



# TRAINING BULLETIN

Los Angeles Police Department

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## PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CRIMES - PART II MEDICAL/FORENSIC EXAMINATIONS

An important aspect of a sexual assault crime investigation is the medical/forensic examination. There are three purposes for medical treatment following a sexual assault: (1) to examine and treat the victim for physical injuries, (2) to conduct a sexual assault evidentiary examination, and (3) to evaluate the risks of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and pregnancy and offer treatment options to the victim. The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to present guidelines for obtaining medical treatment and evidence collection services for sexual assault victims.

### Sexual Assault Evidentiary Examinations

Evidentiary examinations should be conducted in **all types** of sexual abuse and sexual assault cases (e.g., rape, forced oral copulation, digital penetration, and some types of sexual battery). Generally, forensic evidence from the victim's body shall be collected within 96 hours of a sexual assault.

In some cases, evidentiary examinations should be conducted after 96 hours. The circumstances in which a sexual assault evidentiary examination should be considered after 96 hours include cases in which the victim still has visible injuries (including genital trauma), cases in which the victim complains about pain (especially vaginal or rectal pain), or bleeding, and cases involving non-sexually active individuals (including children, teenagers, and the elderly). It is important to remember that children and teenagers often do not disclose the full extent of the sexual abuse they have suffered in initial interviews, particularly in cases involving ongoing abuse over an extended time period. If more than 96 hours have passed since the assault, contact the appropriate detective for advice.

When emergency medical attention and/or a sexual assault evidentiary examination are not indicated, sexual assault victims should be encouraged to get medical care from a regular provider, including testing for STDs and pregnancy related to a sexual assault.

### Victim Management

Explain to the victim that the importance of a medical examination is to ensure the victim's well being and to collect evidence for corroborating the crime. Evidence may include photographs of injuries and the collection and preservation of biological specimens. The hospital may also need to collect the victim's clothing worn during or immediately after the assault. Recommend that the victim either bring a change of clothing, or have someone bring clothing to the hospital for them.

If a victim is **reluctant** to have a medical examination, explain the benefits (to ensure the victim's well being and to collect evidence that may be irretrievably lost as time passes). It may also be helpful to clarify that victims may give consent to only those procedures that they are comfortable with. **Refusals** by a victim for medical treatment must be documented in the appropriate report (e.g., IR, Injury Report, DFAR).

Advise the victim to delay any personal hygiene activity (e.g., bathing, douching, urinating, brushing teeth) that may alter, contaminate or destroy valuable evidence such as semen, saliva, hairs, or blood. If the victim was forced to perform an act of oral copulation on the suspect, do not let the victim drink, eat, or chew gum as this may destroy evidence.

### **Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)**

Whenever possible, officers shall ensure that sexual assault medical examinations are conducted at a designated Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) medical center (see attached list). The SART medical personnel have the specialized training, experience and equipment necessary to properly conduct sexual assault medical examinations as well as expertise in documentation, collection and preservation of evidence and experience in presenting medical findings during court proceedings.

Officers should transport either a victim or a suspect to one of the SART hospitals, whenever a sexual assault medical examination is required. Officers should telephonically notify the appropriate SART hospital that a person is being transported to that facility for the examination. This is especially important during non-business hours when on-call forensic medical personnel may have to respond from home to conduct the examination.

The only exception to taking a sexual assault victim to a SART hospital is when the victim has suffered a serious physical injury requiring immediate medical care. In cases where the victim is transported to a non-SART hospital due to a medical condition, the responding officers should contact their Area Detectives for advice and to ensure experienced forensic medical personnel conduct the examination and collect the evidence.

### **Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assaults**

Drug-facilitated sexual assaults can present challenges for investigators. The effects of the drugs used to incapacitate victims may also interfere with a victim's ability to remember what happened. For example, in cases involving suspected ingestion of substances such as Rohypnol and Gamma Hydroxy Butyrate (GHB), victims may report being in a club or at a party and then waking up hours later, sometimes in a different location, with their clothing off or in disarray. Victims who suspect they may have been drugged and sexually assaulted should be taken for sexual assault examinations, even though they do not remember any specific sexual acts.

These drugs evacuate very quickly from the body. It is imperative that a urine sample be collected from the victim as soon as possible. If the victim has to urinate prior to getting to a medical facility, the officer should provide the victim with a standard urine sample jar. If

necessary, another clean container, such as a disposable drinking cup or plastic bag, can be used. The urine sample should be given to the medical examiner who conducts the evidentiary examination to be labeled and packaged with the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit. Crime scene evidence is important in these cases. Recover any containers from which the victim may have consumed beverages.

When a victim may have been drugged and/or sexually assaulted, but there is insufficient evidence at the time of the preliminary investigation to establish a crime has occurred, document the circumstances of the incident in the narrative of the Property Report, Form 10.01, and book the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit and urine sample.

### **Medical Treatment for Juveniles**

Generally, parental consent is needed for the medical treatment of a juvenile. However, when a medical examination is indicated for a sexual assault victim who is a juvenile, medical treatment may be administered without parental consent. If the juvenile is 12 years of age or older and alleges to have been sexually assaulted, he or she may consent to medical care related to the diagnosis or treatment of the condition and the collection of medical evidence with regard to the assault.

Parental consent for an evidentiary examination of a juvenile is not required for cases of known or suspected child abuse. If questions arise, contact Juvenile Division or Detective Support Division for advice.

### **Evidentiary Examinations for Suspects**

Evidence found on the suspect's body may link the suspect to the victim, the crime scene, or other items of evidence. Suspect evidentiary examinations are conducted at SART medical facilities by trained medical staff for biological or trace evidence and/or physical injuries related to the assault. Given the varied circumstances of sexual assault arrests, officers should contact the appropriate detective for advice prior to transporting a suspect for an evidentiary examination.

Advise the hospital in advance if you are transporting a suspect in custody for an evidentiary examination. If the facility does not have separate areas for conducting victim and suspect examinations, take precautions to ensure that there is no cross-contamination of evidence and that the victim and suspect do not come into contact with one another in the hospital. Whenever possible, take the suspect and the victim to separate medical facilities.

Evidence collected during a suspect examination will be documented on the Forensic Medical Report: Sexual Assault Suspect Examination (OCJP Form 950) and given to officers at the conclusion of the examination.

### **Sexual Assault Evidence Kit**

Sexual Assault Evidence Kits are used by medical personnel to collect and package dried secretions; vaginal, rectal, and/or oral swabs; pubic combings; and any other evidence collected from the victim or the suspect as part of the medical examination. The items are packaged separately by medical personnel in white laboratory envelopes and are placed in an “Analyzed Evidence - To Be Frozen” envelope and given to the officer.

### **CONCLUSION**

Although sexual assault crime investigations are complex, the importance of medical/forensic examinations for victims cannot be underestimated. Following these procedures will enhance the prosecution of suspects and enable the victim to begin the recovery process sooner.

**This Bulletin supercedes and cancels Volume XXXV, Issue 14, 2003.**

Field Training Services Unit  
Training Division

DISTRIBUTION “A”

## **SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM (SART) HOSPITALS**

### CALIFORNIA MEDICAL CENTER

#### **SART Program**

1401 South Grand Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90015  
(213) 742-5519  
(213) 742-5555 = After hours  
Cutoff age = 14 and above

### COMMUNITY HOSPITAL OF LONG BEACH\*

#### **Forensic Nurse Specialists, Inc.**

1720 Termino Avenue  
Long Beach, CA 90804  
(562) 497-0147 = (call this number first)  
(800) 566-6220 = Alternate Number  
Cutoff age = All ages

### LA COUNTY USC MEDICAL CENTER

#### **Violence Intervention Program (VIP)**

1200 N. State Street Los Angeles, CA 90033  
(323) 226-3961  
(323) 226-3601 = Under 18  
(323) 226-3061 = Over 18

### NORTHRIDGE HOSPITAL

#### **Children's Assault Treatment Svcs (CATS)**

14500 Sherman Circle  
Northridge, CA 91405  
(818) 908-8632  
(818) 908-8630 = After hours  
Cutoff age = All ages

### CENTINELA FREEMAN MEMORIAL CAMPUS

#### **SART Program**

333 North Prairie  
Inglewood, CA 90301  
Cutoff age = 17 and above

### SAN PEDRO PENINSULA HOSPITAL\*

#### **Forensic Nurse Specialists, Inc.**

1300 West Seventh Street  
San Pedro, CA 90732  
(562) 497-0147 = (call this number first)  
(800) 566-6220 = Alternate Number  
Cutoff age = All ages

### LITTLE COMPANY OF MARY\*

#### **WOMEN WELLNESS CENTER**

#### **Forensic Nurse Specialists, Inc.**

514 N. Prospect Avenue  
Redondo Beach, CA 90277  
(562) 497-0147 = (call this number first)  
(800) 566-6220 = Alternate Number  
Cutoff age = All ages

### SANTA MONICA UCLA HOSPITAL

#### **Rape Treatment Center**

1250 16<sup>th</sup> Street  
Santa Monica, CA 90404  
(310) 319-4503  
(310) 319-4000  
Cutoff age = All ages

### SAN GABRIEL VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER

#### **SART Program**

438 West Las Tunas Drive  
San Gabriel, CA 91776  
(626) 289-2610 (call first)  
(626) 457-3261  
Cutoff age = 14 and above

\* Forensic Nurse Specialists, Inc. is in charge of the SART program in these hospitals.

