

A GUIDE FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL CRIMES



Pro-tukipiste

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. FOREWORD	3
Don't stay alone	3
Support is available	4
2. WHAT TO DO IMMEDIATELY AFTER A CRIME HAS BEEN COMMITTED	5
Collecting evidence	5
How to cope with the emotional states caused by violence	6
3. WHAT IS A SEXUAL CRIME?	7
4. REPORTING A CRIME	8
Specific issues related to sex work in a crime situation	9
5. WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE?	10
Seri Support Centre	10
RIKU Victim Support Finland	10
Pro-tukipiste	11
Tukinainen	11
6. INFORMATION FOR SUPPORT PERSON AND NEXT OF KIN	12

This guide has been developed in collaboration with sex workers. Many thanks to the people involved in writing this guide!

Writers:

Erja Aalto and Sini van Schravendijk Väisänen

Autumn 2024

1. FOREWORD

Sexual crimes can happen to anyone, regardless of age or gender. Crimes can happen anywhere, including in connection with the sale of sexual services.

You have the right to work safely in the sex and erotic industry. Remember that sexual acts without your consent and violence against you are not work accidents, but crimes committed against you.

This guide can also be downloaded electronically from the Pro-tukipiste's website.

**Violence in sex work is not a work accident
but a crime against you!**

Don't stay alone

If a sexual crime is committed, it is never your fault or responsibility. You have the right to services, support and treatment you need.

Your reactions to a violent incident may vary and are always individual. Your mood may swing, and you may feel uncomfortable. Your experience of what happened may seem unreal, you may feel numb or anxious. It is only natural to be upset and shocked if you have been a victim of a sexual crime. Don't blame yourself if you can't act rationally or remember everything straight away.

Events may come back to you suddenly and cause intense physical symptoms (headache, nausea, muscle tension), concentration and sleep problems. Emotions can fluctuate wildly, moods can drop, life can start to feel scary as events may constantly flash through your mind.

You may not want to tell anyone what happened. However, you might want to seek support immediately from your colleagues or friends. But take a moment and consider your options. You decide who to tell and what kind of support you want. Other people should respect your choices.

Don't stay alone with the experience. It is recommendable to seek support as soon as possible. However, you can still get support even years after the event.

Don't blame yourself – a sexual crime is not your fault

Support is available

In Finland, there are many different services for victims of sexual crimes. One option is to immediately contact support services for those who have experienced sexual violence. Support services respect your choices and will not force you to do anything against your will. You can also receive additional information on these services and concrete support from Pro-tukipiste.

Pro-tukipiste is a NGO working with and for sex workers. You can contact Pro-tukipiste without fear of judgement, discrimination or moralisation. Pro-tukipiste's support is available anonymously and you can tell the employee as much as you want about what happened. Together, we can think about how you want to deal with the situation and what other support you may need. We can go with you to the Seri Support Centre and help you get a lawyer if you want to press criminal charges. Seri Support Centres are health care units for those who have experienced sexual violence, where you can seek help within 30 days of the violence situation, even if you are not yet sure whether you want to report a crime. Seri Support Centres offer the help you need in one place, whether it's taking the necessary forensic specimens, receiving trauma support, psychological counselling or psychosocial support.

Pro-tukipiste worker can support you if needed



2. WHAT TO DO IMMEDIATELY AFTER A CRIME HAS BEEN COMMITTED

- **If you are in immediate danger, call 112.**
- **You can go to a Seri Support Centre or other healthcare unit if you wish. (Do not shower or change clothes.)**
- **If you need support, contact Pro-tukipiste or another organisation.**
- **You can seek support from friends or family if you wish so.**

Collecting evidence

1. In a situation of violence, the most important thing is your own safety. Try to get out of the situation as quickly as possible. Please note that challenging or defying the offender can be dangerous.

2. Do not wash yourself or change clothes, as stains, hairs and fibers left by the offender can be important evidence.

3. Once you're safe, start collecting evidence about the offender. Take pictures of the scene with your mobile phone when safe to do so. Write down everything you remember about the incident and the offender, did he or she have any distinguishing marks (scars, tattoos, hair, personal items or manner of speech) and other information about the offender (contact details, car registration number, etc.) Collect all your conversations and messages with the offender.

4. Consider whether you want to seek medical attention or go to Seri Support Centre.

5. Contact Pro-tukipiste for specific support and advice, especially from a sex and erotic worker's perspective.

6. Consider whether you would like to report the crime. The earlier you contact the police, the better they will be able to conduct a preliminary investigation into the crime, find evidence and the offender.

7. Consider whether you want to tell and warn your colleagues about the offender. Please note that sharing contact information may be contrary to data protection legislation.

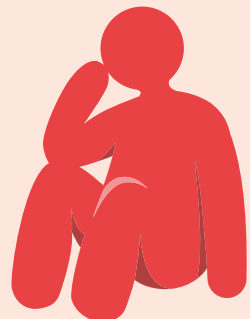
How to cope with the emotional states caused by violence

At its worst, the experience of sexual violence can be a difficult and traumatic event. It violates human integrity and human rights. A violent experience can negatively affect a person's overall well-being.

The first reaction after a traumatic event is often the joy of being alive. This phase can be followed by a range of emotions: anxiety, fear and anger. Your mind may be on high alert and the traumatic event may come to your mind compulsively. Such stress-induced reactions are very common and usually subside on their own over time. However, it is good to be aware of these stress reactions. Awareness can reduce fear and anxiety and help you to understand yourself and your close ones who may have experienced a frightening and traumatic event.

If you have experienced a sexual crime, a difficult situation or trauma, it is normal to start remembering what happened and you may also experience dreams reminiscent of the event. Performing daily tasks can become difficult. It's worthwhile to accept support. Recovery is gradual and may take a long time.

Recovery does not mean that you'll forget the traumatic event completely. Over time, the event begins to take up less space in your thoughts and "normal life" gradually returns. However, if you notice that the symptoms persist for a long time and affect your relationships, work and other things that are important to you, it is advisable to seek professional help.



3. WHAT IS A SEXUAL CRIME?

- There are different types of sexual crimes, and they can have different charges.
- Different acts that constitute as sexual crimes:
 - sexual harassment
 - sexual abuse
 - sexual assault, which involves sexual acts other than intercourse
 - rape
 - unauthorized production, distribution and publication of sexual imagery
- 1st of January 2023, the revised Sexual Crimes Act entered into force, which aims to strengthen the right to sexual self-determination and protection of personal integrity for all.
- In the revised sexual crimes legislation, the definition of rape was amended to include the absence of consent to the sexual act.
- Consent means consent to a particular act at a particular time and does not give the right to other acts.
- The revised sexual crime legislation does not have a direct impact on sex work. For example, the legislation on pandering was not changed.



Removing a condom intentionally during sex without your consent is a crime.

4. REPORTING A CRIME

- As an adult, you can decide for yourself whether you want to report the crime.
- You can consider your situation together with Pro-tukipiste worker: what reporting the crime means for you, what the process is like and what happens during it.
- Victims of sexual crimes are entitled to free legal aid, regardless of their income or wealth. A legal counsel or lawyer acts as a promoter and guardian of victim's rights.
- Pro-tukipiste can help you find the right legal counsel for you.
- A legal counsel can help you report a crime if you have not done so already.
- Crimes can be reported electronically, at the police station or your legal counsel can do it with you in writing. At Pro-tukipiste, we recommend that you report the crime together with a legal counsel, so that all legally relevant information is recorded in the report.
- In general, it is recommended to report a crime as soon as possible. The statute of limitations for sexual crimes is 10-20 years depending on the seriousness of the offence. You have time to think about it if you are unsure whether to report the incident.
- Once the crime has been reported, the police carry out a preliminary investigation, after which the case goes to the prosecutor for consideration of charges. If the prosecutor decides to press charges, the matter proceeds to the district court. After the district court, the decision can be appealed and may have to be dealt with by higher courts.
- The legal process can take several years and is often seen as stressful. If prolonged, the effects can be of an economic, social and psychological nature.
- In the courtroom, the plaintiff has the right to testify from behind a screen or the testimony can be recorded in a separate room.
- The plaintiff can bring a support person to the trial.
- Pro-tukipiste worker can support you during the criminal procedure should you decide to go for it.

Victims of sexual crimes are entitled to free legal aid from a lawyer in Finland

Specific issues related to sex work in a crime situation

- Sex work is something that many people keep to themselves, partly because sex work is still a negatively stigmatized activity. Disclosing sex work to others e.g. friends or family can be a scary thing.
- People who earn income by selling sexual services are equal to others. They have the same rights as other people who are victims of sexual crimes.
- Sex workers can be victims of sexual crimes, both at work or during private life. However, sexual violence is not a normal or acceptable part of sex work.
- People who earn an income from sex work are not always working formally and selling sex can be an informal income. Sometimes people, who earn informal income, fear that reporting a crime could have other consequences. This can be a reason not to report crimes to the police or other authorities. When investigating sexual crimes, the police mainly focus on the crime itself.
- Selling and buying sex is a legal activity in Finland. Although it is a legal means of earning an income, sex work is subject to different laws. For example, people from outside the EU/Schengen area, who sell sexual services, may be removed from the country (expulsion, deportation) and even be banned from entering Finland. This is due to the Finnish Aliens Act (Section 148 subsection 6), in which the mere suspicion of the sale of sexual services is grounds for deportation.



Sex workers have the same rights as others in criminal situations.

5. WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE?

Seri Support Centre for Victims of Sexual Violence thl.fi

Seri Support Centres are support units for all persons over 16 years of age, regardless of gender, who have experienced sexual violence. You can go to the Support Centres around Finland by yourself or together with a support person. Seri Support Centres provide forensic examinations, trauma support, psychological counselling and assistance.



Victim Support Finland (RIKU) riku.fi

Victim Support Finland provides support and assistance in criminal proceedings. RIKU's mission is to improve the situation of crime victims, next of kin and witnesses by providing easily accessible support and counselling services. Through RIKU, you can get a trained support person for criminal proceedings.

Rape Crisis Centre Tukinainen

tukinainen.fi

Tukinainen provides support, help and advice to victims of sexual crimes, their next of kin and professionals working with victims. Tukinainen offers telephone crisis support for sexual abuse and violence, and their legal helpline provides information and advice on sexual crimes.

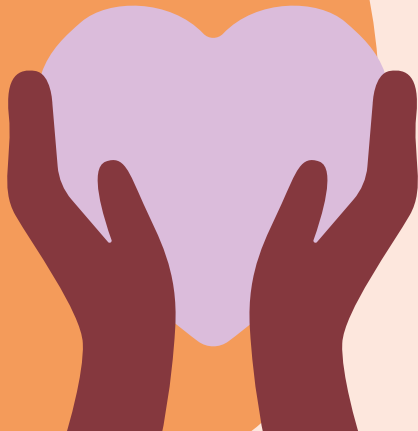
Pro-tukipiste

protukipiste.fi

Pro-tukipiste provides confidential support for people working in the sex and erotic industry and for people providing transactional sex. We also support people if they have experienced violence, such as human trafficking.. Support is available for using various public services and for dealing with everyday matters. We offer the opportunity for conversations that respect self-determination, joint reflection and support in difficult life situations.

Further support services:

- Tyttöjen Talo and Poikien Talo
- The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters
- Mieli Crisis Helpline
- Women's Line
- Your local health station



6. INFORMATION FOR SUPPORT PERSON AND NEXT OF KIN

When supporting a victim of a sexual crime, try to be empathetic and respectful. Do not attempt to define their experience.

Victims of crime need time to understand what has happened to them, so listen carefully and believe what you are told. Do not question what the victim tells you.

Your most important role is to provide support and create a safe environment. Give the victim time to talk about what has happened. Ask if they want information about possible support services and help them to access support if needed.

Remember to respect the victim's privacy and keep things confidential. Do not tell anyone what has happened without consent.

Respect the victim's freedom of choice, decisions and preferences about how they want to proceed.



Pro-tukipiste



@protukipiste | protukipiste.fi

