

## Documentation

Whether the intent is to utilize the criminal justice system or civil measures, or both, to address abuse, documentation is key!

Photographic evidence of any physical injury is important. However, since injuries are not always visible, it is vital for the victim to maintain a **detailed written account** of what occurred. These records will not only help in the prosecution of a criminal case but may also be helpful if the victim chooses to pursue Family Court assistance.

It is helpful for victims to keep personal records of any abuse with a trusted friend. This includes a log or diary of all incidents, as shown in the following example:

Date and Time	Description of Event: things said, what took place, thoughts you had	Signs: marks, bruising, bleeding	Symptoms: changes to bodily functions, behavioral changes

## Resources

New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline  
(800) 942-6906

Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center  
(518) 447-7100

Equinox Domestic Violence Services  
(518) 434-6135  
24-Hour Hotline (518) 432-7865

Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention, a program of The National Family Justice Center Alliance  
707 Broadway, Suite 700, San Diego, CA 92101  
(619) 533-6000  
<http://www.strangulationtraininginstitute.com>

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The **mission** of the Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center is to "provide direct and comprehensive services to all victims of sexual assault and other crimes of personal violence and to change, through community and prevention education and bystander engagement, societal conditions that allow oppression, especially interpersonal violence, to exist". The Center also assists other victims of personal violence, particularly adults and children abused within domestic relationships.



Daniel P. McCoy  
Albany County Executive

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity (as defined in paragraph 249(c)(4) of title 18, United States Code), sexual orientation, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity funded in whole or in part with funds made available under [VAWA], and any other program or activity funded in whole or in part with funds appropriated for grants, cooperative agreements, and other assistance administered by the Office on Violence Against Women.

## Strangulation: It's Not Choking

A Basic Guide to Strangulation Documentation for Victims and Professionals

Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center  
112 State Street  
Rm 1010  
Albany, NY 12207  
Phone: (518) 447-7100  
Sexual Assault Hotline: (518) 447-7716  
Fax: (518) 447-7102  
e-mail: [cvsvc@albanycounty.com](mailto:cvsvc@albanycounty.com)  
[www.albanycounty.com](http://www.albanycounty.com)

## Potential Signs & Symptoms

**Petichiae** (red or flushed pinpoint spots)

\*Can occur any place above the point of strangulation

\*Areas include eyes/eyelids, nose, ears, scalp, face

### **Scratch Marks**

\* May be found on the strangulation victim, the assailant or both  
\*Common places include face, neck, shoulders, under the chin

### **Bruising**

\*Under the chin  
\*Behind the ears  
\*Neck, shoulders, mouth, finger tips

### **Swelling**

\*Tongue  
\*Mouth area  
\*Neck

**Bleeding:** may occur from ears, nose

### **Other Visible Signs**

\*General abrasions  
\*Fingernail or finger shaped marks  
\*Broken nose  
\*Bloodshot eyes

### **Breathing**

\*Shortness of breath  
\*Hyperventilation  
\*Unable to breathe

### **Voice**

\*Raspy Voice  
\*Hoarseness  
\*Coughing  
\*Trouble speaking  
\*Loss of speech

### **Physical**

\*Painful swallowing  
\*Neck pain  
\*Nausea/vomiting  
\*Drooling  
\*Inability to swallow  
\*Involuntary bowel movements  
\*Dizziness/seeing spots  
\*Headaches  
\*Unconsciousness  
\*Memory loss  
\*Ringing in ears

### **Behavioral Changes**

\*Restlessness or combativeness  
\*Problems concentrating  
\* Amnesia  
\*Agitation  
\*Hallucinations  
\*Uncontrollable shaking

## Ask the Right Questions

The right questions will provide you with the most accurate information. **Remember: a lack of a visible physical injury does not mean strangulation did not occur.**

- Was the strangulation with one hand or two used? With forearm? With an object?
- If object was used, what was the object and where did it come from?
- Did the offender use any other physical force? (hair pulling, slapping, punching, hitting with object to subdue)
- Was the offender saying anything before, during or after the strangulation?
- What were your thoughts while you were strangled?
- Do you know how long you were strangled?
- How long did it feel like the strangulation lasted?
- Did you try to end the strangulation by removing the offender's hands or the object used? (Look for self-inflicted clawing marks, and marks to offender's hands/arms/face.)
- What caused the strangulation to end?
- Did you have, or are you still having, trouble breathing?
- Does your voice sound the same to you?
- Are you having any trouble swallowing? Do you have any pain in your neck or head area?
- Did you lose consciousness? Do you feel dizzy or lightheaded?
- Did you experience any loss of bodily functions? (urination, bowel movement, nausea, vomiting)



## Strangulation Can Be Lethal!

### Strangulation:

- \*Is one of the highest indicators of potential homicide
- \*Does not always involve visible physical injury
- \*Can result in neurological and psychological damage
- \*Can result in miscarriage
- \*Can result in loss of consciousness in seconds
- \*Can result in death in minutes
- \*Can cause internal injuries that can result in death, even days or weeks later

**Strangulation: For all these reasons, it is VITAL that the victim receives medical attention.**