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| **Judicial System**  This may be your first involvement with law enforcement or the judicial system. It’s very common for people to expect what they have seen on television or movies to apply to their current circumstances. Unfortunately, these expectations are often unrealistic or a distorted snapshot of how things truly operate.  There are laws and regulations in place aimed at protecting victims. For cases involving prosecution, court advocates may be available to provide information, education, and support that will help reduce your fears and uncertainties (e.g., discussing what to expect when you go to court).  Education and information about how the judicial system works, your rights, and your role can help you navigate these processes.  **Benefits of Counseling**  When it is safe to do so, consider speaking to a counselor. Some benefits to seeking counseling:   * Coping skills and strategies can help you to continue daily activities and relationships. * Establishing a support network can help to decrease the negative physical, psychological, and emotional effects that often result from traumatic experiences. * In a confidential setting, you can discuss topics such as:   + Safety planning and options for the future.   + The event and how it made you feel.   + Legal and judicial decisions. | |  | | --- | | **Who Can Help?**  [*Agency*] Victim Services can assist you with information regarding victims’ rights, Crime Victim Compensation, case status, navigation of the criminal justice system, and referrals to the appropriate community resources or helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.  **Resources**  Local Resources  [*Insert state Crime Victims’ Compensation information*]  [*Insert other relevant local resources*]  National Resources  **VINE**  **(Victim Information and Notification Everyday)**  1-877-894-8463  [www.vinelink.com](http://www.vinelink.com)    **National Domestic Violence Hotline**  1-800-799-SAFE (7233)  [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)    **Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN)**  1-800-656-HOPE (4673) – National Sexual Assault Hotline  [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)    **Women’s Law**  [www.womenslaw.org](http://www.womenslaw.org)    This publication was produced under [Grant Number] awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this draft publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.  [*Revision Date*] | | |  | | --- | | **Strangulation/**  **Suffocation**  **[*Agency*] Victim**  **Adult Grief and Loss**  **Adult Grief and Loss**  **Services**  **[*address*]**  **[*phone number*]**  **[*Insert Agency logo*]**  **[insert Agency logo]**  **[insert Agency logo]**  **[insert Agency logo]**  Name/ID Number:  Direct Number: | |
| **The Danger of Strangulation**  You always have the right to be safe. You do not deserve to be harmed or threatened, and you should never feel afraid for your well-being in your relationship. Strangulation/suffocation is one of the deadliest forms of domestic violence and is a sign that the violence is getting worse. Strangulation is an extreme form of power and control. A victim who is strangled/suffocated by their partner and survives is more than 7 times more likely to be murdered by that partner.1  The danger of strangulation/ suffocation is not only about the external injury or risk, but also about the internal damage that happens when not enough oxygen and blood get to the brain and other internal organs, no matter how brief the event. Unconsciousness can happen within seconds and death within minutes.  Approximately 50% of strangulation/suffocation victims have no external signs of injury, and, of these, only 15% have injuries that can be photographed. Symptoms might not appear until hours, days, or weeks after the event. You are ***strongly***encouraged to seek medical attention immediately following a strangulation/suffocation and follow-up medical care to rule out potentially fatal internal injuries or complications. This is especially important for women who are pregnant at the time of strangulation/suffocation. Experiencing physical violence during pregnancy can be extremely dangerous and can result in significant complications or even miscarriage.2  1 Nancy Glass et al., “[Non-Fatal Strangulation Is an Important Risk Factor for Homicide of Women](https://www.jem-journal.com/article/S0736-4679(07)00414-3/fulltext),” *Journal of Emergency Medicine* 35, no. 3 (October 2008): 329–335.  2 World Health Organization, “[Intimate Partner Violence During Pregnancy: Information Sheet](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/%2010665/%2070764/WHO_RHR_11.35_eng.pdf?sequence=1).” (2011) | **Signs and Symptoms**  Signs and symptoms of strangulation/suffocation may include (not a comprehensive list):   * Dizziness and/or confusion * Difficulty and/or changes in breathing and/or swallowing * Hoarse and/or raspy voice * Loss of memory * Headache, nausea, vomiting * Involuntary urination and/or defecation (not related to another medical condition) * Changes in mental status (e.g., restlessness, combativeness, mood swings, psychosis) * Changes in vision and/or hearing * Pain, soreness, stiffness (especially in the head, neck, and throat areas) * Physical injuries such as redness, scratches, bruising, ruptured capillaries, lip injuries * Droopy eyelids * Seizures * Loss of consciousness   **Documentation**  Some injuries of strangulation/suffocation might not be immediately noticeable. Taking photographs of the injuries 24, 48, and 72 hours after the event is encouraged. Changes in your ability to work because of your injuries should be reported to your employer. If you currently do not have a doctor or medical insurance, [*Agency*] Victim Services may be able to assist you in locating community resources. Keep all treatment records (ambulance, hospital, doctor, pharmacy) and save all receipts and bills. Receipts and documentation may be important when applying for assistance through Crime Victims’ Compensation, a program that may assist with out-of-pocket medical expenses that result from a crime. | **Common Reactions**  Recognize that healing from a traumatic event takes time. Give yourself the time you need. Many different reactions are understandable. You may also find yourself reliving the incident, trying to find a different response or outcome. You may see these possibilities now that the immediate danger has passed, but do not forget the reality of what happened. During the strangulation/suffocation, you were powerless and in a state of fear. Always remember you are not to blame and that your actions were understandable given the potentially life-threatening circumstances of the strangulation/ suffocation. Common reactions of victims of strangulation/suffocation are like those who survive other traumatic events and may include:   * Shock * Panic * Anger * Helplessness * Intrusive thinking (mind wandering, flashbacks to the event, or sense of reliving the event) * Nightmares * Exaggerated startle response * Embarrassment * Sense of vulnerability * Sense of violation * Desire to seek revenge.   These responses will likely diminish with time. However, if reactions are especially long-lasting or troubling, you may need to consult with a counselor or helping professional for assistance. |