

# Restaurant and Bar Staff's **Angel Shot** Response Guide

Suggestions for a trauma-informed violence-  
prevention response





# Restaurant and Bar Staff's **Angel Shot** Response Guide

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# What is an Angel Shot?

The Angel shot is a code signal for patrons to use to indicate to restaurant and bar staff that they are feeling unsafe and need help. It is not a real shot, but a subtle way to seek assistance.

It was developed in the UK as an addition to the "Ask For Angela" campaign, a sexual-assault prevention effort where patrons could ask staff to speak with Angela (also a code) in order to receive assistance.

There are three different types Angel Shots. Depending on what a guest orders, bar or restaurant employees will know what to do:

***Neat or straight up:***

The patron needs an escort to their car;

***On ice or on the rocks:***

Staff should get the patron a taxi or an Uber; or

***With lime or with a twist:***

Staff should call the police.



# Sexual Violence in Canada: The Facts

According to the Canadian Women's Foundation (2022), approximately 30% of all women over the age of 15 will experience at least one sexual assault outside of an intimate partner relationship. That is almost 4.7 million women, or one in three.

The vast majority of sexual assaults (87%) are gendered violence against women, and women are more likely than men to experience unwanted sexual behaviour in public or to be sexually assaulted. And, 52% of sexual assault offenders are known to the victim/survivor, meaning that it is slightly more likely that an individual will be assaulted by a friend, acquaintance, or neighbour than a stranger, although both pose a significant risk.

Single women are also 9x more likely to report a sexual assault than any other relationship status.



But, sexual violence is a preventable crime. With harm reduction and prevention techniques and tools like the Angel Shot code, we can make a life-changing difference.





# Why should I adopt the Angel Shot Code?

Anybody can be sexually assaulted or face unwanted sexual behaviour, but this crime still remains overwhelmingly gendered.

The more women who know about the Angel Code, the more chances there are to make sure your business is a safe space, and possibly even to prevent a rape or sexual assault.

Since the Angel Shot is a code, it is important to share it in ways that acknowledge its unique value. Ideally, an individual could go to the bar or speak to a staff member privately, but sometimes the only way to ask for help might be doing so in front of the person who is making them feel unsafe, like a date or another patron.

To keep the code inconspicuous but still useful, we suggest putting the North Shore Women's Centre's Angel Shot poster in your Women's Washroom. Doing so provides the patrons who are the most at-risk for violence with a discreet and private place to learn that your business is committed to keeping them safe, and increases the chance that they can use the code without detection by the dangerous party.



# Logistics for Management

To prepare to implement the Angel Shot code in your establishment, management should consider the following points:

1. Each restaurant is going to have a different protocol on how to handle this. What will your approach be?
  - a. Do you want the staff member to drop everything and support?
  - b. Do you want the staff member to notify someone to cover their other tables?
  - c. Do you want the manager to be brought in immediately and for them to handle the concerns?
2. How are you going to support your staff members following an intervention? Will you have staff debrief management?

These and other logistical questions are important to discuss with staff before implementing the Angel Shot code at your business.

The North Shore Women's Centre aims to evaluate the success of the Angel Shot implementation in the community, and may contact your establishment to measure this, including asking approximately how many shots have been ordered, how many patrons have mentioned the poster, etc. Your cooperation with these follow-up evaluations helps us continue our programming and measure the helpfulness of the Angel Shot code.



# What should I do if someone uses the Angel Shot code?

Making all staff members aware of the Angel Shot code and its variations is the first step of integrating the code into your business.

If someone uses the Angel Shot code, staff members should act quickly but discreetly. Here are some tips on how to act in a trauma-informed manner:

- Make sure you understand the situation. Use context clues to evaluate the danger level.
  - Do they seem alert, disoriented, or overly intoxicated? Does their state of mind reflect the amount of alcohol, if any, they have been served?
  - Be aware of the signs of "Date Rape" or "Roofie" drugs, and do not dismiss an individual who seems intoxicated - it is better to be safe than sorry.
- Evaluate the situation.
  - Did they order the Angel Shot with any variations?
  - Do you need to make them a 'drink' to keep their cover? In this case, consider pouring something non-alcoholic



# What should I do if someone uses the Angel Shot code?

- Help them as soon as possible in the manner they indicated. If they simply ordered an Angel Shot with no variations, handle the matter according to your assessment of risk.
  - Some ideas include:
    - Safely separate the dangerous party from the patron.
    - Ask to speak to the dangerous party about a problem with their bill, a 'call' that has just come in for them, etc. (See De-escalation Suggestions)





# How to respond to an Angel Shot code

1. Remain calm and, if safe, let the patron know you understood their call for help
  - a. Acknowledge the patron's courage
    - i. You can say something like “I know it can be scary to ask for help, I'm really glad you reached, I am going to help you”
2. Let your manager/ security know a patron has ordered an angel shot
  - i. Refer to your workplace's protocol.
3. Remain in proximity to the patron



# Angel Shot Neat: Now What?

If a patron has ordered an Angel Shot neat, they need an escort to their vehicle or out of the establishment. Here are some suggestions on how to best respond:

- Ask the patron if they feel safe walking with you to their car or outside
  - The patron may feel nervous walking with someone of a different gender (for example a female identifying patron may want a female identifying staff member to walk them)
- If they say yes, ensure they have their belongings and escort them to their car or outside
- Provide them with the resource sheet of local services (see Resources) should they require any follow up support
- Ensure they get to their car, and watch as they drive off



# Angel Shot with Ice: Now What?

If a patron has ordered an Angel Shot with ice, they need staff to call them a taxi or rideshare. Here are some suggestions on how to best respond:

- Ask the patron to remain at the bar while you make the call
  - You can say something like “I think I need to get that bottle from the back, can you wait here?”
- Once the call has been made, get an estimate on time and ask the patron if they would like an escort to the car.
- If they say yes, ensure they have their belongings and escort them to their car
- Provide them with a resource sheet should they require any follow up support
- Ensure they get to the car, and watch as they drive off





# Angel Shot with Lime: Now What?

If a patron has ordered an Angel Shot with lime, they need staff to involve the police. Here are some suggestions on how to best respond:

- Acknowledge the person's request and establish safety. Ask the patron if they feel safe accompanying you to a quiet place so you can better support them (ex. manager's office, a quiet booth, or even the end of the bar.)
  - Yes: escort the patron to a quiet place
  - No: you can respect their wish, and discuss where they feel most comfortable
- Notify your manager; refer to your establishment's current procedure for managing dangerous patrons.
- It is also important to learn if patron's request is of concern for the rest of the establishment
  - Is there a dangerous person that is posing a threat to other patrons?
  - Is the individual disclosing an assault or drink spiking that just occurred, or a historical assault that occurred elsewhere after seeing your allyship with the poster?



# Angel Shot with Lime: Now What?

- (Continued) For this, you could ask if they'd like you to connect them with a local Sexual Assault Service to support with the report
- You can do this by asking the saying “I understand you are needing police support, could you tell me a little bit about what happened and how I can help?”
  - Listen to the patron's concern, allow them to lead the conversation and share as many or as little details as they wish.
    - You can say “I am so sorry you've experience this, I can understand why you were nervous/scared etc, I am glad you reached out. I am here for you right now. Let me get my manager to call 911.”
- Your manager will contact 911 if warranted; in some situations, other support resources may be more appropriate.
- Provide client with resource sheet should they require any follow up support.



# Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Violence

The most important thing is to listen, believe the individual and empower them to make the right decision for themselves on how they would like to proceed.

- Remember: You may be the first person the survivor contacts to disclose a sexual assault, how you respond is going to have a profound impact on them
- You can express that you are sorry that the event happened to them
- Your role is to listen and support. Be patient and let them tell you as little or as much as they want on their own pace.
- Ensure your responses convey that you believe them and reassure the patron that the assault was not their fault.





# Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Violence

(Continued)

- Avoid asking unnecessary questions, which may contribute to their feelings of guilt and shame; avoid intrusive questions that may inquire about the individuals actions
  - ex. “Why were you there?”
- How can we help?
  - Ask the individual what they would like to do. Ex. “I am so sorry this has happened to you, you have options, would you like to discuss them with me?”
  - It is important to follow up with the offer of resources to provide support following this encounter



# De-escalation Suggestions

What might you say to the dangerous person if they engage with you? Here are some suggestions:

- “I think I saw them leave”
- “Sally wanted me to tell you she got an urgent call and had to leave” or “Sally has gone home and wanted me to let you know.” You don’t owe them any explanation.
- If retrieving belongings: “Sam is feeling really unwell and needs her purse in the bathroom”
- “Jake was feeling a bit uneasy with the way the date was going so he decided to leave, we’ve taken care of his bill.”
- If they interrupt the 'order': “We ran out of that bottle, so our bartender is running to the back to grab another, Jane and I are just chatting while she waits.”
- If they are asking why the patron is sitting with a manager or other staff member “John is talking with our manager about a potential job/business opportunity/partnership etc.”
- “We’ve received a report that you’ve made a few patron’s uncomfortable, we have a zero tolerance policy for harassment so we have to ask you to leave.”



## What else can I do to prevent violence at my business?

- If a patron's intoxication level is inconsistent with what you have served them, ask them if they are feeling alright.
- If someone is encouraging a patron to drink more alcohol than they are comfortable with, ordering drinks for them or without their consent, or encouraging them to be overserved, keep a close eye on the situation and be aware of context clues that indicate a patron is uncomfortable.
- Keep an eye out for hasty exits, excuses from the dangerous party to misrepresent or minimize the patron's intoxication ("she has a low tolerance," "she's fine, she just needs to sleep it off," etc.). In these circumstances, consider intervening before the patron and dangerous party can leave the premises together, especially if the patron is unconscious, losing consciousness, disoriented, or has poor spatial awareness (dizziness, nausea, stumbling).





# Post-Angel Shot Resources (Patrons)

Situations where a patron feels the need to seek outside assistance can be tense, stressful, and even dangerous. In some cases, a patron may have even been drugged, assaulted, or had a terrifying near-miss.

An event like this can be traumatic and should be taken seriously; the feelings of fear, distrust, unease, and violation may not go away when the situation is de-escalated.

We suggest having copies of the following resources on-hand:

- [Help Starts Here: Sexual Assault Information](#)
- Family Services North Shore's Sexual Assault Response Program 24/7 Support Line at 604-924-7676
- Vancouver General Hospital Sexual Assault Service, Phone: (604) 875-2881; WAVAW After-Hours: (604) 255-6344
- West Vancouver Police Department Non-Emergency: 604-925-7300; North Vancouver RCMP Non-Emergency: 604-985-1311
- WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre 24-Hour Crisis and Information Line: 604-255-6344

**Additional information and resources can be found at  
the North Shore Women's Centre  
131 East 2nd Street, North Vancouver**



# Post-Angel Shot Resources (Staff)

Responding staff members may feel distressed after responding to an Angel Shot code. You may wish to debrief with staff about their experiences.

We suggest having copies of the following resources on-hand:

- [Responding to a Sexual Assault Disclosure](#)
- [Secondary Traumatic Stress Fact Sheet](#)
- [Here To Help BC: Vicarious Traumatization](#)
- [Ending Violence Association of BC: Mitigating Vicarious Trauma Resources](#)



# Where can I learn more about the NSWC?

The North Shore Women's Centre is a non-profit organization with the goal to improve the social, economic, legal and political status of women, and to encourage and support self-empowerment by acting as a resource and a catalyst for change, from feminist perspectives. We support women's right to safety and security, and to live free of violence.

We operate a drop-in resource centre in North Vancouver, located at 131 East 2nd Street. We are open from 10am-3pm, Monday-Thursday, and provide peer counselling, resources, referrals, and a number of free programs and services for women in the North Shore.

To learn more about what we do and what we offer, visit our website ([www.northshorewomen.ca](http://www.northshorewomen.ca)) or social media pages (@northshorewomen).

This resource booklet is only a suggestion. The North Shore Women's Centre urges you to use your best judgement and consider this booklet only a guideline. We acknowledge the support and contribution of North Shore Family Services Sexual Assault Response Program in the making of this booklet.

north shore  
**women's  
centre**  
a place for women, a voice for women

**604-984-6009**

**[info@northshorewomen.ca](mailto:info@northshorewomen.ca) | 2022**

