

## STEP ONE: Attend To The Victim

- Explain you are there to help.
- Apply first aid as needed.
- Inform the victim of advocacy services; for an advocate call: 1-800-871-7741 or TTY: 1-888-458-5599.
- Avoid conveying judgment or blame; reassure the victim that it is not her/his fault.
- Consider the physical & psychological trauma that has been endured; victims may have varying emotional or behavioral responses.
- To preserve evidence, request that the victim not smoke, drink, eat, brush teeth, bathe, shower, douche, urinate or defecate; have victim bring clothing worn and a change of clothing.
- Encourage medical treatment for injury, STDs, pregnancy, etc., regardless of how much time has passed since the assault; explain that forensic evidence can be collected at the hospital if the victim chooses.
- Call the health care facility in advance and note if the victim has special needs (interpreter, etc.).
- If ambulance is required, notify EMS personnel of need to preserve as much evidence as possible without hindering treatment.
- If suspect needs medical treatment, take to a different hospital than the victim (if available); if taken to the same facility, inform hospital and keep separate.

A sexual assault advocate can be reached by calling 1-800-871-7741 or TTY 1-888-458-5599. Your call will be routed to the nearest sexual assault support center. For more information, visit [mecasa.org](http://mecasa.org).

- Inform the victim that if evidence is collected using a sex crimes kit, the sexual assault medical forensic exam is free.
- Drugs used to facilitate sexual assault are excreted quickly from the body; specimens should be collected at the hospital ASAP.

## STEP TWO: Notify Supervisor & D.A.'s Office (as appropriate)

## STEP THREE: Secure The Crime Scene

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

## STEP FOUR: Gather Information

- Afford the victim whatever privacy is available.
- Limit traffic over police radio that could identify the victim.
- If possible, have the same officer stay with the victim until the case is transferred to an investigator (if appropriate).

- Record observations: Victim's physical appearance, emotional demeanor, injuries, damage to clothing, etc.
- Describe the scene in detail. Remember: who, what, where, when & how.
- Avoid questioning by multiple officers; in depth questioning should be conducted by the primary investigator unless the same officer will be conducting the entire investigation. Limit questions to pertinent information.
- Obtain suspect information (physical description, clothing, vehicle, direction of flight, weapon, etc.). Transmit a radio alert when appropriate.
- Identify witnesses: Contact information; statements (if appropriate).
- Police reports should focus on observations rather than conclusions.

## STEP FIVE: At the Hospital

If you suspect drug facilitated sexual assault, inform the hospital personnel upon arrival.

### FOR INVESTIGATING OFFICER:

- Police interview should be conducted without medical personnel present.
- The presence of a sexual assault advocate is advisable; they will provide their name and agency information.
- Note if there is anyone else in room (friend, parent, etc.).
- Obtain voluntary written consent for release of medical records from victim.
- Provide contact information to the hospital to facilitate sex crimes kit pickup and submit to the Crime Laboratory even if the suspect is unknown.

## STEP SIX: Evidence Collection

- Prevent cross-contamination by using standard up-to-date practices (i.e. change gloves after collecting each article of evidence).
- Photographs of all injuries including anogenital injuries and injuries to the breast(s) should be taken by a health care provider, preferably a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE).
- Bruising may not immediately appear; encourage victim to obtain follow-up photographs, most of which may be taken by an officer; photographs of anogenital or breast area bruising should be taken by a health care provider, preferably a SAFE, and if possible the provider who took the initial photographs.
- Collect clothing worn at the time of the assault as well as the first change of clothes (especially undergarments) if not collected by medical personnel; keep in mind the victim may have changed between the time of the assault and reporting.

### FOR INVESTIGATING OFFICER:

- The suspect is also a crime scene; collect forensic evidence and suspect clothing as necessary with consent or search warrant; use suspect kit.
- Suspect kit available at Maine State Police Crime Lab.

## STEP SEVEN: Evidence Storage

### FOR INVESTIGATING OFFICER:

- Air-dry wet items prior to 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 & vomit to the Health and Environmental Testing Lab ASAP.
- Anonymous sex crimes kits and all other evidence must be kept at least 90 days 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 (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 held.

**These are guidelines. Every case is different. These guidelines are to be considered minimum standards. Individual District Attorneys may distribute more comprehensive instructions.**

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Male victims may have difficulty speaking about the assault.
- Older adult victims may also have difficulty speaking about the assault; risk of assault-related injury is greater among elderly victims.
- Assault by the same sex or same gender may not be connected to sexual orientation of either the victim or the perpetrator.
- Individuals with developmental disabilities or mental illness are at high risk; speak slowly and calmly using clear and easy to understand language; do not assume they are not credible.
- Whenever possible, use professional interpretation services.
- People with a physical challenge (speech, hearing, etc.) may not have a developmental disability.
- Consider cultural background.
- Minors can consent to a medical forensic examination without parental notification.
- Comply with mandatory reporting requirements to Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services and your DA.

## STATEWIDE SEXUAL VIOLENCE RESOURCES

**Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Line**  
1-800-871-7741 • TTY: 1-888-458-5599

**Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Domestic & Sexual Violence Advocacy Center**  
207-551-3639

**Houlton Band of Maliseets, Domestic & Sexual Violence Advocacy Center**  
207-532-6401

**Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations**  
877-853-2613

**Penobscot Indian Nation, Domestic & Sexual Violence Advocacy Center**  
207-631-4886

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**2-1-1 Maine, Resource Referrals**  
2-1-1

**Adult Protective Services**  
800-624-8404 • Maine Relay 7-1-1

**Child Protective Services**  
800-452-1999 • Maine Relay 7-1-1

**Domestic Violence Hotline**  
866-834-4357

**Health & Environmental Testing Lab**  
207-287-2727

**Maine State Police Crime Lab**  
207-624-7100

**Mental Health Crisis**  
888-568-1112 • Maine Relay 7-1-1

# Guidelines For Adult & Adolescent Sexual Assault

## LAW ENFORCEMENT FIRST RESPONSE

**PRODUCED BY THE STATEWIDE  
SART GUIDELINES COMMITTEE**

**Endorsed by the Maine Chiefs of Police Association,  
the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the  
Maine Prosecutors' Association, the Maine Sheriffs'  
Association, and the Maine State Police**

**mecasa**  
MAINE COALITION AGAINST  
SEXUAL ASSAULT

**24-Hour Confidential Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Line:**

**1-800-871-7741 (TTY: 1-888-458-5599)**