

Read about our member organisations, violence against women, warning signs and more.



HELP!

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SKR

The Swedish Association of Women's Shelters and
Young Women's Empowerment Centres

An equal society free from violence

SKR is a national association of women's shelters (kvinnojour), young women's empowerment centres (tjejjour), relatives' associations and other organisations working to prevent and put a stop to men's violence against women. The association is not affiliated to any political party or religion.

SKR has a strong child perspective, which means we see children living in the women's shelters with their mothers as individuals in their own right, with their own needs, wishes and experiences of violence.

SKR also believes that the work towards creating an equal society free from violence must include men and boys, and a questioning of masculine norms.

SKR's priorities include raising awareness and developing more specialised activities to ensure that every person seeking support feels welcome and receives the appropriate support, regardless of ethnic background, physical or mental capability, sexuality or age.

Illustrations: Moa Dunfalk

The women's shelters

If you are a woman and the victim of violence you can turn to a women's shelter for support. It doesn't matter whether the violence was committed by a man or a woman.

The way the shelters are run varies. Some employ staff to run an office and have a helpline, while others have fixed telephone times and are staffed entirely by female volunteers. Most shelters can offer counselling, advice, safe accommodation and support in contacts with the police, social services, the family courts and the legal system.

The support does not cost anything. You do not have to give your name and you do not have to be registered with a government agency, although many of the women living in sheltered accommodation have been referred after an initial contact with the social services.

All the women's shelters in Sweden are listed on www.kvinnojouren.se

Young women's empowerment centres

The young women's empowerment centres listen, support and encourage anyone who defines herself as a young girl or woman. Many of the empowerment centres visit schools to run girls' groups and arrange workshops around themes such as equality, sex and self-esteem.

Some of the centres have a telephone helpline, but most contact is by mail or on-line chat. You can also ask for a volunteer to accompany you to the police station or the youth clinic. The target group varies from centre to centre but is usually girls and young women aged from thirteen to their early twenties.

The empowerment centres want to be a voice for young women, and often influence public opinion in questions which affect the daily lives of girls and young women. Some of the centres employ staff, but a lot of the work is done by volunteers. Everyone who is involved in the work of the centre is over 18. All the young women's empowerment centres in Sweden are listed on www.tjejjouren.se and www.kvinnojouren.se.



Children who experience violence

Most of the violence which affects women takes place in their own home. This means that it also affects many children. According to Save the Children Sweden, around every tenth child experiences acts of violence against their mother.

Most of SKR's women's shelters provide accommodation for mothers with children. Some of the shelters also have special activities for children, such as group therapy sessions.



SKR has a strong child perspective, which means we see children living in the women's shelters with their mothers as individuals in their own right, with their own needs, wishes and experiences of violence. Both SKR and the majority of the women's shelters are working to develop more organised activities for the children living there.

What is men's violence against women?

On both a global and a national level, men's violence against women has been defined as a widespread health and social problem which poses a serious threat to the health, wellbeing and lives of women and children. According to the UN, women all over the world are in a position of physical vulnerability in both private and public spheres, and men's violence against women is a threat to women's physical and sexual integrity.

Between 25,000 and 30,000 cases of violence against women are reported in Sweden every year, and in a majority of the cases the abuser is someone with whom the woman has some sort of relationship. Around 17 women are murdered by a man close to them every year.

Between 40 and 50 cases of sexual crimes against women are reported every day. Half of these involve rape or attempted rape, and the vast majority of these crimes are committed indoors by someone whom the woman knows or has a relationship with.



Many of the women who are victims of violence or abuse in a close relationship experience feelings of guilt and shame, and few seek treatment for their injuries. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention estimates that no more than one in ten cases is reported to the police.

What form does the violence take?

Violence and abuse occur in relationships between both heterosexual and homosexual couples. The violence can be mental, physical, sexual, material or financial. It is rarely only physical.

Emotional abuse

This includes verbal abuse, threats, isolation, blackmail and control which over time lead to loss of self worth.

Active physical violence

Everything from pushing, kicking or striking to taking a stranglehold, pinning or holding down or an attack with some type of instrument.

Passive physical violence

This includes sleep deprivation, not being given enough food, or being exposed to long-term mental stress which leads to physical side-effects.

Sexual violence

Being forced to take part in, commit or watch sexual acts against your will.

Financial and material abuse

Being forced to sign contracts which will lead you into debt, or to you becoming financially dependent on your partner, or your partner destroying your private property or threatening to smash up furniture and furnishings.



Warning signs

If you suspect that a friend or relative is being abused by her partner, you can watch out for the following signs:

- ▶ she gets in touch less often and has less time to spend with family and friends
- ▶ her partner often calls or texts you to ask where she is and who she is with
- ▶ her partner always drives her to and from her work and other activities
- ▶ she cancels appointments at the last minute
- ▶ you suspect she is not able to take decisions about her own financial situation, or to dress as she wants
- ▶ the couple often argue in public and she makes excuses for him afterwards
- ▶ furniture and other objects in her home show signs of violence
- ▶ she seems reluctant to be alone at home with her partner, perhaps often staying on late at work

You can also be on the look-out for physical signs in the form of bruising, grazing and scratches. She may well laugh them off or avoid giving direct answers if you ask how she came by them.

If you are a relative or friend

Do you suspect that a relative, friend or colleague is being abused by her partner? You can make a difference just by being there.

Dare to ask

Show that you care. Make it clear that you see what is happening and that it is wrong.

Listen

Listen but do not judge. Do not question her story.

If she doesn't want to talk about it

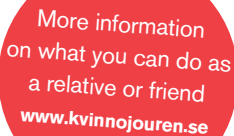
Show her that you are there for her and that you will be happy to listen anytime she wants to talk.

If she won't leave

Try to stay close and support her, to build her self-esteem.

Don't forget the abuser

Talk to the person who is making the threats and committing the abuse.



More information
on what you can do as
a relative or friend
www.kvinnojouren.se

Help is available

At www.kvinnojouren.se
you can find the contact
details for all the women's
shelters and young women's
empowerment centres in
Sweden. In an emergency –
call the police. Dial 112

urgent

Call the police

112



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SWEDISH ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN'S
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EMPOWERMENT CENTRES

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