

SOS Guide

for International Students
on Sexual Harassment
and Sexual Violence

SOS Guide

for International Students
on Sexual Harassment
and Sexual Violence

SOS Guide

for International Students
on Sexual Harassment
and Sexual Violence

SOS Guide for International Students on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

NOTES

1. This guide is a revised edition of the Guidebook for International Students published by the Ministry of Education in 2022. It incorporates newly enacted and amended legal provisions and expands guidance on responding to emerging forms of harm, including digital sexual violence.
2. This guide is intended as a reference to help international students prevent and respond to sexual harassment and sexual violence on university campuses. In practice, responses may differ depending on the specific situation and context.
3. The following individuals provided valuable advice on the contents of this guide, for which we extend our sincere appreciation.
 - Monlomjamts Khulan | Graduate Student, Keimyung University
 - Oji Ekenna Ezinna Nwanyioji | Graduate Student, Ewha Womans University
 - Chi Huien | Graduate Student, Ewha Womans University
 - Dahye Chang | Senior Research Fellow, Korea Institute of Criminology and Justice
 - Choe Jina | Professional Counselor, Center for Gender Equality, Yonsei University



Hello, international students!

We warmly welcome you to the Republic of Korea.

Beginning your studies and daily life in a new country can be exciting, but it can also bring unexpected challenges.

Issues related to sexuality, in particular, can be difficult to deal with alone, especially when language barriers and cultural differences are involved.

This guide was created to help you better understand issues of sexual harassment and sexual violence that you may encounter in Korean society and on university campuses, and to offer practical guidance on how to respond.

You are not alone. Everyone in Korea, regardless of nationality, has the right to feel safe and be protected.

The Government of the Republic of Korea and Korean universities recognize sexual harassment and violence as serious violations of autonomy and dignity and are committed to protecting you.

Clear legal grounds and university regulations are in place to prevent and punish such acts, along with systematic support systems to safeguard students who experience harm.

To those of you who have set out on the worthy new endeavor of studying abroad in the Republic of Korea

If you encounter the rough storm of sexual harassment or sexual violence along the way, this guide will serve as a compass and steady guide.

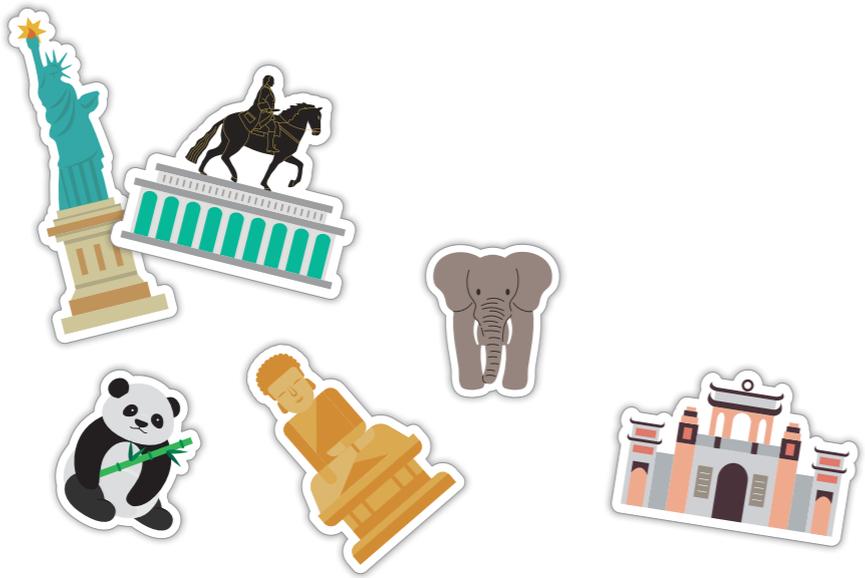
The Government of the Republic of Korea and Korean universities are here to support you so that you may fully understand and exercise all your rights in the Republic of Korea and enjoy a safe campus life free from the threats of sexual harassment and violence.

We wish you success in your new endeavor and a safe and rewarding experience in Korea.





SOS Guide for International Students on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence



CONTENTS

CONTENTS

I. What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence in Korea?

II. How to respond in different situations

- 01. Campus life and safety
 - 02. Social gatherings and personal safety
 - 03. Intimate partner violence
 - 04. Digital sexual violence
 - 05. Stalking
-

III. If a friend or someone you know has been harmed

IV. Requesting help

[Appendix]
Support organizations and resources

I

What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence in Korea?



I What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence in Korea?



If you move to a new country to live or study, it is important to understand the legal and cultural expectations of the society in which you are living. Perceptions of sexuality, as well as the scope of acceptable sexual expression, vary from country to country and culture to culture.

Korean law places strong emphasis on respect for sexual autonomy and imposes strict penalties on conduct that violates it. In cases of sexual violence, the offender's intent is an important factor in determining responsibility. In contrast, the determination of sexual harassment does not depend on whether the offender had sexual intent, but on whether the affected person experienced sexual discomfort or a sense of shame. This distinction is particularly important to understand.



Sexual harassment and sexual violence are treated seriously.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence are regarded not merely as issues of personal ethics or style in Korea. They are treated as serious offenses that infringe upon the rights and dignity of others.



"Cultural differences" are not recognized as valid justifications.

Explanations such as "This is a sign of friendliness in my country" or "It was meant as a joke" are not accepted. Any gesture or behavior that is intimate in nature and engaged in without the other person's consent may constitute a criminal offense.



Sexual harassment can be determined to have occurred whether or not the offender had such an intent.

Statements such as "I had no intention to harass" or "I did not realize the other person felt uncomfortable" are not accepted as excuses. Sexual harassment is established based on whether unsolicited remarks or conduct caused the other person to experience sexual discomfort, unease, or humiliation.

1 What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment refers to any act in which unwanted sexual remarks or behavior cause another person to experience sexual shame, discomfort, or humiliation. It includes physical, verbal, and visual conduct related to sexual relationships between men and women, or to the physical characteristics of men or women.

Types of sexual harassment

Type of sexual harassment	Description
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any act involving physical contact without the other person's consent Touching specific body parts, or forcing the other person to touch one's body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical contact such as kissing, hugging, or touching from behind Touching specific body parts such as the chest or buttocks Forcing massage or physical affection
Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexually suggestive remarks or sexual jokes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes phone calls, messaging platforms, and online media (including social media) Making sexual remarks or sexual evaluations about someone's appearance Asking about another person's sexual life or spreading related information Pressuring or soliciting sexual relationships Forcing someone to drink alcohol or to sit next to someone at group gatherings
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing sexual content (photos, videos, text, etc.) against the other person's wishes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual harassment may be established even if it occurs in a non-face-to-face setting, such as on social media Intentionally exposing or touching one's own specific body parts Staring at another person's specific body parts in a sexually inappropriate manner
Other forms of sexual harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any verbal or physical conduct that is generally recognized as causing sexual discomfort or a sense of humiliation

Criteria for determining sexual harassment

- Conduct that would cause sexual discomfort or aversion to an ordinary, reasonable person in the same position as the affected individual is regarded as harassing.
- Offenders and victims may be male or female, and sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex.
- Not only explicit refusals, but also implicit or passive expressions of refusal are regarded as expressions of non-consent.
- Sexual harassment may be established even when the conduct is one-sided or not directed at a specific individual.

Q&A

Q

Are all cases of sexual harassment that occur at universities subject to punishment?

A

Not all cases of sexual harassment that occur on campus are subject to criminal punishment. However, even when criminal penalties do not apply, disciplinary measures may still be imposed under a university's internal regulations.

- Sexual harassment must be assessed in a comprehensive manner, taking into account not only the nature of the conduct itself but also the specific circumstances and context in which it occurred. When sexual harassment involves physical contact, it may constitute a sexual violence offense and be subject to criminal punishment. Verbal sexual harassment, however, is generally difficult to prosecute criminally. Even so, conduct that does not meet the threshold for criminal punishment may still be subject to disciplinary action if it occurs within a university.
- In determining whether sexual harassment has occurred, the victim's perspective is given primary consideration. At the same time, how a reasonable person in a similar position would perceive the conduct is also taken into account. In this assessment, the offender's intent is not considered a determining factor.
- Reports of sexual harassment may be filed with the human rights center at each university, or submitted online to the Ministry of Education's Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Reporting Center. Reports may be filed under one's real name or anonymously, and the confidentiality of the reporting party's identity is guaranteed.

2 What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence refers to any sexual act carried out against another person's will. When a sexual violence offense occurs, the incident may be reported to investigative authorities, and the offender may be subject to criminal punishment through criminal proceedings. Within universities, victims can receive a wide range of support throughout the entire process from the campus human rights center, including counseling, filing reports to investigative authorities and referrals to specialized support services.

✓ Types of sexual violence

Type of sexual violence	Description
Rape / quasi-rape / forced indecent act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts of rape or indecent assault committed through physical force or threats
Statutory rape / quasi-statutory rape / quasi-forced indecent act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts of rape or sexual physical contact committed against a person who is unable to resist, such as someone who is unconscious
Sexual assault involving abuse of occupational authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts of rape or sexual physical contact committed involving abuse of one's authority, influence, or power over a person who is under one's supervision or protection due to a work or employment relationship
Indecent acts in crowded public places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts of indecent assault committed in crowded public spaces, such as public transportation, performance or demonstration venues, or other places where large numbers of people gather
Intrusion into multi-use facilities for sexual purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering common-use facilities such as restrooms, bathhouses, or changing rooms for the purpose of sexual gratification, or refusing to leave such spaces after being asked to do so

* Under the law, rape and sexual assault refer to acts involving the insertion of one's sexual organ or objects into another person's genitals, anus, or mouth.

Q&A



The victim of sexual violence has not yet had their 19th birthday. What punishment could the offender face?



Sexual violence offenses committed against minors are subject to enhanced penalties, and offenders are subject to criminal punishment.

- As of June 2023, Korea applies the international age-counting standard, under which a person's age increases on their birthday. As a result, first-year university students who enter university immediately after graduating from high school and have not yet reached their nineteenth birthday are newly classified as legal minors under the Act on the Protection of Children and Youth Against Sex Offenses.
- Korea applies particularly strict penalties for sexual crimes against minors. If the victim is younger than 19 years of age, the university is required to report the incident to investigative authorities immediately upon becoming aware of the offense, and the offender must be subject to criminal prosecution. In such cases, significantly harsher penalties apply, regardless of the offender's age or position.

3 Common misunderstandings and actual standards of behavior

Campus life in Korea often involves close relationships between seniors and juniors, strong expressions of solidarity and camaraderie, and an active drinking culture. However, actions that may be intended as friendliness can, under Korean legal and ethical standards, be regarded as sexual harassment or sexual misconduct. What matters is not the actor's intent, but how the other person experiences the behavior and whether clear consent was given

CASE 1 Physical contact: Shoulder and arm touch, assisting someone who is intoxicated

Korean society takes non-consensual contact very seriously. Gestures such as patting someone on the shoulder to offer encouragement, linking arms to express closeness, or physically supporting an intoxicated colleague may be considered sexual misconduct if the other person feels uncomfortable or objects. Caution is therefore essential.

CASE 2 Verbal expressions: Comments on appearance or sexualized compliments

Remarks intended as jokes or compliments may still constitute verbal sexual harassment. Statements such as "You look sexy" or "You have a great body" are easily perceived as sexualized comments rather than compliments. As a general rule, it is advisable to avoid making evaluations of another person's appearance.

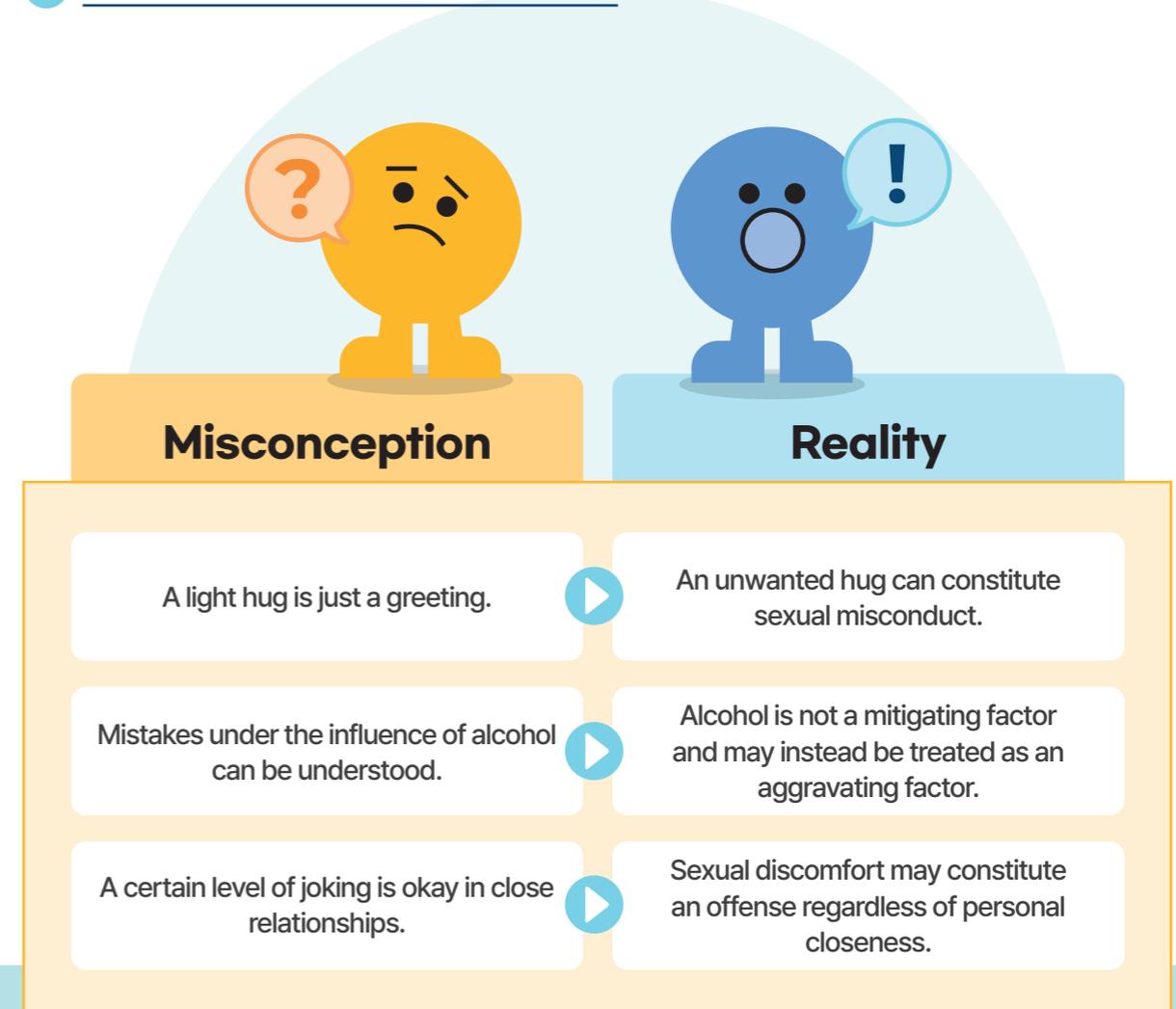
CASE 3 Misunderstandings about consent: Does silence mean "yes"?

Silence does not mean consent. In the absence of clear and explicit agreement, the situation must be understood as refusal. Even if the other person smiles or does not clearly say "no," this does not indicate consent to sexual conduct. This point is especially important in relationships involving a power hierarchy, such as between seniors and juniors or between professors and students, where the other person may feel unable to refuse and remain silent. Consent given while intoxicated or otherwise lacking decision-making capacity has no legal effect. Sexual contact under such conditions may be classified as quasi-rape or quasi-forced indecent acts and is subject to severe punishment.

CASE 4 Digital culture: illegal filming and sharing sexual images

Photographing or filming another person in classrooms, festival venues, or other settings by focusing on specific body parts without their consent, or posting a colleague's photo in a group chat, constitutes a criminal offense. Repeatedly sending late-night personal messages, or sharing images containing sexual jokes or implications, may also be considered sexual harassment.

✓ MISCONCEPTION vs REALITY



II

How to respond in different situations



II How to respond in different situations

01 Campus life and safety

1 Sexual harassment and sexual violence on campus

1. Sexual harassment and sexual violence in university life

Universities are communities made up of diverse members who interact in many different ways. As a result, sexual harassment and sexual violence may arise in any type of relationship, including student–student, student–teaching assistant, student–faculty, student–administrative staff, faculty–faculty, and staff–staff interactions.

To address such situations, each university has established its own regulations, which apply uniformly to all members of the campus community. Regardless of one’s position (faculty, staff member, or student) or nationality (Korean or international), everyone affiliated with the university is required to comply with these rules. Even if someone argues that, due to cultural differences, they were unaware that their behavior caused sexual discomfort, or that the conduct was intended merely as a “joke” within a close relationship and not as sexual harassment or sexual violence, the conduct may still be treated as sexual harassment or sexual violence under the given university’s regulations.

In handling such cases, neither a person’s status as an international student nor cultural differences based on country of origin are taken into consideration. At the same time, it is important to remember that if you experience harm, you are entitled to the fullest protection available under Korean law and the relevant support systems.

2 Examples

During campus life or in connection with classes, there may be situations in which seniors, fellow students, teaching assistants, professors, or administrative staff abuse their position by threatening advantages or disadvantages, or by deceiving students, in order to engage in sexual contact. Below are examples of different types of offenders that may be involved.

✓ **Where the offender is faculty, a teaching assistant, or a staff member and the victim is a student**

CASE 1 | Classroom instruction

Making sexual remarks in front of multiple students during class—whether under the pretext of explaining course material or in ways unrelated to the lesson; encouraging students to make sexual comments; or engaging in unnecessary physical contact, such as touching parts of a student’s body under the guise of instruction

“You’ll need breast implants and to lose weight if you want to get a boyfriend.”
 (During a practical class) “Massage my thighs.” / “Try holding me from behind.”
 “You look nice today. Got any dates for the night?”
 “Don’t we have boyfriends (or girlfriends) because we need to sleep with someone?”
 “Have you ever been sexually propositioned by someone of the opposite sex? How did it happen?”
 “Don’t people from your country like this kind of explicit stuff? I’ve heard they’re sexually open.”

CASE 2 | Academic advising or individual meetings

Making unnecessary personal contact outside academic purposes, or requesting or pressuring students to meet privately under the pretext of employment, career guidance, scholarships, counseling, coursework, or research

“Even after I got home, I couldn’t stop thinking about you.”
 “I imagined falling in love with you.”
 “If you go on a date with me, I’ll give you an A in my class and write you a recommendation letter.” “Let’s go see the ocean together.”
 “Have you ever been to a motel?” “Let’s hold hands.”

Consent is essential even in close relationships!



Lack of consent means refusal. ❌



✓ **Where both the offender and the victim are students**

CASE 3 | Group or community activities

Making sexually harassing remarks, or commenting on specific body parts and evaluating someone’s appearance, in group chats for departmental activities or team projects

“I want to jump you.”
 “How far did ○○ go with △△?”
 “○○ has the best body, but □□□ has the prettiest face.”

Sending sexual messages, videos, or photos on a one-sided basis, or forcing others to view such content

(Sending explicit photos or videos) “Isn’t this crazy? It looks like you.”

Q&A

Q What should you do if sexual harassment or sexual violence occurs between friends?

A Even in very close relationships, any sexual behavior carried out without the other person’s consent can still be a problem.

- You can report the incident to the university even if there is no physical evidence, as long as it is considered necessary to separate you from the offender in academic settings or to take disciplinary action. When clear evidence is difficult to obtain, circumstantial evidence—such as CCTV footage, witness statements, recordings, or accounts from third parties who can help explain what happened—may be used. If you experience sexual violence (such as rape or sexual assault), it is best to contact the police (112) as soon as possible so that physical evidence can be collected and appropriate medical care and support can be provided.
- After making a report, you can receive medical, psychological, and legal support free of charge, and interpretation services are available for international students. If you feel unsure about reporting despite having been harmed, do not deal with it alone. Consider speaking with the campus human rights center or another specialized support organization. Even if you have already contacted the police, you may still contact the campus human rights center if you want the university’s protection or wish to request university-level disciplinary measures.

02 Social gatherings and personal safety

1 Sexual harassment and sexual violence in social settings

Campus life offers many opportunities to interact with others outside the classroom. You may participate in school events, social gatherings, or meetings for group projects. As relationships develop, people may get together to eat, have coffee, and/or travel, or visit one another's homes. Some events or gatherings may also involve alcohol.

You may also meet people off campus. This can include socializing with other international students, meeting new people while drinking or going to clubs, connecting with others through online chat apps, or interacting with people through part-time work.

In any setting, whether on campus or off, being close with someone does not justify asking or pressuring them to do something they do not want. Even among friends, continuing to behave in a way that causes sexual discomfort despite a clear refusal can constitute sexual harassment or sexual violence.

Sexual remarks or behavior toward people from a particular country or cultural background are based on prejudice and are inappropriate. Such conduct should not be justified as "Korean culture." While light physical contact may be common among close friends in some cultures, in Korea it is generally accepted only within clearly intimate relationships. Regardless of nationality, culture, or gender—whether Korean or international, male or female—any one-sided behavior without the other person's consent can be problematic. Before any physical contact, you should always pay close attention to whether the other person has given verbal or non-verbal consent.

2 Examples

✓ Group settings such as study groups, student clubs, department gatherings, or freshman welcome events

When sexual jokes or behavior are directed at others in public or group settings and cause discomfort, this becomes a problem. Even among young people socializing together, attempting some unsolicited matchmaking without regard for the wishes or feelings of the persons involved can make them feel uncomfortable. After-event parties or group dinners with alcohol are sometimes seen as part of Korean culture. However, there is growing awareness even among Koreans that pressuring others to drink in these settings is inappropriate. Refusing to drink alcohol is no longer considered rude or a sign of failing to adapt to Korean culture. Even if drinking games are used to ease awkwardness, games that encourage excessive drinking or include sexual content or offensive expressions are inappropriate and should be changed.

CASE | Sexual jokes or behavior in group settings

- Sexualizing others during gatherings or meetings through remarks such as "People from ○○ (a specific country or ethnicity) will go on a date (or have sex) if you ask," or "People from ○○ are sexually open," or similar statements or expressions
- Forcing unreasonable penalties, such as mandatory kissing or pressuring two people to go on a date, during drinking games at social gatherings by claiming "this is how it's done in Korea"
- Pressuring people seated nearby to participate in drinking rituals and engaging in unnecessary physical contact
- Insisting that men and women must sit together during drinking occasions and forcing someone to sit next to a person of the opposite sex
- Making comments such as "○○ and △△ really look good together," "Aren't they basically dating already?" "Do a love shot," or "Sit closer," and forcing unwanted pairing or physical closeness in public settings
- Forcing someone to dance together in karaoke rooms, pulling them closer, or engaging in unwanted physical contact while seated nearby

✓ Visiting someone's home or a friend's home one-on-one or in small groups

Inviting someone repeatedly to your living space when they have expressed discomfort, or attempting to visit someone else's living space without their invitation, can escalate into criminal behavior. Respect people's personal space.

CASE | Making sexual advances in closed everyday spaces

- Inviting someone to one's living space under the pretense of working on assignments together or attending a group gathering, and then attempting forced physical contact
- After a drinking gathering, insisting on going home together "to have another drink" or claiming it is too late to leave, and then attempting sexual activity behind closed doors

Q&A

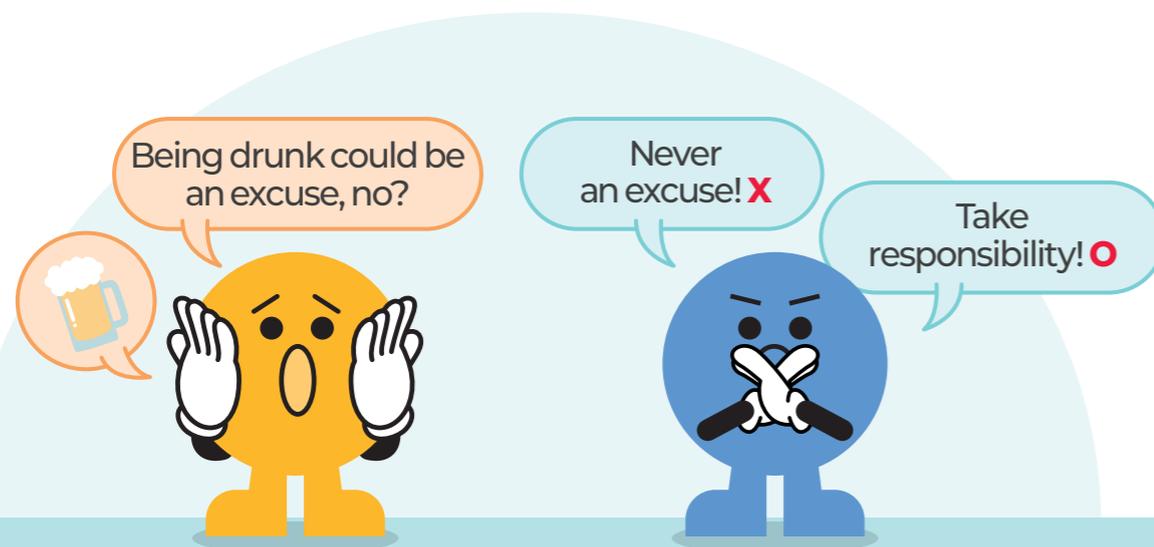
Q

I was drunk and not fully conscious, and sexual intercourse happened. What should I do?

A

Exploiting a person who is unable to resist is a serious crime and may constitute quasi-rape or quasi-forced indecent acts.

- If the circumstances show that a person was so intoxicated that they were unable to think clearly or make decisions, they are considered incapable of giving consent. Engaging in sexual contact without consent, or taking advantage of someone who is incapacitated, constitutes sexual violence and may be classified as quasi-rape or quasi-forced indecent acts.
- If sexual violence has occurred, saying “I made a mistake because I was drunk” is not a valid excuse. Even if the offender was intoxicated, they remain responsible for their actions. Victims often blame themselves afterward, thinking “I drank too much that day” or “I should have been more careful.” However, drinking alcohol does not make someone responsible for becoming a victim of sexual violence.
- If you experienced sexual violence while intoxicated, you can contact the police (112) or call the emergency hotline 1366. Through 1366, you can be connected to a local Sunflower Center or sexual violence counseling center, where you can receive counseling, medical care, and legal support free of charge. Even if you are unsure about reporting to the police, it is important to preserve evidence as early as possible in case you need support later. Sunflower Centers provide evidence collection services free of charge, and interpretation support is also available through the 1366 hotline.



03 Intimate partner violence

1 Intimate partner violence in romantic relationships

Violence that occurs in close, romantic relationships is referred to as intimate partner violence. It includes not only violence within an ongoing relationship, but also violence that occurs before a relationship is formally established (such as during a mutual interest or “seeing each other” stage), during the process of breaking up, or even after the relationship has ended.

Control over a partner must never be disguised as an expression of affection. Violence committed under the pretext of love is still a crime—this is something that must not be forgotten.

2 Examples

Intimate partner violence can take many forms, including verbal, physical, psychological or emotional, and sexual violence, as well as stalking. In many cases, it does not end with a single incident but continues over an extended period of time. Because it occurs within a close relationship with someone once trusted or loved, the process of addressing the harm is often difficult, and recovery can take a long time. If control or violence by an intimate partner is causing difficulties in your daily life, do not blame yourself or hesitate to seek help.

✓ Everyday control

- Forcing or controlling a partner's behavior based on one's own desires or emotions, while disregarding the partner's wishes
- Pressuring or manipulating a partner to conform to one's own standards in areas such as appearance, personal relationships, or social life.

CASE

- Constantly checking who I am with, controlling my entire schedule, and getting angry if I do not comply
- Getting angry about my clothing choices and forbidding me from wearing miniskirts or revealing clothes
- Forcing me to quit my job or stop working part-time
- Preventing me from meeting other people or attending new gatherings

✓ Verbal and emotional abuse

- Using insults, demeaning language, criticism, humiliation, or raising the voice to instill fear or intimidate
- Manipulating or suppressing a partner's emotions, such as through gaslighting

CASE

- Getting angry when I do not act the way they want
- Blaming me for every conflict
- Undermining my judgment or decisions and persuading or pressuring me to act according to their own standards
- When angry, suddenly using abusive or degrading language, shouting, and making threats
- After I said I wanted to break up, sending threatening messages and coming to my home to intimidate me

✓ Physical violence

- Acts of physical force against a partner
- Includes behaviors ranging from pulling hair or grabbing arms to acts that cause serious physical harm

CASE

- Hitting me during an argument simply because I express a different opinion or talk back
- Throwing dishes or overturning food if an argument starts during a meal
- Intimidating behavior such as punching walls or throwing objects
- Repeatedly shoving me or forcefully grabbing my arms to impose their will

✓ Sexual violence, in the real world and online

- Any verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual acts that violate a partner's sexual autonomy and dignity
- Includes sexual violence carried out through digital media, such as illegal filming of sexual acts, threats to distribute sexual images, or sexual harassment in chat rooms.

CASE

- Touching my body or forcing sexual acts without my consent
- Spreading rumors by telling others about sexual acts I shared with them
- Refusing to delete sexual videos recorded together, even when asked to do so
- Demanding that I send nude photos of myself
- Continuing to pressure me to allow filming during sex even after I clearly said I did not want it
- Secretly installing a camera in a studio apartment or accommodation and filming sexual activity without my knowledge

3 How should you respond?

✓ Their control feels excessive.

Interference or control over a partner's appearance, clothing, or behavior is often dismissed as "something that can happen in intimate relationships," which can delay appropriate responses. However, the longer such situations go unaddressed, the more likely they are to lead to long-term harm and escalate into more serious forms of violence.

Human rights center on campus	Emergency hotline 1366	Police (112)
Provides support such as investigations of on-campus incidents in accordance with regulations, victim counseling, information, and psychological counseling.	Available 24/365 for counseling, emergency rescue, and protection.	Coordinates with support services such as 1366, especially important in severe control situations involving threats or confinement.

✓ I experienced (physical or sexual) violence.

If violence has occurred and your safety is at risk, it is necessary to report the incident to the police (112). When physical or sexual violence occurs, the police can take emergency action such as responding at the scene and separating the victim from the perpetrator. The 1366 emergency hotline is a support service available around the clock, year-round. When needed, it can connect you with the broader victim support system, including police investigative services, emergency shelters, legal assistance, and medical support.

✓ If you have experienced intimate partner violence

1 Take notes on the situation.

Summarize the date, time, and place, as well as the nature of the violence (verbal, emotional, sexual, or physical), the perpetrator's actions, and the resulting harm or impact.

2 Keep records and related materials.

- Gather evidence, such as photographs of injuries and/or damaged property, screenshots of chat messages containing threats or verbal abuse, and record the date, time, and location of each incident.
 - * Keep photos or videos, text messages, emails, call logs, recorded conversations, contact histories, and messaging app records.
- If you have sustained physical injury due to the violence, take photographs as evidence and visit a hospital. Make it clear that the injuries resulted from violence and obtain a medical injury report.
- Evidence may also include details or records of cases where others around you have also been subjected to violence by the same person.

04 Digital sexual violence

1 What is digital sexual violence?

Digital sexual violence refers to acts that violate another person's sexual autonomy through the use of AI technology or digital devices. Because of the severity of the harm involved and the low likelihood of recovery, it constitutes a serious criminal offense that can inflict profound and lasting damage on victims. Korean law has detailed legal grounds to punish digital sex crimes and responds to them with strict enforcement. Note that, in Korea, deepfake sexual content is subject to penalties as severe as those imposed for illegal sexual imagery involving real footage.

2 Types of digital sexual violence

Illegal filming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filming another person's body or specific activities (such as using the restroom or engaging in sexual acts) without that person's consent
Distribution / redistribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributing sexual images or videos of another person (even if originally recorded with consent) without consent, including sharing in group chats, on social media platforms, or online
Threats of distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threatening to distribute sexual images or videos Using threats of distribution to demand money, sexual acts, or additional filming
Circulation / consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform operators or users who amplify harm by redistributing content Consuming illegal sexual content through distribution, facilitation, cooperation in sharing, or other forms of circulation, often for profit
Production and distribution / redistribution of deepfake sexual content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Editing, compositing, or manipulating images or videos against a person's will in ways that may provoke sexual desire or humiliation Combining ordinary, everyday photos with sexual images and distributing them without consent Producing and distributing sexually explicit synthetic content created using AI technologies

Possession / purchase / storage / viewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possessing, purchasing, storing, or viewing illegally filmed content, redistributed sexual content, deepfake sexual material, or sexual exploitation material involving minors
Online grooming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inducing a minor to send self-produced photos or videos and using them as leverage to demand increasingly explicit content Approaching victims in vulnerable situations, repeatedly engaging in sexual conversations or cultivating false intimacy, and then coercing sexual acts
Online sexual harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defamation or verbal abuse involving sexual content in online spaces Providing unwanted sexual images or videos (including links) Posting sexual harassment in private chats or on social media, such as sexually explicit text accompanied by the victim's everyday photos

3 Common examples of digital sexual violence on campus

CASE 1 | Illegal filming

- Someone secretly filmed me with a smartphone from above the partition while I was using a restroom, then ran away.
- I discovered that the person I was dating had secretly recorded a sexual video of us and saved it on their laptop without my consent.
- I saw another student secretly filming my friend's hip area during class.

CASE 2 | Distribution or redistribution of recordings

- A sexual video I recorded with a former partner is being circulated online.
- Nude photos I shared only with my partner were shown to their friends without my permission.
- A friend keeps sending photos or videos of other people's bodies.

CASE 3 | Threats of distribution

- When I tried to end the relationship, my partner threatened to share the sexual videos we had recorded together.
- I shared a photo of my body with someone I met through a chat app, and they captured it and threatened to send it to people I know.

CASE 4 | Creation, distribution, and possession of deepfake sexual content

- Deepfake sexual images using my face and/or my friends' faces are being shared on social media.
- A classmate created a sexually explicit deepfake video using my face and shared it in a group chat.
- I joined a group chat out of curiosity and saw people downloading and viewing deepfake sexual content that included the face of someone I know.

Q&A

Q Deepfake sexual content is fake anyway. Since it isn't real, isn't it acceptable?

A Deepfake sexual content is punished at the same level as real footage.

- With the rapid advancement of AI technology, synthetic images and videos have become so sophisticated that it is often difficult to distinguish them from real ones. Because digital sexual violence is extremely difficult to fully erase once content is distributed, victims frequently suffer long-term psychological harm.
- In response, the Korean government amended the Act on Special Cases concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes in 2024, significantly strengthening penalties for deepfake sexual offenses.
- Deepfake sexual content must no longer be regarded as something created out of curiosity or as a prank. It must be recognized as a serious crime that violates the victim's dignity and personhood.

Q&A

Q I only viewed deepfake sexual content. I didn't make it or share it. Is that still a problem?

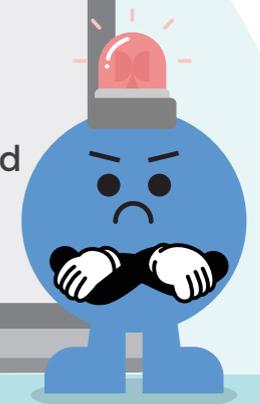
A Possession or viewing alone constitutes a clear criminal offense and is subject to punishment.

- Even if a person did not directly create the content, merely viewing deepfake sexual material treats the victim not as a human being but as an object of sexual curiosity, entertainment, or play, thereby violating their dignity and reputation.
- As deepfake sex crimes became a serious social issue, the Korean government amended the law in 2024 to allow punishment even without intent to distribute, if a person possesses or views such content.
 - * Penalties for possession, purchase, storage, or viewing: Imprisonment for up to three years, or a fine of up to KRW 30 million

Korean law now imposes even more serious penalties on deepfake crimes.

Deepfake video content of explicit nature are no longer treated as "fictional" content.

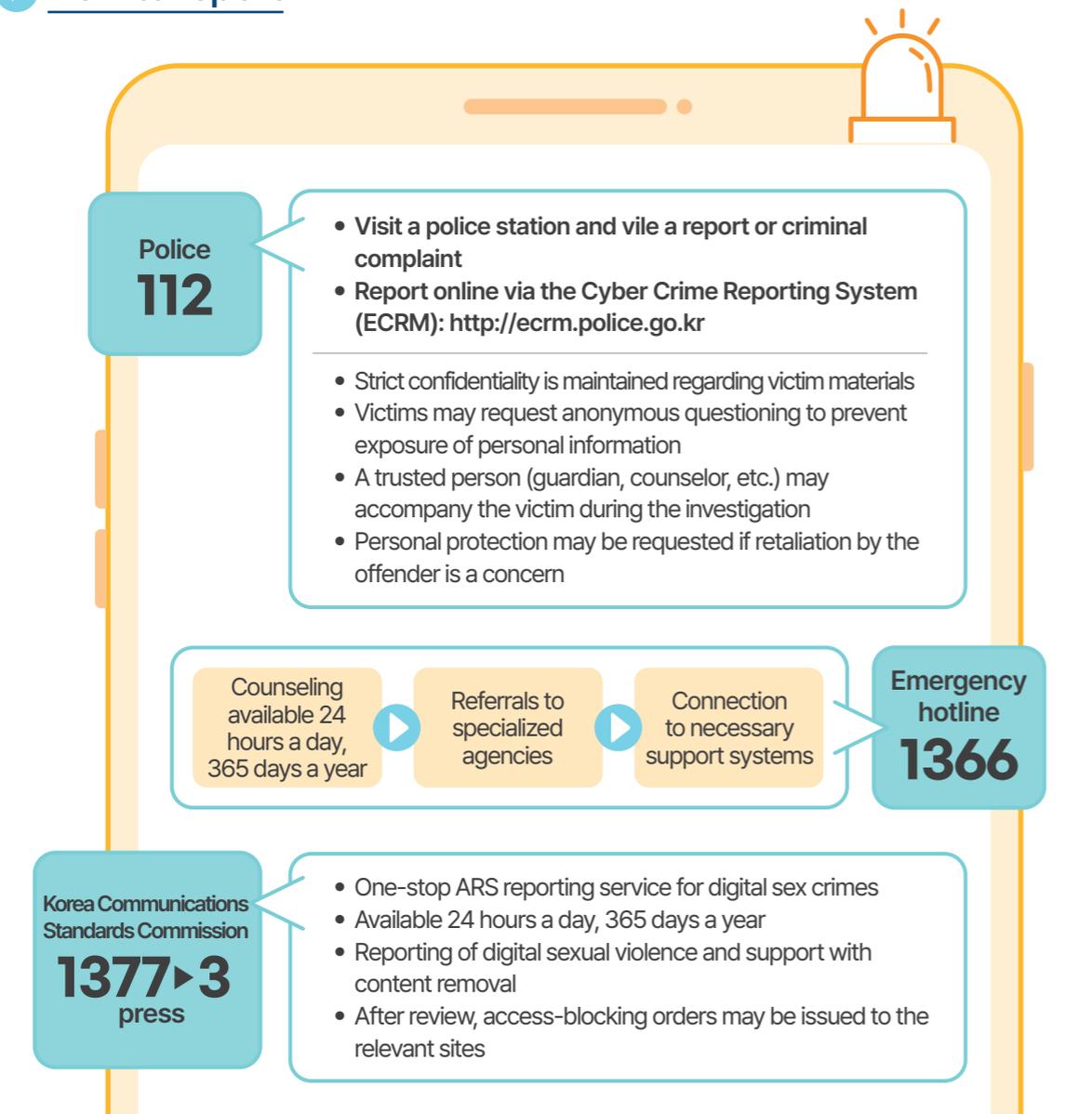
Creators and distributors will be subjected to the same punishments as those creating and distributing unauthorized, illegal video contents of sexual nature.



4 If you have experienced digital sexual violence

In cases of digital sexual violence, reporting the incident as soon as you become aware of it and initiating complaints, charges, or appeals is the most effective way to minimize further harm. Receiving early support from specialized digital sex crime response agencies is essential. There are public support systems that assist victims throughout the entire process, from initial harm identification to investigation, content removal, healing, and recovery.

✓ How to report



Victim counseling and content removal support

National Center for Digital Sexual Crime Response (NCDSR)

Year-round, one-stop victim support

- Phone: 02-735-8994
- Online bulletin board: <http://d4u.stop.or.kr>

Victim counseling and intake for support with content removal

Emergency removal support (after distribution) and monitoring of redistribution (including failed removals)

Linked support for investigation monitoring, evidence preservation, medical care, psychological treatment, and free legal assistance

Regional Centers for Digital Sexual Crime Response

Accessible local support regardless of location

Counseling, support with content removal, and monitoring of redistribution

Referral to investigative, legal, and medical services (including trauma counseling)

Recovery programs tailored to the victim's individual circumstances

* See [Appendix: Support organizations and resources].

NEVER delete photographs, videos, or messages from the offender!



Q&A



How does the removal of harmful digital content work?



- Once harmful content is found online, support with removal begins immediately. The removal process does not focus only on the images or videos themselves. It also targets related materials such as thumbnails, search keywords, and other information used to spread the content. Requests for removal are sent to each platform where the content appears. If a platform does not respond or refuses to comply, the case is referred to the Korea Communications Standards Commission. After review, the Commission can order the content to be blocked or taken down.

05 Stalking

1 What is stalking?

Stalking refers to approaching or following another person in a way that causes anxiety or fear, or blocking another person's path against their wishes and without legitimate reason. It also includes acts directed at the person's family members or people they live with. When stalking behavior is repeated or ongoing, it constitutes a criminal offense. If someone is stalking you, you can report it to the police and receive protection.

2 Types of stalking offences

✓ Forms of stalking

Engaging in any of the following acts against a person's wishes and without legitimate reason, thereby causing fear or anxiety (Article 2 of the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking)

Approaching the person or deliberately blocking their path	Waiting near or watching the person's home or workplace, including part-time job locations
Repeatedly calling or sending messages	Approaching the person online, such as repeatedly commenting on their social media
Sending packages or leaving objects	Damaging property at or near the person's residence
Sharing, distributing, or posting the person's personal or location information (or altered or modified versions of such information) online	Impersonating the person online using their personal information or photos

3 What should you do if someone is stalking you?

Any conduct that disregards the other person's will can be criminal regardless of the actor's intent. If you are being subjected to ongoing or repeated stalking, do not hesitate to report it to the police.



Criminal penalties for stalking

In Korea, stalking is legally defined and punished as a criminal offense. If stalking behavior is repeated or continuous, the offender may be subject to up to three years' imprisonment or a fine of up to KRW 30 million. If the offense is committed while carrying or using a weapon or other dangerous object, the penalty increases to up to five years' imprisonment or a fine of up to KRW 50 million. International students are subject to the same penalties if they commit stalking offenses in Korea.



Emergency measures and provisional protective measures

When stalking is reported, police may be dispatched to the scene and take emergency measures such as issuing a written warning to the offender, separating the parties, or escorting the victim to a protection facility. Courts may also order provisional protective measures, including restraining orders, electronic location-tracking devices, or temporary detention. If an offender violates these measures and approaches the victim, they may face up to two years' imprisonment or a fine of up to KRW 20 million.



Counseling and support for stalking victims

If it feels difficult to report directly to the police, you may seek counseling through your university's human rights center. If stalking has interfered with your academic life or right to study, you are encouraged to request assistance. The types of available support vary by institution, so check with your university's counseling center, human rights center, or international student office. In addition, counseling and support are also available through the Emergency Hotline (1366) and specialized sexual and domestic violence counseling centers.

Q&A

Q

Isn't stalking usually committed by men, or only between people in a romantic relationship?

A

- No. Stalking applies regardless of gender or relationship. Stalking does not occur only in romantic or intimate relationships. It may arise from resentment, hostility, curiosity, or even amusement. If stalking behavior is repeated or ongoing, it constitutes a criminal offense regardless of the offender's gender or relationship to the victim.

Q&A

Q

Isn't it acceptable as long as I don't contact the person directly or go to see them?

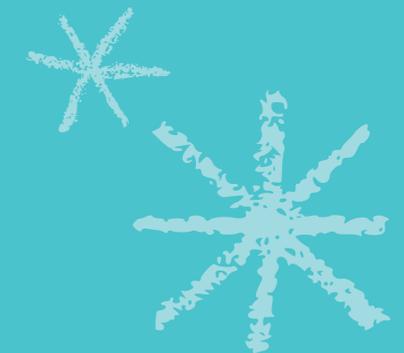
A

- No. Indirect actions can also constitute stalking. Leaving objects, delivering items through third parties, or using indirect means of contact can all qualify as stalking. Courts have also recognized stalking in cases where a person repeatedly used their own social media profile to post photos or content that criticized or threatened a specific individual.

SOS Guide
for International Students
on Sexual Harassment
and Sexual Violence



If a friend or
someone you know
has been harmed



III If a friend or someone you know has been harmed

1 What can I do as someone close to them?

If harm has occurred around you, what should you do? Even if you are not the victim yourself, if you become aware that a friend, acquaintance, or third party has been harmed, you can stand with them and support them in the following ways.



What you can do

<p>✓</p> <p>Tell the victim clearly: "This is not your fault."</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Keep confidential any information you learn about the incident.</p>
<p>✓</p> <p>Do not share information about who the victim is or what happened.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>Do not treat the incident as gossip or a source of curiosity.</p>
<p>✓</p> <p>Listen to the victim's story with empathy.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>With the victim's consent, seek advice from institutions or professionals who can help.</p>

2 What not to say to a victim

Statements that side with the offender

"Didn't you do something wrong to them?"

"Are you sure? It doesn't sound like them."

"They (the offender) told me to tell you this..."

Statements that blame the victim

"It's not that big of a deal. Why are you taking it so badly?"

"Didn't you like them too?"

"Why did you take those photos (or videos)?"

"That's why I told you to be careful around them."

"It's over now. Just forget and move on."

Statements that send a message of hopelessness

"Everyone already knows. What can you do now?"

"It's already spread everywhere. There's no way to completely remove it."

"Reporting it won't help."



Pause

Things to consider before offering help

Even actions or words meant to help can cause harm if the victim does not want them.

- 1 First, ask whether the victim wants help at all.
- 2 Allow the victim to choose what kind of help they need.

IV

Requesting help



IV Requesting help

1 Securing evidence in advance

✓ Preserving evidence of harm

Evidence should never be deleted and must be carefully preserved. Documents such as counseling confirmation records, medical or injury reports, and emails or messages exchanged with the offender should be saved or captured so that the circumstances of the harm are clearly documented. In cases of digital sexual violence, it is especially important to keep all records and details of the incident, as these are essential for monitoring the spread of content and supporting removal requests. Be careful not to delete original files, as they may be required during investigations or removal procedures.



Counseling confirmation records

- Records showing when counseling was received and what issues were discussed
- Can be issued upon request by professional support organizations such as the Emergency Hotline (1366) or Centers for Digital Sexual Crime Response.



Medical certificates / medical opinions

- Proof of medical treatment received after the incident—Both general medical certificates and injury reports are acceptable



Witness statements / confirmations

- If there is a witness, a written confirmation or statement describing what they observed may be collected.
- If written documents are unavailable, screenshots of chat logs or text messages containing relevant conversations may also be submitted.



Emails, text messages, and SNS content (screenshots)

- All emails, text messages, and social media messages exchanged with the offender
- Saved or captured records of contact, threats, or coercive messages



Related images or video files

- In deepfake cases, the original photos or videos used to create the manipulated content



URLs where content appears

- If the harm involves online posts, clearly organize and submit the exact URLs.
- Providing precise URLs is particularly helpful for investigations and content removal.

Other supporting materials

- Any additional materials that may help demonstrate or corroborate the harm

Q&A

- Q** I don't have the deepfake content itself. What should I do?
- A**
- To receive monitoring and removal support, either the harmful content itself or a link to the site where it was posted is needed. If you do not currently have the content, you can first report the case to the police. The police may help recover the material from your device or work with someone who has access to it, so that monitoring and removal support can still proceed.

2 Reporting harm



Receiving support through the university human rights center

Receiving counseling at a university human rights center does not automatically lead to a formal report. The purpose of the initial consultation is to understand what kind of support you need and to receive guidance from professionals on possible next steps. Depending on the university's policies, third-party reporting may also be possible through a trusted person.



Filing a police report together with a criminal complaint

To ensure that a victim's rights are fully protected during criminal proceedings, it is important to file a formal criminal complaint. Compared to victims who do not file a complaint, those who do are afforded broader legal protections. For this reason, it is generally recommended that reporting and filing a complaint be done at the same time.



Protecting yourself from further harm

If there is a risk of additional harm, such as coercion, extortion, threats, stalking, intimate partner violence, defamation, retaliation, or harassment, request victim protection measures from the university human rights center or investigative authorities.

University human rights center	Investigative authorities
can assist with temporary measures such as separation from the offender and support for recovery (in accordance with university policies).	may provide crime victim safety measures upon request, such as temporary accommodation, personal protection, or safety devices such as police smartwatches.

3 Seeking help



On campus (human rights centers, etc.)

You may receive counseling or file a report through your university's human rights center (or gender equality center). In accordance with each university's internal regulations, these centers provide services such as investigation of on-campus cases, victim counseling, information and guidance, and psychological support. Throughout the entire counseling and reporting process, the victim's personal information (including name and nationality) is strictly protected, and there is no impact on visa status or academic standing.

Examples of support provided by university human rights centers

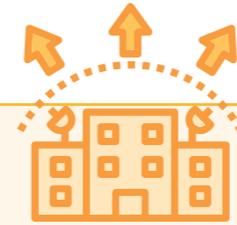
Separation from the offender (such as changes to classes, sections, seating, or dormitory assignments, at the victim's request)

Strict protection of personal information and identity

Psychological counseling and interpretation support

When necessary, adjustments to living arrangements (such as dormitory housing) to help the victim feel safer

* Available support varies by university policy. Please contact your institution's human rights center for details.



Off campus

Emergency Hotline 1366

By calling 1366 (no area code required), you can report harm and receive counseling 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Free counseling is available for victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence, intimate partner violence, digital sex crimes, stalking, and other forms of violence. Through counseling, you may be referred to specialized organizations and connected to medical, legal, and other support services as needed.

Police (112)

By calling 112, you can receive immediate assistance from the police.

If interpretation is needed, simply say "interpreter," and interpretation services (including English and Chinese) will be provided. Reporting by text messaging is also available. You can also use the 112 emergency reporting app to file a report without making a phone call. The app supports more than 13 languages and provides real-time translation.

4 Interpretation support services

✓ Danuri Call Center (1377-1366) and other resources

Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, it provides counseling and interpretation in 13 languages and supports three-way calls. The center offers counseling, emergency assistance, and follow-up support for victims of violence. Similar services are also available through the Seoul Counseling Center for Migrant Women, operated by the Seoul Metropolitan Government. If sexual harassment or sexual violence occurs in the workplace (whether you are employed full time or part-time), interpretation support is also available through services operated by the Ministry of Employment and Labor.



Interpretation support services

Danuri Call Center

1577-1366 | available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

- **Languages available** Counseling provided in 13 languages, including Korean, English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Cambodian, Mongolian, Russian, Japanese, Thai, Lao, Uzbek, and Nepali.
- **Regional centers** Seoul, Suwon, Daejeon, Gwangju, Busan, Gumi, Jeonju (After 6 p.m., calls are connected through the main number.)

Seoul Counseling Center for Migrant Women

02-733-0120 | weekdays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m

- **Languages available** Counseling provided in six languages, i.e., Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, English, Tagalog, and Mongolian
- **Additional languages** Interpretation in up to 22 languages, including Cambodian, Thai, and Nepali, available upon request through the interpretation support team
- **Regional centers** Counseling (legal counseling; counseling for domestic violence and sexual violence; counseling for psychological distress, etc.) and access to emergency shelters

Ministry of Employment and Labor – Interpretation support service for foreign workers

for sexual harassment or sexual violence occurring during part-time or temporary work

Information on available languages and regional contact details can be found on the Ministry of Employment and Labor website : https://www.moel.go.kr/policy/policydata/view.do?bbs_seq=20240500363

Appendix Support organizations and resources

Type of support	Organization	Contact information	Services provided
Police reporting	Police	112 (no area code required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting with bringing a trusted person to accompany the victim during the investigation • Strict and confidential protection of personal information • Personal safety protection measures upon request • Interpretation services
Victim reporting and counseling	Emergency Hotline 1366	1366 (no area code required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling 24 hours a day, 365 days a year • Case referral to specialized support organizations • Connecting victims to necessary support systems
Interpretation services	Danuri Call Center	1577-1366	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling 24 hours a day, 365 days a year • Interpretation support in thirteen languages
Centers for Digital Sexual Crime Response	Central (Main Office)	02)735-8994 http://d4u.stop.or.kr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year-round, one-stop support for victims • Counseling for digital sexual violence • Supporting the removal of digital content of victims • Coordinating specialized services, including investigation monitoring, medical and psychological treatment, and free legal assistance
	Seoul	02)815-0382	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Comprehensive, locally based recovery support (operating in all nine provinces and eight metropolitan cities nationwide) </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling on digital sexual violence • Supporting the removal of digital content of victims • Coordinating tailored legal and medical services • Accompanying victims to investigative authorities and courts • Supporting victims' healing and recovery
	Busan	051)802-2081	
	Daegu	053)215-6487	
	Incheon	032)517-5170	
	Gwangju	062)672-1355	
	Daejeon	042)255-0078	
	Ulsan	052)252-8247	
	Sejong	044)866-1366	
	Gyeonggi	1544-9112	
Gangwon	033)765-1366		
Chungbuk	043)267-3006		
Chungnam	041)545-8994		
Jeonbuk	063)717-1366		
Jeonnam	061)283-4510		
Gyeongbuk	054)284-0404		
Gyeongnam	055)244-9009		
Jeju	064)744-8994		

SOS Guide for International Students on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

Publication date | December 2025

Published by | Officer of Gender Equality Policy
Ministry of Education(044.203.7114/7111)

Editing & Printing by | (사)대구문화콘텐츠플랫폼

* This booklet is available in Korean, English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Mongolian, Uzbek, and Nepali. Unauthorized excerpting or reproduction of any part of this publication without prior approval is prohibited.