



Today, you received care from the
Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme (TVEP)

TVEP is a non-profit organisation working in partnership with Government to deliver support services to survivors of sexual assault, family violence, and people infected with HIV/AIDS in the Thulamela municipality. What you share with us is confidential and our services are free of charge.

This brochure is for you and your family to read once you have left the TVEP Trauma Centre. It is to remind you of what happened at the Trauma Centre, and to offer information on the medical and legal procedures that you are now going through. It also outlines some of our free services that could be of use to you.

YOUR VISIT TO THE TRAUMA CENTRE

At the Trauma Centre, you were assisted by a **TVEP Survivor Support Officer (SSO)**. S/he listened to your story, recorded your details, and called the doctor to examine you and treat any injuries you may have. If you chose to receive additional services from TVEP, you gave permission to your SSO to access medical and legal information on your behalf. Copies of these documents are available if you want them.

All TVEP staff & volunteers take an oath of confidentiality. No one will release any information about your case without your signed consent.

Legal Process

If you have opened a **Criminal Case** with SAPS, the police officer on duty took your statement, and together with the doctor made sure the necessary form for bringing a case to court was completed. This is called the J88.

The doctor may also have collected **Forensic Evidence** from you during the exam. These are samples of hair, fluid or even fingerprints that doctors send to a laboratory to be tested to build a criminal case against the attacker(s).

Your SSO and the Trauma Centre will assist you even if you do not open a criminal case. You do not have to lay a criminal charge with SAPS, unless you are not yet sixteen.

If you opened a case with the police, you will be contacted by a SAPS **Investigating Officer (IO)**, who is responsible for collecting evidence to prove the guilt of the attacker(s). If you have not been contacted within 2 days, inform your SSO. S/he will help you liaise with the police and the criminal justice system so that you are updated on the progress of your case.

If the police have enough evidence, the perpetrator will be arrested and charged, and the case will go to court. The **Prosecutor** is responsible for presenting the case against the perpetrator. When an arrest is made, the accused is either kept in jail or granted bail, depending on the decision of the magistrate. Your IO must attend that hearing, and you have the right to ask the Prosecutor to oppose bail, or to apply special conditions to keep the rapist away from you.

If the rapist is out on bail and contravenes bail conditions by trying to contact you, threaten you or sending relatives to “negotiate a settlement” with your family, inform your Investigating Officer and SSO IMMEDIATELY. DO NOT LET HIM INTIMIDATE YOU!

Your case will first be taken to the **District Court**, and if there is sufficient evidence against the accused it will proceed to the **Sexual Offences & Community Affairs (SOCA) Court**. The accused will either plead guilty or not guilty. You will not always be required to attend court, as sometimes the purpose of the meetings is administrative (e.g. to set a date for the hearing). The IO will tell you when you must attend. You are allowed to review or amend your official statement at any time. If you have any questions or if you do not hear from the IO, please call your SSO.

If the accused pleads **Guilty** then the Magistrate will decide on an appropriate **Sentence**. The Sentence is a punishment decided by the magistrate and might include community service, fines or time in jail. If the accused pleads **Not Guilty** then the case will go to **Trial**. If the case goes to trial, the Magistrate will decide if the accused is guilty or not guilty based on evidence submitted by the Prosecutor and the testimony of witnesses. If the Prosecutor does not believe there is enough evidence to convict your attacker, s/he may **Withdraw** the case, or return it to the police for further investigation. If this happens, call your SSO for advice.

If the Magistrate decides the accused is not guilty then s/he will be released from the custody of the court and be free to go. This is called an **Acquittal**. If the accused is found guilty of the crime, s/he will be **Convicted** and the Magistrate will then decide on a sentence.

A case may be **Remanded** (delayed) during the court process. There are many reasons for remands and they can be caused by the Prosecutor, the Defence Attorney or the Court. When a case is remanded a later court date is decided for the case to resume. If this happens more than 2 times, call your SSO.

You can withdraw your case at any time and still receive TVEP counselling services. However, we encourage you to discuss any problems you are having with your SSO before deciding to withdraw.

Medical & Psycho-Social Care

The nurse or doctor also took a sample of blood from your arm. These **blood tests** were taken to determine what medicine you need. You received an **STI Test** to identify any sexually transmitted infections (STI) that you might have developed during/after the incident. If you are a woman, the doctor may have conducted a **Pregnancy Test**. If the test showed that you are not pregnant, the doctor may have given you emergency contraception to prevent you becoming pregnant from the rapist.

You also were advised to take an **HIV test**, and if you agreed, you received pre-test counselling to prepare you for the test, and post-test counselling to help you accept the results. The purpose of this blood test was to determine your HIV status at the time of the sexual assault. This is very important because if you tested HIV negative, you were given medication to reduce the chances of being infected from the rapist. The results of this test remain confidential and are only available to case workers responsible for your medical treatment and counselling.

If you tested **HIV positive**, you were already infected with the virus at

the time of the assault. This is **not** a death sentence! You can live a long, healthy and happy life with HIV, as long as you lead a healthy lifestyle and practice safe sex to prevent the virus from developing into AIDS. Your SSO will refer you to people who can teach you to do this, and to help you to disclose to your family if that is what you want to do.

If your results were **negative**, you are probably not infected with the HIV virus. However, if you were infected within the past 3- 6 months, the virus would still be in the “window period” which means it cannot be seen in your blood. This is why you **must** be re-tested 6 weeks after your first test, and then again after 3 months. Remember that testing HIV negative is no guarantee you will be negative in the future so **always practice safe sex!**

After taking these blood tests, you may have received different types of **Medication**. If you tested HIV negative and arrived at the Trauma Centre within 72 hours of the sexual assault, you received **Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)**. It is very important that you take these pills for a full 4 weeks, because if the man who raped you was HIV+, this medicine can stop the virus taking hold in your body. The doctor may have given you anti-emetic medicine to take if the PEP makes you feel nauseas. If you experience any other side effects, phone your SSO for advice but try by all means to continue taking the medicine. Your SSO gave you a month’s supply of a food supplement – eating some every day will help your body to fight infections.

The doctor may also have given you **Emergency Contraception** (also called the “Morning-After” Pill) to prevent you from becoming pregnant. You also may have received **Antibiotics** to treat any sexually transmitted infections from the assault. If so, do not drink any alcohol for at least 2 days after finishing the antibiotics, as it will stop them from working properly.

It is important that you finish taking all the medicines exactly as prescribed by the doctor, to ensure their effectiveness. Your SSO will contact you a few days after you were at the Trauma Centre to make sure that you are coping with the medications and to see if you need any other assistance.

You will find a list of the medicines you received at the end of this booklet. Some pills can give you a stomach ache, but if you vomit they may not work. Therefore, it is important you report vomiting immediately so you can be given another dose. A few people are allergic to some antibiotics, so **if you experience any other physical problems or side effects, contact your Doctor or SSO immediately.**

You may need continued assistance to cope with the assault. If you are unable to get help from your local Social Worker, TVEP will offer you ongoing **Trauma Counselling** to provide you with emotional support to deal with symptoms of traumatic stress. You can meet one-on-one with our Trauma Counsellors; bring a friend or family member to one of the counselling sessions; or be put in contact with a local support group for sexual assault survivors and/or people living with HIV/AIDS. Discuss these options with your SSO.

If you have difficulty telling your spouse or family about what happened to you, ask the TVEP Trauma Counsellor for help. Never forget that **the sexual assault was not your fault**. You are the innocent survivor, and TVEP is there to help – no matter what.

THINGS FOR THE SURVIVOR TO REMEMBER

- **You are not alone** – we are here to help you whenever and however we can.
- You can call one of our Trauma Centres at any time of the day or night, 24 hours of the day, 7 days of the week, 365 days of the year; they are always open and the numbers can be found at the back of this booklet.
- All our staff and volunteers have taken an oath of confidentiality; therefore you can feel free to tell them *anything* and be guaranteed that none of the information will be disclosed to anyone without your consent.
- If you don't feel comfortable with your SSO, please phone our Access to Justice Office at 015 963 1976 and ask for a Legal Officer. No one will be offended or hurt, and someone more suitable will immediately be allocated to you.

TVEP staff and volunteers can be identified by their uniforms (sky blue shirt with our logo) and a TVEP ID card with his/her photo.

SPECIAL NOTE TO FAMILY & FRIENDS OF THE SURVIVOR

Sexual assault is one of the most traumatic and devastating experiences that can be endured by any human being; it is therefore essential that you provide emotional support to the survivor:

- Be **available** if s/he wants to talk about the experience, but do not force the issue.
- Be **warm and sensitive** in your responses; rape is NEVER the victim's fault.
- Respect the survivor's confidentiality and need for privacy, and do not inform other people about the assault without her/his permission.
- Contact the survivor's SSO if you have any concerns, or if you would like to participate in counselling.

If you visit a doctor for any reason whilst taking these medicines, show him/her this list

REFERENCES

The name of your SSO is: _____

Contact Number(s): _____

Your Profile Reference # is: _____ Your SAPS Cas # is: _____

Your IO's name and contact #: _____

APPOINTMENTS MADE

Your Counselling/HIV re-test has been booked for h on ___ at Donald Fraser / Tshilidzini Trauma Centre with Ms/Mr _____.

IF YOU CAN'T ATTEND OR WILL BE LATE, PLEASE RESPECT OUR TIME AND INFORM THE TRAUMA CENTRE IN ADVANCE.

24-hour Call Centres:

Tshilidzini Trauma Centre: 015 964 2310 and Donald Fraser Trauma Centre: 015 963 6791.

This booklet is published by TVEP
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