



Timely Access to Quality Care for Sexual Assault Survivors

Background

Most hospitals in Washington State (75%) provide sexual assault forensic evidence examinations and collection via trained medical providers, including Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs). If a trained provider is not available, hospitals should develop a plan, in consultation with the local community sexual assault agency, to assist patients to obtain a sexual assault evidence exam at a facility that can provide the service.

WSHA Position

WSHA supports requiring all hospitals to have a clear process for notifying patients seeking sexual assault forensic evidence examinations if the hospital cannot provide the service. This process should include helping patients access forensic exams at another facility. Costs associated with a sexual assault evidence exam, including any transportation cost, should be covered by the Crime Victim's Compensation Fund. WSHA opposes penalties on hospitals.

Key Messages

- Trained staff to provide SANE services are a critical and limited resource in the state. Whether forensic exams are available at any given time depends on the availability of trained staff. If a hospital is not able to provide SANE services to a patient, the patient is screened, stabilized and then may be transferred or referred to a different hospital that provides this service.
- All hospitals should have a policy to assist individuals with obtaining sexual assault evidence kit collection at a facility that provides such collection. These policies should be developed in consultation with the local community sexual assault agency and establish a process to assist patients if a hospital does not provide sexual assault forensic evidence kit collection at the time a patient requests the service.
- Forensic evidence kits should be collected by well trained, experienced health care providers. Because the work requires advanced skills, some SANE providers are also the best nurses to assist in the case of trauma or life-threatening illness. While a SANE may be at the hospital when a patient needs a kit collected, the SANE may not be available to provide the service immediately.
- There is significant cost and time associated with specialized SANE training. This can be prohibitive, especially for small, rural, and remote hospitals that already struggle to find sufficient staff members. In addition, this work requires specialized skill and aptitude, making it challenging to retain specially trained providers.

Contact Information

Zosia Stanley
Associate General Counsel
ZosiaS@wsha.org | 206.216.2511

Lisa Thatcher
WSHA Lobbyist
LisaThatcher@comcast.net | 253.686.8746