

San Mateo County Adult Sexual Assault Protocol Quick Guide

Page 1: LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE

Refer to the San Mateo County Adult Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Protocol for full details on law enforcement responsibilities, including for adult victims of sex trafficking.

1A. INITIAL VICTIM CONTACT

- Obtain only basic information (see reverse, Section 2A).
- Give Sexual Assault Survivor Rights Card (add your contact information; cards are available in Spanish).
- Call RTS (Rape Trauma Services, 650-692-7273) to request that an advocate respond 24/7 (advocates who speak languages other than English may be available).
- Consider the need for medical care and forensic evidence collection (see below, Sections 1C and 1D).
- If transporting the victim to another location, consider seating him/her in the front seat of your patrol car.
- Victims are not required to make a statement in order to receive RTS support and acute medical care.
- Consider any language needs of the victim for next steps.

1B. RECORDED INTERVIEW

- The Keller Center (at SMMC, San Mateo Medical Center) is the preferred location for recorded interviews. It can be opened by SMMC hospital security 24/7. Recording instructions are in the observation room.
- Call RTS (650-692-7273) for interviews; allow 45 minutes for RTS to arrive. Upon arrival, RTS will meet with the victim, explain their role, and offer support during the interview, per PC 679.04.
- Officer should use a trauma-informed interview approach (see reverse, Section 2B).
- Keller Center Interview Specialists are available upon request during business hours (consider especially for adults with developmental delays).
- Consider if the interview should be conducted in a language other than English.

1C. ACUTE MEDICAL-LEGAL EXAM (within 10 days)

- By law, LE is responsible for authorizing forensic medical care whether or not victim wants to make a LE report, and female victims have a right to emergency contraception upon request.
- Medical-Legal Exams should be completed as soon as possible after an assault, generally within 10 days (or longer if injuries are present). LE may consult with a Keller Center nurse 24/7 if needed (650-573-3761).
- Transport victim to SMMC (San Mateo Medical Center); consider seating him/her in the front seat of your patrol car. Upon arrival, SMMC will contact RTS and the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE).
- Allow 45 minutes for RTS to arrive. Upon arrival, RTS will meet with the victim, explain their role, and offer support during the medical exam, per PC 264.2.
- Book clothing collected by SANE into evidence per LE agency's guidelines. Medical evidence kits are stored at the Keller Center and picked up weekly by the Crime Lab (LE may take the kit to the Crime Lab for an exigent case).

1D. OTHER BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

- Follow LE agency's guidelines for collection of perishable biological evidence, e.g., bedding, condoms, first vomit/urine (for drug- or alcohol-facilitated sexual assault), etc.
- Suspect exams can also be completed at the Keller Center; a holding cell is available. There is to be no contact between suspects and ANY victims at the Keller Center.

Rape Trauma Services (RTS)
650-692-7273

Keller Center
650-573-2623

**San Mateo Medical Center
(SMMC) Emergency Room**
650-573-2671

Victim Services
650-599-7479

Aging and Adult Services
800-675-8437

Ombudsman
650-780-5707

1E. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS/STEPS

- Call RTS for support during any investigative contacts with the victim.
- Keller Center facilities may be used for other victim contacts; equipment for investigation-related phone calls is located in the observation room.
- If applicable, cross-report to Aging and Adult Services and/or Ombudsman (for licensed care), per WIC 15630.
- Refer individuals to Victim Services and RTS for on-going services. Services in languages other than English may be available.
- Attend the 2-day Protocol Training (POST-certified) and monthly case review meetings.

San Mateo County Adult Sexual Assault Protocol Quick Guide

Page 2: TRAUMA-INFORMED INTERVIEWS

Trauma-informed interviewing helps victims feel safe, empowered, and better prepared to participate in the investigatory process. It recognizes the difficulties of reporting a sexual assault, improves information-gathering, reduces duplicative interviewing, considers optimal location and timing of the interview, and includes referrals for supports and services.

2A. INITIAL STEPS

- *I am Officer / Deputy... Tell me what happened that [you came to the police station / you came to the hospital / police were called].* Listen and allow the victim to answer without interruption.
 - **PAUSE:** Do not ask follow-up questions if you already have the basic information needed for an initial crime report. (Basic information = name/address of victim and suspect, location/jurisdiction of assault, date/time of assault.)
 - A. Give Sexual Assault Survivor Rights Card (add your contact information; card is available in Spanish).**
 - B. Call RTS (650-692-7273) to request that an advocate respond 24/7 (advocates who speak additional languages may be available).**
 - C. Consider the need for medical care and forensic evidence collection (see reverse, Sections 1C and 1D).**
 - **PAUSE:** To reduce duplicative interviewing, consider your agency's guidelines and victim's needs re: who will conduct the forensic interview, if a language other than English should be used, and the optimal time/setting for an interview. (Per the San Mateo County Adult SART Protocol, the ideal environment to conduct a recorded forensic interview is the Keller Center.)
- Explain next steps.

2B. TRAUMA-INFORMED INTERVIEW

- **Introduction/Instructions**
 - Prior to starting the interview, call RTS (650-692-7273). Introduce yourself (if needed).
 - *I would like to start by giving you an overview of the interview & answer questions you may have.*
 - *I may have to ask you some sensitive and detailed questions.*
 - *I may ask for clarification. This does not mean I don't believe you; I just need to make sure I understand.*
 - *Interviews can take quite a while; if you need a break, just let me know.*
 - *I will be recording our conversation so that I can correctly remember everything that we discuss.*
 - *You have rights, including having an advocate (RTS) present during the interview.*
 - Explain PC 293 and provide the Survivor Rights Card.
 - *You can ask me questions throughout the interview. Do you have questions before we begin?*
- **Gather Details**
 - *Tell me what happened.* Listen. Allow the victim to answer without interruption. You can fill in the timeline later.
 - Ask follow-up and clarifying questions, as needed. Examples of trauma-informed phrases include:
 - *Tell me more about OR Help me understand*
 - *You said [you didn't want to... / (name) made you... / things changed...]. Tell me more about that.*
 - *It's important for me to know the specific details of the sexual acts, including if there were parts you were ok with / parts you weren't.*
 - *What were you feeling or thinking at the time? What is/was most difficult for you?*
 - Before asking a sensitive question, explain why you need to ask it. Examples include:
 - *Sometimes clothing can be an important piece of evidence. Where is the clothing you were wearing?*
 - *Sometimes alcohol or drugs are involved. If that happened, can you tell me more about that?*
 - *Sometimes people have contact with each other afterwards. If this has happened, can you tell me about that?*
 - *Sometimes phones have important information on them. Would you be willing to show me your phone?*
- **Closure**
 - Explain next steps (e.g., if medical exam is needed, next investigative steps), answer questions, write contact information/case # on Survivor Rights Card, and show resources on the card.

Trauma-Informed Reminders

- *"Why / Why did you / Why didn't you" questions can be perceived as blaming or judgmental.*
- *Victims may have a "freeze" response or not "fight back."*
- *Questions about prior sexual history should generally be avoided.*
- *Avoid making judgments about victim's emotional response, attire, or difficulty reporting the order of events.*