

# **Paulding County**

# **Sexual Assault Response**

# **Protocol**

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## **I. Purpose of the Protocol**

The protocol is intended to facilitate the provision of consistent, comprehensive, sensitive, and non-judgmental treatment to victims of sexual assault as they progress through the health and criminal justice systems. It is also intended to standardize the collection of evidence in order to aid in the prosecution of cases. A further purpose is to develop a coordinated effort among health providers, law enforcement, prosecution, and victim advocates ensuring that victims receive efficient and comprehensive medical care, an evidentiary examination, emotional support, and referral information. Health care providers, care providers, including hospitals, all branches of law enforcement, including prosecution, and community-based programs which assist victims should use the protocol. Protocol shall be established pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 15-24-2.

## **II. Persons Covered**

This protocol is for those ages thirteen<sup>1</sup> and greater, regardless of the sex (male, female, intersex) that are victims of sexual assault. This includes victims who were assaulted within Paulding County or are present in Paulding County after an assault which took place elsewhere. A general definition used in this protocol is that sexual assault includes contact or intimacy performed upon one person by another without mutual consent, or with the inability of the victim to give consent due to age or mental or physical incapacity. In Georgia, there is no one law applicable to the crime of sexual assault. Rather, there are a number of laws that refer to rape; sodomy, aggravated sodomy, statutory rape, sexual battery, child molestation and aggravated child molestation.

Existing county or jurisdictional child abuse protocols should be followed when the victim is a minor and has been sexually abused. Note: Reference Appendix I on the process for responding to minors that are thirteen years of age and older and able to access LiveSafe Resources for a SANE Exam.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: All Mandated Reporting procedures must be followed with any person under the age of eighteen. Mandatory Reporters include but are not limited to faculty/teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, law enforcement professionals, healthcare providers and other persons who participate in providing care and treatment to minors.

### **III. Providing Care & Common Response**

Special Note on Language: A desired part of the recovery process for the individual is that others begin to view the individual as a survivor rather than a victim, however, in the acute phase following sexual assault, the individual is still considered a victim. Throughout the protocol, the term “Victim” is used to denote a person who has been sexually assaulted and is still within the acute phase. The goal of the affected agencies should be to assist a Victim to become a Survivor. Giving the victim control over decisions is an important part of the transition from victim to survivor. It is important to note the various disciplines involved in providing services or working with victims of sexual assault may use their own term (patient, client, victims, etc.) but throughout this protocol we will use the term victim since the protocol refers to the acute phase of victimization.

Providing care to the victim will require special sensitivity on the part of law enforcement, medical, and support personnel. The victim of sexual assault may suffer from physical as well as emotional or psychological trauma. Physical aggression has been used to humiliate, harm, or degrade the victim. The victim’s sense of self may have been threatened by the hostility and the aggression involved. The victim may wonder what he or she could have done to deserve this assault. The potential of people learning about the attack and the threat of pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease may also cause distress. Some victims may fear being denied fair treatment. As the victim reports the incident, the individual may be worried, hurt, frightened, ashamed, isolated, embarrassed, or humiliated. It is important that the victim feel acceptance and support, regardless of the victim’s emotional and/or cultural response. The victim may also be feeling fearful and anxious after the assault in dealing with the legal, medical, and social systems and will need assistance and understanding through these phases.

Anyone responding to a victim of sexual assault should make the same inquiries of all victims, and offer the same level of support, regardless of gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

**Victim confidentiality must be strictly protected.** Professional staff should make direct inquiries of the victim regarding how to address the disclosure of confidential information. Assumptions should not be made concerning whether it is safe to disclose information to family, friends, employer, or news media about the assault or the victim's sexual preference. Any documentation should be undertaken with sensitivity to the potential for long-term negative consequences to a victim. Note: Reference Appendix II on the process for protecting the privacy and maintaining confidentiality of victims of sexual assault.

#### **IV. Financial Resources**

The 2011 Georgia Legislature passed a bill to pay the costs of collecting evidence in rape and aggravated sodomy cases. This law went into effect on July 1, 2011. O.C.G.A § 17-5-72 provides that a victim shall have the right to a forensic medical examination, regardless of whether the victim participates in the criminal justice system (or cooperates with law enforcement by pursuing prosecution of the crime). A victim is not required to pay, directly or indirectly, for the cost of a forensic medical examination. The cost of a forensic medical examination shall be paid for by the Georgia Crime Victims Compensation Program (Eligibility applies to sexual assaults occurring on or after July 1, 2011).

For such other medical costs associated with the assault, reimbursement can be claimed through the Crime Victim's Compensation Fund, and payment will be made directly to the hospital or other medical provider. However, if a victim is insured or on Medicaid, then those sources will be sought first before the Crime Victim's Compensation Fund is administered by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). The Crime Victim's Compensation funds are available to any victim regardless of the age of the accused or age of the victim.

## VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICES

Rape crisis centers, victim assistance programs, crisis centers, or other agencies can provide services to victims. These programs can be non-profit or governmental and are free to the victim. In Paulding County, the three victim support services are LiveSafe Resources Sexual Assault Program, Paulding Child Advocacy Center, and the Victim-Witness Assistance Program through the Paulding County District Attorney's Office.

(1) **LiveSafe Resources Sexual Assault Program** provides a 24-hour crisis line, forensic medical exams, psychological support to the victim, accompaniment to medical or legal appointments, support groups, advocacy for victims including support throughout the criminal justice system, and assistance with applying for financial compensation. This program can provide training to medical and law enforcement personnel on the psychological reactions and needs of sexual assault victims. Note: The LiveSafe Resources Sexual Assault Program does not extend its medical forensic exam services to child victims under the age of 13 years old (see Paulding Child Advocacy Center below).

(2) **Paulding Child Advocacy Center (Paulding CAC)** coordinates, in a child friendly environment, the interagency investigation and intervention regarding allegations of sexual, severe physical abuse as well as any minors who have witnessed violent crimes. Additionally, Paulding Child Advocacy center can provide interviews for adults with developmental disabilities that cognitively function as a minor. The Center is responsible for facilitating bi-weekly multi-disciplinary team meetings where all cases are reviewed. Peer supervision is provided for forensic interviewers. Services include: expanded forensic interviews, crises consultation, TF-CBT for primary and secondary survivors as well as support groups. The Center links children and their families with appropriate services, i.e., medical evaluation or counseling. The Center also provides expert testimony, training, and prevention education. ~~including Stewards of Children Program which is aimed at adults accepting the responsibility for preventing child sexual abuse.~~

*The Paulding CAC (Child Advocacy Center) follows and is a part of the Paulding*

*Child Abuse Protocol*

(3) **Victim-Witness Programs** are located in the prosecuting attorney's offices. They provide information, support, and guidance for the victim through the criminal justice process; information regarding the status of the court case; information and explanation regarding criminal proceedings; accompanier to attend court with the victim; emotional support and referrals to counselors and other agencies. Assistance is also provided to the victim in applying for financial compensation. For felony charges the District Attorney's Victim Witness program will work with the victim. Misdemeanor charges will be handled by the Solicitor General's Victim Witness Program.

Victim service organizations are involved at various points in sexual assault cases, but services should begin at the time the sexual assault victim reports their assault and should work with all affected agencies to form a continuum of care for victims. Unlike other agencies (i.e., law enforcement, medical, or prosecutor's offices), which service victims at certain specific junctures in the case, many victim services programs help victims from "start to finish." The following section includes a discussion of issues relating to victim service programs and their involvement and coordination with other agencies, which respond to sexual assault victims.

## **I. Initial Report of Sexual Assault (Live Safe Resources Sexual Assault Program)**

A sexual assault can be reported multiple ways; via a law enforcement agency, hospital or other medical facility, or an emergency crisis line operated by a sexual assault crisis center or other crisis agency. Each of these agencies should have an immediate concern for the safety and physical and emotional wellbeing of the victim. Victim service programs often play dual roles:

- a) Providing Crisis Intervention
- b) Acting as a Liaison with Partner Agencies

*It is important to involve victim services programs as soon as possible regardless of which entity or agency receives the initial report of a sexual assault.*

Note: A victim who is under the age of 18 will require involvement from law enforcement Paulding County SO-Juvenile Division and Division of Family & Child Services (DFCS). Any victim 18 years or older law enforcement response would be from Criminal Investigations Department (CID). Additionally, any survivor taken to an emergency room or medical facility will automatically enact a response from law enforcement, regardless of the victim's age.

## **II. Coordination of Services (LiveSafe Resources Sexual Assault Program and Victim-Witness Assistance Program)**

The initial point of the contact's primary concern should be for the safety and wellbeing of the victim. The role of the victim services provider is to:

1. Identify and address the immediate concerns of the victim (e.g., are they in a safe place, are there family members or friends who should be contacted, do they need emergency medical care, clothing to wear home from the hospital or the crisis center);
2. Provide emotional support and crisis intervention to victims and their families;
3. Be present during the medical exam.

For their own safety and to avoid interfering with the investigation, victim advocates do not go to the crime scene. Victim advocates are not investigators or attorneys and do not investigate cases or give legal advice. Many different agencies come into contact with the victim at various stages after reporting an assault. The victim service organization is often considered the core of this response as they provide consistent support and advocacy throughout the process. The role of the victim advocate should be explained to the victim, and the advocate should make sure the victim is comfortable with the advocate continuing to provide service.

There are two types of advocates that work with victims of sexual assault; community-based and systems-based advocates. While both support the victim at various stages in the process, they are unique in the services they provide. The victim service providers need to

achieve an effective balance between advocating for victims and working within the parameters of the criminal justice system.

A Community-Based Advocate's role is to support the victim with a focus on health and welfare. They serve as confidential sources of support and are able to provide resources and referrals to agencies in the community regardless of involvement in the criminal justice process.

A Systems-Based Advocate's role is to support the victim and keep them engaged during the criminal justice process. They cannot offer confidential services and are generally associated with a government agency. Note that there is overlap between the two roles and it is best for the two to work in partnership to ensure victims' needs are met.

#### **System Based Advocates Role Includes:**

- Maintaining constant communication with victims regarding the status of the criminal court case proceedings;
- Notifying victims of all available services such as support groups, counseling, education, etc.;
- Explaining the Victims' Bill of Rights (O.C.G.A. 17-17-1 et seq.), and how to request the various notifications (such as notices of bond hearing, release of defendant from incarceration, case status, etc.) and how to provide input during the case proceedings;
- Helping prevent additional trauma or injury to the victim;
- Encouraging and supporting victims to become active participants in the case;
- Protecting and ensuring the victims privacy;
- Helping victims in dealing with any problems they encounter during the aftermath of the crime;
- Helping victims complete compensation applications to help with non-reimbursed expenses caused by the crime (such as medical, counseling, prescriptions, lost wages).

#### **Community Based Advocates Role Includes:**

- Notifying Survivors of all available services (such as groups, counseling, education, safe shelter, etc.);
- Helping victims complete compensation applications to help with non-reimbursed expenses caused by crime (such as medical, counseling, prescription, lost wages);
- Helping prevent additional trauma or injury to the victim;
- Encouraging and supporting victims to become active participants in the case;
- Protecting and ensuring the victims privacy;
- Helping victims in dealing with any problems they encounter during the aftermath of the crime.

### **III. Guidelines: Survivor Services**

#### **Initial Report to (LiveSafe Resources or Paulding CAC Crisis Center)**

- Determine if the victim is in immediate danger;
- Ascertain if emergency medical assistance is needed;
- Help identify and address the immediate concerns of the victim;
- Ask if victim wants to report the crime to the police (if not already reported). If the victim chooses to report, the advocate should offer to assist with this process;
- Offer crisis support services;
- Caution the victim against destruction of evidence.

#### **Medical Examination (LiveSafe Resources or Wellstar @ SafePath CAC)**

- Explain medical examination procedures to the victim;
- Provide victim with emotional support during examination if the victim wants this;
- With victim permission, discuss assault with family and provide support to secondary victims;
- Ensure victim has clothing to wear home after the medical examination is complete;

- Give victim written information about compensation and Victims' Bill of Rights, and counseling services available;
- Obtain consents for follow up care and make referrals to other agencies as appropriate.

#### **Pre-Arrest (LiveSafe Resources or Paulding CAC)**

- Accompany victim to any law enforcement proceedings, including interviews, line-up, etc. when applicable (LiveSafe Resources);
- Maintain contact with law enforcement and serve as a liaison between law enforcement and the victim when needed;
- SANE Coordinator or Program Director will regularly communicate contact information for Advocates employed through LiveSafe Resources that may serve as liaisons for victims and law enforcement within Paulding County.

#### **Post-Arrest (Victim-Witness)**

- Make contact with victim to inquire about desires regarding bond of the accused.
- Provide information to the victim about the possibility of the accused's pre-trial release from custody;
- Paulding County Jail will notify the victim of bond status of the accused upon their release. Must have the proper phone number given to law enforcement for the jail notification or the victim may have the Victim-Witness Advocate call the jail to update them with the correct information.

#### **Pre-Trial (Victim-Witness)**

- Establish procedures for notifying victims of case status, using the Victim's Bill of Rights as a guideline;
- Provide the victim with a written, concise explanation of the criminal justice system;
- Facilitate meetings between victim and prosecutor in order to prepare for trial;
- Assist the victim in preparing a Victim Impact Statement to inform the prosecutor of the physical, financial, and emotional impact of the crime;

- Provide guidance for facilitating victim/prosecutor communications concerning plea negotiations, which is a discussion about the possibility of the accused admitting his guilt without a trial in return for an agreed upon sentence;
- Accompany the victim to any pre-trial court hearing or notify the victim of results if the victim is not present;
- Provide notification about postponements or changes in court appearances.

#### **Trial (Victim-Witness and LiveSafe Resources, if necessary)**

- Accompany the victim to court hearings;
- If there is not a separate waiting area for the victim, request that the judge keep contact between the victim and accused to a minimum;
- Prepare the victim for the possibility of media coverage and questions;
- Arrange special assistance or transportation for victims with special needs (medical, handicapped, etc.).

#### **Sentencing (Victim-Witness)**

- Assist the victim with the preparation of a Victim Impact Statement, if not already prepared;
- Communicate with prosecutor about whether victim will be allowed to speak about the crime's impact during sentencing phase;
- Continue court accompaniment and support;
- Educate about possibilities about sentencing.

#### **Post-sentencing (Victim-Witness)**

- Explain to the victim how to request notification from the Georgia Corrections and Parole Board Office of Victim Services of change of status of Custody (escape, death, transfer, etc.);

- Help the victim update or prepare Victim Impact Statement to be mailed to the Georgia Corrections and Parole Board Office of Victim Services and/or, if applicable, to the appropriate division of the Department of Corrections;
- Explain to the victim, procedures for being notified by the Georgia Corrections and Parole Board Office of Victim Services of the release of inmate from the state prison system;
- Explain procedure for the victim to appear in person at the Georgia Corrections and Parole Board Office of Victim Services;
- If applicable, explain restitution collection and procedures;
- Inform the victim of the importance of notifying the Georgia Corrections and Parole Board Office of Victim Services, Probation Division and the Probation Officer of any change of address or phone number;
- Explain to the victim how to claim any personal property held as evidence and assist as necessary;
- Provide guidelines for reporting harassment or violation of protection orders or bond orders, or probation restrictions by assailant;
- Explain procedures regarding those accused who are put on probation or given split sentences, i.e., sentenced to prison followed by a period of parole and/or probation;
- Provide referrals to the victim for other community services.

#### **Ongoing Victim Services (LiveSafe Resources or Paulding CAC (Child Advocacy Center))**

- Provide referrals to the victim for other community services and assist in accessing these services;
- Provide continuing support or counseling as long as the victim requests it;
- Offer a 24-hour crisis line number for victims and their families;
- Offer follow-up medical exams as appropriate as well as referrals to the Health Department for follow-up STI screening and medical exams.

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE**

#### **I. Responding to Victims – The Role of Law Enforcement**

Sexual assault victims are typically traumatized and often embarrassed to report the offense to the police. The fear of investigative and prosecutorial procedures may add to a victim's reluctance to report. Police officers and criminal investigators play a significant role in the victim's willingness to cooperate in the investigation. The victim's ability to cope with after-effects of the crime plays a part in how well the investigation proceeds. It is critical that law enforcement agencies treat victims of sexual assault with compassion and consideration and provide the necessary information and assistance to make their interaction with the criminal justice system easier.

In particular, investigators need to be sensitive to the following areas that may impact a victim's comfort level with reporting an assault; cultural context, social status, economic status, age, physical abilities, biological sex as well as sexual identity. Special training is recommended so that law enforcement can have a better understanding of the issue of sexual assault and its potential impact on a victim. It is important to note that a sexual assault has a greater potential for creating a lasting impact upon the victim, family members and friends than many other crimes.

## **II. Complaint Reporting Procedures**

In most cases, the initial report of the sexual assault by the victim to a law enforcement agency comes through the dispatch or communications center. In these cases, upon receipt of the initial call the dispatch or communications center operator should:

- Determine the victim's name, where they are calling from, where the attack occurred, when it occurred, name and/or description of assailant, direction, and means the assailant used in leaving;
- Advise the victim not to change clothing, shower, or touch anything in the immediate area where the assault occurred;
- Dispatch the appropriate responding personnel, law enforcement and medical if needed. If a victim does not want to report to law enforcement, dispatch should connect the victim with LiveSafe Resources for further assistance by providing the

crisis hotline number 770-427-3390. **Note:** SANE exams are available regardless of a victim's desire to report to law enforcement at the present moment;

- 911 Center will maintain an open line with the victim if there is an impending danger until responding law enforcement personnel has arrived at the victim's location. Maintain a copy of the 911 calls.

The dispatcher or emergency communications personnel are critical in aiding the victim to regain control and composure after the assault. Personnel should remain calm and understanding and avoid being judgmental.

In other cases, the initial complaint may be received directly after the assault from family members, friends, neighbors, or witnesses. Or the complaint may be received from clergy, medical personnel, or others sometime after the assault has taken place. In these instances, similar information still needs to be obtained and appropriate personnel dispatched as necessary.

### **III. Initial Law Enforcement Response**

This pertains to the arrival of a uniformed patrol officer to the reporting victim. It should be emphasized again that a thorough collection of evidence and the establishment of a cooperative relationship with the victim are essential to the identification of the accused and the subsequent prosecution.

The officer should first respond to the victim's physical or medical needs. This may include the application of immediate first aid while waiting for the appropriate emergency medical response unit to arrive and give more complete and thorough medical attention prior to transporting the victim to the appropriate medical facility. It is necessary for the responding officer(s) to address these needs by keeping the victim calm, by remaining empathetic, and advising the victim of all procedures so that the victim can make informed decisions.

It is critical for law enforcement officers to let victims know that reporting the sexual assault is their choice. Empowering the victim to make their own decision in this matter is essential to restoring a sense of power after a traumatic event like sexual assault. If a victim decides that

they are not interested in engaging in the criminal justice process at that time, an officer should conduct a “non-criminal report” while ensuring that the content of the report is just as detailed as a criminal report. These details could provide support for investigation and prosecution down the road should the victim chose to report at a later point in time. It is normal for a victim to initially have hesitation in reporting to law enforcement and later want to go forward in the process. Regardless of the victim’s choice to report, they are eligible to receive all services from LiveSafe Resources which includes a free SANE exam.

Detectives should make every effort to increase the victim’s comfort level prior to transporting the victim to LiveSafe Resources for a SANE exam. In the case where the victim requires immediate medical attention, take or have transported via ambulance to the nearest emergency room. For minors needing immediate medical care, follow the Paulding Child Abuse Protocol.

Advise the victim of the importance of the physical evidence the medical facility will obtain in order to successfully identify and prosecute the assailant(s). If the victim needs and requests the support of a family member or friend, the officer should arrange contact as quickly as possible. The Detective or Officer should advise the survivor that a trained staff/volunteer sexual assault program advocate will meet the survivor at the designated location to lend assistance.

The primary responsibilities of the responding officer(s) and/or detective are to:

- Ensure the immediate safety and security of the victim;
- Inquire if the victim desires to file a criminal report or non-criminal report at that time;
- Determine jurisdiction of sexual assault when possible;
- Contact appropriate investigative agencies for possible activation of SANE Nurse;
- While limiting investigative questioning to those matters necessary to identify the victim and to describe and locate the suspect, obtain preliminary information necessary to complete an original incident report, including preliminary interviews of all witnesses, the victim, and the initial reporter of the crime. The initial incident report should also include all the elements of the crime;
- Conduct questioning in private and only by one officer, when possible;

- Determine possible use of date rape drugs;
- Protect the crime scene by securing physical evidence. This may include fingerprints, trace evidence, victim's clothing, or additional evidence that may be collected from the victim. This initial protection should prevent the unnecessary loss of physical evidence until appropriate evidence collection personnel can respond to process the crime scene. However, at this stage it is unnecessary to ask questions beyond the point of securing the scene to continue the investigation;
- Inform the victim of the Victim's Bill of Rights;
- Inform the victim of medical and support services available and of the importance of seeking an immediate medical examination as injuries may be unnoticed initially;
- Inform the victim of the need to refrain from washing, showering, brushing teeth, using a mouthwash, smoking, eating, drinking, douching, urinating, or defecating to prevent the loss of valuable physical evidence. Stress the evidentiary importance of preserving personal clothing and articles from the crime scene. However, if the victim has bathed or douched, proceed with collection of evidence;
- Determine if victim will consent to a sexual assault examination;
- Transport the victim to the appropriate medical facility or SANE exam site. To protect the identity of the victim, when possible, a non-uniformed officer should transport the victim to the medical facility in an unmarked police vehicle;
- Inform SANE of any information about the assault, which may be useful in the medical examination and evidence collection procedures. Advise medical personnel/SANE whether or not the victim's clothing is needed to be sent to the Crime Lab. When necessary, present medical personnel with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Sexual Assault Kit;
- Remain on hand at the hospital or exam site for safety and security of the victim and to assist with return transportation;
- In accordance with O.C.G.A. 35-1-2, when a forensic medical examination is performed, evidence is collected, and the alleged victim has requested that law enforcement officials be notified, the individual performing such exam, or his or her designee, shall notify the appropriate law enforcement agency of the collection of such evidence. Law enforcement officials shall take possession of such evidence

no later than 96 hours of being notified. It shall be the duty of every law enforcement officer who takes possession of the evidence to ensure that such evidence is submitted to the Georgia Bureau of Investigations within 30 days of it being collected, in accordance with the procedures established by the division.

- Ensure that evidence is properly stored and identified for not less than ten years after the report of the alleged sexual assault. If the victim does not cooperate with law enforcement or prosecution, evidence shall be stored and identified for not less than 12 months from the date any such physical evidence is collected;
- Prepare an incident report which should include the following:
  - Details concerning the type of offense committed including the elements of the crime or crimes;
  - When and where the assault occurred;
  - The extent of injuries to the victim;
  - Whether a weapon was involved;
  - The identity and description of the assailant(s) if known and relationship to the victim, including any known address or work location of the assailant;
  - Any statements the victim made to the responding officer;
  - If responder had contact with perpetrator, any statements the perpetrator made;
  - Possibility of a drug facilitated sexual assault;
  - Names, addresses and phone numbers of any witnesses or other persons who may reach the victim;
  - Victim's personal information including phone numbers and addresses for home, work, and a contact person's address and phone number.
- Forward a copy of the report to the assigned investigator or supervisor.

#### **IV. Activation of SANE Nurse**

The SANE Program operates in conjunction with LiveSafe Resources to serve female, male and intersex victims of sexual assault ages thirteen years and older. The SANE Program exists to meet the needs of the patient and law enforcement providing services for acute cases. Acute cases are as follow: vaginal assault within 120 hours; anal assault 72 hours; oral assault 24 hours and saliva on skin within 96 hours of the reported sexual assault. Any case that presents outside the time frame of 120 hours requires a medical consultation with LiveSafe Resources SANE Program Coordinator to determine the next appropriate steps which may still involve evidence collection through a SANE Exam. There have been times where DNA evidence has been collected from a victim of vaginal assault up to 10 days post assault.

*Note: If a victim is being seen at SafePath Children's Advocacy Center for forensic medical services, follow the procedures of the center.*

- The SANE Nurse is activated by Law Enforcement (Detective/Investigator) with jurisdiction in Paulding County or by LiveSafe Resources Advocate or SANE in non-law enforcement reported cases when evidence collection is required. An investigator/detective or supervisor of the investigative unit activates the SANE Nurse;
- The SANE Nurse will activate a Sexual Assault Advocate to respond for the examination;
- The SANE Suite is located at LiveSafe Resources, 48 Henderson Street, Marietta, GA 30064;
- Access to the SANE Suite is gained by entering through the SANE Suite Door at the rear of the building. Law enforcement, SANE Nurses, and LiveSafe Resources Advocate may park in the designated spaces near the SANE exam suite;
- Law enforcement will wait until the SANE Nurse or LiveSafe Resources Advocate arrives to gain access to the SANE Suite;
- Any sexual assault victim with injuries requiring immediate medical attention (i.e., fractures, lacerations, strangulation, etc. requiring treatment by physician or impaired by alcohol/drugs) will need to be transported to the nearest Emergency Room for treatment. If the sexual assault victim is transported to the Emergency Room, the SANE can be activated once the victim is discharged from the hospital. In cases where collection timeframes are expiring the SANE may be able to obtain

emergency credentialing or guide a physician through evidence collection and the chain of custody process;

- Law enforcement should refer to local EMS protocols when determining whether a patient is stable enough to be transported to the exam site at LiveSafe Resources (not by ambulance) or whether the victim's condition dictates the closest medical facility;
- Sexual Assault victims cannot be received at LiveSafe Resources if transported by EMS (per state law);
- If present, law enforcement must remain at the exam site until such time as the exam is complete;
- Investigative bodies must take possession of the evidence at the conclusion of the SANE Exam.

## **V. Role During Medical Examination**

Law Enforcement personnel should not be present inside the exam room during the medical examination of the victim, with the exception of cases in which the victim is in police custody. During exams with victims that are in custody, law enforcement personnel may become privy to private communications. Some of these communications are protected by HIPAA and it is important for law enforcement in the room to note that protection and the victim's right to privacy of their medical history. The law enforcement officer inside the exam room should not be the same person investigating the case and should not disclose any information heard or observed inside the exam room.

## **Follow Up Interview**

An investigating officer will immediately be assigned to the case. The officer's responsibilities are to:

- Compile the basic investigative information contained in the initial interview, criminal complaint and evidentiary examination;
- Determine the victim's emotional and physical ability to participate in an in-depth

follow-up interview and schedule the interview as soon as possible after the incident;

- During this interview, the investigator should find a comfortable and private setting and explain the need for obtaining detailed information concerning the crime, including; details of the sexual act, the suspect's modus operandi, clothing, means of restraining the victim, the use or threat of weapons; words or instructions given to the victim; marks, scars, tattoos, deformities or other unusual physical features or body odors of the suspect, and any witnesses, participants or accomplices that may be described or identified by the victim;
- Document the victim's actions in response to the attack to include the type and degree of any resistance offered, the nature of any acquaintance with the suspect, and the state of mind of the victim during the attack;
- Determine the degree to which the victim has received support from family, friends and victim advocacy programs and encourage or facilitate these interactions.

### **Ongoing Involvement in the Case**

During the investigation of the sexual assault and after the arrest of a suspected assailant, the investigating officer continues to have a responsibility to interact with the victim by:

- Soliciting the victim's continued support in the investigation;
- Work with the prosecutor's officer to develop the case and to familiarize the victim with the kind of questions, which may be asked during the cross examination;
- Maintain continued contact with the victim to ensure that appropriate support services are available.

## **VI. Interviewing Procedures**

The investigative officer should be trauma-informed, non-judgmental, and professional. It is not necessary that the interviewer be of the same sex as the victim. However, every effort should be made to accommodate a request from the victim for a same sex interviewer. Privacy

for the interview is very important. When possible, the interviewer should select a location that allows both visual and sound privacy as well as freedom from unnecessary interruptions.

While it is generally preferred that the interview be conducted in a setting where only the interviewer and the victim are present there are occasions when additional persons may need to be present. In some cases, it may be necessary for an interpreter to be present. However, consideration should be given to any request from the victim or the victim advocate for the advocate to be present.

The investigator or interviewer's role in connection with the investigation should be explained to the victim. Also, the investigator should inform the victim of the reason for asking certain sensitive questions and why the victim will be asked to provide explicit details of the assault. The interviewer also should upon completion of the interview inform the victim of additional steps needed in the investigation: composites, photographic, or live lineups, and means of obtaining updates on the investigation or judicial process.

It is important to keep in mind the sensitive nature of communications between the victim and investigative body. The trauma of a sexual assault can be both physical and psychological. The feelings experienced after an assault by a victim may be similar to the feelings experienced by a law enforcement officer after a critical incident on the job. It is vital to keep this in mind when interviewing the victim as they may be experiencing shock and a variety of other psychological impacts. Establishing rapport with the victim can lead to a more successful interview and long-term cooperation in the criminal justice process.

Privacy during the interview is extremely important as the victim's reluctance to reveal certain details may be greatly magnified. The investigator should use language that is readily understood by the victim. For example, if the victim uses slang terms for the parts of the body it may be because of lack of knowledge of the proper terms. If the interviewer must use slang terms, it should be done so unhesitatingly and without embarrassment. Keep in mind there are some questions that are inappropriate and do not aid in the investigation.

The skilled interviewer should be familiar with the specific needs of the victim to be interviewed.

## **VII. Guidelines: Law Enforcement and Dispatcher**

### **Dispatch**

- Determine if assailant is present;
- Obtain victim's name, location, where and when attack occurred, name or description of assailant, means assailant used in leaving;
- Determine if emergency medical care is needed and dispatch accordingly;
- Dispatch patrol officer(s) according to departmental policy;
- Advise victim not to change clothing, shower, or touch anything in the immediate area where the assault occurred;
- Make every attempt to keep sexual assault victim on-line until patrol officer(s) arrive;
- Keep copy of 911 calls.

### **First Responder**

- Ensure immediate safety and security of victim;
- Respond to victim's physical and emotional needs;
- Determine need for emergency medical care;
- Ask sexual assault victim if the suspected assailant is at the crime scene;
- Ask victim for description and/or identification of assailant and broadcast be-on-the lookout message for the suspect;
- Advise victim of evidence preservation steps;
- Preserve the crime scene (if sexual assault was recent). Contact supervisor/investigations division for possible activation of SANE nurse;
- Ask victim if the assistance of a family member or friend is needed and make appropriate contact;
- Complete incident report by obtaining preliminary information; interview with the witnesses, victim, and initial reporter of the crime;

### **Medical Examination**

*If emergency medical attention is required, the victim will be taken to a hospital; otherwise the victim should be taken to LiveSafe Resources for free care and services through the SANE Program. The following guidelines are for a victim requiring emergency medical care.*

- Inform Emergency Room Physician, Mid-level Provider or Registered Nurse of any information about the assault, which might be useful in preserving evidence in order for a forensic medical exam to be performed by a trained SANE;
- If law enforcement has reason to believe that date rape drugs might have been used, request necessary samples for proper testing;
- Present Emergency Room Physician or Mid-level Provider with the GBI standardized sexual assault kit if necessary;
- Maintain and secure all evidence.
- Inform the victim a sexual assault advocate will be meeting them at the location

### **Investigators**

- Arrange transportation for victim to and from hospital or SANE examination site;
- Keep sexual assault victim informed about the state of the case;
- Address victim's concerns for safety and the possibility that the assailant will return;
- Accommodate victim's needs during investigator processes, which require victim participation, e.g., interviews, hearings, and line-ups;
- Notify sexual assault victim when suspect is taken into custody;
- When warrant is issued, request **No Contact and No Bond** provision for bond;
- When warrant is issued, provide update victim of status;
- Upon request, permit a victim advocate or LiveSafe Resources Sexual Assault advocate, to be available on premises during line-ups to provide emotional support for the victim;
- Request copy of the 911 call and initial report.

### **Initial Interview – Detective**

- Determine information needs for police and prosecutor from victim interviews to minimize necessity of repetitious interviews;

- Provide appropriate steps to make sexual assault victim comfortable with the interview, i.e., ask victim about gender preference for interview or allow victim to have a LiveSafe Resources sexual assault advocate or friend present during the interview;
- Provide interpreter services, if needed, including language translation for the non-English speaking and signing for the hard of hearing and deaf sexual assault victims;
- If you have probable cause, proceed with the case;
- If there is a stated policy about the use of video and/or audio taping of the interview, inform the victim of this process and how the tape will be used in later proceedings.

### **MEDICAL ACCOMPANIMENT AND ADVOCACY**

*From: Division of Public Health Standards/Guidelines for Georgia Sexual Assault/Sexual Offense Programs*

*The Sexual Assault Response Team works to secure written agreements with the local law enforcement agencies so that the law enforcement personnel will call the SANE nurse when they receive a sexual assault related call and the SANE nurse will call LiveSafe Resources victim advocate. Note: If a victim is being seen at SafePath Children's Advocacy Center for forensic medical services, follow the procedures of the center.*

In the event of reaching the 120-hour mark paired with the absence of a SANE, law enforcement will accompany victim to hospital facility for the forensic medical exam to be performed according to hospital policy and activate a LiveSafe Resources Advocate through the 24-hour crisis hotline. Otherwise, the best method for sexual assault kit collection for preservation of evidence and trauma-informed processes is with a specialty trained SANE Nurse at LiveSafe Resources.

The medical facility must obtain informed consent from the patient explaining all tests and procedures, which will be given.

The medical facility should perform the following for all patients of sexual assault: Physical exam by an Emergency Room Physician/Mid-level Provider/SANE, treatment for any injuries, collection of evidence for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, pregnancy test, and

prophylactic medications for such sexually transmitted infections as chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis. Post coital hormonal prophylaxis will be offered to prevent pregnancy and referral for baseline serologic tests for hepatitis virus and screening for any appropriate sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV.

LiveSafe Resources SANE Nurses will offer and provide prophylactic STI medications, a urine pregnancy test and pregnancy prevention medications to all victims that seek services at LiveSafe Resources. Please note, LiveSafe Resources does not provide STI testing.

LiveSafe Resources will work with the medical staff so that the facility will allow, with the victim's permission, the staff or sexual assault advocate to be present in the exam room as they will assist the victim at the Emergency Room and throughout the exam.

The LiveSafe Resources Advocate explains to the victim their rights and options. The SANE will explain the nature of the evidence collection and the physical exam, tests and lab work which should be provided, prophylactic pregnancy prevention medication and other prophylactic medications to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, options regarding testing for HIV and hepatitis B. The LiveSafe Resources Advocate and SANE will discuss follow-up options with the victim/patient.

The LiveSafe Resources Advocate provides information regarding the emotional and physical reactions which the victim may experience, and the assistance available to the victim, including where to obtain counseling, name of detective, and information about applying for victim compensation funds.

The LiveSafe Resources Advocate provides the victim and those persons accompanying the victim with handouts explaining services available through LiveSafe Resources Sexual Assault Program and how the center will contact the victim after they return home to assist them.

The LiveSafe Resources SANE Program will maintain internal protocol on performing medical forensic examinations in accordance with current evidence-based recommendations of practice.

The LiveSafe Resources Sexual Assault Program will provide education to the emergency department and other medical staff on how to respond to and to treat the emotional needs of the patient, and symptoms of the Rape Trauma Syndrome.

### **Non-Reporting Victims**

Per 42 U.S.C. § 3796gg-4(d), victims of sexual assault have the right to decide whether or not to report to law enforcement. The following steps should be followed if a victim 18 years of age or older chooses not to report to law enforcement but chooses to have a forensic-medical exam done:

- An advocate will speak with a victim to explain their rights, discuss their concerns, and discuss the pros and cons of an exam and reporting to law enforcement;
- The SANE will explain the procedure if the victim chooses to report;
- The SANE will store the evidence indefinitely in a locked location within the LiveSafe Resources' SANE exam suite;
- Only SANE RNs and the LiveSafe Resources Director of Sexual Assault Programs will have the keypad code to the storage unit in which the exam kits are stored;
- An advocate will attempt to contact victims for follow-up and to discuss options should a victim choose to report later;
- The Director of Sexual Assault Programs, SANE Program Coordinator, or SANE Program Manager will maintain chain of custody and keep detailed record of the date of evidence collection and storage as well as the date and details of any release of evidence.

### **Special Note to all entities handling Sexual Assault Kits**

In support of Georgia State House Bill 255, also known as The Sexual Assault Reform Act of 2021, a sexual assault kit tracking system (SAKTS) has been developed for the state through a partnership between the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI). The reform act requires all medical facilities, state, county and city agencies, and persons that handle, process or store sexual assault kits (SAKs) to be registered users of the system by June 30, 2022. All community partners that possess SAKs are required to enter the SAKs into the tracking system.

## **Prosecution**

### **I. Victim Expectation and the Role of the Prosecutor**

The following guidelines are listed as suggestions for determining feasibility of prosecution and progression of any potential criminal case. However, final decisions to prosecute and/or the disposition of the case are within the discretion of the prosecutor assigned and based upon law and evidence. Sexual assault victims have been subjected to one of the most traumatic experiences possible. The following recommendations are made in an attempt to address the issues in the prosecution of the case.

### **II. Recommendations for Prosecutors in Working with Sexual Assault Victims**

The Prosecuting Attorney should assume ultimate responsibility for informing victims of the status of a case in accordance with the Crime Victim's Bill of Rights (OCGA 17-17-1 et seq).

This responsibility includes the following specific statutory requirements:

- Whenever possible, the prosecuting attorney shall notify the victim prior to any proceeding in which the release of the accused will be considered. (O.C.G.A. 17-17-7(c));
- Whenever possible, the prosecuting attorney shall offer the victim the opportunity to express the victim's opinion on the release of the accused pending judicial proceedings (O.C.G.A. 17-17-7(d));
- Upon initial contact with a victim, a prosecuting attorney or victim witness advocate shall give prompt notification to the victim of the following:
  - The procedural steps in processing a criminal case;
  - The rights and procedures of victims under the Victim's Bill of Rights;
  - Suggested procedures if the victim is subjected to threats or intimidation;
  - The names and telephone numbers of contact persons at both the office of the custodial authority and in the prosecuting attorney's office (17-17-8(a)).

- If requested in writing by the victim and to the extent possible, the prosecuting attorney or victim witness advocate shall give prompt advance notification of any scheduled court proceedings and notice of any changes to that schedule. Court proceedings shall include any changes to that schedule. Court proceedings shall include, but not be limited to pretrial commitment hearings, arraignment, motion hearings, trial, sentencing, appellate review, and post-conviction relief. The prosecuting attorney shall notify all victims of the requirement to make such request in writing (17-17-8(b));
- The prosecuting attorney or victim witness advocate shall offer the victim the opportunity to express the victim's opinion on the disposition of an accused's case, including the views of the victim regarding plea or sentence negotiations and the perpetrator's participation in pretrial or post-conviction diversion programs (17-17-11);
- Upon written request of the victim, the prosecuting attorney or victim witness shall notify the victim of the following:
  - That the accused has filed a motion for a new trial or an appeal of his or her conviction;
  - Whether the accused has been released on bail or other recognizance pending the disposition of the motion or appeal;
  - The time and place of any appellate court proceedings relating to the motion or appeal and any changes in the time or place of those proceedings;
  - The result of the motion or appeal (17-17-12(a)).
- In the event the accused is granted a new trial or the conviction is reversed or remanded and the case is returned to the trial court for further proceedings, the victim shall be entitled to request the rights and privileges provided by the Victim's Bill of Rights (17-17-12(c));
- Each prosecutor to ensure that the above statutory requirements are satisfied should establish procedures compatible with a particular jurisdiction;
- If feasible, prosecutors should charge and pursue to the fullest extent of the law defendants who harass, threaten, injure, or otherwise attempt to intimidate or retaliate against victims or witnesses;

- Prosecutors should discourage case continuances once the State has completed its trial preparation. When such delays are necessary, every effort should be made to accommodate victims and witnesses in determining when to reschedule the court proceeding. The new court date, as well as the reason for the continuance, should be explained to the victim;
- Prosecutor's offices should establish and maintain direct liaison with victims and with victim service agencies.

### **III. Suggested Criteria in Deciding Whether or Not to Prosecute**

Although there is no set number or type of factors, which must be present before a case involving sexual assault is deemed prosecutable, there are variables, which should be considered in making the decision. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- The availability and extent of cooperation from the victim;
- Whether or not there is independent evidence of the assault, such as eyewitnesses, photographs of injuries, forensic evidence, admissions of defendant, etc.;
- What impact testifying would have on the victim;
- The existence of a history of assaults, whether charged or uncharged, by the defendant.

### **IV. General Procedures for Handling Sexual Assault Cases**

#### Assignment of Cases

The case will be assigned to the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit employed within the District Attorney's Office. The prosecutor will employ "vertical prosecution," i.e., if an attorney is initially assigned a particular case, then that attorney should handle the case until its final disposition.

#### First Appearance

The victim will receive a phone call from the victim witness advocate that will explain the following:

- Whether or not the defendant has a bond;
- Request any information from the victim about their feelings on a bond;
- Establish the relationship between the victim and the defendant;
- Get any other contact information from the victim, including a secondary contact in case of emergencies;
- Give a brief description of the Judicial process and what to expect moving forward;
- Call the victim after first appearance to discuss what occurred and if a bond was granted.

#### Contact by Victim-witness Advocate

- Send out a Victim Packet to the address listed;
- Call the victim to establish a relationship and address any concerns;
- Explain the Judicial System and what to expect;
  - It is the State moving forward with the charges, not the victim;
  - Parties are the State of Georgia vs. Defendant;
- Find out if the victim is safe in their current location and offer all resources;
- Answer any questions;
- Determine victim cooperation;
- Discuss any details that may be pertinent to the case that was not received by law enforcement and forward that information to the DA's Office Investigator
- Establish the history between the defendant and the victim
- Complete a Lethality Assessment

#### Initial Screening

After assignment, the prosecutor should initially review sexual assault cases as soon as possible; the purpose of this initial screening is to determine what additional investigation needs to be done in preparing the case for disposition. In conducting this initial screening, the prosecutor should consider the facts of the case and the following variables:

- The extent or seriousness of the injuries;
- Whether or not the assault involved a gun or other weapon;
- Defendant's prior criminal history;
- Status of defendant's arrest;
- Victim cooperation;
- Presence and amount of information and evidence of the assault.

As part of the initial screening, the prosecutor should make a diligent effort to contact the victim as quickly as possible upon receipt of a case. During this initial contact, the following information should be reviewed with the victim:

- It is the State, not the victim, which must determine what disposition is to be made of the case. This is particularly important in cases in which the victim's attacker is a family member or close friend;
- The victim will testify in trial;
- The parties in the action are the State of Georgia and the defendant;
- Whether the victim knows the attacker, determine if the defendant has talked to the victim after the incident and what was said;
- Convey that the victim is not responsible for the defendant's behavior; the defendant bears that responsibility;
- Encourage the victim and tell them that they are not alone;
- Determine whether the victim has received the statutory required notices and information, and refer to those agencies, which may be in operation in the community to assist sexual assault victims.

In the event the victim is hostile or is otherwise unwilling or unable to cooperate with the attorney in the prosecution of the case, then it will be necessary for the prosecutor to determine if there exists sufficient independent evidence to prove the elements of the assault. Such independent evidence may include but is not limited to the following:

- Availability of the victim;
- Injuries observed by someone other than the victim;
- Medical reports/evidence of the assault;
- Eyewitnesses to the crime or independent evidence of assault;

- A 911 call or other recording of a prior statement of the victim concerning the assault;
- The presence/availability of physical evidence indicating the crime occurred, i.e., semen, blood, etc.;
- Admissions by the defendant;
- All photographic evidence gathered at the scene or subsequently;
- History of assaults, whether charged or uncharged, by the defendant.

If a victim is unwilling or unable to cooperate in the prosecution of the case but sufficient independent evidence exists, then the prosecutor may pursue the case. If such independent evidence does not exist, then the prosecutor may dismiss all charges and immediately notify the victim of this action.

#### Pre-Trial Motions & Guidelines

Prosecutors will make every effort to engage in aggressive pre-trial motions practice to protect and advocate for victims of sexual assault by limiting unlawful inquiry into the victim's character or sexual history. Prosecutors should also consider whether or not each victim requires special accommodations for purposes of testifying in court.

When it has been determined to proceed with a case, the following preparations, when appropriate, should be made before the case is presented to the Grand Jury:

- Any corroborating witnesses should be interviewed;
- Name, addresses and phone numbers of all witnesses are included in the case File;
- A complete criminal history of the defendant is in the file;
- Where applicable, photographs of the victim's injuries have been received and reviewed;
- Contact has been made with the victim-witness assistant and service agencies, which have been working with the victim;
- All police reports have been received and reviewed;
- Results of all reports surrounding the case.

## Trial

In sexual assault cases there are several factors which, if not unique to these offenses, are more likely to have an impact on the trial of the case. For this reason, the prosecutor should be sensitive to the presence and influence of these factors in preparing for and in conducting the trial:

- One such factor is the extreme embarrassment or humiliation a victim may suffer in having to testify in open court as to the assault. Efforts should be made to prepare the victim for these emotions and to “shield” the victim as much as possible during his/her testimony;
- Another factor to assess in the trial of these crimes is the prejudice and preconceived notions people often have when someone has been sexually assaulted. More so than in other cases, people will scrutinize the dress and conduct of a victim and the choices he/she made prior to the assault in judging the case;
- Similarly, jurors are likely to pay closer attention to the dress and conduct of the victim in court than they would with a burglary charge. The prosecutor should be sensitive to this in presenting the case to the jury;
- Depending on the type of assault, there may be other factors that will have a special impact on the case because it is a sexual assault crime. Attempts should be made to identify and deal with these factors during the presentation of the State’s case;
- Consideration should be given to using expert testimony on victim and offender dynamics in appropriate cases. Ways to use the hearsay exceptions should also be explored when confronted with an uncooperative victim.

## Recommended Guidelines: Prosecution Working with Victims

- Notify sexual assault victim of all hearings and changes in schedules;
- Consider the needs of the sexual assault victim when scheduling case-related activities, e.g., religious holidays, health requirements, family activities and occupational requirements;

- Facilitate victim participation in all activities at which the assailant has a right to be Present;
- Establish communication methods to avoid unnecessary trips to the courthouse, e.g., on-call system for victims or voice mail system for victims to call in and receive current case status information;
- Object to requests for continuances that are dilatory and do not benefit the State or victim.

#### Preliminary Hearings, Arraignment and Bail Hearings

- Make every effort to discuss desired conditions of release with sexual assault victim prior to bail hearing;
- Request that any release on bond include protection orders for the victim; Request that any perpetrator that is granted a release on bond, that the conditions of bond include no contact with victims when possible.
- Keep sexual assault victim informed about the detention status of the suspected assailant and/or make sure that the victim has the name and telephone number of a contact person at the detention facility that will inform the victim as to detention status;
- When possible, allow the victim to express concerns about the danger posed by the suspected assailant.

#### Plea Negotiations

- Inform sexual assault victim of reasons to consider a negotiated plea, when appropriate;
- Describe optional courses of action other than a negotiated plea;
- In determining appropriate case disposition, take into consideration the desires/concerns of the victim;
- Consider the needs of the victim in accepting a plea, e.g., restitution, protection, emotional security;
- Provide sexual assault victim some method for making concerns, feelings, needs, etc. known to the court at or before sentencing on a plea.

### Trial

- Provide separate areas for victims and defense witnesses;
- Provide court accompaniment for sexual assault victim;
- Keep victim informed about court schedules: dates, times and places;
- If requested by victim, provide information and explanation for the victim's absence to employers/teachers as to the victim's presence at court proceedings.

### Sentencing

- Ensure opportunity for a victim impact statement as a part of sentencing considerations;
- Provide sexual assault victims some method for making their concerns, feelings, needs, etc., known to the court at or before the sentencing hearing;
- Include victim needs as part of sentence, e.g., restitution, protection, emotional security.

### Post Sentencing

- Inform victim of the name and telephone number of the appropriate contact person at the Georgia Corrections and Parole Board Office of Victim Services for such information as changes in offender status, dates of scheduled parole hearings, method for updating victim impact statement, etc.;
- Whenever possible, accompany victim to any face-to-face parole intervention;
- Provide priority prosecution for violations of release conditions;

## **Appendix I**

In combination with the Paulding County Child Abuse Protocol, the following guideline should be used upon the occurrence of a sexual assault of a minor<sup>2</sup> in Paulding County:

## I. Determine Timeline of Assault

Forensic medical examinations are recommended as soon as possible after the assault but within 120 hours because passage of time and the healing process can obscure medical evidence and decrease effectiveness of prophylactic medications. The child should have prompt evaluation if they have signs or symptoms of injury, infection or another active medical condition. If there is ever any question regarding the timeline or appropriateness of a SANE exam, there should be coordination with the LiveSafe Resources SANE On Call Nurse to determine the next best steps.

- (1) If the sexual assault or incident in question occurred over five days ago, contact law enforcement and/or Department of Family & Child Services to make a report. Either law enforcement or the Department of Family & Child Services will coordinate with Paulding CAC (Paulding Child Advocacy Center) to coordinate forensic interview as well as follow up advocacy and medical services.
- (2) If the sexual assault or incident in question occurred within the last five days, contact law enforcement and/or Department of Family & Child Services to make a report and then proceed to determine the appropriate venue for the SANE exam.

## II. Determine Venue for SANE Exam

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<sup>2</sup> Note: All Mandated Reporting procedures must be followed with any person under the age of eighteen. Mandatory Reporters include but are not limited to faculty/teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, law enforcement professionals and other persons who participating in providing care and treatment to minors.

The primary concern for any survivor of sexual assault is their safety and any immediate medical attention takes priority over completing a SANE exam. In the event an individual requires immediate medical attention; it is critical to ensure that they are taken to the nearest emergency room. The safety and wellbeing of the survivor takes priority.

- (1) If the minor is medically stable and only requires a SANE exam, those **twelve years and younger**, contact SafePath Children's Advocacy Center or they should be taken directly to Children's Health Care of Atlanta (CHOA) for a SANE exam
  - a. SafePath Children's Advocacy Center - 736 Whitlock Ave NW Suite 600, Marietta, GA 30064; Phone: 770-801-3465
  - b. Children's Health Care of Atlanta – Scottish Rite Hospital; 1001 Johnson Ferry Rd NE, Atlanta GA 30342 Phone: 404-785-5437
  - c. Children's Health Care of Atlanta – Hughes Spalding Hospital; 35 Jesse Jr. SE Atlanta GA 30303 Phone: 404-785-5437
  
- (2) If the minor is medically stable and only requires a SANE exam, those **thirteen years and older** may be taken directly to SafePath Children's Advocacy Center or LiveSafe Resources for a free SANE exam after activation of the SANE on call or may also go to Children's Health Care of Atlanta Hospitals for a SANE exam but may incur a cost to the patient and family.
  - a. LiveSafe Resources; 48 Henderson St. Marietta GA 30064  
Crisis Line: 770-427-3390
  - b. SafePath Children's Advocacy Center; 736 Whitlock Ave NW Suite 600, Marietta, GA 30064; Phone: 770-801-3465

### III. Follow-Up & Advocacy Services

Every minor thirteen years and older who completed a SANE exam at LiveSafe Resources will be provided information on the SafePath Children's Center services for medical follow up as well as given the option to complete a referral document with their guardian after completion of SANE exam at LiveSafe Resources.

Note that these minors as well as their guardians are eligible for follow up

services through LiveSafe Resources in addition to services through Paulding CAC (Paulding Child Advocacy Center) which may include advocacy, individual and group counseling services.

Any minor that completes a SANE exam at CHOA will be directed by either law enforcement or DFCS to coordinate with Paulding CAC (Paulding Child Advocacy Center) for a forensic interview as well as follow up services including advocacy, counseling and group therapy.

#### IV. Forensic Interview Procedures

The Child Advocacy Center is an integral part of the investigation between DFCS and law enforcement. When an interview of a minor is required at any time during the investigation, it must be done through a Child Advocacy Center or other location that has trained forensic interviewers. In general, minors most appropriate for a forensic interview include those whom there are concerns regarding the following; physical abuse with injuries, severe negligence, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and/or abduction or witness to any type of violence including but not limited to domestic violence, rape and murders.

Video recorded forensic interviews of children 3-18 who may have experienced abuse or exposure to violence should be conducted at the Paulding CAC (Paulding Child Advocacy Center) or another Children's Advocacy Center and will be scheduled at the request of DFCS, law enforcement, district attorney's office or the court only. Paulding CAC-is also able to interview adults with special needs, upon request.



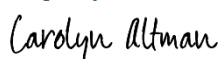

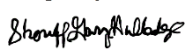
Intake reports should be made to the Children's Advocacy Center staff who will schedule an interview time. To ensure that all relevant information is obtained in the initial interview, all team members involved in the investigation should be present. For additional information and details on the Forensic Interview Procedures, please reference the Paulding County Child Abuse Protocol.

## Appendix II

Additionally, agencies should protect, as much as the law allows, the confidential information from release to the media. Georgia's Open Records Law § 50-18-72, subsection 4 defines that law enforcement reports, except the initial incident report, are protected from public release until the case investigation is no longer pending : *“Records of law enforcement, prosecution, or regulatory agencies in any pending investigation or prosecution of criminal or unlawful activity, other than initial police arrest reports and initial incident reports; provided, however, that an investigation or prosecution shall no longer be deemed to be pending when all direct litigation involving such investigation and prosecution has become final or otherwise terminated; and provided, further, that this paragraph shall not apply to records in the possession of an agency that is the subject of the pending investigation or prosecution.”*

Additionally, certain victim incident information is protected under the Official Code of Georgia Title 16, Chapter 6 *“Sexual Offenses”*, § 23 *“Publication of Name or Identity of Female Raped or Assaulted with Intent to Commit Rape”*. However, this code section has been challenged. The Georgia Court of Appeals ruled this code section unconstitutional (see *Dye v. Wallace*, 553 S.E.2d 561 (2001), 274 Ga.257); therefore, agencies can no longer rely on this code section to justify their withholding of victim information, that appears on the face sheet of the original incident report as a shield for victim's identification. In all cases it is recommended that the agency work collaboratively with their respective attorney before the release of any victim information.

The signing of this Protocol signifies the continued support and involvement of each agency listed for supporting the continued project functioning of the Paulding County Protocol for Responding to Victims of Sexual Assault

<div>Signed by:  013B127DFF384E4...</div> <div>District Attorney Robert Lane</div> <div>Representing: Paulding Judicial Circuit</div>	<div>12/9/2024</div> <div>Date Signed</div>
<div>Signed by:  F331264E48CE4A6...</div> <div>Chief Magistrate Judge Martin Valbuena</div> <div>Representing: Paulding Magistrate Court</div>	<div>12/18/2024</div> <div>Date Signed</div>
<div>Signed by:  967FD9B9CC854C1...</div> <div>Juvenile Judge Carolyn Altman</div> <div>Representing: Paulding Juvenile Court</div>	<div>12/10/2024</div> <div>Date Signed</div>
<div>Signed by:  F9D7F99E5EC04CE...</div> <div>Solicitor General Luana Nolen</div> <div>Representing: Paulding County Solicitor's Office</div>	<div>12/10/2024</div> <div>Date Signed</div>
<div>Signed by:  C2CBA80A08894BB...</div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>12/9/2024</div> <div></div>

Sheriff Gary Gullledge

Date Signed

Representing: Paulding County Sheriff's Office

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Chief Joe Duvall

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Chief Joe Duvall

Date Signed

Representing: Dallas Police Department

Signed by:

Chief Michael Turner

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12/9/2024

Chief Mike Turner

Date Signed

Representing: Hiram Police Department

Signed by:

Tabitha Collins, RN – Nurse Manager

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12/9/2024

Tabitha Collins, RN – Nurse Manager

Date Signed

Representing: Paulding County Health Department

Signed by:

Lisa Mello, CEO

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12/9/2024

Lisa Mello, Chief Executive Officer

Date Signed

Representing: LiveSafe Resources

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Nia Monet Phillips

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12/9/2024

Nia Phillips, RN, BSN

Date Signed

Representing: Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner

Signed by:

Jessica Gullett

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12/9/2024

Jessica Gullett

Date Signed

Citizen of Paulding County Designee

Signed by:

Director David C. Mumford

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12/12/2024

Director David C. Mumford

Date Signed

Representing: Paulding County E-911

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Ivy Capps

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12/9/2024

Ivy Capps, Executive Director

Date Signed

Representing: Paulding Child Advocacy Center