

The Untold Cost of Rape

By Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR)

Sexual violence takes a toll on an individual's body, mind, spirit, and wallet. It steals a person's safety, their stability and comfort. It causes fear, shame, and pain. It costs victims trust, sleep, and control. Sexual assault uproots a person's life, affecting every aspect of their lives.

In the aftermath of an assault, victims and their families face a number of challenges and concerns. Victims often need immediate resources in order to pay for therapists, counselors, lawyers, and medical care. According to a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rape costs an individual an average of \$122,461 across their lifetime. This includes the cost of physical and mental health treatment, lost work productivity, counseling and therapy services, and many other factors.

According to RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), nearly 40 percent of victims experience problems in maintaining relationships with friends and family. Following their assaults, victims often have difficulty in work or school. Individuals often miss a considerable amount of work due to medical, legal, and other appointments. Many will quit or leave their jobs.

When sexual violence occurs in childhood or adolescence, one of the most immediate effects is a decrease in education. High school and college students that experience sexual assault may also drop out of their schooling early, setting them back years in their education.

Sexual violence also leaves survivors fighting a lifetime of trauma. Following sexual assault, mental and physical health challenges can make it difficult to concentrate at work and at home. Depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, stress--these are all impacts that victims of sexual violence may experience. According to RAINN, 94 percent of women who are raped experience PTSD during the two weeks following their assault. About 30 percent will experience PTSD nine months after their assault. Victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence are also more prone to develop substance abuse problems, eating disorders, and attempt suicide at higher rates.

Financially, rape and sexual violence cost the United States more than any other crimes. As reported by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, rape costs the United States over \$127 billion a year. However, sexual violence is preventable and there are services available for victims and their families.

In Pennsylvania, there are 50 rape crisis centers serving more than 30,000 survivors of sexual violence each year. They offer free, confidential services to victims of sexual assault as well as friends and family members. Sexual assault counselors provide counseling, hotline services, case management, and medical and legal assistance at **no cost to victims**. Each year, rape crisis centers also provide education to over 300,000 Pennsylvanians on how to prevent sexual violence in their communities.

It takes all of us to prevent sexual violence and support survivors in our communities. By donating, volunteering, or building relationships with the counselors at your local rape crisis centers, you can help prevent and stop violence in your communities. We encourage you to visit connect with your local sexual assault center and learn about what you can do to end sexual assault.