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More Calls To Sexual Assault Center Amid Vanderbilt Allegations

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by **Aundrea Cline-Thomas**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - More calls are coming into the Sexual Assault Center after former Vanderbilt football players were charged with raping another student. It's not the first time a highly publicized case had unrelated victims calling their therapists for help.

"Every client that comes in that I've seen, and I show them this," Clinical Supervisor Amber Stevenson said about t-shirts clients decorate to illustrate how they're processing their pain. "I can see it on their face that they look at these shirts and say wow I'm not alone."

Rape relies on shame and isolation to keep its secret.

"The problem is that no isn't respected," Stevenson explained, "consent isn't given and that's when it becomes rape."

The call volume at the Sexual Assault Center has noticeably increased in recent weeks, since four former Vanderbilt football players were charged with raping another student who police said was unconscious.

"I think in general people in our community are not talking about sexual assault. For whatever reason, there's a stigma, there's shame. We don't like to talk about it.

It will be up to the court to determine what happened in that dorm room on June 23rd. Regardless of the outcome, rape is an issue colleges across the country are having to confront.

"About half of rapes go unreported on college campuses. Maybe the victim knew him, maybe there is fear about coming forward in that way."

Every year the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation tracks Crime on College Campuses. The number of forcible sexual offenses have increased from 19 in 2008 to 44 in 2011.

"With that can come depression, anxiety, hopelessness, nightmares, flashbacks...all of these trauma symptoms we're seeing..."

No matter if the incident occurred recently or years ago here's help and victims are not alone.

"The sooner someone comes in, the sooner that healing process can start.

The Sexual Assault Center treats children and adults. Their 24-hour crisis and support hotline can be reached at 1-800-879-1999.

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