

Seek Then Speak: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Professionals

Q: What is Seek Then Speak?

A: Seek Then Speak is an innovative platform empowering sexual assault survivors by offering a self-guided, online interview process. This tool enables survivors to gather information and explore options for reporting to police and finding medical care and support services. Learn more at: www.seekthenspeakseattle.com.

Q: How does the reporting option work?

A: The “Speak” feature guides survivors through a series of questions designed to collect critical information about their sexual assault. Once complete, a PDF report is generated, which survivors can forward to law enforcement as an initial step toward investigation. To submit their PDF to the Seattle Police, victims can email seekthenspeak@seattle.gov.

Q: What are the benefits of offering this reporting option?

A: For survivors, the tool is trauma-informed, explaining why questions are asked, how the information will be used, and what their rights are throughout the process. This helps reduce anxiety, increase accuracy, and prepare survivors for the in-person interview and investigation, if they decide to provide the report to law enforcement.

For law enforcement, victims who may not otherwise report, may come forward with this option. This helps law enforcement investigate crimes, an essential step to keeping perpetrators from committing additional assaults.

Q: What happens after a Seek Then Speak report is submitted?

A: Submitted reports are reviewed by SPD's Special Assault Unit to determine the next steps. A supervisor evaluates the initial report, and if the case is assigned, a detective will follow up with the survivor to conduct further investigation, which includes gathering evidence and interviewing involved parties.

Q: Does every report submitted through Seek Then Speak lead to an investigation?

A: Not necessarily. Each report received via Seek Then Speak is carefully reviewed by the Seattle PD's Sexual Assault Unit (SAU) to assess if it fulfills the criteria necessary for launching an investigation. Additionally, a victim advocate reaches out to gauge the victim's willingness to partake in the investigative process. The decision to proceed with an investigation is based on both the report's details and the victim's preferences.

Q: How does Seek Then Speak complement traditional law enforcement procedures in handling sexual assault reports?

A: Seek Then Speak is designed to augment, not replace, traditional law enforcement responses to sexual assault. Officers can offer it as a resource to victims while still following their agency's mandatory procedures for immediate medical needs, danger assessments, evidence collection, and thorough documentation of incidents.

Q: What should victims do if they need an urgent response?

A: If the assault occurred within the last 10 days, if the victim is in pain or might be injured, or if there are immediate safety concerns, it's recommended to call 911 or seek medical care.

Q: How is confidentiality maintained on the Seek Then Speak platform?

A: No victim information is stored by or uploaded to the website. Report data is temporarily stored locally on the user's device, and users are prompted to clear the form once finished.

Q: Once a report is sent to Seattle Police, is it still confidential?

A: Submitting a report means it becomes an official police record, accessible by legal parties if the case goes to court. While initial submission steps offer some confidentiality, complete privacy cannot be guaranteed once it becomes part of the legal process.

Q: Who can I contact with questions about submitting a Seek then Speak report?

A: Crime Victim Advocates follow-up with victims who contact the Seek then Speak email to answer questions, provide emotional and logistical support and offer resources.

Q: Can victims report anonymously through Seek Then Speak?

A: Yes, victims can initially provide information to law enforcement anonymously using Seek Then Speak. However, it's important to note that while reports can be made anonymously, investigations and prosecutions cannot take place with a victim's name. Anonymity at the report stage does not mean the case can proceed anonymously through the legal system.

Q: What are the limitations of non-investigative reporting?

A: While Seek Then Speak allows for the possibility of non-investigative reporting – meaning information documented by law enforcement without opening an investigation – there are exceptions where SPD might still initiate an investigation. These exceptions include, but are not limited to, cases involving very young or elderly victims, severe physical injuries, intimate partner violence, incidents involving a serial offender, or high-profile cases.

Q: How does Seek Then Speak handle language accessibility?

A: Seek Then Speak features browser-based translation, making the platform accessible to people with limited English proficiency. Reports completed in languages other than English are translated for the victim's convenience and understanding; law enforcement receives the information as submitted with the questions in English and answers in the victim's language.

Q: Can someone else complete the interview on behalf of a victim?

A: No, it is important that the victim completes the interview themselves to ensure the accuracy and legality of the report. However, victims can have emotional support from an advocate or a support person while they complete the interview.

Q: Where can I learn more?

A: Seek then Speak is a national resource created by End Violence Against Women International, which has additional informational resources on their [website](#).