

## STEP 6 EVIDENCE COLLECTION

- Prevent any issues by using standard up-to-date practices (i.e., change gloves after collecting each article of evidence).
- A health care provider should take photographs of all injuries including ano-genital injuries and breast injuries. A trained Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) is preferred.
- Bruising may not appear immediately. Encourage the victim to get follow-up photographs taken. Most photos may be taken by an officer. A health care provider should take photos of ano-genital or breast area bruising. It is helpful to have the same provider who took the first photos take the follow-up photos; a SAFE nurse is preferred.
- Collect clothing worn during the assault. Also collect the first change of clothes, especially undergarments) if not collected by medical personnel. Keep in mind the victim may have changed between the assault and reporting.

## FOR INVESTIGATING OFFICERS

- The suspect's body is also a crime scene. Collect forensic evidence and suspect clothing with consent or a search warrant. Use the suspect kit.
- The suspect kit is available at Maine State Police Crime Lab.

## STEP 7 EVIDENCE STORAGE

### FOR INVESTIGATING OFFICERS

- Air-dry wet items before packaging.
- Use separate paper bags when packaging evidence. Do not use plastic bags.
- Seal bags with tape, not staples.
- Transport sex crimes kit & all other evidence to MSP Crime Lab.
- Transport urine, blood, and vomit to the Health and Environmental Testing Lab ASAP.
- Anonymous sex crimes kits and all other evidence must be kept at least 8 years at the law enforcement agency in the town/city where the hospital is located.
- The sex crimes kit does not require refrigeration or freezing.
- Urine and vomit should be frozen if possible. Otherwise refrigerate.
- Blood vials should be refrigerated. They will explode if frozen.
- Store in a secure area.
- If the victim is unconscious, notify the D.A. that an anonymous sex crimes kit is being used.
- All sex crimes complaints must be shared with a DA in 60 days.

These are guidelines. Every case is different. These guidelines are minimum standards - local District Attorneys may share more comprehensive instructions.

A sexual assault advocate can be reached by calling  
**1-800-871-7741**

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**2-1-1 Maine, Resources & Referrals**  
2-1-1

#### Adult Protective Services

1-800-624-8404  
Maine Relay 7-1-1

#### Child Protective Services

1-800-452-1999  
Maine Relay 7-1-1

#### Statewide Domestic Abuse Helpline

1-866-834-4357

#### Mental Health Crisis

1-888-568-1112  
Maine Relay 7-1-1

#### Health & Environmental Testing Lab

207-287-2727

#### Maine State Police Crime Lab

207-624-7100

#### ENDORSED BY:

Maine Chiefs of Police Association  
Maine Prosecutors' Association  
Maine Sheriffs' Association  
Maine State Police

## LAW ENFORCEMENT FIRST RESPONDER GUIDELINES

## ADOLESCENT AND ADULT SEXUAL ASSAULT



**mecasa**  
MAINE COALITION AGAINST  
SEXUAL ASSAULT  
mecasa.org



## STATEWIDE RESOURCES

Statewide Sexual Assault Helpline  
1-800-871-7741

## TRIBAL RESOURCES

Micmac Advocacy Center  
207-551-3639

Maliseet Advocacy Center  
207-532-6401

Indian Township Passamaquoddy  
Advocacy Center  
207-214-1917

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations  
Advocacy Center  
1-877-853-2613

Penobscot Nation Advocacy Center  
207-631-4886

## STEP 1 ATTEND TO THE VICTIM

- Explain you are there to help.
- Apply first aid as needed.
- Call **1-800-871-7741** for a sexual assault advocate. An advocate can listen to the victim, talk about options and next steps, and go with them to medical or legal events.

- Don't show judgement or blame the victim. Avoid asking "why" questions. These questions often make the victim feel they are being blamed. Reassure the victim that it is not their fault. Consider the physical & psychological trauma the victim has experienced. Victims may have different responses than what you expect.
- Ask the victim not to smoke, drink, eat, brush teeth, bathe, shower, douche, urinate, or defecate. This helps preserve evidence. Ask the victim to bring what they were wearing at the time of the assault and a change of clothing.
- Suggest medical treatment for injury, STDs, pregnancy, etc. no matter how much time has passed since the assault. Tell the victim that forensic evidence can be collected at the hospital if they want.
- Call the healthcare facility when you're on your way. Tell them if the victim has special needs (like if they need an interpreter).
- If the victim needs an ambulance, notify EMS personnel of need to preserve as much evidence as possible without compromising treatment.
- If the suspect needs medical treatment, take them to a different hospital than the victim if possible. If they must be taken to the same facility, tell the hospital and keep the victim and suspect away from one another.
- Tell the victim that if evidence is collected using a sex crimes kit, the kit and the exam are free.
- Drugs used in sexual assaults leave the body fast. Specimens should be collected at the hospital ASAP.

## STEP 2 NOTIFY SUPERVISOR & D.A.'S OFFICE (AS APPROPRIATE)

## STEP 3 SECURE THE CRIME SCENE

- Secure all crime scenes (assault scene, clothing, bedding, etc.). Remember that the bodies of the victim and suspect are crime scenes.
- More officers may be needed for responding to multiple crime scenes.

## STEP 4 GATHER INFORMATION

- Provide as much privacy to the victim as you can.
- Limit traffic over police radio that could identify the victim.
- It is best for the same officer to stay with the victim until the case is transferred to an investigator.
- Record observations: victim's physical appearance, emotional demeanor, injuries, damage to clothing, etc.
- Describe the scene in detail. Remember: who, what, where, when & how.
- The victim should not be questioned by many officers. In-depth questioning should be left to the investigator unless the same officer will conduct the entire investigation. Limit questions to related information.
- Obtain suspect information (physical description, clothing, vehicle, direction of flight, weapon, etc.). Transmit a radio alert when appropriate.
- Identify witnesses. Get their contact information and statements (if appropriate).
- Police reports should focus on observations, not conclusions.

- Ask the victim if pressure was applied to their neck during the attack. Pressure on the neck can cause injury and death up to several days after an attack.. Encourage the victim to seek medical attention. If the victim does not want to seek medical care, ask if you can measure their neck circumference.

## STEP 5 AT THE HOSPITAL

If you suspect drugs were used to enable the sexual assault, let the hospital personnel know as soon as you get there.

## FOR INVESTIGATING OFFICERS

- The police interview should be conducted without medical personnel present.
- The medical exam should be conducted without police officers present.
- A sexual assault advocate should be present, if possible. They will provide their name and agency information.
- Note if there is anyone else in the room (friend, parent, etc.)
- No body worn cameras should be used in a hospital setting. Check your department's and the hospital's policies for body-worn cameras.
- Obtain voluntary written consent for release of medical records for the victim.
- Provide contact information to the hospital for sex crimes kit pickup. Submit to the Maine State Police Crime Lab even if the suspect is unknown (but not if the victim wants to stay anonymous).