

Temporary COVID-19 Shelter in Place Sexual Assault Response Team Protocol October 2020

- I. A temporary SART protocol will be effective April 3 and continue until the State of California and the County Health Officer lift the Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order.**
- II. In light of the current Coronavirus public health advisory and CDC recommendations all healthcare providers and patients are faced with elevated risks and challenges in delivering healthcare, including forensic medical exam services. This protocol affords an alternate method of evidence collection while the patient remains safely sheltered in place and protects the health of not only the patient, but that of multidisciplinary members: Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners, Law Enforcement Personnel, and Sexual Assault Counselors.
- III. In the midst of a pandemic, all healthcare facilities must be dedicated to essential health services. The potential of very high census of COVID-19 patients overwhelming local hospitals is expected. It is very difficult to maintain CDC's Social Distancing recommendations with our community partners inside healthcare facilities, particularly during lengthy sexual assault forensic examinations.
- IV. Exams will be conducted between the hours of 8 AM and 8 PM with limited exceptions.
- V. All requests for exams will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Adult and Adolescent Patients

Home Exam (Tele-SART) Flow

- Patient contacts law enforcement.
- Law enforcement calls SAFE and requests a forensic exam.
- SAFE calls the patient and asks if the patient feels safe in the home.
- If the patient states they are safe at home and have adequate privacy, the SAFE will use the existing Medical Screening Exam tool to determine emergent care needs and appropriateness of exam given the time that has passed since the event, and types of acts that occurred.

- *If the SAFE determines that an exam is not indicated, the patient will be given contact information for the Rape Crisis Center. If a physical exam must be done outside of the patient's home, it will be conducted at the Child Advocacy Center between the hours of 8 AM and 8 PM.*
- If a shelter-at home/acute sexual assault forensic exam is indicated, SAFE contacts the Law enforcement officer and requests that the officer deliver a kit to the patient's door. A consent form and a urine cup, and a urine container for toxicology will be attached. (The supplies will be distributed to each agency).
- The SAFE sets up a HIPAA compliant telemedicine connection for the patient, Law enforcement Officer, SAFE, and Sexual Assault Counselor to communicate. Some patients may not have a microphone or camera on their computer or may not have WiFi and will need to use a cellphone to join the session. If the patient is using a cell phone, the SAFE will send the invitation by text to the patient's phone and explain how to download the Zoom app. Another option is for the patient to view the Zoom session on the computer so that the nurse can demonstrate techniques on a larger screen use the phone for sound.
- The SAFE interviews the patient as usual, using the OES 923 Form with Law Enforcement and the Sexual Assault Counselor present, via a secure telemedicine connection.
- After the interview, Law Enforcement leaves the telemedicine platform, delivers a kit, a urine cup for the hospital lab, a urine toxicology collection kit for the DOJ, and the first page of the 2-923 form for the patient's consent, and waits on site in their patrol car.
- Using HIPAA compliant telemedicine, SAFE observes the patient
 1. Unseal the kit
 2. Wash their hands
 3. Collect the samples : Suggested samples include 2 buccal swabs, 2 swabs from each breast, 2 labial swabs, 2 vaginal swabs, and 2 anal swabs. Consideration of the history of the assault will also determine swab collections for example if the patient reports a suction injury or exposure to semen on a body surface.
 4. Seal the kit.

(This process should take approximately 30 minutes).

- SAFE notifies law enforcement that the kit is ready for pick up and
 1. Directs the patient to place the sealed kit, urine cups, and signed consent outside their door
 2. The law enforcement officer picks it up from the patient's door.
- Law Enforcement delivers the evidence kit and the urine toxicology sample to the crime lab within 20 days.
- The Crime lab will ship evidence weekly to the RADs lab where 3 swabs will be chosen for DNA analysis.
- The SART Coordinator will scan or fax the completed OES 923 Form directly to the crime lab and the police.

STI Testing and Medication

If the patient requests prophylactic medication, the SAFE will arrange to meet the patient at the Child Advocacy Center.

1. The examiner will retrieve the urine from the patient in her car, take the specimen to the lab and do a stat test pregnancy test while the patient waits.
2. If serology is indicated or requested by the patient, the SAFE will obtain blood and order tests.
3. When a negative pregnancy test is resulted, the examiner will provide prophylactic medications to the patient.

Emergent Care Needs

- If a patient must be seen in the hospital due to emergent needs (excessive bleeding, strangulation, severe pain, pregnancy, or other concerns) they should seek medical attention in an appropriate healthcare facility.
- A SAFE may not be able to conduct the forensic exam in the healthcare facility at that time.
- If a forensic exam is not done in the emergency department, it will be offered between the hours of 8 AM and 8 PM after the patient has received medical treatment and returned to their home. Exceptions to conduct exams between the hours of 8 PM and 8 AM will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Suspect and In-custody Exams

The Emergency department exam room may not be available for forensic exams. This means it may not be possible to conduct suspect exams or in-custody exams immediately when requested. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Non-Investigative Reports

It may not be possible to offer Abbreviated (NIR) exams if the patient is quarantined. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Pediatric exams

Acute exams will be conducted at the Child Advocacy Center. Law enforcement and the SAFE will make a joint decision on a case by case basis for non-acute exams. The DA's office and CAC staff will decide on the need for a CFIT interview.