

SHARING YOUR STORY publicly

Sharing your story can be **powerful**,
healing and **impactful**.

Many survivors choose to share their
experience through media or creating art.

There is no wrong way to share your experience.

However, it's still good to know the risks. When going public, your abuser may claim defamation or that you are making disparaging remarks.

WHAT IS **defamation**?

Defamation is a false statement that is presented as a fact and causes harm to a person's character or reputation. Some abusers try to sue claiming defamation when a survivor speaks out.

An abuser does not need to have a strong case to file a lawsuit.

Defamation lawsuits are becoming a more common intimidation tactic by abusers to **silence survivors**. This seems especially true when the abuser has financial resources and/or holds a position of power. If you are notified that a lawsuit has been filed against you, you will need to respond or else the court may enter a default judgment against you.

truth is the best defense

TO A DEFAMATION CLAIM AGAINST YOU

If you can prove that what was said/written is true, then the lawsuit should fail.

Based on this, consider the following:

- Share about your experience without naming your abuser.
- Avoid stating legal conclusions (ex: *saying someone is guilty when there is no criminal conviction*) or name-calling (ex: *calling them a rapist or pervert*).
- If you're stating an opinion, make it clear that it's your opinion.
- Share only your personal experience and don't speak for others without their consent.
- Some states have anti-SLAPP (strategic lawsuit against public participation) laws that can provide a quick response to stop a defamation case.



Collect your “evidence” before going public.

Have the information and documentation ready that helps you prove what you're saying/writing is true. This may include your own detailed account of what happened including date/time/place; list of anyone that you disclosed the assault to at that time or since; statements by others who were similarly victimized by the perpetrator (perhaps at your workplace?); and any other information that confirms your experience.

There is always the risk of uncontrolled publicity and media attention in these situations,

particularly when the abuser is a public figure or person in a position of power. Unfortunately, the coverage of these matters is not always favorable to or even fair to the survivor. This in and of itself can be traumatic



If you decide you don't want to share your story publicly at this time,

THERE ARE OTHER OPTIONS TO HOLD YOUR ABUSER ACCOUNTABLE

Report to Law Enforcement

You can report the incident(s) to law enforcement which means there will be a police report and possible investigation, which can lead to criminal prosecution.

Seek a Civil Protection Order

You can file for a Protection Order which is a civil court order to protect the survivor from future contact or abuse.

Administrative Complaint

Depending on how you know your abuser and what they do, you can make a complaint with their employer, school, licensing body or other agency that might have some oversight.



**Sexual Violence
LAW CENTER**

This is a difficult situation to navigate & there is a lot to consider and weigh.

If you have any questions or would like to talk to an attorney, please reach out to us via email at legalline@svlawcenter.org or via phone at 844-991-7852

www.svlawcenter.org