



# Referring Medical Provider Guide Forensic Care & Advocacy

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Providing Care and Advocacy for Sexual Assault, Intimate Partner Violence,  
Child and Vulnerable Adult Abuse and Neglect, and Human Trafficking

## Referring Medical Provider

Forensic Nursing Evaluation for Sexual Assault, Intimate Partner Violence, Child and Vulnerable Adult Abuse and Neglect, and Human Trafficking

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# Introduction to Forensic Care & Advocacy (Formerly SANE)

Forensic Care & Advocacy at Spectrum Health Lakeland has been providing specialized medical forensic evaluations since 2009. Forensic nurses and certified sexual assault nurse examiners (SANE) provide any or all of these free services as part of the medical forensic exam to patients who have survived sexual assault (SA):

- Crisis intervention and emotional support
- Health care
  - sexually transmitted infection [STI] screening and prophylaxis
  - pregnancy testing and emergency contraception
  - injury detection and treatment
- Trauma-informed forensic medical evidence collection
- Medicolegal documentation
- Ongoing support and advocacy, including legal advocacy, through the sexual assault response team
- Assistance with contacting law enforcement and child or vulnerable adult protective agencies
- Expert witness consultation

## Other Services

This program has expanded its services and also offers medical forensic exams, care, and advocacy to patients who have experienced:

- Intimate partner violence (IPV), otherwise known as domestic violence
- Child abuse & neglect
- Elder or vulnerable adult abuse
- Sex trafficking or other kinds of human trafficking (HT)

## Benefits

Forensic nurses and certified SANEs are a vital resource to both patient survivors of abuse and neglect and to the legal community.

It is very important that the patient has an opportunity to talk to a forensic nurse and advocate, even if the patient does not want to work with the law enforcement. The Forensic Care & Advocacy team has many services to offer besides evidence collection and the patient does not need to work with the police to receive these other services.

Since implementation of the SANE program in 2009, the quality of the patient's medical forensic exam has drastically improved. The emergency department (ED) providers and nursing staff's workloads have been significantly decreased, and the other ED patients also benefit as the ED providers and nurses can continue caring for them in a timely manner.

To ensure all of the survivor patients consistently receive excellent quality care, Forensic Care & Advocacy protocols were written to meet and/or exceed the established national practice guidelines. The program is managed by a medical director and a full-time nursing manager and the nursing team reviews cases with them and actively participates in other case reviews such as; Berrien County's monthly multidisciplinary team case review and Midwest Chart Review.

## Support for Difficult Decisions Regarding Patient Care and Mandatory Reporting Guidelines

The provider faces many challenges in evaluating for possible SA, IPV, child abuse, elder and vulnerable adult abuse, and human trafficking. The provider must determine which cases require an immediate evaluation and which cases to report to investigative agencies or refer to other professionals.

The provider has the Forensic Care and Advocacy team of professionals with advanced forensic training and experience with trauma-informed care to refer their patient to when there is a question of abuse or neglect. The purpose of this guide is to provide you direction when caring for these populations.

# Spectrum Health Lakeland Forensic Care & Advocacy Sites

## Emergency Departments - 24/7

Forensic nurses, certified SANEs, and advocates are on call for all three Spectrum Health Lakeland emergency departments to evaluate both male and female patients of any age.

## Nursing Clinic - By appointment

Not all survivor patients need an urgent exam and being sent to the ED is not always necessary (see the decision tree on the last page). However, it's very important these patients receive a medical examination.

To best meet these patients' needs we offer a clinic at the Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Michigan (CAC) which allows patients and/or guardians to schedule a medical forensic exam at a time that works best for them. The clinic routinely schedules patient appointments every Wednesday, but the forensic nurses are usually able to schedule appointments on other week days to meet their patients' needs.

## Definitions:

**ABUSE:** Means harm or threatened harm to an adult's health or welfare caused by another person. Abuse includes non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or mistreatment.

**CHILD ABUSE:** Harm or threatened harm, to a child's health or welfare, by a person responsible for the child's health or welfare, and occurring through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, or maltreatment.

**CHILD NEGLECT:** Harm to a child's health or welfare by a person responsible for the child's health or welfare, occurring through negligent treatment and including the failure to provide adequate food clothing shelter, or medical care.

**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:** Any contact or interaction between child and adult in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person.

**ENDANGER:** Means a life-threatening situation caused by the inability of the person whose life is threatened to respond.

**EXPLOITATION:** Means the misuse of an adult's funds, property, or personal dignity by another person.

**NEGLECT:** means harm to an adult's health or welfare caused by the inability of the adult to respond to a harmful situation (self-neglect) or the conduct of a person responsible for a significant aspect of the adult's health or welfare. Neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, and/or medical care.

**PROTECTIVE SERVICES:** includes but is not limited to, remedial, social, legal, health, mental health, and referral services provided in response to a report of alleged harm or threatened harm because of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or endangerment.

**SEXUAL ASSAULT:** Any type of sexual contact that is nonconsensual, forced or coerced, or when the victim is incapable of giving consent because of her/his temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity or because of her/his youth. SA is the use of any kind of sexual behavior as a weapon to harm an individual. SA includes: street harassment, sexual harassment, incest, stranger assault, and acquaintance rape. Some behaviors indicating sexual violence include: the use of physical force; coercion or verbal manipulation; verbal and/or visual harassment; use of drugs or alcohol to facilitate an assault.

**VULNERABLE:** means a condition in which an adult is unable to protect himself or herself from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or endangerment because of physical or mental impairment or because of the frailties or dependencies brought about by advanced age.

**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE:** describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression (including coercive acts) by a current or former intimate partner. An intimate partner is a person with whom one has a close personal relationship that can be characterized by the following: Emotional connectedness, Regular contact, Ongoing physical contact and/or sexual behavior, Identity as a couple, Familiarity and knowledge about each other's lives. Examples of intimate partners include current or former spouses, boyfriends or girlfriends, dating partners, or sexual partners. IPV can occur between heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy. IPV can vary in frequency and severity and it occurs on a continuum. There are four main types of IPV: sexual violence, stalking, physical violence, and psychological aggression.

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING:** form of modern-day slavery in which people profit from the control and exploitation of others. This crime occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to control another person for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or soliciting labor or services against his/her will.

# Referring – Sexual Assault Suspicion or Disclosure

## Referring a SA patient to Forensic Care & Advocacy for SA evaluation

SA occurs commonly and can have lifelong effects on patients' physical and mental health. When the issue of possible SA is raised in the clinical setting, it is important for providers to know; how to respond and evaluate, when to refer for an evaluation by other professionals, when to report the case to the appropriate investigative agency, and how to counsel patients (parents) to decrease the long-term damaging effects of the abuse.

### Factors requiring an urgent exam in the ED (Also see the decision tree on the last page).

- Patient has pain, bleeding, or other injuries to genital or anal area
- According to the National Center for Victims of Crime: "In the vast majority of cases where there is credible evidence that a child has been penetrated, only between five and 15% of those children will have genital injuries consistent with sexual abuse"
- SA may have occurred within the preceding 120 hours
  - Children may not understand all that entails sexual contact, therefore last contact with suspected perpetrator (not just sexual) should be used as determining factor for 120-hour time period.
  - Patient cannot remember when the contact occurred - Assume time period is <120 hours.
- Medical intervention is needed to ensure the safety of the patient;
- The patient is experiencing significant behavioral or emotional problems and needs evaluation for possible suicidal ideation.
- Collection and storage of evidence using the Michigan State Evidence Collection Kit may be indicated if:
  - The adult patient wants evidence collected.
  - Evidence will be collected for children in a way that will not traumatize them. The prepubescent child will have a "head-to-toe and everything in between" exam with swabs taken from the OUTSIDE surface of the body.
  - The last episode of SA occurred within the past 120 hours
  - The history indicates contact with the perpetrator's semen, blood, hands or saliva.
  - The history indicates a struggle (including strangulation) that may have left skin or blood (of the assailant) under the patient's fingernails, or touch DNA on the patient's body or clothing.
  - The patient's clothing or body may be covered by trace evidence (debris, fibers, etc.) from the scene of the event.
  - In rare cases evidence can be collected after 120 hours (at the discretion of the examiner).

### How to arrange an urgent SA exam:

- Refer to the patient's choice of Spectrum Health Lakeland EDs
  - If the patient is a child and there is suspicion of abuse or neglect and you suspect or are unsure of the parents'/guardians' intent to transport the child to the ED– Call Law Enforcement and Child Protective Services Central Intake before sending the child to a second location for the exam. Law Enforcement can respond immediately to ensure the child is not placed in further danger and can make sure the patient is transported to the ED.
- If you are unsure and would like to speak to the Forensic Care and Advocacy manager call **269.930.0005**

### How to arrange a non-urgent exam:

If your patient (adult or child) does not need an urgent medical examination, you may refer them to the Lakeland Forensic Nurse Clinic located at the Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Michigan (CAC).

Please be aware that the CAC is a safe place for children. If you are unsure of the appropriateness of your adult patient to be seen in a place that is designed for the comfort and safety of children (e.g. alcohol or drug abuse, unpredictable or dangerous behaviors, perpetrator of sexual assault or other kinds of abuse in the past) contact 269.930.0005 at any time to consult Forensic Care & Advocacy. It is still important for this patient to be seen by this program, but we may choose to do so in the ED even if it is not an urgent case.

- Call the forensic nurse at 269.687.1863. Leave a message including your phone number and your need to schedule an appointment for a child.

#### OR

- Encourage the patient to schedule their appointment as soon as possible
  - Give the patient the clinic scheduling number 269.687.1863
  - Provide the patient with a **Forensic Nurse Clinic Referral Instruction Sheet** to reference when scheduling their appointment.

If you plan to refer SA patients keep in mind it's best to avoid; discussions in front of children, multiple interviews and anogenital exams. It's helpful if the examiner is made aware of concerning medical history, social history, and review of systems for urogenital and behavioral problems.

## PROVIDER GUIDANCE FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT:

Providers should:

- Understand the mandatory child abuse and vulnerable adult reporting laws in Michigan
  - Referral to clinic or ED does not relieve providers of the responsibility of reporting suspected child or vulnerable adult abuse to the central intake hotline
- Understand that according to the National Institute of Justice "one-fifth of child sexual assaults were committed by a member of the youth's family. In terms of location, more than half of all sexual assaults occurred either within the victim's home or in the victim's neighborhood."
- Recognize that sexual assault, abuse and trafficking of children and adult patients occur commonly, and they should be prepared to respond appropriately in their clinical practices
- Be aware of normal, developmentally appropriate variations in children and adolescents' sexual behaviors
- Be aware of community resources available to assist in the evaluation and management of sexual assault, abuse and trafficking
- Seek a second expert opinion from the forensic nurse in pediatric cases when the child's anal or genital examination is thought to be abnormal.
- Know when and where to refer cases of acute sexual assault, abuse and trafficking that requires forensic testing, prophylaxis for STIs and HIV, emergency contraception and advocacy
- Know the importance of using non-leading, open-ended questions if they are asking questions about possible abuse
- Understand how to support patients and their families when sexual assault, abuse and trafficking is suspected
- Be aware of the effects of SA and abuse on a patients' mental health and be able to additionally refer to mental health professionals who have expertise in treating sexual assault, abuse and trafficking trauma
- Advise on protection of sexual assault, abuse and trafficking should be part of the anticipatory guidance given to patients and their parents

Resources are available on the internet for providers with and without Lakeland login such as; policies, referral forms, patient scheduling clinic instructions, relevant articles, and information for patients. Simply go to our website: [spectrumhealthlakeland.org/forensic-care](http://spectrumhealthlakeland.org/forensic-care)

## Referring - Other Situations Requiring an Urgent Exam in the ED

### **Child or Vulnerable Adult Physical (not sexual) Abuse Suspicion or Disclosure**

Registered nurses, with advanced and specialized forensic nursing education will provide medical forensic care and/or examination for patients who present with a history of (or suspected of) physical abuse or neglect.

### **Physical Assault or Intimate Partner Violence**

A forensic medical evaluation should be conducted on a patient with a complaint of physical violence, neglect, or intimate partner violence.

### **Human Trafficking or Sex Trafficking**

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to control victims for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or labor services against his/her will.

A forensic medical evaluation should be conducted on a patient with signs of HT

**Note:** According to federal law, any minor under the age of 18 engaging in commercial sex is a victim of sex trafficking, regardless of the presence of force, fraud, or coercion. It is important to know an adult can also be the victim of human trafficking.

**Potential Warning Signs of Human Trafficking:**

The presence of these red flags is an indication that further assessment may be necessary to identify a potential human trafficking situation. Indicators reference conditions a potential victim might exhibit.

*Common Work and Living Conditions:*

- Is not free to leave or come and go as he/she wishes
- Is in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp / manager
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours
- Is not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it off
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work
- High security measures exist in the work and/or living locations (e.g. opaque windows, boarded up windows, bars on windows, barbed wire, security cameras, etc.)

*Poor Mental Health or Abnormal Behavior:*

- Is fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid
- Exhibits unusually fearful or anxious behavior after bringing up law enforcement
- Avoids eye contact

*Poor Physical Health:*

- Lacks medical care and/or is denied medical services by employer
- Appears malnourished or shows signs of repeated exposure to harmful chemicals
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture

*Lack of Control:*

- Has few or no personal possessions
- Is not in control of his/her own money, no financial records, or bank account
- Is not in control of his/her own identification documents (ID or passport)
- Is not allowed or able to speak for themselves (a third party may insist on being present and/or translating)

*Other:*

- Claims of just visiting and inability to clarify where he/she is staying/address
- Lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or of what city he/she is in
- Loss of sense of time
- Has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story

**How to conduct an assessment or exam with a potential victim of human trafficking:**

- Victims do not often disclose their trafficking situation in clinical settings
- It is critical for medical staff to use trauma-informed care practices when interviewing a potential victim
- Before talking with the patient, assess the potential safety risks there might be from asking sensitive questions of the patient
- Recognize that the goal of your interaction is NOT disclosure or rescue, but rather to create a safe, nonjudgmental place that will help you identify trafficking indicators and assist the patient

## The Medical Forensic Examination:

Patients of any age have autonomy in regard to their bodies. After speaking with the forensic nurse, adult patients may refuse, any, all or partial examination, treatment and care for their reproductive health. If a patient is under 18 years old, law enforcement and/or CPS must be notified immediately, and the patient will be sent to the ED for nursing care. Once the minor patient has spoken with the forensic nurse, they will be educated in a developmentally appropriate, trauma informed manner. This will guide the care provided by the forensic nurse.

The purpose of the exam is to ensure the survivor gets the medical care they need while ensuring that their privacy, safety, and health is protected. The forensic nurse and advocate take any amount of time required to build trust with the survivor. The examination and treatment of the survivor is patient led and is based on education, ongoing consent, and communication.

### The Medical Forensic Exam Components May Include:

- A medical history and a general medical exam with a thorough head-to-toe inspection
- Oral, anal, and/or genital exam, depending on what happened during the assault or abuse
- Strangulation assessment
- Assessment for potential psychological & physical health risks associated with assault or abuse
- The survivor can have relevant lab tests done and an opportunity to receive prophylactic medications such as emergency contraception and antibiotics to prevent sexually transmitted infections and HIV
- Evidence such as clothing, saliva, bite marks, hairs, and bodily fluids can be collected for the MI SA Evidence kit during the exam. The forensic nurse gathers this evidence while doing the exam as an added benefit to the victim.
- The forensic nurse objectively documents the details of the assault and the findings from the head-to-toe assessment by using diagrams, written descriptions, and photo-documentation. Documentation of medical treatment received should include: medical treatment required to stabilize injuries, laboratory and radiology tests, and medications, including: prophylactic antibiotics, HIV post-exposure prophylaxis, and pregnancy prevention medications.
- Discharge instructions and follow-up referrals will be provided to survivors for counseling services, and victim-witness or court contacts. Depending on the results of the safety assessment, it may be necessary to provide the patient with information regarding shelters or safe houses in the area.

## Forensic Care & Advocacy Manager Contact Information:

For any further information or questions, please contact **Alyssa Pliml**, by email at **[aplml1@lakelandhealth.org](mailto:aplml1@lakelandhealth.org)** or by calling **269.930.0005**. You can also reach the on-call forensic nurse by paging or texting your information to **269.232.0800**. Please leave your call back number including the area code.

Medical Director Sheila Philpott, MD, may be reached through the manager listed above.



# Referencia a la clínica de SANE

Hay motivo de preocupación por una agresión y/o abuso sexual que pudo haber ocurrido hace más de 3 a 5 días. Quisiéramos que se comuniquen con nosotros para coordinar un examen médico con la clínica de enfermeras examinadoras de agresión sexual (SANE, por sus siglas en inglés) en Lakeland Regional Medical Center, St. Joseph.

## Planifique su cita

Para solicitar una cita, favor de llamar a la Administración de Lakeland de Lunes a Viernes, de 8 a. m. a 5 p. m. al **269.687.1863**. Este número lo conectará de inmediato para que pueda coordinar esta cita lo antes posible.

## Qué esperar

El propósito del examen es asegurar que reciba la atención que necesita y merece. Por favor, siéntase libre de hacer preguntas. Es posible que le hagan preguntas difíciles de responder. Seremos comprensivos y conscientes de sus necesidades.

Nos aseguraremos de que reciba una atención médica que se adapte a sus necesidades. El examen incluye:

1. Un examen médico en el que se le hará preguntas sobre sus antecedentes médicos y la agresión y/o abuso.
2. Un examen genital. No se suele someter a los niños menores de 12 años a exámenes internos.
3. Fotografías, si es necesario.
4. Toma de muestras para cultivos y análisis.
5. Medicamentos para tratar y prevenir ciertas infecciones.

## Su cita en la clínica

- Asegúrese de llegar al Centro de Defensa de Niños (Children's Advocacy Center), 4938 Niles Road, St. Joseph, 15 minutos antes de su cita programada. Entre por la puerta principal.
- Una vez que se registre, una enfermera de la clínica SANE le acompañará a una habitación segura.
- Puede traer una persona de apoyo. Algunas personas prefieren venir solas. También podemos solicitar un defensor si lo deseara.
- Si el paciente es un niño, puede traer un juguete, una manta, música, un libro u cualquier otro artículo que le ayude a sentirse cómodo. Es mejor que el niño haya comido y descansado antes del examen. Explíquelo a su hijo que el fin del examen es asegurar que su cuerpo esté bien. Queremos que su hijo sepa que estamos aquí para ayudarlo, no para lastimarlo o asustarlo.

**Pagando por el examen: No se le cobrará el examen. Los exámenes son gratuitos.**

## Información sobre la cita

Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Hora \_\_\_\_\_

# Referral to the Forensic Nurse Clinic

There is a concern about abuse and/or assault which may have occurred more than 5 days ago. We would like for you to follow up for a medical exam with the forensic nurse or sexual assault nurse examiner at the Spectrum Health Lakeland Forensic Nurse Clinic located at the Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Michigan.

## Plan Your Appointment

Your healthcare provider has referred you or your child to Spectrum Health Lakeland Forensic Nurse Clinic. If your provider has not already scheduled, you an appointment; Call the scheduler at **269.687.1863**. This number will connect you right away, so you can make this appointment as soon as you can.

## What to Expect

All exams are done at the comfort level of the patient. The patient (even a child patient) has control over what happens to their body. We will not force a child to have an exam that makes them afraid. The purpose of the exam is to ensure you, or your child gets the care you need and deserve. Please feel free to ask questions. You may be asked questions that are hard to answer. We will be caring and thoughtful of your needs.

We will make sure the medical care best meets your needs. The exam includes:

- A medical exam with questions about your medical history and the assault abuse
- A genital exam if sexual assault or abuse is suspected or confirmed. Internal exams are usually not done on children 12 and under.
- Photographs if needed.
- The collection of specimens for culture and testing.
- Medicine to treat and prevent certain infections.

## Your Clinic Appointment

- Arrive at the Children's Advocacy Center, 4938 Niles Road, in St. Joseph approximately 15 minutes before your scheduled appointment. Go to the main entrance.
- After you register, a clinic nurse will escort you to the secure location.
- You can bring a support person. Some people prefer to come alone. We can also call for an advocate if you wish.
- If the patient is a child, they should feel free to bring a toy, blanket, music, book, or other items that make them feel at ease. It is best If the child is fed and rested before the exam. Please explain to your child that the exam is to make sure their body is okay. We want your child to know we are here to help, not hurt or scare them.

**Paying for your exam: You won't be billed for the exam. The exams are free.**

Appointment information

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

## Medical Forensic Evaluation Referral Record

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Referral Site	Urgency	Phone #	Fax#
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niles ED	Urgent	269-687-1412	269-683-0940
<input type="checkbox"/>	Saint Joseph ED	Urgent	269-983-8263	269-983-8263
<input type="checkbox"/>	Watervliet ED	Urgent	269-463-5019	269-463-5362
<input type="checkbox"/>	Children's Advocacy Center Clinic	Non-Urgent	269-687-1863	269-683-2337

Fax Received By \_\_\_\_\_  
*Print Name/Title                      Phone Number                      Date                      Time*

### Referring Agency Information

Referring Agency: ☐ CPS    ☐ Children's Advocacy Center    ☐ Other Provider \_\_\_\_\_

Referred By: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Print Name/Title                      Phone Number                      Date                      Time*

### Patient Information

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal guardian or CPS that will accompany minor patient: \_\_\_\_\_  
*If the patient is an adolescent they do not need accompaniment*

Relationship to Patient: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reason for Medical Forensic Evaluation

Suspected or Disclosed: ☐ Sexual Abuse    ☐ Physical Abuse    Est. Date of Abuse: \_\_\_\_\_

Law Enforcement Information \_\_\_\_\_  
*Police Department                      Officer                      Phone #                      Complaint #*

Relevant Details to This Case \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

☐ **This case requires a CPS call back** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Print Name/Title                      Phone Number                      On-Call Emergency Number*

☐ DO NOT RELEASE THIS CHILD WITH \_\_\_\_\_

☐ CPS 3200 Form has been filled out OR CPS is already involved \_\_\_\_\_

**Any Questions About Referral Appropriateness or Site Considerations  
 Please Call Forensic Care & Advocacy Manager Alyssa Pliml ANYTIME  
 269-930-0005**





