



Sexual Offences Courts

The problem of rape and sexual abuse is an ongoing crisis in our communities. We have one of the highest rates of rape in the world. We also have high levels of poverty and a huge difference between rich and poor in our country. This means that rape survivors get very different kinds of support after being a victim of a sexual offence depending on what community they live in and which police station they report the rape to.

Ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice while supporting the victims of crime must be the focus of the court system. This way, rape survivors will be able to testify during the court case while receiving support. Courts where these things happen are called sexual offences courts.

What is a Sexual Offences Court?

Sexual Offences Courts are special court rooms that only deal with sexual offences such as rape. They provide special services to rape survivors and other witnesses. These courts are sensitive to the survivor and help to:

- make the trauma of a survivor much less
- speed up cases so they are completed more quickly
- make better court decisions or judgements because the people working in these courts are experts that are very skilful and experienced
- give more people hope that reporting rape will work out well so more rape survivors will report their cases to the police
- get more convictions and send more perpetrators to jail

What is special about a Sexual Offences Court?

The idea of Sexual Offences Courts was developed in South Africa. In 2013, a new Sexual Offences Court Model was developed. This was done to set out everything that is needed for a court to be a Sexual Offences Court. These courts have specially trained prosecutors, court supporters and magistrates. A sexual offences court has a special court room, and a testifying room with CCTV equipment so that children and can testify from a separate room and not have to see the perpetrator while they talk about what happened.

When will these courts be rolled out?

In 2013, the Department of Justice promised to roll out sexual offences courts across the country. The Department of Justice says that there are 60 sexual offences courts, but these courts might not have all the things that a sexual offences court should have.

What to watch

Although some sexual offences courts have been set up, the law that makes this possible must still come into operation. This will make sure that these courts are rolled out in a planned and budgeted way and also tell us exactly how these courts will be operating and set up. In 2018 we watch to see if this law starts to work.

The Shukumisa Coalition

We are a coalition of over 60 organisations across South Africa working against sexual violence. We have a vision of a South Africa where adults and children are free from sexual violence. Our mission is to ensure that South Africa takes the problem of sexual violence seriously, as evidenced by well crafted, well implemented legislation derived from broad-based public participation processes.

For any questions or queries, please visit our website www.shukumisa.org.za or contact Aniela Batschari, the Shukumisa Coordinator

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