're not alone in this. I'm here to listen and help."*



## DON'T

1. **Confront them or have an 'intervention'.**

2. **Ask them why they don't just leave** or imply that they deserve violence if they stay.

3. **Put yourself in danger.**



# Now What: How to Help

## Listen to Them

If you're reading this guide, there's likely someone that you're worried about. The most important thing you can do is make sure that they know that you love and support them.

To the outsider looking in, it can be hard to understand why they don't just leave. It's important to remember that gender-based violence often includes emotional manipulation, threats, and violence that can get worse when they try to leave. Don't forget that it's hard to leave someone you love, even if they treat you badly.

## What You Can Do

With your friends, form a circle of support around them. It's everyone's job to make sure they know you are all there, ready to listen, and without judgement.

If they want to talk, it's important that you listen, believe them, and above all, don't judge them or their decisions.



# Now What: How to Help

## Be There for Them

Sometimes the best thing you can do is show up when they need you. Simply being with them can help relieve the stress and anxiety produced by trauma. If you can't be physically in the same space, be ready to talk.

Gender-based violence robs survivors of their sense of control over their own lives. Showing up and supporting their decisions, even simple ones, can help them reclaim their power.

## What You Can Do

Join them for the things that feel really scary, like walking to their car after work or reporting to the police. If they live in the same community as their abuser, going to the grocery store may be overwhelming. Offer to shop with them.

Make sure you let them drive the action. Don't try to fix things or overrule their decisions. Support what they decide to do, even if you disagree. Let them tell you how to help.

Check out Option B  
for more ideas on  
how to support  
someone after they  
have experienced  
violence.



# Now What: How to Help

## Be an Example of Self-Care

Resist the urge to preach self-care. They're going to hear a lot of people telling them to practice self-care like that's a cure-all for trauma. The pressure to do self-care 'right' can create more stress on top of trauma.

## What You Can Do

Be an example of self-care. Know your own limits and take time to recharge. Whether it's bingeing on your favourite Netflix series or taking a long walk, show them how you're actively taking care of yourself.

For more ideas around self-care, [check out RAINN.](#)



# Now What: How to Help

## Be Ready With Resources

The most dangerous time in an abusive situation is when the survivor stands up for themselves. This might mean leaving, telling a friend or boss, or reporting to police. Whatever the situation, asking for help takes a massive amount of courage on their part and it means the danger that they're in could get worse, and fast.

As their friend, it's important that you don't put yourself in danger. Don't commit to doing things that could put you at risk of violence.

## What You Can Do

Be ready with resources and talk to them about who to call first. If you're afraid that they are in serious danger right now, call 911.

**See page 18 for a list of local resources and services for the Durham region, as well as some online resources.**



# What Happens Next?

So maybe there is a problem, or something has happened to them. If they aren't sure how to disclose their story to their family, or if they want additional support after talking to you, there is immediate and accessible help available. They can [speak to a therapist through online therapy](#) or [chat online using RAINN](#) to connect with a trained individual who can help.

## How to Deal with Unsupportive Responses

It would be wonderful if everyone was as supportive as you when they disclose their story. Unfortunately, not everyone is going to respond in a helpful way. They may ask questions or provide unhelpful comments, such as: "What were you wearing? What did you do to try to stop it from happening? Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

If someone responds in such a judgmental or unhelpful manner, remind them that it's not their fault. They are not alone. Just because someone isn't supportive doesn't mean that everyone else in their life will respond the same way.

## Online Legal Aid

There are services available that can help by providing **free, independent legal advice**. These services are available remotely or in-person based on region.

Visit the [Legal Aid section of our Resource Library](#) for individually sourced legal services and specialized programs for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and other forms of violence.



# Should They Go to the Hospital?

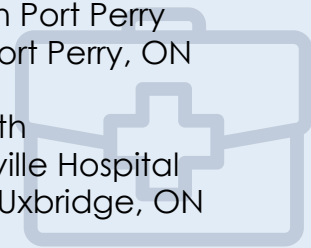
You or another friend or family member can accompany them to the emergency department of the hospital. There, they can tell the triage nurse that they have been assaulted. Physical evidence can be collected within 12 days of the assault, however, there is a greater chance at collecting forensic evidence within 72 hours.

By visiting the hospital and telling a nurse what happened, **they are not automatically reporting the assault to the police.** If they choose not to report to the police, they can still receive medical attention at any hospital.

The nurse will ask if they want to report to the police. If they don't want to report, the nurse will provide them with options, which can include a physical and genital exam to assess any injuries that may have occurred. The nurse will talk with them about sexually transmitted diseases, and for female victims, about pregnancy concerns. The nurse will discuss treatment options, such as emergency contraception and medicines to combat sexually transmitted diseases. They will also provide information about follow-up medical care.

## Emergency Rooms in Durham

- Lakeridge Health Bowmanville  
47 Liberty St. S, Bowmanville, ON
- Lakeridge Health Oshawa  
1 Hospital Court, Oshawa, ON
- Lakeridge Health Port Perry  
451 Paxton St., Port Perry, ON
- Oak Valley Health  
Markham Stouffville Hospital  
4 Campbell Dr., Uxbridge, ON



# How Does Reporting Work?

Reporting is their decision. You may want them to report. You may really want to see the perpetrator get arrested and possibly even go to court. But, it's up to them.

They don't have to report. But if they want to, now or later, they will need a record of what happened. As a friend, the most important thing you can do right now is help them document their experience.

If they're thinking about reporting but don't know where to start, we've created a user-friendly survivor's handbook for people who have experienced sexual violence. In this handbook, we cover topics like definitions, the way the Canadian criminal code outlines terms, myths, important details regarding reporting and court proceedings, links to 24/7 crisis services, and more.

Our hope is that our straightforward handbook is able to bring clarity to some of the common questions people may have surrounding sexual violence.

**Download the full handbook or individual chapters as needed.**



# Document Now. Report If They Want To.

For those looking to document their experience, they can start by visiting VESTA Community: a research-backed application for disclosure, reporting, and support.

Whether they want to share specifics or can't remember details, the app allows them to record their story in their own words using a trauma-informed question and answer format. They can also access online resources, crisis text or chat lines, counselling, report anonymously, report to local police, or save their record and return to it at a later time.

[Visit the VESTA  
Community App](#)



# Resources in Durham

## Sexual Assault Centres and Shelters

- Bethesda House (Bowmanville)  
24 Hour Support Line: 905-623-6050 or 1-800-338-3397  
<http://bethesdahouse.ca>
- The Denise House (Oshawa)  
24 Hour Support Line: 905-728-7311 or 1-800-263-3725  
<http://thedenisehouse.com>
- Durham Rape Crisis Centre  
905-668-9200,  
<http://drcc.ca/>
- Durham Region Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Care Centre  
905-576-8711 ext. 3286  
<http://www.sacc.to/gylb/satc/CentreID=8.htm>
- Herizon House (Ajax)  
24 Hour Support Line: 1-866-437-4066  
Administration Phone: 905-426-1064  
[www.herizonhouse.com](http://www.herizonhouse.com)
- Y's WISH (Oshawa)  
Crisis Line: 905-576-2997 or 1-888-576-2997  
Transitional Support: 905-576-0182  
<https://www.ywcadurham.org/emergencysHELTER>
- Victim Services of Durham Region  
(905) 721-4226 or 1-888-579-1520 ext. 3400  
<https://www.victimservicesdurham.ca>

## Durham Region Police Services

(905) 579-1520 ext. 3400 or 1-888-579-1520  
Whitby: (905) 579-1520, ext. 1836  
Bowmanville: (905) 579-1520, Ext. 1687  
Port Perry: (905) 579-1520, Ext. 2672  
Pickering: (888) 579-1520, Ext. 2521

## Addiction and Mental Health Services

- Durham Mental Health Services – Crisis Services  
905-666-0483 or 1-800-742-1890  
<http://dmhs.ca/cause/crisis-response>
- Drug and Alcohol Helpline  
1-800-565-8603

# Resources in Durham

## Legal Support and Help Lines

- Family Law Information Centre  
905-579-1988 or 1-877-294-6524  
(Walk-in services located at 150 Bond St. E,  
Oshawa, ON, on the first floor)
- Durham Community Legal Clinic  
905-728-7321 or 1-888-297-2202  
[www.durhamcommunitylegalclinic.ca](http://www.durhamcommunitylegalclinic.ca)
- Luke's Place Support and Resource Centre  
905-728-0978 or 1-866-516-3116  
<https://lukesplace.ca/>
- Legal Aid Ontario Oshawa Office  
905-576-2334 or 1-866-595-0563  
[www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca)
- The Law Society Referral Service  
416-947-5255 or 1-855-947-5255  
Legal Line: 416-929-8400  
[www.legalline.ca](http://www.legalline.ca)
- Women's Sexual Assault Help Line  
1-800-461-2929 (Daily 24 hours)
- Assaulted Women's Helpline  
1-866-863-0511 or 1-866-863-7868
- Fem'aide (24/7 crisis line for French-speaking  
women across the province of Ontario)  
1-877-336-2433
- Crisis Intervention Team Lakeridge Health Oshawa  
905-576-8711 ext. 4384
- Distress Centre Durham: Helpline  
905-430-2522 or 1-800-452-0688
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans Youth Line  
1-800-268-9688
- ConnexOntario  
1-866-531-2600  
<https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/>
- Talk4Healing (Help Line for Aboriginal Women)  
1-855-554-HEAL (4325)  
<https://www.talk4healing.com/>

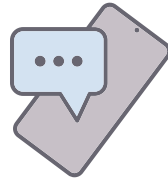
# Are You Ready to Do Something About GBV?

Here's how you can help make online reporting a reality.



## Share this Guide with Friends

Give your friends the information and support that they may need.



## Share this Guide on Social Media

Share a link to this guide on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media.



## Ask for Online Reporting

Spread the word in your community about the possibility of online reporting.

**For more information on gender-based violence and how you can join the fight, visit [VestaSIT.com](https://VestaSIT.com)**

VESTA Social Innovation Technologies is creating solutions for those who have experienced gender-based violence. We're on a mission to eradicate rape culture by improving the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of individuals who have experienced violence. We create research-backed applications for disclosure, reporting, and support.

**Together we can  
end gender-based  
violence. Be ready  
with resources.**



**VESTA**

**[www.vestasit.com](http://www.vestasit.com)**