

## **Statement of a victim's right to a medical-forensic exam**

**As a victim/survivor of sexual assault, you have the right to a medical-forensic exam, at no cost to you. You have the right to this exam regardless of whether or not you cooperate with law enforcement and prosecution.**

### **What is a Medical-Forensic Exam?**

A medical-forensic exam is a comprehensive medical exam performed by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner/Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SANE/SAFE) who is a specially trained Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Physician's Assistant or Physician with advanced educational and clinical preparation.

The SANE/SAFE will perform the following during the medical-forensic exam:

- ***Obtain a detailed history of the assault or abuse***
- ***Provide a detailed head-to-toe examination***
- ***Perform a detailed genital examination, which may include an examination with a speculum***
- ***Collect biological or trace evidence from your body***

The medical-forensic care you receive from the SANE/SAFE is being provided at no cost to you; however there may be costs related to your medical care provided by the emergency department staff including labs, tests and medications. The SARS Advocate or SANE can arrange for you to speak with emergency department staff if you have additional questions about billing.

The evidence may help with the identification and prosecution of the perpetrator of the crime. Without this evidence, it is often more difficult to identify and/or prosecute the person who committed the sexual assault.

## **Facts to consider when deciding on a medical-forensic exam**

You can still receive medical-care without having a medical-forensic exam.

- Hospital staff can provide medications, including medications to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STI) and Plan B to prevent pregnancy.
- A physician can treat you for any injuries you have as a result of the assault

You can still receive advocacy provided by a specially trained Sexual Assault Resource Service (SARS) Advocate.

The exam often takes several hours to complete and victims are asked to possibly refrain from certain activities during this time (i.e. drinking, eating, smoking and using the bathroom).

Over time, evidence is lost, begins to degrade, or becomes contaminated and is difficult or impossible to process. After a certain point, typically around **120 hours (5 days after an assault)**, most experts believe that little or no useful evidence will be collected during a medical-forensic exam.

Even when a medical-forensic exam is performed immediately after a sexual assault, sometimes there simply isn't a lot of evidence that can be collected.

**You can make a report to law enforcement at any time; however your kit may be destroyed within one (1) year of receiving the medical-forensic exam.**

Any delay in the investigation may substantially reduce the ability of law enforcement to assign or investigate the case.

The biological evidence in your kit may be analyzed, even if you do not cooperate with law enforcement.

Law enforcement may choose to contact you, but you have the right to decide when you make a report.