

The You Have Options Program focuses on changing two fundamental elements in the law enforcement response to sexual violence:

Increasing the number of victims who report to law enforcement, and thoroughly investigating identified offenders for serial perpetration.

You Have Options Program Participating Law Enforcement Agencies recognize the need for a victim-centered and offender-focused response to sexual violence. The traditional law enforcement response to sexual violence tends to discourage sexual assault victims from seeking assistance through the criminal justice system. As a result, often law enforcement doesn't receive the information necessary to hold sexual offenders accountable, and those offenders go on to victimize additional persons.

By addressing the barriers victims face when reporting sexual assault, and thereby increasing the number of sexual assault reports, the YOU HAVE OPTIONS Program provides investigators with information they would otherwise never have received.

When a victim is given the ability to control certain aspects of a sexual assault investigation - such as who is contacted and if an arrest is made - law enforcement and the victim both benefit. Victims provide investigators with more accurate information, are more willing to identify their assailant and participate more fully in the investigative and judicial process. Victims are provided with the time they need to make a decision that is right for them, independent of the needs of the criminal justice system, and are more likely to report a positive experience with law enforcement regardless of the judicial outcome.

The You Have Options Program focuses on identifying serial sexual perpetration.

Investigators move beyond traditional sexual assault investigative practices that too often rely solely on gathering information from the victim and the suspect. The program utilizes the Inquiry into Serial Sexual Assault (ISSA) to provide a clearer picture of the reported incident and the offender. A small percentage of the population commits a large number of sexual assault offenses. Utilizing the victim-centered and offender-focused strategies of the You Have Options Program allows law enforcement to work collaboratively and gather the information necessary to identify and successfully investigate serial sexual predators.