

LAW ENFORCEMENT

GUIDE TO RESPONDING TO SEXUAL ASSAULTS

Responding to crimes of sexual violence is one of the most difficult duties law enforcement faces. Successful investigations require a combination of:

- **Duty before doubt:** FBI/multiple research studies confirm that only 2-8% of reported rapes are false reports.
- **Compassionate Interviewing and Rapport Building:** compassionate victim interviewing does not negate law enforcement's ability to be neutral fact finders, but makes them stronger evidence collectors by creating an environment where victims are able to recall and share more information.
- **Attention to Detail and Evidence Collection**



FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMINATION

Rape kits are used to collect forensic evidence and assess the physical trauma of the victim.

- Victim advocates provide support and knowledge during an exam.
- Victims have the right to refuse an examination.
- For adults, exams must be admitted within 72 hours of the assault.
- Sexually Transmitted Infection preventative medication and an emergency contraceptive can be provided.
- Rape is not a medical diagnosis, exams **DO NOT** prove or disprove rape occurred.
- Research shows around 10% of all rape victims have genital injuries.

VICTIM RESPONSE DYNAMICS

Victim responses will vary.

Victim affect may be manic, flat, anger, distraught, or a combination of these. Fear is the most common emotional outcome of sexual violence.

Normal emotional trauma can present as: closed body language, facial covers, avoidance of eye contact, non-linear recall, delayed recall, etc.

Best trauma recall occurs after victim is allowed at least one sleep cycle, preferably two sleep cycles.

Victims who utilize advocates report a better experience with the criminal justice system and a greater willingness to maintain contact with law enforcement.

INVESTIGATION CHECKLIST

- Establish Victim Safety
- Collect Evidence:
 - Secure items that may contain body fluid
 - Separate paper bags, NOT plastic bags
- Photo Document:
 - Visible injuries/scene
- Forensic Examination
 - Contact Rape Crisis Center
 - Exams are the Victim's choice
 - Secure Completed Kit/Evidence
- Interview Victim
 - Victim Advocate Present
 - Allow at least one sleep cycle before interview
 - Build rapport/Take frequent breaks

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

DUTY BEFORE DOUBT!



FOLLOW UP

- Interview Witnesses
- Send Evidence to Crime Lab
- Keep Victim Appraised of Case Status

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