

Advocate Role in the ER or During Forensic Examinations



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Before you go to the ER

- o Prepared ahead of time
- o Do you have all the information you need such as hospital/ER protocol?
- o Does the victim know you were called?
- o Is your phone charged?

Before you go to the ER

- o Do you have any information about the victim?
- o What other information will you need?
- o Do you have resource information such as places to which you may refer victim?
- o Do you have resources such interpreters, etc. if needed?
- o If a victim would like to have a Native spiritual leader/elder to offer them spiritual aid, do you have referrals?
- o Has this person been trained on sexual assault, confidentiality, hospital protocols?

Before you go to the ER

- o Have you been trained on such things as emergency contraception, sexually transmitted infections.
- o Do you have or need materials on these if your medical facility doesn't have them?

Indian Health Service Sexual Assault Response - Advocate

- o *“The victim advocate is responsible for informing victims about their rights before, during, and after the examination process, ensuring the victim's interests are represented and that their wishes are promoted. They assist victims in addressing related legal and other issues. Included on the SART, victim advocates must be experts in how to provide sensitive, appropriate, and coordinated interventions. All IHS behavioral health providers and registered nurses who are trained as victim advocates may provide victim advocacy services and may participate as a member of the SART.”*

-From I.H.S. Sexual Assault Response Policy

Advocate's Role in the Emergency Room

- o Introduce yourself to victim & ER staff.
- o Is there anything you need to know about this victim such as intoxication, special needs.
- o Ensure privacy when meeting with the victim
- o Visit with the victim regarding concerns, questions
- o Provide active listening
- o Obtain basic information from victim just so you know if there are *victim safety concerns*, children at home, etc.

Advocate's Role in the Emergency Room

- o Offer assistance to provide concrete help (call family, is she/he in pain, is she/he cold, has she/he eaten...)
- o Provide information about options of making a report to law enforcement and see if victim has any concerns or questions about that process
- o Provide information on victim rights to confidentiality, to give consent
- o Ask victim if she/he has questions.
- o Provide emotional support during the exam

- o Avoid asking questions about the assault that will also be asked by the SANE or law enforcement to avoid duplication.

Remember, sexual assault and any discussion about sexually explicit details, such as speaking about the genitals and sexual acts especially with someone from a different gender than the victim's, may be difficult for a Native victim of sexual assault.

Provide support, acknowledge that this could be a difficult procedure and give permission to victim to ask procedures to stop when they feel uncomfortable or if she/he just needs to regroup.

Advocate's Role in the Emergency Room

- o Ensure respectful, compassionate treatment from ER staff, law enforcement and others throughout process
- o Work as a team member
- o Do not touch any part of the forensic exam kit even if asked
- o Ensure victim has transportation to a safe place
- o Provide follow up as necessary
- o Avoid note taking as information may be subpoenaed

Working with Secondary Victims

- o Introduce yourself
- o Inform them of confidentiality. You can't share what victim tells you without her/his written permission
- o Be mindful of range of feelings that they may be feeling
- o Listen
- o Provide emotional support

Working with Secondary Victims

- o Provide information on what is happening or may happen
- o Provide information on how this may impact the victim and general sexual assault victimization
- o Provide ways they can be helpful to their family/friend who's been sexually assaulted
- o Inform them of any services in their area specific to secondary victims

Post Outreach Work

- o Document what you are required to document particularly data that will be needed to satisfy grant requirements, data collection procedures
- o Be cautious what you document.
- o Is there a need to speak further with law enforcement, SANE, etc.?

Help for Yourself

- o This work can at times be stressful
- o Make sure you have opportunities for debriefing
- o Plan for some time to rest, decompress

Questions?

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