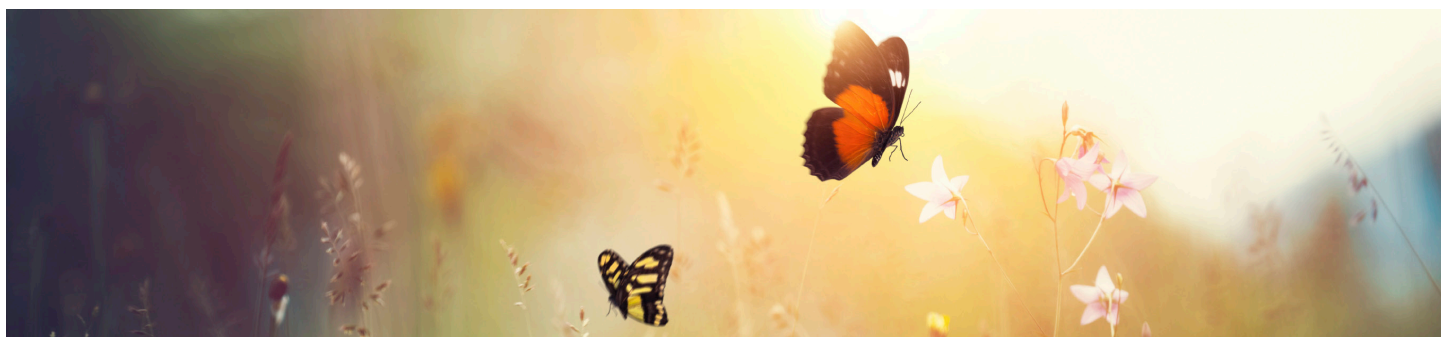


# Connecting After a Disclosure of Sexual Abuse Within the Faith Community



Like sexual assault programs, religious organizations and faith-based communities strive to be sources of help, hope, and healing for the populations they serve. This is especially true in times of crisis and pain. Offering assistance to a community of faith that is reeling from the aftermath of a disclosure of sexual violence requires compassion and understanding, especially when the victim and the perpetrator are both members of the same religious community. There is no perfect answer to the complex questions and issues that will arise. Letting the faith community know that your organization is available to support them through this difficult time is the first step.

## HELP

The primary goal of any response to allegations of sexual violence should be to prevent further trauma, primarily to the victim, but also to other members of the religious community who may be directly impacted, such as the victim's family and friends and the perpetrator's family and friends.

### *Ways Advocates can offer help:*

- Listen, and within your capacity, respond to immediate needs and concerns of the faith-based community and its members.
- Provide resources and training for faith leaders as they lead their members through this challenging time.
- Assist in the formation and training of a response team.
- Lead discussions on sexual violence-related issues for faith groups.
- Post contact information for your program's hotline and services in bulletins, newsletters, and on bulletin boards.
- Help develop or revise policies and procedures. Educate about relevant laws that may inform response.



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## HOPE

*Ways Advocates can offer hope:*

- Let them know that they are not alone.
- Sexual abuse can cause people to question their faith. Collaborate with faith leaders to provide information to members that address these challenging intersections.
- Help faith leaders inform the larger faith community about next steps, and community resources.
- Empower individuals and communities to create change. Offer to provide prevention resources and training.

## HEALING

*Ways Advocates can offer healing:*

- Provide staff and volunteers to be on-site during or after group meetings about the incident(s) to provide support.
- Make resources about your program's services available to victims of sexual abuse and their significant others.
- Help congregations identify, validate, and address secondary trauma.

- Provide forums to promote discussion, connection, and to address community impact. Consider partnering with an organization such as Keystone Crisis Intervention Team.
- Recognize that healing takes time. Be an on going support for the faith community as it heals. resources and training.

## RESOURCES

Faith and Service Technical Education Network  
[www.fastennetwork.org](http://www.fastennetwork.org)

Faith Trust Institute  
[www.faitrustinstitute.org](http://www.faitrustinstitute.org)

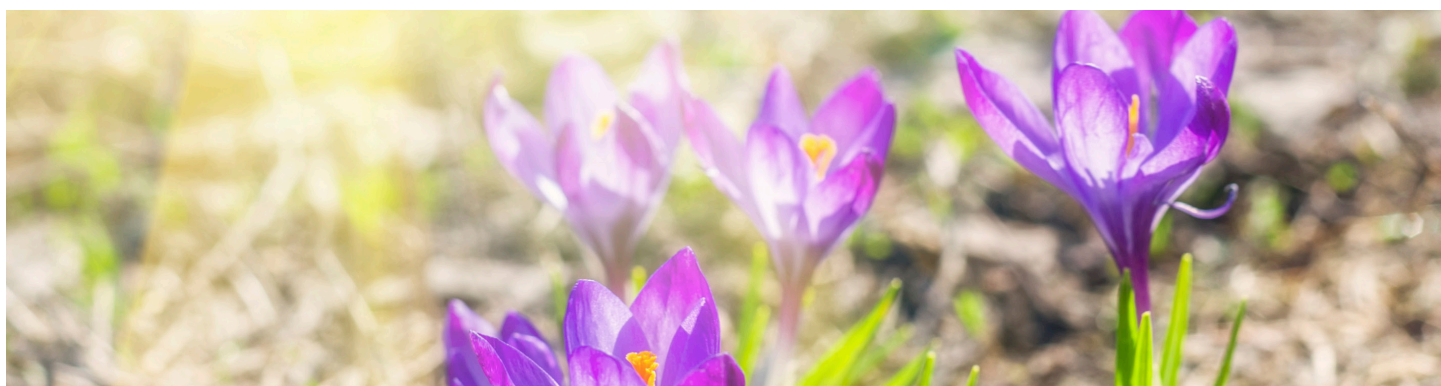
Jewish Women International  
[www.jwi.org](http://www.jwi.org)

National Sexual Violence Resource Center  
[www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape  
1-888-772-PCAR (7227)  
[www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org)

The Pluralism Project of Harvard University  
[www.pluralism.org](http://www.pluralism.org)

Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs  
[www.wcsap.org](http://www.wcsap.org)



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