

SEXUAL ASSAULT PROTOCOL FOR TOWNS AND UNION COUNTIES

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF ENOTAH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

December 14th, 2023

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Georgia enacted O.C.G.A. Section 15-24-2 requiring the establishment of a Sexual Assault Protocol; and

WHEREAS, the undersigned established a Sexual Assault Protocol Committee pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 15-24-2; and

WHEREAS, the Committee has met on December 14th, 2023 and discussed the Protocol, which was approved by a majority vote and which is attached hereto, as the protocol for cases of sexual assault in Union and Towns counties of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, Ninth District of the State of Georgia.

NOW THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, this document is accepted by the Court as the protocol to be used in responding to, investigating and prosecuting cases arising from an alleged sexual assault and shall be spread upon the minutes and filed with the Clerk of the Superior Court of Union County and Towns County.

SO ORDERED, this fourteenth day of December, 2023

UNION AND TOWNS COUNTIES SEXUAL ASSAULT PROTOCOL

This Towns and Union Counties Sexual Assault Protocol (“Protocol”) is adopted pursuant to O.C.G.A § 15-24-2 for the purpose of outlining the procedures to be used in responding to, investigating and prosecuting cases of sexual assault. The purpose of this Protocol shall be to ensure coordination and cooperation between all agencies involved in sexual assault cases so as to increase the efficiency of all agencies handling such cases and to minimize the stress created for the alleged sexual assault victim by the legal and investigatory process¹.

¹ O.C.G.A. § 15-24-2; provided, however that a failure by an agency to follow the protocol shall not constitute an affirmative or other defense to prosecution of a sexual assault, preclude the admissibility of evidence, nor shall a failure by an agency to follow the protocol give rise to a civil cause of action.

The mission of the Towns and Union Counties Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) is to ensure coordination and cooperation between all agencies involved in sexual assault cases, provide victim-centered trauma-informed response to victims, and to minimize stress for the sexual assault victim through the legal, medical and investigatory process.

For purposes of this Protocol, the term *victim* shall refer to victims age 18 and older. Every sexual assault case involving victims under 18 shall refer to the Union County Child Abuse Protocol or Towns County Child Abuse Protocol in identifying appropriate services and resources. Per the state model Child Abuse protocol, those services and resources should include the Support in Abusive Family Emergencies (S.A.F.E.) Sexual Assault Center and the Butterfly House Child Advocacy Center in providing services to adolescents in acute cases. S.A.F.E. and the Butterfly House CAC are the same 501©(3) non-profit. In providing services to anyone under the age of 18, DFACS and/or law enforcement shall be notified pursuant to O.C.G. A § 19-7-5.

INITIAL REPORT OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

If a victim of sexual assault decides to report an assault or requests medical services, the victim should be allowed to decide whom to tell. Options include family members, guardians or caretakers, staff of law enforcement, a hospital or other medical facility, or an emergency crisis line operated by a sexual assault center or other crisis agency.

Victim service agencies, at the outset, often play dual roles of providing crisis intervention and acting as liaison with other agencies.

Towns and Union counties' victim service agency is Support in Abusive Family Emergencies (S.A.F.E.). The victim service agency should be involved at the earliest possible time after a report of sexual assault, no matter which agency receives the initial report.

1. Initial Response

Whoever is contacted first by the victim should be concerned for the safety and wellbeing of the victim. The following actions should be taken following contact by the victim:

- With the consent of the victim, help identify and address the immediate concerns of the victim, e.g., is he/she in a safe place, are there family members or friends whom the victim wishes to contact, is there a need and want for medical care or transportation to the hospital, if law enforcement needs to be contacted, and is clothing needed to wear home from the hospital
- Contact S.A.F.E. at 706-379-3000. The on-call Advocate will contact medical facilities and law enforcement to coordinate services.
- Provide information to the victims regarding the importance of preserving evidence

2. Coordination of Services

Although several different agencies come into contact with victims at various stages after the assault is reported, victim service agencies are often considered the “hub of the wheel” for victims, providing support and advocacy throughout the process. Once S.A.F.E. is contacted concerning a victim, the on-call Advocate will immediately notify the parties involved and coordinate services at the victim’s request.

Of course, contact with parties depends on the immediate needs of the victim, and immediate medical services or law enforcement protection may be necessary. Each agency will have procedures in place for how to proceed depending on the immediate needs of the victim.

ADVOCACY

The victim service agency for Union and Towns counties is,

S.A.F.E.

Crisis Line: 706-379-3000

Office Line: 706-379-1901

The role of the sexual assault victim advocate² is to provide services to the victims of sexual assault regardless of whether or not the victim chooses to participate in the criminal justice process. Victim service agencies should be involved at the earliest possible time after a report of sexual assault, no matter which agency receives the report. They play a very important role in providing a response that keeps the victim central in the process, allowing the investigation and prosecution to be offender focused. Advocacy also has a critical role in promoting the healing process for the victim. Sexual assault victim advocates provide crisis intervention, support, family advocacy, information and referral and other ancillary services to assist the victim throughout the criminal justice process. The support provided by the sexual assault victim advocate also benefits the criminal justice process, because supported, well-informed victims are more likely to continue through the process. Advocates will operate under the guidelines established by *The Georgia Crime Victim’s Bill of Rights* (O.C.G.A. § 17-17-1) and will adhere to best practices as outlined in the *Georgia Sexual Assault Response Team Guide and the Georgia Sexual Assault Certification Standards*.

Responsibilities of the sexual assault victim advocate include:

- Being available to victims and families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via a 24-hour crisis line staffed by trained community advocates
- Providing services to victims and families that are sensitive to the unique barriers and special considerations that diverse victims encounter in reporting sexual assault crimes
- Provide emotional support and crisis intervention to victims and their families
- Be present during medical exams and police questioning when appropriate

² Defined as a trained sexual assault victim advocate working with a Georgia certified sexual assault center

- Help arrange transportation to and from the hospital or medical facility or collaborate with law enforcement for transportation, if the crime is reported
- Providing options to victims so that they may make informed decisions
- Supporting victims who choose to report to law enforcement by providing a link to eliminate barriers effecting the victim's participation in the criminal justice process
- Maintaining victim confidentiality
- Offering services to non-reporting victims and assisting if and when the victim decides to report
- Advising victims of procedures for payment of forensic portion of medical examination by the Georgia Crime Victims Emergency Fund as provided in O.C.G.A. 17-15-15 and helping victims complete compensation applications for non-reimbursed expenses resulting from the crime
- Notifying victims of all available services such as support groups, crisis intervention, advocacy, counseling and education
- Explaining the Victim's Bill of Rights, O.C.G.A. 17-17-1 et sec, and how to request the various notifications and provide input during the case proceedings
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Victims may also work with systems based Victim Advocates in the District Attorney's office if the case progresses through the criminal justice system to the point of prosecution.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Union County/Blairsville, GA

Union County Sheriff's Office
378 Beasley St,
Blairsville, GA 30512
706-439-6066

Blairsville Police Department
96 Blue Ridge St,
Blairsville, GA 30512
706-835-1692

Towns County/Young Harris and Hiwassee, GA

Towns County Sheriff's Office
4070 A. Hwy 339,
Young Harris, GA 30582
706-896-4444

Hiwassee Police Department
50 River Street
Hiwassee, GA 30546
706-896-2888

Young Harris College
Police Department
1 College St,
Young Harris, GA 30582
706-379-4569

The role of the investigating officer is to ensure the safety of the victim and the community and to ascertain if the report of sexual assault meets the elements of a crime under Georgia law. Within their jurisdictions, law enforcement will investigate sexual assault crimes.

Many sexual assault victims are severely traumatized as a result of their attack. This trauma, coupled with the intensely person nature of the crime, often leaves victims reluctant, embarrassed or afraid to report the assault to the police. An understandable apprehension about police and court procedures may further increase victim reluctance to report the crime and cooperate with law enforcement.

Police officers and detectives play a crucial role in overcoming the psychological hurdles which confront a victim and then obtaining a victim's cooperation in the assault investigation. Since a victim's ability to cope with the crime and its aftermath may prove critical to the ultimate success of criminal prosecution, it is imperative that law enforcement agencies always treat the victim of sexual assault with the utmost compassion while skillfully guiding the victim's potentially uncomfortable journey through the criminal justice system.

1. Complaint Reporting

The first report of a sexual assault is sometimes made by the victim to a dispatch or communications center of a law enforcement agency. Dispatch or communications staffers are critical in aiding the victim to regain control and composure after an assault. The staffers should remain calm, understanding and non-judgmental while speaking with any victim.

2. Responding Law Enforcement Officer

The first law enforcement officer to reach a sexual assault victim is usually a uniformed or "street" police officer. This officer, as with others who investigate the case, should quickly develop a good rapport with the victim while initiating the gathering of evidence.

- Address victim's physical, medical, and emotional needs
- Contact S.A.F.E. to coordinate a medical exam if victim wishes for one and transportation
- Protect the crime scene
- Conduct initial response as determined by the procedures of the law enforcement agency

3. The Investigator's Role in Sexual Assault Cases

The chief investigator in a sexual assault case has the critical role in the successful prosecution of the case. The importance of obtaining an eventual criminal conviction, however, should coincide with the necessity of protecting the victim's physical and emotional health.

General investigative responsibilities include:

- Identification, apprehension and interrogation of suspect(s)
- Attendance at the forensic medical exam
- Interview of victim with an offender focused and trauma informed approach, which includes allowing an advocate to be present
- Interview of witnesses
- Collection and preservation of evidence
- Maintenance of chain of custody
- Timely submitting sexual assault evidence collection kits to GBI crime laboratory regardless of whether a suspect has been identified, per GBI recommendations

- Review of GBI Crime lab reports as soon as possible after they are released to investigating agency, per GBI recommendations
- Determination of probable cause and arrest
- Preparation of case reports with investigative summaries
- Assistance to District Attorney's office in prosecution of case
- Testimony and presentation of evidence in court
- Follow up with the victim concerning arrest of assailant, case developments, and ensure that appropriate support services are available
- The investigating officer will notify the Victim Advocate, located in the District Attorney's office, within 24 hours

Pursuant to OCGA § 17-5-74, all law enforcement agencies, collection sites and other entities having custody of sexual assault kits shall register for and utilize the statewide Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System (SAKTS) no later than July 1, 2022.

- Law enforcement shall access SAKTS to acknowledge receipt of all sexual assault kits and to provide notification to the GBI crime lab in the tracking system of any reported case when their agency submits the physical kit for forensic analysis. Law enforcement shall also utilize SAKTS to indicate the receipt and retention of any non-reported case that is being held onsite at their agency.

Investigating officers will work with victim advocates to ensure a victim centered response to the investigation and proper notification of case updates to victims. Additionally, law enforcement officers will operate under the guidelines established by *The Georgia Crime Victim's Bill of Rights* (O.C.G.A. § 15-17-1) and adhere to best practices as outlined in the *Georgia Sexual Assault Team Guide*.

MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

Synergy Health Inc.
85 Seasons Lane
Hiawassee, GA 30546
706-896-0505
Ages 18 and under
Focus on chronic cases
Available for YHC students

Union General Health System
35 Hospital Rd,
Blairsville, GA 30512
706-745-2111
Ages 12 and over
Focus on acute cases

The role of the medical forensic personnel is to provide a timely, high-quality medical forensic examination that can potentially validate and address sexual assault patients' concerns, minimize the trauma they may experience, and promote their healing. At the same time, it can increase the likelihood that evidence collected will aid in criminal case investigation, resulting in perpetrators being held accountable and further sexual violence prevented.

Medical forensic examinations shall be performed at Union General Hospital in Blairsville and at Synergy Health in Hiawassee, GA. There is overlap in services for children in an effort to make FME services as responsive as possible to the benefit of victims. Flexibility is the key to working together as a SART team and meeting victims' needs.

Medical forensic exams for adults should be made available if patient chooses to report, chooses not to report, or chooses to report anonymously. Victims will be asked if they have specific requests as to gender of examiner or place of examination. However, victims may be unable to make these decisions due to symptoms of trauma and referrals should be made in the victims' best interests.

Medical forensic examinations shall be performed by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner ("SANE"), physician, nurse practitioner or physician's assistant ("PA") trained in performing such exams.

The patient is triaged and screened medically, and registered in the health care facility. The patient is informed that in Georgia the health care facility is required to notify law enforcement of all non-accidental injuries. However, it is the victim's decision to whether to report the crime and cooperate with an investigation.

In order to preserve the patient's dignity and confidentiality, it is important to discuss these matters in a private office or secluded space with an Advocate and/or support person present.

Medical forensic responsibilities include:

- Having trained personnel on-call and available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year
- FMEs will take place within sixty minutes from notification of SANE provider
- Obtaining informed consent from the patient for the medical forensic examination, documentation and evidence collection
- Contacting S.A.F.E. if they have not yet been contacted or victim showed at the emergency room
- Gathering the medical forensic history
- Conducting a physical examination
- Coordinating treatment of injuries
- Documentation of biologic and physical findings
- Collection of evidence from the patient
- Documentation of findings
- Providing information, treatment, and referrals for STIs, pregnancy
- Follow-up as needed for additional treatment and/or collection of evidence.
- Providing testimony at trial

Pursuant to OCGA § 17-5-74, all law enforcement agencies, collection sites and other entities having custody of sexual assault kits shall register for and utilize the statewide Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System (SAKTS) no later than July 1, 2022.

- Medical personnel conducting forensic medical exams shall access SAKTS to acknowledge receipt and collection of all reported and non-reported sexual assault kits. For reported cases,

medical personnel shall use the tracking system to notify law enforcement that the kit is ready for pick-up. If the collection site/agency is a sexual assault center that has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with local law enforcement to hold non-reported kits, center personnel shall utilize SAKTS to indicate any non-reported case that is being held onsite at their agency.

BIOLOGIC EVIDENCE COLLECTION

The SANE, physician, nurse practitioner or PA will collect biologic samples at the request of a patient, in accordance with currently accepted protocol (defined as the *National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations Adults/Adolescents*), to obtain timely biologic reference samples for possible analysis at the GBI Crime Lab. At the conclusion of the sexual assault medical forensic examination, any evidence collected will be packaged and protected in a manner to ensure the integrity of specimens and the appropriate chain of custody of the evidence.

Typically biologic evidence can be collected up to 120 hours after assault. However, cases should be evaluated on an individual basis as the medical forensic examination may be completed beyond 120 hours.

All biologic samples, fluids, hairs and other evidence requiring GBI analysis will be given directly to the case investigator for processing using a proper chain of evidence.

Pursuant to SB 304/O.C.G.A. § 35-1-2, it shall be the duty of every law enforcement officer who takes possession of the evidence collected during a sexual assault forensic medical examination to ensure that such evidence is submitted to the division within 30 days of it being collected.

Urine collected for analysis can be collected up to 120 hours and may be submitted to the Georgia Bureau of Investigations Crime Lab, the Federal Bureau of Investigations Crime Lab or other private lab for toxicology drug screen. Blood analysis can be performed within 24 hours.

All biologic evidence collected at the request of a patient who chooses not to initiate and participate in and/or cooperate with a law enforcement investigation shall be stored at the location of the investigating law enforcement agency in a dry, secure, and air conditioned-maintained area.

Completed FME kits must be collected by law enforcement within 96 hours from the time of the exam, per state law.

REQUESTS FOR MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAMINATION

With the consent of the patient, medical forensic examinations can be performed at the request of (1) a law enforcement agency, (2) the District Attorney's Office, (3) the medical examiner or coroner's office, (4) a hospital, (5) pursuant to a court order, or at the patient's request pursuant to O.C.G.A. 17-5-72.

Medical forensic examinations may be requested 24 hours a day by using the following procedure:

- Contact S.A.F.E. via the crisis hotline, 706-379-3000, to begin the initial team response
- S.A.F.E.'s on-call Advocate will immediately respond to the referring party and contact other necessary parties to coordinate medical examination and transportation

*In effort to keep response as efficient as possible, each medical facility will provide SAFE's Executive Director with direct contact numbers for each SANE examiner. These contact numbers will only be used if an issue arises with the on-call schedule.

COSTS OF THE MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAMINATIONS

The cost of examinations shall be paid pursuant to O.C.G.A § 16-6-1(c), O.C.G.A § 17-5-72. Patients shall not be responsible for the payment of medical forensic examination costs.

The Sexual Assault Advocate who responds to the victim will be responsible for providing education and paperwork to the victim concerning payment. All forensic medical exam costs will be billed to Georgia State's Victim's Compensation according to the billing limits set by the State. The Advocate will get paperwork signed by the appropriate parties, collect billing information from Union General Hospital, submit the paperwork to Georgia Victim's Compensation program, and follow up on the submissions. Most medical costs will be covered by S.A.F.E. if the cost is not covered by Georgia Crime Victim's Compensation, as much as S.A.F.E. is able to.

If a victim is in need of medications of which the costs are not covered by their insurance, S.A.F.E. will cover the costs. Questions concerning the coverage and billing of medical expenses, including Georgia Crime Victim's Compensation, should be directed to the Sexual Assault Advocate at S.A.F.E.

Each medical facility will have polices and processes in place to maintain accurate billing processes. Cost of services should not be a concern of the victim.

CONDUCT OF THE MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAMINATION

A SANE, physician, nurse practitioner or PA will perform the examination and assessment. They must have the FME training as approved by the state of Georgia and maintain annual training hours.

Medical forensic examinations and biologic evidence collection should be completed as quickly as possible after a report is received.

Medical forensic examinations and biologic evidence collection shall be conducted in accordance with Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) procedures using a GBI Sexual Assault Evidence Kit. It is also recommended that medical forensic exams be conducted in accordance with the *National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations*.

A trained victim advocate will be available to accompany the patient and offer emotional support during the examination. The advocate will at no time ask the patient questions related to the details of the assault.

The SANE, physician, nurse practitioner or PA will complete appropriate authorizations relating to the examination.

The SANE, physician, nurse practitioner or PA will photograph and document injuries and prepare a report.

The SANE, physician, nurse practitioner or PA will maintain and document the chain of custody of any evidence collected during the examination and assessment.

The SANE, physician, nurse practitioner or PA will adhere to best practices as outlined in the *Georgia Sexual Assault Response Team Guide*.

PROCEDURES for HOSPITALS RECEIVING WALK-IN REPORTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULTS

Hospitals receiving patients reporting incidents of sexual assault shall immediately contact law enforcement in accordance with O.C.G.A § 31-7-9 mandating all non-accidental injuries be reported. Patients will retain the right not to initiate, participate in, and/or cooperate with any law enforcement investigation of such assault.

The Hospital will also contact S.A.F.E. to initiate the Advocate response in a timely manner.

PROSECUTION

The role of the District Attorney's office is to protect the rights of the victim and ensure a fair and thorough investigation while holding the offender accountable when appropriate. Prosecutors should work in a collaborative fashion with law enforcement, medical forensic and victim advocates.

Enotah Judicial Circuit shall assume ultimate responsibility for informing victims of the status of a case in accordance with the Crime Victim's Bill of Rights. Prosecutors' offices shall establish and maintain direct liaison with victims and victim service agencies.

Prosecutors are responsible for:

- Notification of procedural steps, proceedings, and contact information concerning the perpetrator and the criminal case
- Offer the victim the opportunity to express an opinion on the release of the accused pending judicial proceedings
- Offer the victim the opportunity to express an opinion on the disposition of an accused case
- If victim requests by writing, give prompt advance notification of any scheduled court proceedings and notice of any changes to that schedule
- Make decisions on whether or not to prosecute based on consideration of variables of the case

- General procedures for handling sexual assault cases through indictment and trial

Prosecutors will operate under the guidelines established by *The Georgia Crime Victim's Bill of Rights* (O.C.G.A. § 15-17-1) that state, for example, that victims have the right,

- To be treated fairly and with dignity by all criminal justice agencies involved in the case
- To proceedings free from unreasonable delay
- To reasonable, accurate and timely notice of an court proceeding where the release of the accused will be considered
- To reasonable, accurate and timely notice of court proceedings or any changes to such proceedings, including restitution hearings
- To reasonable, accurate and timely notice of the accused's release and/or monitoring program
- To be present at all criminal proceedings in which the accused has a right to be present
- To NOT be excluded from any scheduled court proceedings, except as provided in O.C.G.A. § 17-17-1 or otherwise provided by law
- To a waiting area, during judicial proceedings, that is separate from the accused and his or her relatives, friends and witnesses
- To be reasonably heard at any scheduled court proceedings involving the release, plea or sentencing of the accused
- To complete a Victim Impact Statement and have it presented to the court prior to the trial or plea of the accused (O.C.G.A. § 17-10-11)
- To refuse to submit to an interview by the accused, accused's attorney or agent of the accused.
- To a requirement by the court that defense counsel not disclose victim information to the accused (O.C.G.A. § 17-17-10)

If a victim attends any court proceeding, a victim advocate from S.A.F.E. will accompany the victim upon the victim's request.

Prosecutors and prosecution based advocates will adhere to best practices as outlined in the *Georgia Sexual Assault Response Team Guide*.

DRUG-FACILITATED SEXUAL ASSAULTS

Victims of drug-facilitated sexual assault have been compromised by alcohol and/or drugs and their ability to consent has been affected. The state of intoxication makes the victim easier to perpetrate on. The victim may have been forced to consume, tricked into consuming without their knowledge, or knowingly and purposefully consumed drugs and/or alcohol. The perpetrator may take advantage of their state of intoxication or be the cause of it.

The most commonly used substance is alcohol. Other substances include prescription drugs and street drugs. These substances manifest themselves in various types of symptoms and are in the body's system for different amounts of time. SANEs need to be up to date on the various inebriating substances.

When a victim presents as inebriated it is priority to get them medical care and safety. A victim cannot consent to a FME when they are intoxicated. Collection of evidence will be performed when it is possible for the victim to consent. Blood work will be done at the victim's consent.

Evidence must be collected by law enforcement within 96 hours of the FME.

Law enforcement and other first-responders must be educated and knowledgeable about the dynamics of drug-facilitated sexual assault. Intoxication should not create fault on the part of the victim and victims should not be treated in that manner.

Intoxication and various substances may affect memory and the victim's ability to communicate their assault. Memories may develop over time, causing disclosures to come in parts and timelines to be confusing.

RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking and sexual exploitation involve sexual assault but have different dynamics and require a different response than single occurrence assaults or chronic single perpetrator assaults. Trafficking and exploitation involve the trade of money or goods for sex, may be organized by the third party, may involve the movement of the victim from one place to another, and often have multiple perpetrators. The dynamics involve intense psychological coercion and manipulation on the part of the perpetrator and/or trafficker, creating increasing barriers to victim cooperation. These cases also commonly involve drugs and alcohol, technology, and physical assault. Victims of human trafficking are commonly polyvictimized.

Law enforcement and other first-responders must be educated and knowledgeable about the dynamics of trafficking and exploitation to enhance the ability to identify trafficking/exploitation, collect evidence, and work with victims. Advocates can be used as a tool by law enforcement to help with victim cooperation and guidance on the dynamics of trafficking/exploitation.

Victims of trafficking/exploitation need to be offered the same process and choices of care and evidence collection.

Major changes in the protocol concerning these particular cases are the resources available for victims. Advocates from S.A.F.E. will respond as per protocol, however, other resources are necessary to create a wraparound response. S.A.F.E. Advocates or other involved parties will contact the Georgia Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking to coordinate services for adult victims. For victims under the age of 18 years, please refer to the Union or Towns County Child Abuse Protocols.

Georgia Coalition to Combat Human Trafficking
Hotline Number: 1-866-ENDHTGA (1-866-363-4842)
<http://www.endhtga.org/>
Available 24/7

RESPONSE TO COLWELL DETENTION CENTER SEXUAL ASSAULT

Colwell Detention Center has an MOU with S.A.F.E. that facilitates advocate response to reported sexual assault of inmates. The number of Advocates available for this response is limited due to restrictions within the detention center, so advocacy services will be provided as soon as possible.

Victims of sexual assault within the detention center should be provided resource options and the option of an FME. If a victim needs a FME, the detention center will contact S.A.F.E. for a Sexual Assault Advocate and then coordinate medical response with Union General Hospital. Procedures for medical response will be followed as normal per the detention center.

First responders will respond to victims at the detention center as victims, not as criminals. However, appropriate caution will be taken, as advised by law enforcement and the detention center staff.

LOCAL SART COORDINATED RESPONSE

All members of the Union and Towns Counties Sexual Assault Response Team will adhere to best practices as outlined in the *Georgia Sexual Assault Response Team Guide (available summer 2017)*.

Members of the Towns and Union Counties SART agree to meet bi-annually for case review, discussion and evaluation to assure the coordination and cooperation between all agencies responding to sexual assault cases in Union and Towns counties.

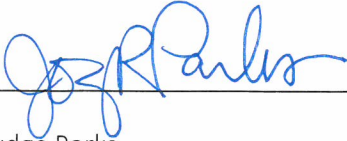
At least one meeting per year will include a review and update to this SART protocol.

This protocol is to be used by agencies on a case-by-case basis, with the intent to be victim-centered.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A § 15-24-2, members of the Towns and Union Counties Sexual Assault Protocol Committee agree to meet annually to review, update and evaluate this Sexual Assault Protocol.

The foregoing Sexual Assault Protocol is hereby adopted and replaces any previously adopted protocol and remains in effect until such time as said protocol is amended and adopted.

This 14 day of December 2023.



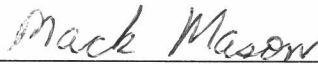
Chief Judge Parks

Superior Court Judge



Sheriff Henderson

Towns County Sheriff's Office



Sheriff Mason

Union County Sheriff's Office



Chief Baxter

Blairsville Police Department



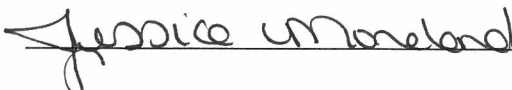
Chief Parker

Hiwassee Police Department




Chief Rich

Young Harris College Police Department



Jessica Moreland

Support in Abusive Family Emergencies, Inc.



District Attorney Jeff Langley

Enotah District Attorney's Office



Dr. Samuel Church

Synergy Health, Inc.



CEO Kevin Bierschenk

Union General Health System