



# Stewardship REPORT

SPRING 2025 DONOR UPDATE

## Sexual Violence: A Reality for Too Many

**T**ragedically, sexual violence remains an all-too-common reality for countless individuals in our region and beyond.

People of all ages, genders, races, and ethnicities are affected by sexual violence — 1 in 4 women and 1 in 26 men report experiencing a rape or attempted rape in their lifetimes. In addition, nearly 1 in 2 women and 1 in 4 men report some form of unwanted sexual contact in their lifetimes according to The National Intimate Partner & Sexual Violence Survey (2016/17). This reality extends to certain groups —

such as LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and communities of color — experiencing sexual violence at even higher rates.

The impact of sexual violence is profound, leaving lasting physical, emotional, and psychological scars. In addition to survivors, it also impacts their families and communities, contributing to broader societal and health challenges. Addressing sexual violence through prevention, education, and support services is essential to creating safer and more equitable environments for all.



Thank you for standing with us in the fight against sexual violence. We depend on your support to provide critical services to survivors.

## Imagine the Journey of a Survivor

**I**magine the fear and confusion of being sexually assaulted. The overwhelming emotions that follow, and the daunting task of seeking help. Survivors often face numerous challenges:

- **Telling family or friends:** In 93% of sexual assaults, the victim knows or is related to the perpetrator, making telling family or friends feel like another risk.
- **Not being believed:** Many survivors worry that their experiences will be

dismissed or questioned, adding to their trauma.

- **Feeling it's their fault:** Survivors may struggle with self-blame, questioning their actions and feeling responsible for the assault.
- **Negative repercussions:** Coming forward can lead to negative repercussions, such as social stigma, victim-blaming, and even retaliation from the perpetrator or others.

*(see page 2)*

# Imagine the Journey of a Survivor

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- **Fear of law enforcement involvement:** Some survivors fear involving law enforcement due to concerns about not being believed, facing invasive questioning, or experiencing further trauma.

““ When I came to WEAVE, they listened. I didn't feel embarrassed or ashamed. They didn't make assumptions about me. They just helped. ””

— note from a survivor

- **No criminal charges:** The possibility that the perpetrator may not face criminal charges can be disheartening and may deter survivors from reporting the assault.
- **Reliving trauma:** Telling their story repeatedly to medical professionals, law enforcement, and in court can force survivors to relive the trauma, which can be incredibly distressing.

There is no getting around many of these challenges, but at WEAVE, we provide a safe and supportive environment where survivors are heard and believed, no matter what. Our survivor-centered team is dedicated to helping survivors navigate their journey to healing, offering the support and resources they need to reclaim their lives.

## Trauma-Informed Counseling

**F**or survivors of sexual assault, having access to a counselor is critical in navigating the complex and interwoven types of trauma that make healing challenging. Sexual assault extends far beyond the physical act — encompassing emotional, psychological, and sometimes even spiritual trauma.

Survivors of sexual assault often face a myriad of emotional responses that can persist for months or even years after the incident. They may grapple with self-blame, question what they could have done differently, and experience difficulties in school, work, and relationships. Through the support of a skilled counselor, survivors can process their trauma, learn coping techniques, and move forward with their lives, rebuilding their sense of safety and self-worth.

Additionally, victims of sex trafficking endure profound trauma, including repeated rapes and abuse, often starting in childhood. They may lack a support system and struggle with managing a wide range of emotions.

These survivors deserve to work with counselors who understand the complexities of their experiences and can provide empathetic, knowledgeable support. Counselors at WEAVE help these individuals heal from their trauma, rebuild their lives, and reclaim their futures.



# Sexual Assault Response Team

For 37 years, WEAVE has been Sacramento County's only Rape Crisis Center, and the 24/7 Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) fills the vital role of providing support to survivors during the medical examination and connecting them to comprehensive supportive services.

We maintain a staff of trained SART Advocates to respond to survivors undergoing a forensic examination, sometimes referred to as a "rape kit." An exam can take hours. During an exam, information about the assault is documented, photographs of physical injuries and/or evidence are taken, physical exam checking for injuries or signs of assault is logged, and DNA is collected for evidence. Often, the victim's clothing must be collected, as well.

For someone who has never undergone a forensic exam, having your clothing taken may seem like a small or procedural part of the process.

However, it can carry significant and traumatic implications for survivors. Clothing often holds personal meaning or represents a sense of identity, which may already feel compromised following an assault. The act of relinquishing these items can feel like an additional loss of control, reinforcing feelings of vulnerability and exposure.

In response, all WEAVE SART Advocates maintain an array of new clothing — including underwear, socks, leggings, and t-shirts or sweatshirts — to provide the survivor with something to wear home from the examination. Though providing clothing does not erase the trauma of the experience, our hope is that it will offer a sense of comfort, dignity, and care during

a difficult time, and it eliminates the need for the survivor to figure out how to obtain clothing before leaving the clinic.

The responding Advocate also arranges for transportation home or to a safe place for the survivor. If it is unsafe to return to their home, WEAVE will arrange for temporary safe shelter or a hotel stay.

In addition to providing support during examinations, the SART Advocate also coordinates follow-up care for survivors, which may include attending law enforcement interviews, medical appointments, and legal hearings with survivors, as well as connecting survivors to free individual and group counseling provided by WEAVE Associate Therapists. The SART Advocate also assists survivors in applying for Victim's Compensation to pay for additional counseling and to make safety improvements — such as changing locks, securing doors and windows, or installing a security system — if the perpetrator knows where the victim lives and the victim fears they will return.

The Sexual Assault Response Team, as a whole, is a collaboration with sexual assault advocates, local law enforcement, hospitals, and the District Attorney's Office to ensure a coordinated and compassionate response to sexual assault cases. This collaborative approach helps to create a supportive environment for survivors and improves the overall effectiveness of all services and touch points, including those outside of WEAVE, that could impact survivors.

“ One of the first things I tell a survivor is, ‘I believe you.’ You can see the relief in their eyes. In that moment, they don't need questions or doubt — they just need someone to be there, to listen, and to remind them they're not alone. ”

— comment from a SART Advocate



# April is Sexual Assault ACTION Month

Survivors and advocates pushed for legislation and funding to support sexual assault survivors, leading to significant milestones like the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994. And throughout history, there have always been individuals dedicated to making the world a better place by advocating for sexual assault prevention.

In the United States, movements for social change and equality gained momentum during the civil rights era of the 1940s and '50s. Although open discussions about sexual assault and domestic violence were limited at the time, equal rights activists began to challenge the status quo.

These efforts were often led by Black women and women of color. Advocates like Rosa Parks worked tirelessly at the intersections of race-based and gender-based violence, paving the way for future advancements in the fight against sexual violence.

WEAVE encourages you to not only be aware, but to act to end and prevent sexual violence. Here are some ways you can make a difference:

- Educate yourself and others: Learn about the dynamics of sexual violence and share this knowledge with your networks. Go to [weaveinc.org/learn-more](http://weaveinc.org/learn-more)
- Support survivors: Offer a listening ear, believe survivors, and provide them with resources and support. WEAVE's 24/7 Support Line is 916-920-2952.
- Advocate for change: Support policies and initiatives that promote safety and justice for survivors.
- Donate: Inquire about the impact your support has on survivors and continue supporting WEAVE's work.

Thank you!



## Your support has been extremely meaningful.

It has enabled WEAVE to provide these critical services to survivors of sexual assault. If WEAVE were not a resource in our community, most of these survivors would not have access to the compassionate care and support they need to heal.

As we continue our work, we are dedicated to supporting every survivor and ensuring our programs best fit their individual needs. Thank you for standing with us in the fight against sexual violence.



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OUR MISSION is to promote safe and healthy relationships and support survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and sex trafficking.