

Improving Survivors' Access to Confidential Health Care Services

“JoAnn,” Excerpt from *Oregon Survivor Voices*, a video produced by the Oregon Attorney General Sexual Assault Task Force, www.oregonsatf.org

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“So then I went to—I still had not told anybody what happened—I went to the hospital, and I didn’t even know how to tell the charge nurse. I remember at the ER they were like, “Why are you here?” And I just froze, cause I think that was the first moment that it really hit me that I was really there because I had been raped. And I tried to say it, and I couldn’t say it to the nurse, so I asked for a piece of paper, and she’s just like looking at me like “What is this lady doing?” I don’t know what she was thinking about me. But she just looked at me strange. So I wrote it down, and I said “I’m here because I was raped.” And that is the first time that I told anybody. And then I saw—they had a special nurse that worked with me to do the exam and everything. I was so ashamed of the situation and of being in a situation where I could be raped. And I just wanted to go away, but I knew that my injuries were enough that I had to get some medical help, because I had been bleeding, I had just beat marks all over me, and I knew I needed help. The nurse was great. She asked me lots of questions. They sent a sexual assault resource gal to the hospital to talk with me, and honestly, I still was mentally in a place where I just didn’t want to talk about it. I was OK with the nurse because I knew she was legally obligated not to tell anybody. And then you have this other person who comes in who, I know was trained, but it was just so humiliating because they’re taking pictures of you—they’re taking pictures of every area of you. And they’re diagramming the bruises and the injuries, and you kind of feel like you’re in this petri dish. Then everybody wants to talk to you about how you feel. And the very last thing you want to do is talk about your feelings. Cause at least for me, I wanted it to go away. And then I felt like there was this pressure, “OK, you know, you don’t want this person to get away with it, so you’re gonna want to talk to a police officer, and we can have police officers there.” And, you know, up until the point that I wrote that down on the little note to the ER person, I really hadn’t accepted that I had been raped. So I was still mulling that over in my brain. I actually sent the advocate that they had sent away, because there’s no way I’m gonna go through that kind of exam with a complete stranger. At least for me. And she was very nice, and she was very understanding. But it’s like trying to tell your worst nightmare to a bunch of strangers while they’re taking pictures of you. And it was horrible. And I didn’t have contact with the police for a few days.”