

# 20 ELEMENTS

## of a Victim-Centered and Offender-Focused YOU HAVE OPTIONS Law Enforcement Response

All YOU HAVE OPTIONS Program Law Enforcement Agencies believe in providing victims of sexual assault with as much control over their report and any subsequent criminal investigation as the law allows.

Unless legally mandated or in other rare circumstances, the following victim-centered and offender-focused options are offered during every sexual assault report and/or investigation at all YOU HAVE OPTIONS Program Law Enforcement Agencies:

**1** A victim of sexual assault is offered three options for reporting: Information Only, Partial Investigation and Complete Investigation.

A victim or other reporting party may remain anonymous and still have the information they provide documented by a You Have Options Program Law Enforcement Agency.

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**3** A victim or other reporting party may have questions answered regarding their options for reporting and/or a criminal investigation prior to providing any identifying or incident information to law enforcement.

A clear explanation of the reporting process and/or investigative procedures will be provided by a law enforcement officer if requested by the victim.

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**5** When making a report there is no requirement to meet in person with a law enforcement officer. For example, a victim or other reporting party may report using an online form or a victim may choose to have a sexual assault advocate report on their behalf.

Reasonable efforts will be made to allow the victim or other reporting party control over the location, time and date where their initial report is made to law enforcement.

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**7** A victim or other reporting party may provide as much, or as little, information as they choose with no time limitations or restrictions on when the information is given to law enforcement. For example, information obtained on an incident outside the current statute of limitations will be documented and used as the law allows to assist in other investigations.

Law enforcement officers will offer assistance in locating sexual assault advocacy services to every person reporting.

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**9** A victim may be accompanied by a sexual assault advocate or other appropriate support person during all phases of the reporting process and criminal investigation.

A victim, or other reporting party, may end an interview with law enforcement at any time without having to provide a reason.

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After making a report, a victim or other reporting party will not be pressured to participate in a criminal investigation.

Reasonable efforts will be made to meet the needs of the victim and address any barriers the victim faces in providing information to law enforcement during the reporting process.

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Law enforcement officers will conduct victim interviews in a trauma-informed manner.

Reasonable efforts will be made to meet the needs of the victim and address any barriers the victim faces when participating in a sexual assault investigation.

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A victim's right to keep their assault confidential will be respected. If legally permissible, no person (outside of a law enforcement agency) will be notified the victim has reported without the victim's consent. This includes the interviewing of identified witnesses and perpetrators.

Investigators will utilize strategies to identify and document serial sexual perpetration, such as the Inquiry into Serial Sexual Assault (ISSA).

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Investigators will collaborate with victims during the investigative process and respect a victim's right to request certain investigative steps not be conducted. Criminal investigations will be conducted at a pace set by the victim, not the law enforcement officer. Victims will be informed that no case can proceed to arrest or referral to an office of prosecution until the investigative process is complete.

A victim may disengage from a criminal investigation at any time prior to an arrest being made or the case being referred to an office of prosecution. There is no requirement that an explanation be given by the victim to law enforcement.

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If legally permissible and probable cause exists for a crime, no arrest or referral to an office of prosecution will occur without the consent of the victim. All You Have Options Law Enforcement Agencies respect the choice of every victim who reports a sexual assault, and understand that justice is not the same for every person who is victimized.

Criminal investigations that do not result in arrest or referral to an office of prosecution will be classified as "inactive" unless found baseless or false, allowing for the investigation to be re-opened in the future at a victim's request and/or if additional information is discovered.

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In some circumstances You Have Options Program Law Enforcement Agencies may be legally mandated to continue an investigation even when a victim does not want to participate. Examples include investigations involving domestic violence, child abuse or where the reported victim is still in physical danger. If you are unsure how law enforcement would respond to your situation, you can call and speak anonymously with an officer at a You Have Options Law Enforcement Agency. You will never be pressured to provide information in order to hear about your options.

**YOU HAVE OPTIONS WHEN REPORTING A SEXUAL ASSAULT.**  
Learn more at [www.ReportingOptions.org](http://www.ReportingOptions.org)