



## **The Victim Rights Law Center** *Leading a New Response to Sexual Violence*

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### The Intake – A Scenario

SETTING: “Advocate” works as an advocate at a family justice center. After explaining to “Chris,” the survivor, about the center’s confidentiality policies, Advocate and Chris begin to discuss Chris’s situation. This is their exchange:

Victim (Chris): Thanks for taking the time to meet with me. I’ve got some questions and don’t know where to go. I think I need some help, maybe an attorney.

Advocate: I’m glad you’re here. Why don’t you tell me what’s going on?

Chris: I think that I’m going to be fired from my job and I need to know if I have any rights. You see, I’ve had to miss a few days recently and I’ve been late twice and while I’ve been warned only once, I think my supervisor just wants to fire me. I need the money for rent, for school.

Advocate: Why have you missed a few days? What’s been going on for you?

Chris: I’ve been depressed lately and I’ve had a couple panic attacks, which makes going to work difficult. I’m also not sleeping at night, which makes it hard to wake up.

Advocate: Is your depression and the panic attacks the result of something specific going on for you right now?

Chris: Yes, but it’s hard to talk about.

Advocate: I understand. Please know that you don’t have to be very specific – I just want to make sure I’m able to provide you with the help that is available and that I’m making the right referrals.

Chris: Ok. I was, well, I’m not sure how to say this exactly, but think that I was, um, raped by someone I know two weeks ago. We were out for drinks after work – there was a group of us who work together and we go out sometimes. I remember having a couple beers. Not that much to drink, really. I don’t remember a lot after that, except that I woke up in my apartment and he was on top of me. He wouldn’t get off. He wouldn’t stop. I tried to make him and he wouldn’t. I feel so stupid.

Advocate: Whatever happened wasn’t your fault. You didn’t ask for it. I want you to remember that. Can you tell me what’s been happening for you since?

Chris: I can't stand sleeping in my bed, or even being at my place. I wish I could leave. I hate my home right now.

Advocate: Tell me about your home - do you rent your apartment?

Chris: Yes, but I haven't told my landlord. It's owned by the school. I did tell my supervisor about a week after it happened. He told me they would get back to me – haven't heard since.

Advocate: Was it after you told your supervisor that you got your first warning about being late?

Chris: Yes. That's when I got nervous about being fired – I've worked there for 3 years and never received a warning and now with all this going on, they are being very formal. I just can't lose my job, I've got so many bills and tuition to pay...this is such a mess!

Advocate: What about your co-worker who sexually assaulted you. Has he tried to contact you? Is he still at work?

Chris: Yes – last weekend, at my apartment—he showed up and tried to talk with me through the door. I was so scared I didn't know what to do. I didn't let him in.

Advocate: Have you thought about whether you want to report this to the police?

Chris: No. I'm not sure that I want to do that. I'm worried about my family finding out. And my classmates. This is a really small town, you know, and things like this get around fast.

Advocate: What about medical help – have you seen a doctor or nurse, or received any help or support?

Chris: I called a hotline and I went to see the health service because of the panic attacks I've been having since that night. I go to school part-time but right now I can't imagine getting through the rest of the semester. I'm just so tired. And I can't concentrate. I've got mid-terms coming up next week and I wish I could just take a break from school until I get past this...but I'm worried what will happen if I leave school.

Advocate: Is there any other information that you think would be helpful for me to know in order to help you?

Chris: Well, um, there are some things I'd like to keep private around this; things that I don't want the whole town to know about, if you know what I mean...

Advocate: I understand, Chris. To be your best advocate, it might be helpful to know what information you're concerned about getting out. I'd like to help you to get the support you need to help you through this difficult time. I'm seeing several legal issues that might have remedies that a lawyer might be able to help you with. I could give you the name of a lawyer in your area, if you'd like. You might want to talk with the lawyer about \_\_\_\_\_.