

FAIRBANKS GUIDELINES FOR THE SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM

I. Purpose:

To provide standardized structure and implementation of The Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) throughout the Fairbanks area.

II. Introduction:

The SART is a multi-disciplinary team developed to improve services to victims of sexual assault. The team is comprised of advocates from The Interior Alaska Center for Nonviolent Living (IACNVL), Law Enforcement officers, and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE's). These team members provide a coordinated, efficient, and supportive response to victims. The benefit of the SART is the ability to provide a full range of comprehensive services to victims who have made the decision to report a sexual assault.

SART teams are established to:

- A. Meet the needs of the victim with crisis intervention and support services.
- B. Provide a medical exam for sexual assault victims.
- C. Provide a joint, effective, sensitive approach to victims of sexual assault.
- D. Conduct an investigation of the crime.
- E. Document and preserve forensic evidence for potential prosecution.

NOTE: The Child Advocacy Center (CAC) is an alternative location for sexual abuse/assault examinations for victims under age 18. The CAC is accessed by a referral from law enforcement and/or The Office of Children's Services (OCS).

III. SART Meetings:

The purpose of the SART meetings is to create a structure that provides for initial and ongoing management of the response team. This serves as the structure for addressing any concerns that may arise and monitoring quality control. The SART meeting will include representatives from IACNVL, all local law enforcement agencies, all SANE's, a representative of the District Attorney's office, and other agencies directly involved in sexual assault investigations. Additional meetings may be called to discuss cases.

IV. Team Structure:

A. Members

Members will include:

1. A victim advocate
2. A law enforcement officer
3. A SANE

B. Responsibilities of Team Members:

1. Advocate:

Advocates provide support to the victim, answer any questions the victim may have, and inform the victim of the process for the interview and examination. The advocate does not participate in the gathering of evidence, fact-finding, or the investigation of the assault. Advocates do not provide an opinion on the merits of the case or participate in conducting the interview, and will not be subpoenaed in these cases. Their focus is placed on assuring that the victim is supported throughout the process.

2. Law Enforcement:

Law enforcement's role is to investigate and report the facts of the case. Law enforcement will consider the immediate safety of the victim. They will arrange for the interview and forensic examination of the victim and suspect, when necessary; and perform all other duties normally associated with law enforcement functions.

3. SANE:

The SANE's role is to provide the health care component of the SART. They take a medical history in conjunction with the law enforcement interview of the victim. They perform the physical assessment of the sexual assault victim, collect, document, and preserve forensic evidence; provide information and referral to the victim on health care matters; document the examination in the medical record; and present expert testimony in court.

V. Training Recommendations:

Cross training of the roles and responsibilities of each team component is strongly recommended in order to maintain the multi-disciplinary approach and assure its success. This shall include:

A. Advocate training includes:

1. Completing orientation to include: an overview of the interview process, law enforcement investigation, forensic examination, and the legal process as related to sexual assault.
2. Observation of a sexual assault trial when possible
3. Supporting training needs of other team members.

B. Law Enforcement training includes:

1. An overview of the forensic examination and victim advocacy process.
2. Sexual assault investigation and SART training, when possible
3. Interviewing techniques
4. Supporting training needs of other team members

C. SANE training includes:

1. Documentation of valid medical/nursing license in the state of Alaska
2. Completing didactic training and preceptorship, as recommended by the Forensic Nurses Association of Alaska (FNAA), prior to performing examinations as the primary SANE.
3. Supporting training needs of other team members.

VI. Facility Responsibilities:

A. Fairbanks Memorial Hospital (FMH) Emergency Department(ED):

1. Will be used for all adult sexual assault exams.
2. Will be used for acute sexual assaults on children (< 18 years), if examiner at CAC is unavailable, there is acute trauma, or exam at hospital is deemed necessary by law enforcement.
3. A sexual assault victim who arrives at FMH will be immediately taken to an area that maintains the victim's privacy. The victim will be assessed for any need of immediate medical attention. If the adult victim is medically stable, they will then be offered a choice to report the offense to the appropriate law enforcement agency or seek medical care from the emergency physician. At that time, a SANE will be contacted for the interview and if authorized by an officer, have a SART exam with evidence collection performed per FMH SART/SANE program policy.

B. Law Enforcement:

1. If victim initially reports to a law enforcement agency; the officer may provide transportation to the appropriate medical facility.
2. Will respond when notified.
3. Will authorize SART exam when appropriate.
4. Will coordinate with the SANE regarding victim's follow up exam.

C. Victim Advocacy:

1. The Interior Alaska Center for Nonviolent Living will be notified when the SART is activated.
2. An advocate will respond when available

VII. Service Availability

A. SART will be available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

1. FMH available all hours.
2. CAC open Monday-Friday 9am to 5pm and on call as needed.

B. Contact person for each of the service area:

1. SANE- FMH ED 458-5555
2. IACNVL 452-2293
3. FPD 450-6507
4. AST 451-5100
5. NPPD 488-6902
6. UAF 474-7721
7. CAC 374-2850
8. FT. WW Military Police 353- 7535 and FPD
9. Eielson AFB Security Police 377-5130 and AST

C. Outlying areas should contact local law enforcement agency if available or AST

VIII. Call-Out Procedures:

The agency receiving the initial report will activate the SART.

IX. Forensic Examination Consent :

- A. The Consent for Examination and Collection of Evidence of Sexual Assault form must be signed by the victim, prior to the interview, unless incapacitated.**
- B. Victims age 12-17 may consent to evidence collection related to a sexual assault. The victim (or parent/guardian if under 12) will be given the following information before signing the consent.**
 1. The victim has the right to refuse all or part of collection of evidence.
 2. Consent for evidence collection may be withdrawn at any time.
 3. Evidence may include photographs.

X. Interview Process:

- A. The interview will be conducted by law enforcement, after all team members are present when possible.
- B. Medical priorities and safety considerations take precedence over the interview and forensic examination.
- C. Whenever possible, the victim should be given the opportunity to speak with a victim advocate prior to the start of the interview.

XI. Examination:

- A. Perform a medical screening exam, physical assessment and colposcopic exam of sexual assault victims.
- B. Evaluate for physical trauma and refer for definitive treatment, as needed.
- C. Collect and document forensic evidence.
- D. Schedule and provide follow up exam when necessary.
- E. Provide information and referral to enhance the continuity of care for the victim.
- F. The advocate will consult with the victim concerning his/her presence during the examination.

XII. Payment of Services:

The charges associated with evidence collection are billed through a commercial account to the appropriate Law Enforcement agency (they will not show on the patient's account). The patient is responsible for lab and pharmacy charges not part of evidence collection and will be billed to the patient's insurance.

XIII. Victim's Assistance:

- A. Law enforcement will provide information on Violent Crimes Compensation and the Office of Victim Rights.
- B. The advocate can provide assistance in completing forms, and provide contact numbers and referrals for additional information.

XIV. Confidentiality

- A. The forensic examination records will be maintained in a separate and secure location.
- B. Advocates will explain the victim's rights.

XV. Evidence:

- A. Upon completion of the forensic exam, law enforcement will collect the evidence kit and a copy of the exam report.
- B. Evidence will remain with SANE or in secured area until handed over to law enforcement. All signatures will be obtained to ensure chain of custody.
- C. Law Enforcement will be notified upon completion of a follow up exam and will be provided a copy of the follow up exam report.

XVI. Timeline for Examinations

- A. It is strongly recommended that the forensic exam be completed as soon as possible.
- B. Suitability for a forensic examination should be decided on a case by case basis.

NOTE: THESE ARE MEANT AS GUIDELINES ONLY AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS THE NEED ARISES.

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