

Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE) Commission

Mason County Service Plan

Local Board/SART Overview

To meet SAFE Commission standards, Mason County has formalized a coordinated response through the creation of a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) serving as the local board, convened specifically to meet the SAFE Commission's guidelines. Members of this local coordinated response collaboration include:

- Prosecuting Attorney's Office Victim Advocate
- CONTACT Rape Crisis Center
- West Virginia State Police
- EMS Director
- Branches DV Advocate
- Rivers Health
- Prestera Mental Health
- Recovery House
- Community Ministerial Representative
- Mason County Sheriff's Department
- Mountain State Family Services
- WV Works
- Mason County Health Department
- Local Emergency Planning Committee
- Child Protective Services
- Community Members

The local board/SART meets/plans to meet monthly with the intent to:

- ☒ Share information and resources
- ☒ Identify gaps in the service delivery system
- ☒ Increase awareness on issues of sexual assault and stalking in the community
- ☒ Increase victim and community safety
- ☒ Develop professional relationships and an understanding of varying roles and responsibilities of first responders
- ☒ Develop, implement, and review county protocol to meet legislative requirements of the SAFE Commission

ADVOCACY PROTOCOL

OVERVIEW

A victim advocate provides free, confidential and non-judgmental emotional support, information, social service referrals and guidance following a sexual assault. A victim advocate's involvement will begin at the time the victim reports the sexual assault and extend beyond the point when other agencies have terminated their involvement. A victim advocate offers the victim the support needed to understand what is happening and make informed decisions.

Services can only be provided by trained advocates who have received a minimum of 32 hours of specific sexual assault advocacy training that meets the training standards established by the West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services <http://www.fris.org/>.¹

The following seven advocacy services meet core service standards. The following services exist in our county:

- ☒ 24/7 advocacy, support, and accompaniment during the medical forensic exam, law enforcement investigations and court proceedings
- ☒ Information for victims about reporting/not reporting to law enforcement
- ☒ Crisis intervention and/or emotional support to victims and their families
- ☒ Referrals and coordinated services with other agencies
- ☒ Support for victims through the criminal justice system
- ☒ Replacement clothing for victims after medical forensic exams, if needed
- ☒ Protection of victim privacy and confidentiality

Services for adolescent/adult victims are provided by CONTACT Rape Crisis Center

CONTACT Rape Crisis Center Victim Advocates may be reached by medical personnel, law enforcement, emergency services staff, or by victims directly, through CONTACT's 24-hour hotline (304-399-1111 or toll free at 1-866-399-7273 and ask for the Mason County Advocate). The advocate should be called as soon as the victim presents at Cabell Huntington Hospital and discloses that they have been sexually assaulted. The

^[1] In cases of child abuse perpetrated against an adolescent as defined by WV law, the local Child Advocacy Center may also be contacted for support and/or forensic services.

CONTACT Victim Advocate will arrive at the hospital within 1 hour of receiving the call and stay until the victim leaves the hospital, or no longer requests advocacy services.

First responders will be informed of this Advocacy Protocol by:

The Mason County SART team will review the SAFE plan every year during April's meeting and hold an information session during May or June for all first responders in Mason County. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office will send out a memo to all first responders to invite them to the information session. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office will then follow up the session by sending the plan to all first responding agencies who were unable to send their staff to the information session. In-person conversations with first responders will be held quarterly or as needed to make sure they understand the plan and are sharing it with the rest of their staff. The SART will work with first responders to add the plan to all onboarding procedures. The first responders who need to have access to this plan are the Point Pleasant Police, Mason Metro Police Department, Mason County Sheriff's Department, State Police - Mason County Detachment, Rivers Health Hospital, Contact Rape Crisis Center - Mason County office, Branches Domestic Violence Shelter – Mason County office, 911 Dispatch, Mason County Schools, Charleston CAC, City & County EMS, and the Mason County Health Department.

Phone numbers of Rape Crisis Center to Activate Protocol:

304-399-1111 or toll-free at 1-866-339-7273

MEDICAL FORENSIC PROTOCOL

OVERVIEW

Medical forensic services are NOT provided by Rivers Health.

Services are provided via a letter of agreement with a medical facility from another County:

Cabell Huntington Hospital
1340 Hal Greet Boulevard
Huntington, WV 25701
304-526-2200

Medical forensic exams are provided by physicians and SANEs who are available on-call 24/7.

First responders will be informed of this Medical Forensic Protocol by:

The Mason County SART team will review the SAFE plan every year during April's meeting and hold an information session during May or June for all first responders in Mason County. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office will send out a memo to all first responders to invite them to the information session. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office will then follow up the session by sending the plan to all first responding agencies who were unable to send their staff to the information session. In-person conversations with first responders will be held quarterly or as needed to make sure they understand the plan and are sharing it with the rest of their staff. The SART will work with first responders to add the plan to all onboarding procedures. The first responders who need to have access to this plan are the Point Pleasant Police, Mason Metro Police Department, Mason County Sheriff's Department, State Police - Mason County Detachment, Rivers Health Hospital, Contact Rape Crisis Center - Mason County office, Branches Domestic Violence Shelter - Mason County office, 911 Dispatch, Mason County Schools, Charleston CAC, City & County EMS, and the Mason County Health Department.

Phone number to Activate Medical Forensic Protocol: 304-526-2200

TRANSPORTATION PROTOCOL

OVERVIEW

- The SAFE Commission requires that this transportation protocol must include the following four core components:
 1. Accessible transportation, including the ability to transport victims with disabilities
 2. Transportation to and from the medical forensic exam regardless of the victim's ability to pay
 3. Plan for victim confidentiality
 4. Plan to return the victim to his or her point of origin (or an agreed upon safe place) after the medical forensic examination

This protocol addresses when an individual is a victim of sexual assault and requires a medical forensic exam but cannot transport themselves to the facility where the exam will be performed. Mason County has a system that provides accessible transportation to victims of sexual assault regardless of ability to pay and regardless of reporting to law enforcement. The protocol will also maintain victim confidentiality and return the victim to a safe location upon the completion of the medical forensic evaluation.

Protocol: All victim information is to remain CONFIDENTIAL

- **911 Call With Injuries:** Where there is a need for immediate emergency care, both Mason County EMS and local law enforcement will respond. The victim will be transported by Mason County EMS (at no cost to the victim) for the medical forensic evaluation at Cabell Huntington Hospital. Should the victim wish to initiate a criminal investigation, the responding law enforcement officers will document and report the incident. The officers may also go with the victim to Cabell Huntington Hospital or return at the conclusion of the medical forensic evaluation to transport the victim to a safe place. Should the victim not wish to initiate a criminal investigation, the responding law enforcement officers shall determine immediate victim safety, provide the victim with contact information in the event they wish to proceed at a later date, and transport the victim to a safe place following the medical forensic evaluation. **Victims with disabilities may be transported by Mason County EMS at no cost to the victim. CONTACT Rape Crisis Center agrees to keep prepaid gas cards on hand to help victims who need assistance with fuel from the hospital. If needed, CONTACT Rape Crisis Center will set-up a ride with Uber or a taxi service to take victims home from the hospital.

- **911 Call With No Injuries:** If a victim calls 911 or contacts a Law Enforcement Agency to report a sexual assault but there is no need for medical care then a Law Enforcement Officer should respond to the victim's location. At that time, the responding officer should inform the victim of the option of reporting the incident and the option to have a medical forensic evaluation.
 - If the victim wishes to have both a medical forensic evaluation and a criminal investigation initiated, the responding officer will transport the victim to Cabell Huntington Hospital and document the incident in the form of a report. If necessary, the officer will stay at the medical facility with the victim and transport the victim to a safe location following the medical forensic evaluation.

 - If the victim does not wish to initiate a criminal investigation and does not have transportation, the responding law enforcement officer will provide transportation to Cabell Huntington Hospital for the medical forensic exam. Following the medical forensic evaluation, the responding officer shall determine immediate victim safety, provide the victim with contact information in the event they wish to proceed at a later date, and transport the victim to a safe place if needed.

 - CONTACT Rape Crisis Center agrees to keep prepaid gas cards on hand to help victims who need assistance with fuel from the hospital. If needed, CONTACT Rape Crisis Center will set-up a ride with Uber or a taxi service to take victims home from the hospital.

- **Call to Rape Crisis Center:** If a victim calls to report a sexual assault to CONTACT Rape Crisis Center, the advocate will inform the victim of the options to report or not report the incident and the option of a medical forensic evaluation. If there is an emergent need for medical care or no need for medical care but the victim does not have transportation, the advocate will request the individual call 911 which will activate one of the protocols listed above.

First responders will be informed of this Transportation Protocol by:

The Mason County SART team will review the SAFE plan every year during April's meeting and hold an information session during May or June for all first responders in Mason County. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office will send out a memo to all first responders to invite them to the information session. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office will then follow up the session by sending the plan to all first responding agencies who were unable to send their staff to the information session. In-person conversations with first responders will be held quarterly or as needed to make sure they understand the plan and are sharing it with the rest of their staff. The SART will work with first responders to add the plan to all onboarding procedures. The first responders who need to have access to this plan are the Point Pleasant Police, Mason Metro Police Department, Mason County Sheriff's Department, State Police - Mason County Detachment, Rivers Health Hospital, Contact Rape Crisis Center - Mason County office, Branches Domestic Violence Shelter - Mason County office, 911 Dispatch, Mason County Schools, Charleston CAC, City & County EMS, and the Mason County Health Department.

Phone number to activate Transportation Protocol: 911

For assistance returning to Mason County from Cabell Huntington Hospital:

CONTACT Huntington: 304-399-1111