

## Acquaintance Rape: Get the Facts

Acquaintance rape is when someone you know forces or **coerces** you to have unwanted sexual activity. This may include unwanted sexual touch, penetration, forcing or tricking you into touching him/her or to pose for sexually explicit photos. While acquaintance rape involves sexual activity, it is used as a means to gain power and control.

### How Can I Recognize a Potential Rapist?

Look for controlling behaviors such as when someone:

- invades your space
- acts excessively jealous or possessive
- gets hostile when you say "no"
- tries to make you feel guilty
- is insensitive to you verbally and/or non-verbally
- subscribes heavily to sex-role stereotypes

### How Do I Protect Myself?

The following suggestions may help you to protect yourself. If you get a funny feeling about a person, situation or a touch, try to get to a safe place as soon as possible.

- Paying half the cost will prevent your date from thinking you "owe" something in return.
- When dating someone new, group date a few times. Get to know him/her before being alone.
- Tell someone where you're going and what time you'll be home. Call if your plans change.
- Be clear about the kind of touches you want and don't want. Give the message that "no" means "no," not "try harder for a yes." If you don't mean "no" don't say it.
- Be aware that non-verbal behaviors or actions can be interpreted differently than you intended; that doesn't mean it is your fault if you are assaulted.
- Avoid secluded, isolated places when alone or if you're with someone you don't know well.
- Be aware that alcohol and drugs are often related to acquaintance rape.
- Have an arrangement with a family member or friend you can call day or night for help.
- Know that giving or accepting a ride (whether you know them or not) may be a risk.
- A decision to be sexual should be agreed upon by both of you. Beware of words that are used by others to try to force you to engage in unwanted sexual activity:
  - "If you don't have sex with me, I'll break up with you."*
  - "If you really loved me, you would."*
  - "If you don't, I'll find someone who will."*
- If you feel pressured, forced or fearful, protest loudly, leave and/or get help.
- Challenge sexist attitudes that make rape acceptable.

REMEMBER: If your prevention strategies do not work, it is not your fault if you are raped. If you or someone you know has experienced acquaintance rape, report it. Acquaintance rape will not stop until everyone understands it will not be tolerated.