

**SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE PROTOCOL**

**SUPERIOR COURTS**

**APPALACHIAN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT**

**STATE OF GEORGIA**

ORDER


WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Georgia enacted O.C.G.A. Section 15-24-2 requiring the establishment of a Sexual Assault Response 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 November 20, 2024, and discussed the Protocol and made changes thereto, which was approved by a majority vote on December 20, 2024, and which is attached hereto, as the protocol for cases of sexual assault in the Appalachian Judicial Circuit, which is comprised of Pickens, Gilmer, and Fannin Counties, 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 Clerks of the Superior Court of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit.

SO ORDERED, this 20 day of December, 2024.

  
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HONORABLE BRENDA S. WEAVER, CHIEF JUDGE  
APPALACHIAN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

This 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 to increase the efficiency of all agencies handling such cases and to minimize the stress created for the sexual assault victim by the legal and investigatory process<sup>1</sup>.

*The mission of the Appalachian Circuit Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) is to:*

- o Promote consistent, comprehensive, sensitive, and non-judgmental treatment of victims of sexual assault as they progress through the victim services, health and criminal justice system;
- o Standardize the collection of evidence in order to aid in the prosecution of cases;
- o Develop a coordinated effort among health providers, law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and victim advocates to ensure that victims efficient and comprehensive medical care, evidentiary examination, emotional support and referral information;

For purposes of this Protocol, the term *victim* shall refer to victims age 18 and older unless specifically indicated herein. Every sexual assault case involving victims under 18 shall refer to the Appalachian Circuit Child Abuse Protocol in identifying appropriate services and resources. Per the state model Child Abuse protocol, those services and resources should include the Appalachian Children’s Center in providing a range of services, including forensic interviews, advocacy, therapy, etc. An agreement between North Georgia Mountain Crisis Center and the Appalachian Children’s Advocacy Center shall define access to and sharing of client records. In providing services to anyone under the age of 18, Georgia Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) and/or law enforcement shall be notified pursuant to O.C.G. A § 19-7-5.

- Medical and forensic exams may be offered in all cases of sexual abuse, regardless of the length of time that may have elapsed between the most-recently reported sexual contact and the examination. Clinical providers will contact an appropriate medical expert if a consultation is needed.
- Forensic medical examinations (FMEs) and sexual assault examinations can help to: 1) screen for injuries and medical conditions and initiate medical treatment; 2) answer questions and reassure victims and parents about the child’s physical well-being; and 3) identify medical evidence to prosecute the offender(s).
  - o Forensic medical examinations<sup>[1]</sup> and sexual assault exams will be conducted using a trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, rights-based approach. Options include the local Child Advocacy Center (CAC) or Sexual Assault Center (SAC) that has a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and a Sexual Assault Victim Advocate (SAVA). Some CACs also have an on-site medical examination room. Other places that conduct these exams are:

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- SafePath Children's Advocacy Center (Wellstar Health System) (for children 18 or younger (736 Whitlock Ave. NW, Suite 600, Marietta, GA 30064, Phone: 770-801-3465)
- Children's Healthcare of Atlanta - Scottish Rite (CHOA) (1001 Johnson Ferry Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30342, Phone: 404-785-5437)
- LiveSafe Resources (for children 13 or older) (48 Henderson St. SW, Marietta, GA 30064, Phone: 770-427-2902).

Consult the child advocacy for appropriate medical services. Hospital emergency rooms are able to conduct medical evaluations for the health of the child. Some hospitals may have a pediatric SANE who can conduct the sexual assault examination. If the child is taken to the Receiving Hope Center (RHC), this exam may be conducted there.

- o Payment for these exams is available and supported through the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC); victims should not be asked for payment.
- o Victim advocacy services<sup>[2]</sup> during the exam process will be offered. The National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations – Pediatric recommends the provision of timely access to victim advocacy services during the exam process. Victim advocates typically function to aid victims and their families in getting help to cope with the impact of sexual abuse in their lives and to promote healing. Advocates also encourage coordination and collaboration among responders so that interventions are child-focused and trauma-informed.
- o The evidence collection kit will be sent to the GBI Crime Lab by the appropriate law enforcement agency. Victims of sexual assault may come to a hospital located outside of their county or state of residence or outside of the jurisdiction where the assault took place. The law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction where the assault occurred is the law enforcement agency charged with investigating the assault and facilitating transfer of the evidence collected from the hospital to the appropriate forensic lab in the jurisdiction where the assault took place.
- o A debrief with the doctor, nurse, or SANE who conducted the exam is an integral part of the investigation.

If the victims are under the age of 16 years, statutory rape may be applicable and a parent/legal guardian may bring the victim for the examination and collection of evidence. In this situation, the victim's cooperation to report may not be required. In these cases, law enforcement may have the parent/guardian consent for the examination and collection of evidence.

### ADVOCACY

The role of the Sexual Assault Victim Advocate<sup>2</sup> is to provide services to the victims of sexual assault regardless of whether the victim chooses to report the assault to law enforcement. 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

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<sup>2</sup> Defined as a trained sexual assault victim advocate working with a Georgia certified sexual assault center.

provide crisis intervention, support, family advocacy, information and referral and other ancillary services to assist the victim through 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 Version 2* (available at <https://svr.ga.org>) 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;
- Providing options to victims so that they may make informed decisions;
- Supporting victims who choose to report to law enforcement by assisting in eliminating barriers affecting the victim's participation in the criminal justice process;
- Maintaining victim confidentiality; and
- Offering services to non-reporting victims and assisting if and when the victim decides to report.

Victims may also work with systems-based victim advocates if the case progresses through the criminal justice system to the point of prosecution. *See Appendix A for more information.*

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Law enforcement agencies that respond to sexual assault victims in the Appalachian Judicial Circuit are:

### **Fannin County**

- Fannin County Sheriff's Department
- Blue Ridge City Police Department
- McCaysville City Police Department

### **Gilmer County**

- Gilmer County Sheriff's Department
- East Ellijay City Police Department
- Ellijay City Police Department

### **Pickens County**

- Pickens County Sheriff's Department
- Jasper City Police Department



Within their jurisdictions, law enforcement will investigate sexual assault cases. 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. Investigative responsibilities include:

- Interview of victim using a trauma-informed approach;
- Interview of witnesses;
- Collection and preservation of evidence;
- Identification, apprehension and interrogation of suspect(s);
- Maintenance of chain of custody;
- Accessing the statewide Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System (SAKTS) , per OCGA § 17-5-74, to acknowledge receipt of the kit and to provide notification to the GBI crime lab for all reported cases.
- Accessing SAKTS to indicate any non-reported case that is being held onsite at their agency.
- 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;
- Assist the District Attorney's office in prosecution of case; and
- Testify and present evidence in court.

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. § 17-17-1 et seq) and adhere to best practices as outlined in the *Georgia Sexual Assault Team Guide Version 2* (available at <https://svrga.org>).

### **MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAMINATION PROCEDURES**

The role of forensic medical personnel is to provide a timely, high-quality Forensic Medical 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.

Forensic Medical Examinations may be performed at the most appropriate and/or expedient facility available. The North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network Sexual Assault Center in Blue Ridge is not yet operational. Forensic Medical Exams should be offered regardless of whether the victim is choosing to report to law enforcement or chooses to report anonymously.

Forensic Medical Examinations shall be performed by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (“SANE”), physician, nurse practitioner or physician’s assistant (“PA”) trained in performing such exams.

Forensic medical responsibilities include:

- Obtaining informed consent from the patient or their guardian for the Forensic Medical Examination, documentation and evidence collection;
- Gathering the medical forensic history;
- Conducting a physical examination;
- Coordinating treatment of injuries;
- Collecting evidence from the patient and documenting biological and physical findings;
- Accessing the statewide Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System (SAKTS), per OCGA § 17-5-74, to acknowledge receipt and collection of the sexual assault kit and to provide notification to law enforcement of kit readiness on all reported cases (or non-reported cases that will be held by law enforcement). Providing the patient with the kit number and PIN prior to leaving the exam.
- Accessing SAKTS to indicate any non-reported case that is being held onsite at their agency if the medical professional works for a sexual assault center that has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with local law enforcement to hold such kits.
- Providing information about, treatment for, and referrals regarding STIs, pregnancy;
- Follow-up as needed for additional treatment and/or collection of evidence; and
- Providing testimony at trial.

## **MEDICAL RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT**

### **SAC’s Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner’s Response:**

1. Respond to on-call SAVA within 15 minutes to the call from NGMCN.
2. Receive case information from crisis hotline staff member or the NGMCN SAVA.
3. Upon arrival at the designated medical facility (see page 7), the SANE nurse will meet with the investigator for initial information regarding the case.
4. Conduct the forensic medical examination and follow protocol for chain-of custody in obtaining evidence and releasing to law enforcement.

5. Give a copy of the forensic record to the Medical Facility staff for their record, law enforcement and sexual assault program director if patient signs release.

Other local facilities include, but are not limited to:

#### **Sexual Assault Center**

1. LiveSafe Resources (Marietta) (for children 13 or older)
2. North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network Sexual Assault Center (Blue Ridge) (NOT YET OPERATIONAL AS OF 12/20/24)

#### **Child Advocacy Centers**

1. SafePath (Marietta)

#### **Hospitals**

1. Blue Ridge Medical Center (Fannin County)
2. Piedmont Mountainside Hospital (Pickens County; no SANE staffed as of 12/20/24)
3. Piedmont Mountainside, Ellijay Emergency Room (Gilmer County; no SANE staffed as of 12/20/24)
4. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) - Scottish Rite (Fulton County)
5. Union General Hospital (Union County)
6. Hamilton Medical Center (Whitfield County)
7. Northside Forsyth (Forsyth County)

**Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)** - A SANE is a specially trained nurse in the forensic medical examination and collection of evidence from victims of sexual assault. The role of the SANE is that of an independent consultant/expert who provides a medical assessment of victims of sexual assault. In addition, they collect forensic evidence from the victim, in way of body fluids and samples. A SANE provides evidence identification, recovery and documentation.

#### **SANE SCOPE OF PRACTICE:**

- Examining the sexual assault survivor to assess, document and collect forensic evidence.
- Offering prophylactic treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and prevention of pregnancy under a pre-established medical protocol or as approved by a

- consulting physician or advance practice nurse.
- Referring care of major physical trauma and treatment of minor injuries for further medical care.
- Explaining to the client that the SANE does only a limited medical examination.
- Providing emotional support, crisis intervention, and working with the advocate when one is available.
- Testifying as an expert witness.

### **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 forensic medical 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.

All biologic evidence will be collected up to a minimum of 96 hours after assault. In addition, cases should be evaluated on an individual basis as the forensic medical examination may be completed beyond 96 hours.

All biologic samples, fluids, hairs and other evidence requiring GBI analysis will be given directly to the case investigator or law enforcement designee 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 96 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.

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 given directly to the case investigator or law enforcement designee for processing using a proper chain of evidence and said case investigator shall notify the District Attorney's Office in making a determination as to pursuing prosecution in said matter.



## **REQUESTS FOR FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMINATION**

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

Forensic medical examinations may be requested 24 hours a day by using the following procedure: Forensic medical examinations may be performed by an approved medical facility or at the North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network Sexual Assault Center when it becomes operational. The facility or entity providing said forensic medical examinations shall be performed by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner ("SANE"), physician, nurse practitioner or physician's assistant ("PA") trained in performing such exams.

Additionally, options for forensic medical exams include, but are not limited to, LiveSafe Resources (48 Henderson St. SW, Marietta, GA 30064, Phone: 770-427-2902) (for children 13 or older), Hamilton Medical Center (1200 Memorial Dr. Dalton, GA 30720) Union General Hospital (35 Hospital Rd, Blairsville, GA 30512, Phone: 706-745-2111), and Northside Forsyth (1200 Northside Forsyth Dr, Cumming, GA 30041, Phone: 770-844-3200).

For juveniles, referrals may be made to the Appalachian Children's Center (293 Progress Rd., East Ellijay, Georgia 30540, Phone: 706-273-2225). Other places that conduct these exams include, but are not limited to, SafePath Children's Advocacy Center (for children 18 or younger: 736 Whitlock Ave., Suite 600, Marietta, GA 30064, Phone: 770-801-3465), Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) - Scottish Rite (1001 Johnson Ferry Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30342, Phone: 404-785-5437). and LiveSafe Resources (48 Henderson St., Marietta, GA 30064, Phone: 770-427-2902) (for children 13 or older). Hospital emergency rooms are able to conduct medical evaluations for the health of the child. Some hospitals may have a pediatric SANE who can conduct the sexual assault examination. For suspected cases of human trafficking, The Receiving Hope Center is Georgia's residential intake center for sexually trafficked youth ages 12-17 (ph #470-467-3669).

## **COSTS OF THE FORENSIC MEDICAL 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.

## **CONDUCT OF THE FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMINATION**

A SANE, physician, nurse practitioner or PA will perform the examination and assessment.

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

Forensic medical 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 forensic medical 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*.

*See Appendix B for more information.*

### **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.

**Forensic Medical Examination Forms Available Upon Request**  
**Please contact the North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network, Inc.**  
**706-632-8400.**

### **PROSECUTION**

The role of the District Attorney's office is to protect the rights of the victim while holding the offender accountable. Prosecutors should work in a collaborative fashion with law enforcement, medical forensic and victim advocates. Prosecutors will operate under the guidelines established by *The Georgia Crime Victim's Bill of Rights* (O.C.G.A. § 17-17-1 et seq) 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; and
- 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 the District Attorney's Office will accompany the victim.

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

### **LOCAL SART COORDINATED RESPONSE AND ANNUAL MEETING**

All members of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) will adhere to best practices as outlined in the *Georgia Sexual Assault Response Team Guide, Version 2* (available at <https://svrga.org>)

Pursuant to O.C.G.A § 15-24-2, members of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit Sexual Assault Protocol Committee agree to meet annually to review, discuss and update this Sexual Assault Protocol. An email list has been created of all active members. The meeting may be in-person or virtually. Members may call for a special meeting in between the annual meeting to discuss a particular issue.

Topics to be discussed at the annual protocol meeting include the following:

- Challenges in responding to sexual assault and how such challenges can be more effectively addressed
- What works well in the current protocol and what does not
- Whether the protocol has been distributed to individuals who actually work sexual assault cases in the specific communities within the Appalachian Judicial Circuit. If not, what is the plan for this to occur moving forward?

Additional topics of discussion at the annual meeting or case reviews might include:

- Identification of local resources;
- 911 response and procedure;
- Local investigative response and procedure;
- EMS transport;
- Advocate response time;
- Drug facilitated sexual assaults;
- Victim interviews;
- Recantation;
- Response to victims of human trafficking;
- Use of interpreters;
- Medical forensic response; and
- Child and adult protective services.

## Appendix A

### **Victim Support Services**

Victim services can be provided by North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network, Inc.'s Sexual Assault Program, Victim-Witness Assistance Programs and other community agencies. These programs may be non-profit or governmental. A combination of services from various agencies may be needed to serve the victim and will be evaluated on an individual basis. Victim services may provide some or all of the following services:

- Maintaining frequent communication with victims regarding the status of the criminal investigation and court proceedings;
- Advising victims of procedures for payment of forensic portion of medical examination by law enforcement;
- Helping victims complete compensation applications for non-reimbursed expenses caused by the crime (such as medical, counseling, prescriptions and lost wages);
- Notifying victims of all available services, such as support groups, counseling and education;
- Explaining the Victims Bill of Rights, OCGA § 17-17-1, how to request the various notifications (notices of bond hearings, release of defendant from incarceration and case status) and complying with Marsy's Law as provided by the Victim Witness Assistance Office of the District Attorney's Office, Appalachian Judicial Circuit;
- Encouraging victims to be active participants in their case; and
- Protecting victim's privacy.

The Sexual Assault Program of the North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network, Inc. works to form a continuum of care for victims. To request the assistance of a SAVA (Sexual Assault Victim Advocate) who can provide services and advocacy for the victim, their family and cooperation with law enforcement, including access and transportation to receive a Forensic Medical Examination by a qualified SANE call 706-632-8400 24/7 and request to speak with the on call Sexual Assault Victim Advocate.

The following section addresses the sexual assault office's involvement in responding to sexual assault victims:



**NORTH GEORGIA MOUNTAIN CRISIS NETWORK, INC.**  
**Sexual Assault Response Protocol:**

**RESPONSE TO CALLS:**

**Sexual Assault Advocate's Response:**

1. Caller (could be a survivor, family, friend, 911 operator, law enforcement or hospital) calls the 24-hr crisis line at 706-632-8400 or 800-334-2836.
2. The hotline is always answered by a staff person.
3. The call is referred to the on-call Sexual Assault Advocate or Volunteer Advocate. If there are any problems with advocate response or questions, please call the Sexual Assault Office at 706-632-8400.

**If the caller is a minor (17 years of age and younger):**

1. Advocate will explain that they are a mandated reporter and Advocate will notify law enforcement and DFCS.
2. Refers he/she, ages 3 to 17 years of age, to law enforcement and/or DFCS and explains Sexual Assault Center Services.

**If the caller is an adult (18 years of age and older):**

1. Advocate will determine if the survivor is in immediate danger.
2. Help identify and addresses immediate concerns of the survivor.
3. Asks if he/she wants to report the crime to the police.

**If an adult DOES NOT want to report:**

1. No report to Law Enforcement is required.
2. Advocate will provide support, advocacy, and complete a formal intake in person.
3. The victim shall sign a form which states the evidence is held, not reported, and only released to law enforcement if the victim decides to report within 1 year.

**If an adult DOES want to report:**

1. The Sexual Assault Victim Advocate [hereinafter referred to as "SAVA" where appropriate] is responsible for calling the SANE and law enforcement, if they have not already been called.
2. The SAVA will respond to the NGMCN Sexual Assault Center [hereinafter referred to as "SAC" where appropriate] or a Medical Facility upon request.
4. If reporting to a Medical Facility, check in with the Medical Facility staff upon arrival.
5. Check in with investigating law enforcement on site.
6. If victim is 15 years old or younger, the SAVA will ask if DFCS and law enforcement have been notified and if a family member is present and follow proper protocol for victims 15 years of age and younger.
7. Provide a Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit and Victim Care Kit.
8. Provide emotional support and advocacy to the victim and his/her family.
9. Explain the services provided by NGMCN's Sexual Assault program and give the survivor brochures, victim's bill of rights, and follow-up materials including Victim Compensation Information.
10. Explain the evidence collection procedures.
11. Accompany victim during the examination and interview process with the victim's permission.
12. Discuss the Pregnancy and STI Prophylaxis.
13. Complete all necessary Sexual Assault Program's paperwork.

**FOLLOW-UP ADVOCACY:**

1. Assist the survivor with completing applications for victim compensation.
2. Follow-up on application to ensure timely processing.
3. Facilitate transportation from SAC or Medical Facility.
4. Accompany survivor to District Attorney's office or any judicial proceedings upon request.
5. Provide the survivor with a written, concise explanation of the Criminal Justice System.
6. Assist law enforcement, SANE and the District Attorney's office at any point during the investigation.
7. Provide follow-up information and referrals for counseling.
8. Ensures that the survivor was able to obtain pregnancy and STI prophylaxis.
9. Anticipating the need to contact mental health or crisis counseling. Local resources include:
  - a. North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network 24-hr. Crisis Line 1-706-632-8400;
  - b. Appalachian Children's Center: (Ages 2-17) 706-273-2225; and
  - c. Highlands Rivers Mental Health Center: 706-635-2739.

10. Encourage referral to Mental Health Agency/Rape Crisis Center/Safe Shelters including:
- a. North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network - 24-hr. Crisis Line: 1-706-632-8400 or 1-800-334-2836;
  - b. Highlands Rivers Mental Health Center: 706-635-2739;
  - c. Rape Response: 24-hr. Crisis line: 1-800-721-1999;
  - d. Georgia Help Line: 24-hr. telephone line: 1-800-338-6745;
  - e. Appalachian Domestic Violence Task Force: 706-636-7233; and
  - f. Georgia Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-334-2836.

Pursuant to OCGA Section 15-24-2, members of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit Sexual Assault Protocol Committee agree to meet annually to review, update and evaluate this Sexual Assault Protocol. The foregoing Appalachian Judicial Circuit 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 the 17 day of December, 2024.


Jack King  
DANKE KIRBY  
FANNIN CO SHERIFF

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 17 day of December, 2024.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Stacy L. Nicholson  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Sheriff of Gilmer County  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*



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This the 20 day of December, 2024.



Pickens Co. Sheriff

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 17th day of December, 2024.



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Dan L. Farnham

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Detective Sergeant

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Gilmer County Sheriff's Office

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 17 day of December, 2024.



Frank H. Wood, Jr.

District Attorney,

Appalachian Judicial Circuit

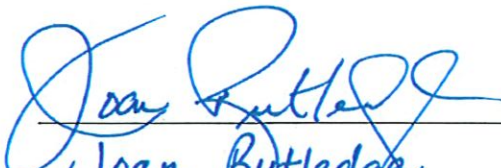
Sign and Type Name

Fannin, Gwin, Pickens

List Title, Agency, and County

Pursuant to OCGA Section 15-24-2, members of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit Sexual Assault Protocol Committee agree to meet annually to review, update and evaluate this Sexual Assault Protocol. The foregoing Appalachian Judicial Circuit 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 the 17<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joan Rutledge  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director Victim Witness Assistance  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Fannin, Gilmer, Pickens  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 17<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Alan Morris  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Magistrate  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Pickens County  
\_\_\_\_\_

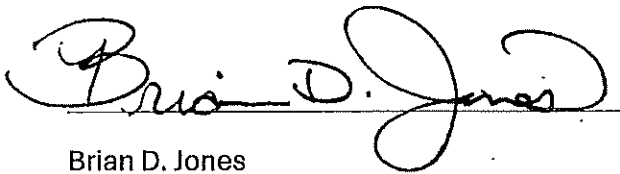
*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*



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This the 17<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brian D. Jones", written over a horizontal line.

Brian D. Jones

Chief Magistrate Judge

Fannin County Magistrate Court

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This the 17th day of December, 2024.

Kevin Johnson

Kevin Johnson

Chief Magistrate Judge

Gilmer County Magistrate's Office

Sign and Type Name List Title, Agency, and Count

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This the 17 day of December, 2024.

Larry Callahan  
Larry Callahan  
Public Safety Director  
City of East Ellijay, Gilmer Co.

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 17th day of December, 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward D. Lacey III", is written over a horizontal line.

Edward D. Lacey III

Chief of Police

Ellijay Police Department

Gilmer, County

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 17<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.

Ashley Deverell RN  
Ashley Deverell, RN  
Infectious Disease Director  
North Georgia Health District

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*



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This the 18th day of December, 2024.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Holli Collier, RN

\_\_\_\_\_  
North Georgia Health District

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 18 day of December, 2024.

Jennifer Puckett PhD, APRN, CRNP, PC, SANE-P

Jennifer Puckett

Wellstar Medical Group @ SafePath CAC

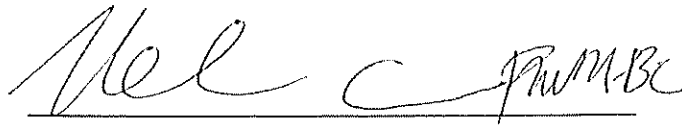
Col

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 18 day of December, 2024.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Hannah Chambers', written over a horizontal line.

Hannah Chambers, MSN, APRN, FNBC

Wellstar Medical Group @ Safe Path CAC

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*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 17 day of December, 2024.

Andrea C. Gibby  
Andrea C. Gibby  
Executive Director  
Appalachian Children's Center

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 20 day of December, 2024.



Cami Fowler, Local Citizen

Pickens County, Georgia

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*

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This the 17 day of December, 2024.

Barbara Honaker

Executive Director

North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network

Fannin, Gilmer, and Pickens Counties

*Sign and Type Name*

*List Title, Agency, and County*