

# SPECIAL ORDER



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Title  
**Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners  
Program (SANE)**

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Related to  
**General Order OPS 304.8 (Collection of  
Physical Evidence)**

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**A Protocol on the SANE Program was issued in July 2000. All Violent Crime Detectives and their supervisors are advised to familiarize themselves with its contents. This Order provides an overview of the Program and applies to sexual assaults against women 18 years of age or older.**

## **I. Background**

A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program has been established in the District of Columbia. The goal of the SANE Program is to provide compassionate and timely care to female sexual assault victims during forensic examinations, while ensuring that the evidence is properly collected and preserved. The program will allow victims to avoid experiencing delays before an examination is administered and being examined by medical staff who have had little or no prior forensic training. All the nurses conducting the examinations under this program have received specialized training to prepare them to perform forensic examinations for collecting evidence in sexual assault cases, to serve as expert witnesses in court cases, and to understand the emotional and psychological impact upon sexual assault victims.

Another feature of the SANE Program is to better coordinate the key agencies responsible for responding to reports of sexual assault, thereby improving overall service to victims. A partnership has been established between the Metropolitan Police Department, Howard University Hospital and the D.C. Rape Crisis Center to ensure that victim(s) of sexual assault receive the appropriate response. As a part of this program, victims will have access to and support from an advocate from the D.C. Rape Crisis Center. Howard University Hospital (HUH) has been designated as the host hospital for SANE. The program will be staffed by a SANE Coordinator and a corps of trained nurses who are available 24-hours a day. The role of the Metropolitan Police Department, in addition to investigating reports of sexual assault, is to support the operation of the Program and treat victims with respect at all times.

This program only applies to female victims 18 years of age or older.

## II. Policy

The policy of the Metropolitan Police Department is to respond to and investigate all reports of sexual assault. Members who investigate sexual assault complaints shall be sensitive and compassionate to the needs of the victim and have compassion, while providing information and assistance through this traumatic situation.

## III. Procedural Guidelines

### A. Preliminary Investigation - First Responder's Duties

Members who are dispatched to a scene to handle a sexual assault shall:

1. Render immediate first aid and arrange for emergency medical treatment, if necessary. If the victim's condition allows, they shall remain on the scene until arrival of the detective to assist in the investigation. The detective is required to attend within an hour of being called. If the victim requires emergency treatment and the injuries are non-life threatening, EMS personnel will transport the victim to Howard University Hospital. Cases involving life-threatening injuries will be handled according to EMS protocol.
2. Briefly interview the victim to determine if a sexual assault has been committed, when the offense occurred, and where the offense occurred.
3. Arrest the assailant, if on the scene, in view, or in the immediate vicinity.
4. If the assailant is not on the scene, obtain a description and broadcast a lookout.
5. If possible, do not allow the victim to bathe, smoke, drink, or use the restroom prior to the examination. If practical, the victim shall be advised to take a change of clothing to the hospital. When a change of clothing is not available, the victim will be provided clothing at the hospital.
6. Notify a violent crime detective from the district *where the offense occurred*. If it is undetermined where the offense occurred, a detective from the district where the victim is located shall be notified to respond.
7. Preserve the crime scene and potential evidence. Notify the Crime Scene Examination Section (Mobile Crime), if there is a crime scene.
8. Isolate the victim.
9. Canvass the immediate area for witnesses and record their names, addresses and telephone numbers. Witnesses should be requested to remain on the scene until the arrival of the violent crime detective.

10. Prepare a PD 251, the detective shall advise as to the proper classification.

**B. Preliminary Investigation - The Investigator's Duties**

1. The dispatcher shall notify a detective from the district where the assault occurred to respond to conduct the investigation.
2. The detective who responds to the scene for a sexual assault shall continue the preliminary investigation according to the following procedures:
  - a. Interview the first officer on the scene.
  - b. Ensure the crime scene is secured and Crime Scene Examination Section (Mobile Crime) is responding.
  - c. Interview reporting person, witnesses and victim. Determine the type and extent of the sexual assault and when it occurred.
  - d. The detective shall request that the victim undergo a forensic examination in *all penetration and attempted penetration cases that occurred within the past 96-hours (4 days)*.

**FORENSIC EXAMINATIONS WILL ONLY BE PERFORMED WITH THE CONSENT OF THE VICTIM**

**Note:** Extensions to the 96-hours (4 days) time restriction are allowed in cases beyond the 4th day if the victim complains of continued pain, injuries or bleeding; victim reports no prior or subsequent penetration of the same nature as the assault; and in kidnapping cases, where the victim was held for a period of time. If the time frame is inconclusive, the examination shall be requested. If detectives have any questions concerning unusual circumstances or whether or not an examination should be performed, they shall contact the SANE Coordinator at Howard University Hospital.

- e. The detective shall explain to the victim the critical need for a forensic examination and encourage the victim to use the services available through the SANE Program. The detective shall explain the benefits of the program and answer questions the victim may have. In addition to the availability of a specially trained nurse and a victim advocate, there should be no cost to the victim.
- f. The investigator shall transport the victim to Howard University Hospital for the examination. If investigative priorities prevent the detective from personally transporting the victim to the hospital, the detective shall arrange for another detective or officer to transport the victim. In such cases, the detective shall complete the preliminary interview with the victim on the scene and ensure the transporting detective/officer is provided relevant information

to brief the SANE. The examination will be performed upon arrival of the case detective at the hospital.

- g. If possible, do not allow the victim to bathe, smoke, drink, or use the bathroom prior to the examination. If practical, the victim shall be advised to take a change of clothing to the hospital. When a change of clothing is not available, the victim will be provided clothing at the hospital.
- h. If the detective has access to a phone, he/she shall call the Howard University Hospital switchboard at (202) 865-6100. The switchboard will page the SANE Nurse and call Focus Communication, an answering service for D.C. Rape Crisis Center, to have an advocate informed of the victim's estimated time of arrival.

### **C. Communications Division Notifications**

- 1. The Communications Division supervisor shall notify a violent crime detective from the district where the assault occurred, if the detective who escorts the victim to the hospital is not from the district where the assault occurred.
- 2. If the detective does not have access to a phone, the Communications Division supervisor shall be notified to call the Howard University Hospital switchboard AT (202) 865-6100 and request that the on-call SANE nurse be paged and a D.C Rape Crisis Center advocate called to inform them of the victim's estimated time of arrival. Both the SANE nurse and the victim advocate should arrive at Howard University Hospital inside an hour of notification.

### **D. The Medical Examination Conducted at Howard University Hospital**

- 1. Upon arrival at the hospital, the victim shall be escorted to the Triage window located in the Emergency Department, where she will be assessed for treatment and her personal information obtained for medical records.
- 2. The Family Conference Room (IE-10) or the Fast Track Area Room #4, located in the Emergency Department have been designated as areas where the detective, the SANE nurse and the advocate can wait for a victim who is being assessed by a member of the Triage staff. Triage staff will escort the victim to one of these areas to await the arrival of the SANE nurse. The detective shall complete the preliminary investigation with the victim, if he/she has not already done so, prior to the forensic examination being performed.
- 3. The victim advocate will notify Triage upon arrival and meet the victim

and detective in the Family Conference Room. The detective shall take a statement of the responding advocate for the investigative report.

**The victim advocate will not ask the victim the details of the assault** but will offer information about the DC Rape Crisis Center advocate program.

4. The victim will be advised by the advocate that she is there to provide support but that the victim can terminate the advocate's services at any time. The advocate will explain to the victim that she may not be permitted to accompany her during the police interview. The advocate may, however, remain with the victim during the forensic examination, if the victim consents.
5. The advocate will not interfere with the police investigation and officers should be sensitive to the rapport building between the advocate and the victim as part of the support intended by this part of the Program.
6. If the detective has to leave the hospital prior to the examination, he/she must leave his/her name, unit, office phone number and contact information with the victim advocate or charge nurse.
7. Once the SANE nurse arrives, the detective shall provide her with the circumstances of the assault and any relevant information she will need to conduct the forensic medical exam.
8. After the forensic medical exam is completed, the SANE will put the name, phone number, and unit of the detective investigating the case on the kit. The evidence will be stored in the secured SANE refrigerator.
9. It shall be the detective's responsibility to ensure that the kit and evidence bags are retrieved from the hospital and delivered to the Crime Scene Examination Section (Mobile Crime).

**Note: The above procedures shall also be adhered to if the victim responds directly to Howard University Hospital.**

Triage personnel will have the victim triaged and escorted to the Family Conference Room or the Fast Track Room #4. Triage personnel will contact the Howard University Hospital switchboard to notify the MPD Communications Division, contact Focus Communications to contact the on-call advocate, and page the on-call SANE nurse. A violent crime detective shall be assigned from the district where the offense occurred to respond to the Hospital. If the detective fails to arrive within the hour, the switchboard will contact the MPD Communications Division supervisor who shall then page the appropriate district Watch Commander. The Watch Commander shall make immediate arrangements for a detective to respond to Howard University Hospital.

**D. Victim Arrives at a Hospital other than Howard University Hospital**

1. Communications Division shall attempt to ascertain from the hospital,

where the offense occurred and shall assign a detective from the appropriate district. If the location of the offense is undetermined, a detective from the district where the hospital is located shall be assigned to respond.

2. On arrival at the hospital, the detective shall determine whether the case is one requiring a forensic examination, based on the time restriction and nature of assault. The detective shall explain the SANE program and benefits to the victim, and encourage the victim to respond to Howard University Hospital for a SANE forensic examination.
3. If the victim agrees to respond to Howard University Hospital and is not injured or in need of emergency medical treatment, the detective shall escort the victim to Howard University Hospital and **follow the procedures outlined in section B. above.**
4. If the victim is in need of emergency medical treatment, the victim will remain at the hospital where she presently is for treatment. On release from the hospital, the detective shall transport the victim to Howard University Hospital for the forensic examination.

#### **E. Victim Declines to go to Howard University Hospital**

1. If the victim declines to go to Howard University Hospital and requests to be taken, or is admitted to another hospital, it is not necessary to contact Howard University Hospital or the staff members of SANE. The detective shall:
  - a. Have the victim examined at the requested hospital or hospital of admission;
  - b. Obtain the victim's consent to have the forensic examination performed and provide the examining physician with a sexual assault evidence collection kit;
  - c. Contact Focus Communication, the answering service for the D.C. Rape Crisis Center to have an advocate respond to the hospital where the victim is being treated;
  - d. Wait until the examination is completed, retrieve the kit and the evidence from the doctor and deliver them to the Crime Scene Examination Section (Mobile Crime).

#### **F. Collection of Forensic Evidence**

1. The "Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit" and paper evidence bags will be kept at Howard University Hospital in a locked area. Once the forensic examination is completed, the SANE nurse will

record required information on the front of the kit and store the kit in the secured SANE refrigerator.

2. The SANE nurse will also sign and seal all paper bags used for each item of clothing and put the detective's name, phone number, and unit on each bag. The bags will not be refrigerated. The SANE nurse will document the appropriate case and evidence information in the "SANE Evidence Control Logbook".
3. The SANE nurse will contact the detective to have him/her retrieve the evidence and assist with transporting the victim.
4. It shall be the detective's responsibility to ensure that the kit and evidence bags are retrieved from the Hospital and hand delivered to the Crime Scene Examination Section (Mobile Crime). This should be done immediately after the examination, or at least within 24 hours. If the detective does not retrieve the evidence in time, the SANE Coordinator will contact an investigative official.
5. Detectives should record the location of the kit and evidence bags in their initial investigative report.

**Note:** The blood in the sexual assault evidence kit must be refrigerated to preserve the evidence; prompt dispatch to Mobile Crime is important.

#### **G. Transportation – Police Assistance**

The victim advocate will offer the victim information about securing a police escort to her destination. Though detectives are not required to remain at the hospital while the victim is being examined (examinations may take between 2 – 3 hours), they are expected to assist the victim with transportation after the examination is complete.

CHR:NMJ: ws

// SIGNED //  
Charles H. Ramsey  
Chief of Police