**TIPS**

**When writing a report:**

- Approach every case with an open mind and without making assumptions.
- Document, preserve, and assign a tracking number for every reported sexual offense.
- Write a detailed narrative. Be careful not to use words that imply consent.
- Use the victim’s exact words and place those words in quotations.
- The supplemental report form should not be used as a substitute for a complete report.

**When interviewing the victim and suspect:**

- Interview, do not interrogate, the victim.
- Arrange unbiased, independent translation if English is not the first language of the victim, witness or suspect.
• Document in detail, using the victim’s exact words, any coercion, force, or threats used.
• Provide detailed descriptions of victim’s condition as observed. Clearly document the victim’s feelings as expressed by the victim.
• Collect forensic evidence up to 120 hours following a sexual assault. Additional physical evidence can be gathered and injuries documented beyond that time.
• Pursue a forensic exam to gather evidence from the suspect following local procedures.
• Be aware that suspects select vulnerable victims who may appear less credible and may be more reluctant to contact law enforcement.
• Understand that assaults often involve alcohol; it enables perpetrators to more easily commit a sexual offense while setting up the victim to be perceived as a less reliable witness.
• Schedule follow-up meetings with victims to build trust and gather additional information to further the on-going investigation.
• When investigating:
  • Do not pressure victims to make any decisions regarding participation in the investigation or prosecution during the initial interview or initial stages of the investigation.
  • Document all actions and statements as reported by the victim and suspect including statements that may corroborate pre-meditation and/or grooming behavior.
  • Due to the nature of trauma, it is normal for the victim not to remember all of the details of the sexual assault. These memories may unfold over time.
  • Make sure the suspect is interviewed in person and allowed to speak freely about the incident.
  • Victims of sexual assault may recant or decline prosecution for a number of reasons. A victim’s reluctance to participate is not reason to forgo a strong, evidence-based investigation.
  • Provide the victim with resources on local counseling services early in the process and in writing if available.
• Do not polygraph victims.
• Identify and interview all outcry witnesses to whom the victim has disclosed.
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• Understand that assaults often involve alcohol; it enables perpetrators to more easily commit a sexual offense while setting up the victim to be perceived as a less reliable witness.
• Schedule follow-up meetings with victims to build trust and gather additional information to further the on-going investigation.
• Keep in mind the co-occurring nature of violence against women crimes and identify and document all additional crimes (e.g. domestic violence, stalking, abduction, theft).
• Provide detailed descriptions of victim’s condition as observed. Clearly document the victim’s feelings as expressed by the victim.