Forensic Medical Exams for Sexual Assaults

Purpose

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to familiarize officers with the protocol for alleged sexual abuse victim exams (ASAV). This bulletin establishes procedures and guidelines to assist officers with sexual assault investigations where a forensic medical exam is needed.

Introduction

Sexual abuse medical examinations, also known as ASAV (alleged sexual abuse victim) or Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), are designed to preserve evidentiary findings in sexual assault crimes. If the alleged incident occurred within the last 72 hours, an ASAV allows for the collection of potential forensic evidence. This evidence is crucial for the District Attorney's Office to successfully prosecute these crimes. The following are guidelines and protocol to assist officers when investigating a sexual assault crime where an ASAV is needed.

I. Guidelines and Protocol

An ASAV or SART is needed in every sexual assault crime if the alleged incident occurred within the last 72 hours and there was any type of penetration (digital, penile, or foreign) to the victim’s genital areas. An ASAV is also needed in cases where the victim is having symptoms (pain, bleeding, discharge, etc.), and/or there is the possibility of DNA evidence being obtained. (Note: Do not allow the victim to bathe until after the exam and collect all clothing that has potential DNA or forensic evidence. Replacement clothing will be provided by the hospital).

II. Alleged Sexual Abuse Victim Exams

ASAV exams for children are available at the Child Abuse Services Team (C.A.S.T) building 1337 Braden Court, Orange, during the hours of 8am to 5pm Monday through Friday. Call and schedule the exam at 714-940-4747 or to page the medical examiner for questions. For after hour emergencies, law enforcement can call the Forensic Nurse Specialist at 562-497-0147, for an examination to be performed at Anaheim Memorial Regional Medical Hospital.

Sexual assault exams for adults are to be conducted at Anaheim Memorial Hospital. The patrol officer or dispatch must make two phone calls. The first phone call is made to the forensic
nurse specialist at 562-497-0147. The second is made to Community Services Program hotline (CSP victim advocate) at 714-957-2737.

At the completion of the examination process for both adults and children, the forensic nurse will hand the officer the completed report and all evidence packaged and sealed with instructions where to store at the station (ie: blood samples are to be refrigerated. All other samples can be frozen). (All evidence and details to the investigation are to be documented in a police report). The entire process takes approximately three hours. Exam times vary depending on how many samples and photos are taken.

Summary

Forensic Medical Examinations are crucial for preserving evidentiary findings in alleged sexual assaults. In several sexual assault cases, the only corroboration to successfully prosecute the perpetrator is those obtained in these exams. Following the appropriate guidelines and protocol can assure the proper collection of these findings.

Acknowledgment:

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