



Confidentiality

at SARC medical/forensic appointments

During your appointment, sensitive information will generally be discussed. SARC doctors and counsellors are required to write notes about your appointment into a file. The doctor takes two sets of notes- 1 to do with the assault, and 1 with your personal medical history. The notes are kept in a medical file.

Files are stored in a secure location on the SARC premises and SARC staff are always respectful of your privacy. Everything you discuss at your appointment is confidential. However, there are some circumstances in which confidentiality needs to be overridden. These are as follows.

Duty of care

- Where there is a risk of harm to you or another person, for any reason, SARC needs to take action to keep you and others safe. The SARC doctor and counsellor will discuss the situation with you at the time, and will involve you as much as possible in decisions.

Mandatory Reporting Laws

- All doctors in Western Australia are required by law to report a sexual assault of a person under the age of 18 years to the Department for Child Protection and Family Support.

Court Cases

- During your appointment, the doctor will take notes and write down the examination findings in your file.
- If you report the assault to police, the doctor may be asked to write a report for the police based on their notes and examination findings.
- It is the police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions who decide if there is enough evidence to 'press charges' and take your case to court.
- If the case goes to court, you become a 'witness' in the case and the SARC doctor's report and the notes to do with the assault will be provided to lawyers on both sides.
- Occasionally a file at SARC is also requested (subpoenaed) by a court and SARC must provide the file by law.

Freedom of information

Under 'Freedom of Information' laws, you have the right to obtain information from your SARC file. However the file remains the property of SARC. To obtain this information, please send a letter with your request to: Freedom of Information Coordinator, WNHS, P.O. Box 134, SUBIACO WA 6904.

The Option of Counselling

SARC provides a counselling support service for people who have experienced a sexual assault. At your medical/forensic appointment, you will be offered a follow-up counselling session either in person, or over the telephone. For many people, counselling is a new experience.



Why counselling?

A trauma experience can have a huge impact on your daily life. It is important that these impacts don't dominate your life and cause serious effects in the long term. Good mental health is just as important as good physical health.

It takes an enormous amount of courage to talk to someone about your experiences. But not seeking help can often lead to the situation becoming worse.

Counselling at SARC

SARC counsellors are experienced in providing counselling to deal with the aftermath of sexual assault and sexual abuse. SARC counsellors treat clients with empathy, compassion and an understanding of trauma.

Together with you, the counsellor will focus on your feelings and emotional reactions and explore strategies to help you recover from the trauma and to feel in control of your life. You will not be forced to talk about anything you do not want to talk about.

In counselling, you can expect to:

- Be treated with dignity, respect and understanding
- Be believed
- Have an opportunity to express feelings and thoughts without being judged
- Receive accurate information
- Make decisions in your own time
- Communicate in your own language, with the help of an interpreter if required.

A SARC counselling session is usually 50 minutes to 1 hour in length and is free of charge.

One of the greatest remedies for healing is to talk to someone supportive, understanding and empathetic.

Your options for Counselling

- Accept the option of attending counselling at SARC
- Contact SARC on (08) 6458 1828 and request a counselling appointment
- Attend counselling at another service.

Written information

SARC's **Care Package** for survivors of sexual assault contains detailed information about trauma and recovery after sexual violence. This Package, and other information, can be found on the **SARC website** (search for 'SARC WA' online).



SARC Contact Details

Emergency telephone support, 7 days, 8.30am-11pm: call (08) 6458 1828; freecall 1800199 888
To request a counselling appointment: (08) 6458 1828; to change an appointment: (08) 6458 1820