



Reporting Sexual Assault to the Police

Information for consideration

Some people are clear that they want to report their sexual assault to police. Others are clear that they do not want to involve the police. Some people are undecided. It is an individual decision for you to make. SARC staff will respect and support your decision.

You can choose one of the following options

- Not to report to police.
- Speak to the police informally, either on the telephone or in person. The police will tell you about your options, but they will not do anything unless you want them to. You do not have to give your name if you don't want to.
- Make an informal report to police. A police officer will write down what happened, and you sign a statement saying that you do not want the matter investigated.
- Make a formal statement to police. This involves telling the police all the details from the assault that you can remember. They will also ask you questions. The details will be typed into a statement which can take several hours to complete. You can have a support person with you if you choose. You then read the statement and sign it when you are satisfied with what has been written. You will be given a copy of the statement.

There is no set timeframe in W.A. for reporting a sexual assault to the police. However, the sooner a report is made, the easier it is for the police to investigate. Forensic evidence can be collected from your body, but only soon after the assault. It is best if the evidence can be collected within 3 days if possible, but sometimes up to 7 days, depending on what has happened. This evidence can be an important part in supporting what you say.

The police can also assist you to complete a Victim Impact Statement if the accused person pleads guilty or is found guilty.

The process after a formal statement is made

- The police will start an 'investigation'. If a suspect is identified, the police and lawyers (who work for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions or 'DPP') determine if there is enough evidence to 'press charges' against the accused person.
- In W.A. sexual assault is regarded as a crime 'against the state'. You become a 'witness' to the crime.
- If the police do not lay charges it does not mean that they do not believe you. Sometimes there is not enough evidence for charges to be laid, or they cannot find the suspect.
- If the matter goes to court, a 'trial' will take place, in the District Court (or the Children's Court if people under 18 years are involved). The police will keep you updated.
- At the trial there will be lawyers on both sides- the prosecution and the defence. You may be asked to give evidence in court and say what happened. You may be asked questions by the defence lawyer. The police and DPP will let you know more about this at the time.
- Cases end with a decision (verdict) with the accused person being found 'guilty' or 'not guilty'. Regardless of the outcome of the trial, people often feel better knowing that they were able to speak out about their experience and be heard.

Reporting to police and going to court can make you feel empowered, even if it seems daunting at the time.

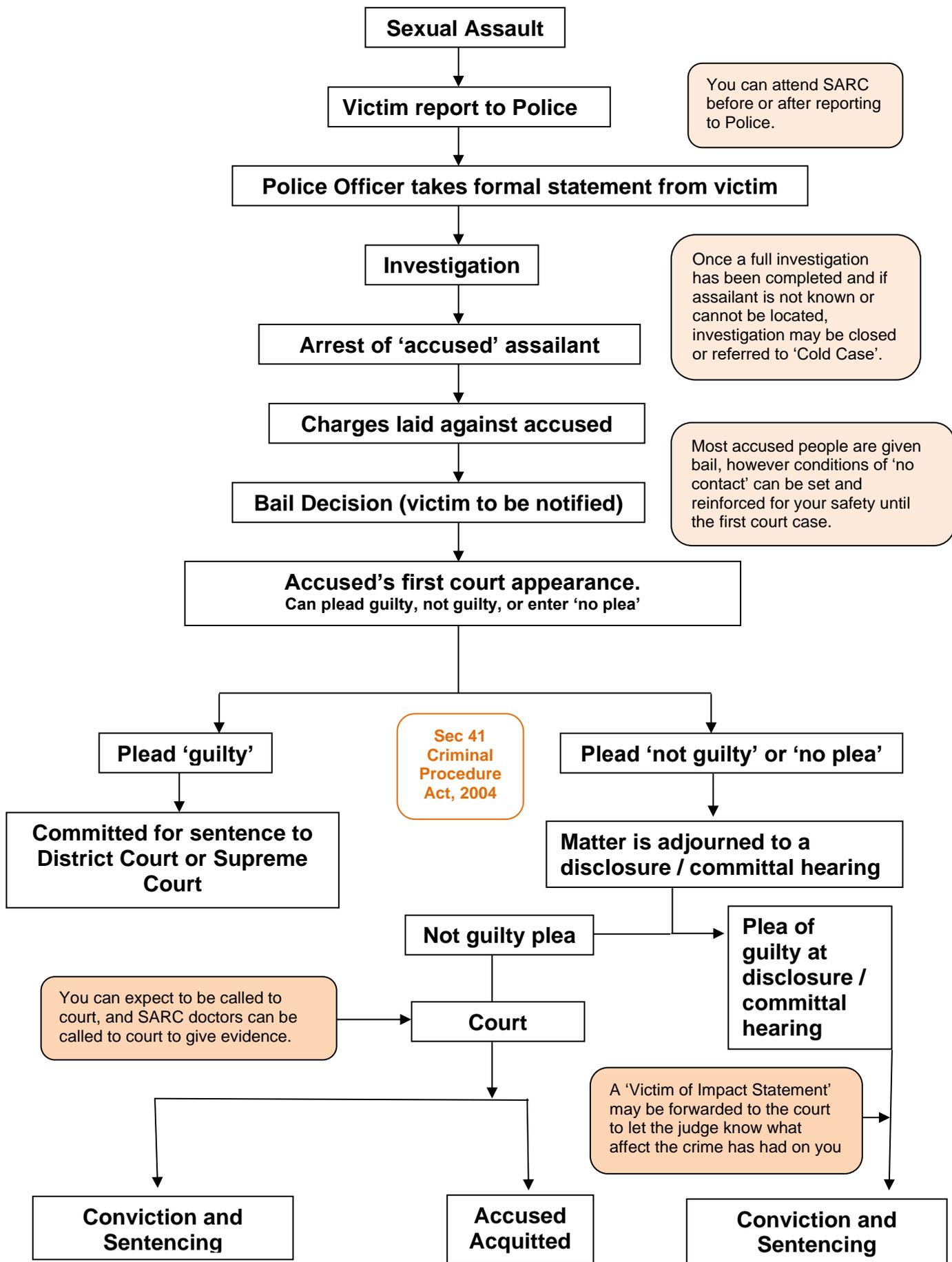
It can be an upsetting and confusing time and you may need extra support from close family and friends, and/or support services.

If your case goes to court, you will be contacted by 'Victim Support Services' at the court who will offer a support worker who can explain the court process and go to court with you.

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

Criminal Proceedings Flowchart



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