

# How advocacy can help:

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is an Advocate?**

An advocate is a trauma-informed professional who has received training to provide support and resources to survivors of sexual assault and other violent crimes. They are free and confidential.

### **What does the Advocate do?**

An advocate walks alongside you through the criminal justice system, other resource agencies, or through processing your experience, whatever that might look like for you. Some examples might include:

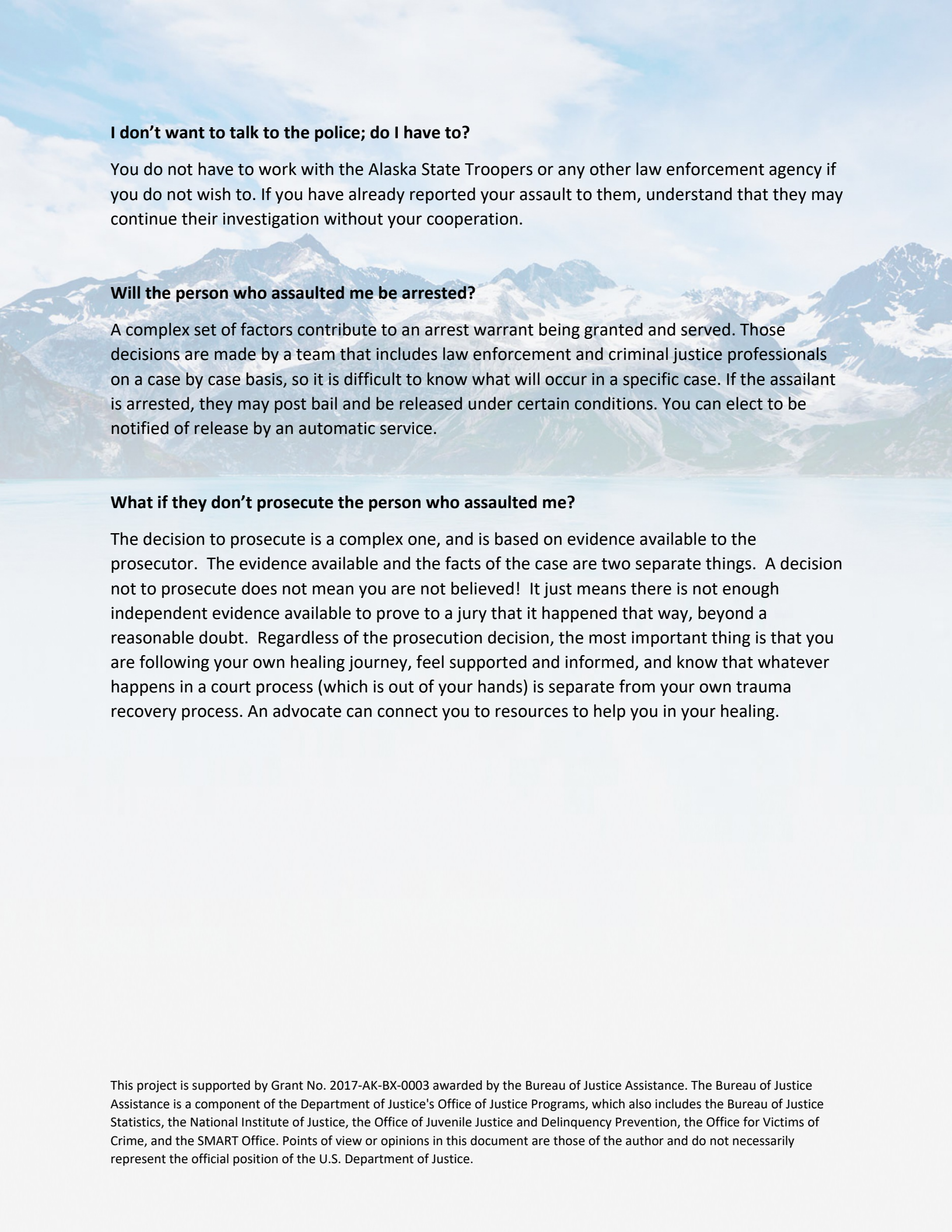
- Providing information on reporting options
- Providing support and accompaniment during the reporting process and forensic exam
- Assessing safety concerns and providing safety planning assistance or help applying for protective orders
- Assist in identifying and applying for resources such as crime victim compensation, emergency shelter, case management services, financial resources, etc.
- One on one support in person or over the phone, support groups, counseling services
- Accompaniment to court proceedings or meetings with criminal justice professionals (prosecutors, law enforcement)

### **Who does an Advocate work for?**

In Alaska, advocates work for nonprofit victim service agencies throughout the state. They are independent of the state and the criminal justice system. Their responsibility is to you, not to the criminal justice system. You do not have to report to police or work with the criminal justice system to work with an advocate.

### **Will the Advocate tell anyone about me or what happened to me?**

No, the advocate will not disclose any information regarding what happened to you. Advocates may only release very limited information about you or your needs with your written permission. The advocate is held under strict confidentiality guidelines, and information will not be shared with anyone else, unless it falls under mandated reporting laws. If you are under the age of 18 years of age, or you disclose that something harmful has happened to a minor or vulnerable adult, an advocate is mandated to file a report about the incident under Alaska statute.



### **I don't want to talk to the police; do I have to?**

You do not have to work with the Alaska State Troopers or any other law enforcement agency if you do not wish to. If you have already reported your assault to them, understand that they may continue their investigation without your cooperation.

### **Will the person who assaulted me be arrested?**

A complex set of factors contribute to an arrest warrant being granted and served. Those decisions are made by a team that includes law enforcement and criminal justice professionals on a case by case basis, so it is difficult to know what will occur in a specific case. If the assailant is arrested, they may post bail and be released under certain conditions. You can elect to be notified of release by an automatic service.

### **What if they don't prosecute the person who assaulted me?**

The decision to prosecute is a complex one, and is based on evidence available to the prosecutor. The evidence available and the facts of the case are two separate things. A decision not to prosecute does not mean you are not believed! It just means there is not enough independent evidence available to prove to a jury that it happened that way, beyond a reasonable doubt. Regardless of the prosecution decision, the most important thing is that you are following your own healing journey, feel supported and informed, and know that whatever happens in a court process (which is out of your hands) is separate from your own trauma recovery process. An advocate can connect you to resources to help you in your healing.