

# What to Expect

Reaching Out to our Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline



## *What Happens When I Contact Safe+Sound Somerset's 24/7 Call or Text Helpline?*

Safe+Sound Somerset's Helpline receives about 4,000 calls and texts a year from individuals who are in crisis, want to access a Safe+Sound Somerset service, or need information about domestic violence, sexual assault, or teen dating abuse. The helpline is the first point of contact for our services and information. Here is what you can expect if you decide to reach out to us.

### **Available for All**

First, you should know that your call or text is important to us, and our staff will work very hard to connect you with services and answer your questions.

- If **you are in crisis**, a trained advocate will help assess your situation. If appropriate, an individualized safety plan will be created, and services available to help will be discussed. If the services we offer don't meet your specific needs, the advocate will work to provide you appropriate community resources and referrals.
- If **you are looking to access another Safe+Sound Somerset service** such as – counseling, legal advocacy, financial empowerment, and/or housing assistance – the helpline advocate taking your call will collect your information and submit a referral on your behalf.
- If **you have questions about domestic violence or sexual assault** services or community resources, we can provide you with information and referrals with safety and compassion in mind.
- If **you need someone to listen**, we provide supportive listening that can help you work through your thoughts and feelings.

Anyone can call our helpline. We talk with survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, family members, friends, teens dealing with dating relationships, parents concerned about their teens, professionals and community partners with questions about domestic abuse and sexual assault or our trauma-informed services, and more.

If you are **under 18 years of age**, you can call the helpline confidentially. No parents will be notified if you call, chat or text. However, if you want to explore using our other services, your parents will need to provide permission. If you are a victim of sexual assault and you are 14 years of age or older, you may explore our other services without parent notification.

## What Happens When I Call, Chat or Text?

### *When you call the helpline:*

Helpline Advocates will answer, "Hi! How can I help you?" We do not identify that we are a domestic and sexual violence helpline to safeguard your safety and confidentiality.

The Helpline Advocates who answer the calls and texts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week are specially trained. They are kind and compassionate individuals who are committed to helping survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault and their children become and remain safe.

When calling or texting the helpline **you may choose to remain anonymous**. However, please know that if you are seeking services, the helpline advocate will need to collect some personal information in order to make the appropriate referral on your behalf.

**We ensure complete confidentiality** of all matters discussed, unless there are reports of child abuse or neglect, elder abuse or neglect, abuse or neglect of an individual with a disability, or suicidal or homicidal ideation. As with all adults in New Jersey, we are mandated reporters, meaning that we are required by law to report these cases to the appropriate authorities. Helpline staff inform callers of these confidentiality limitations at the beginning of the call for complete transparency and will also inform the caller if a report needs to be made.

### *If you text the helpline:*

You will get an automated response from Safe+Sound Somerset, explaining that we are mandated reporters and asking to verify that it's safe to text. Once you reply "Yes," we will be able to communicate with you further.

The advocate will then ask you a little bit about what's going on to make sure they are assisting you in the best way possible. Your immediate safety is our first concern, so we assess this first. We will discuss and create a safety plan with you. Based on the information provided, we discuss services and resources available to you and provide referrals to Safe+Sound Somerset and other Somerset County providers, depending on your unique circumstances.

### *If you need someone to listen:*

Our staff provides supportive listening to those who need to talk about their experiences or find a starting point for moving forward. Many of those who reach out need to be heard but are not yet ready to make any other changes. Calling or texting our helpline for the first time is courageous!

*Always remember, our services are provided free of charge and in your primary or preferred language.*

So, now that you are familiar with Safe+Sound Somerset's 24/7 Call and Text Helpline, feel free to contact us any time at **866-685-1122**. You can also find out more about our services at [safe-sound.org](https://www.safe-sound.org).