

Capital Aug. 30/85

Info on the Sexual Assault Crisis Line

The Antigonish Women's Resource Center is now operating a sexual assault crisis line for survivors of sexual assault, sexual abuse in childhood, and non-offending parents of children who have been sexually abused.

"The assault or abuse can be something that just happened, or something that happened days, weeks, or even years ago," the AWRC explains. This service operates weekends only from 8 p.m. Friday to 8 p.m. Sunday.

Pamphlets, posters, announcements and ads have appeared around the town and county. Here are some questions and answers that might inform someone who is not sure about using this service.

Q. How does it work?

A. Call 863-2830 and ask for extension 229. Leave a name and phone number with the person who answers; this person pages a Crisis Line volunteer who calls back within five minutes.

Q. What will the Crisis Line volunteer do once I've made contact?

A. She will listen to what the caller has to say without judging the person or telling the caller what to do. She will answer any questions she can, give phone numbers the caller might need, help decide what to do next, and then refer the caller to places where one can get what is needed. If the caller doesn't want to do anything, that is up to the individual.

Q. But I'm not sure if what happened to me is really sexual assault or sexual abuse. Can I still call?

A. Yes. The volunteer can help to sort out what happened. She can do this

by giving a definition of sexual assault and sexual abuse, and she can help the caller reflect back on the incident in a way that gives one some space to make up one's own mind about it. If the caller is upset, she will try to help the person to cope.

Q. Who will know about my call?

A. No one has to know about it. Callers don't have to give their last name to anyone in order to speak to a volunteer. Protecting callers' confidentiality is something the volunteers are strongly committed to. She will not tell others that a person called and will not discuss the caller's problem with anyone unless given permission. There are two exceptions to this: 1) If a child has been abused or is in danger, she must report that to a child protection worker, and 2) if someone's safety is at stake, the volunteer will need to take steps to ensure safety.

Q. Can I call if I'm trying to help someone who has been assaulted?

A. Yes. Crisis Line volunteers can give information that the caller can pass on to the person one is concerned about.

Q. I think I was sexually abused when I was very young. Can someone help me figure out if it's true?

A. If anyone knows whether an individual has been abused it is the person. Sometimes it is not possible to know for sure. Crisis Line volunteers have training in this area. They can give a caller information about what sexual abuse is, and how to find a counsellor, a therapy group, or more information. There are many good books, videos and other resources available.