

Systems of Assistance for Victims of Sexual Violence in the USA

Survivors' Bill of Rights Act of 2016

- **Receive a forensic exam at no cost**
- **Have evidence kit preserved for 20 years or according to the state statute of limitations**
- **Receive written notification prior to destruction of kit**
- **Be informed of their rights:**
 - **Exam without or without law enforcement reporting**
 - **Availability of: advocate, protective orders and victim compensation**

Survivors

- Child victims- Child Protective Services
- Adult victims of recent assault
- Adult victims of past assault

Team Approach: Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART) Goals:

- To facilitate coordination to improve overall response to sexual assault victims
- Increase victim safety and offender accountability
- Minimize trauma for victims by providing options and support

SART Team Members

Core Members:

- Law Enforcement
- Prosecution
- Medical Services: Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE)
- Advocate

Additional Members:

- Schools
- Religions leaders
- Population specific members
- Probation, court personnel, judges

SART Teams

- Regular meetings
- Cross-training
- Leadership structure, mission statement, confidentiality
- Strengths/gaps
- Service mapping and assessment

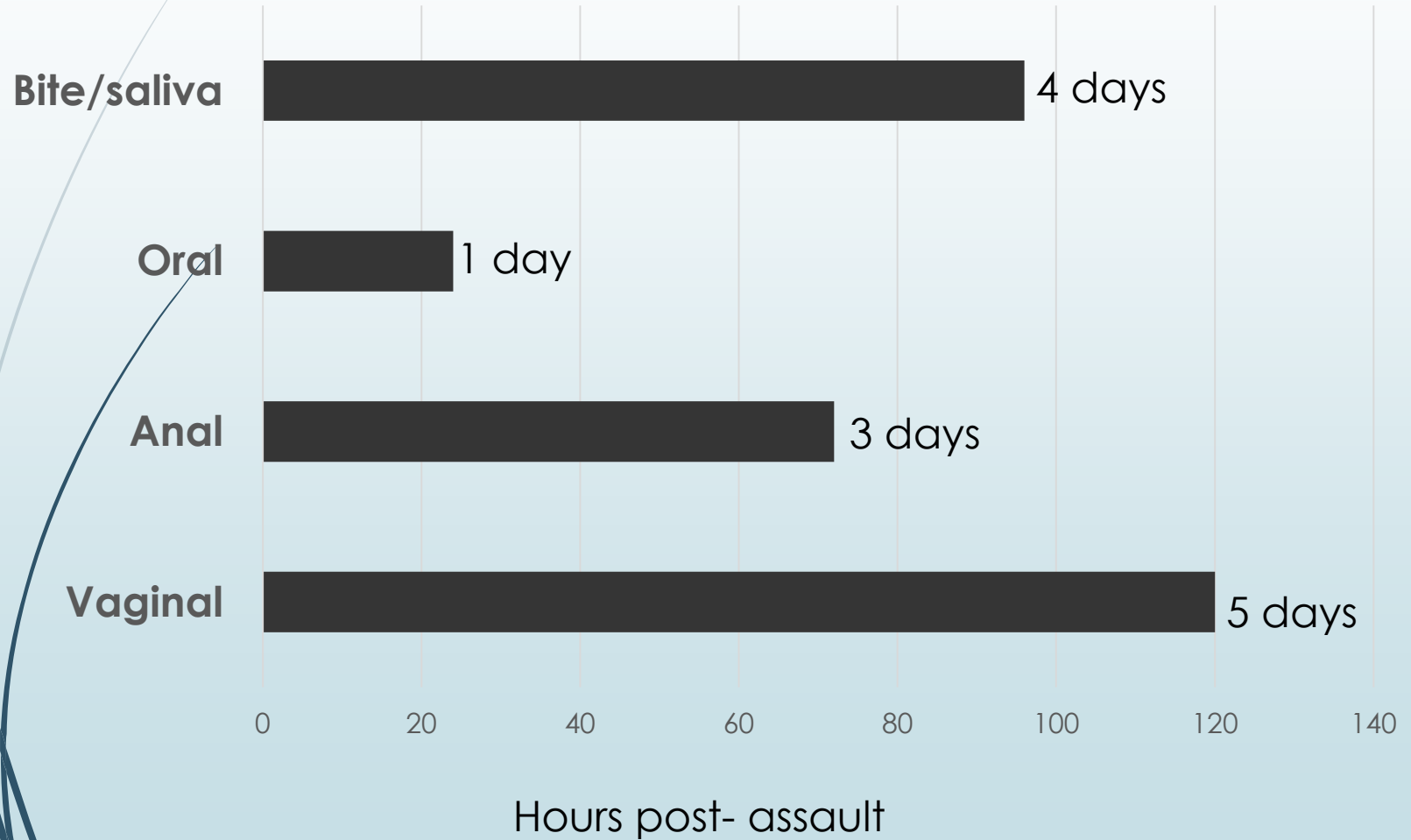
Medical Professionals

- Emergency Severity Index- Level 2
- Private waiting area
- Initiate team response
- Options for treatment and evidence collection
- Informed consent
- Emergency contraception
- STI/HIV and prophylaxis options

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs)

- Address health and emotional care
- Evidence collection and chain of custody
- Studies show they collect better evidence
- Testifying in court

Recommended Time Frames for Evidence Collection



Medical Care Options

- Emergency room
- Personal physician
- Women's healthcare clinic

Law Enforcement

- Initial statement
- In-depth interview
- Evidence collection “rape kits”
- Report writing
- Coordinating with prosecutors and advocates

Prosecutors

- Coordinate with law enforcement and advocates
- Communicate with victims
- Pre-trial preparation
- Victim safety and consultation

Civil Attorneys

- Privacy
- Safety
- Housing
- Financial
- Employment
- Education
- Immigration
- Crime Victim Rights

Advocates

- System based: work for law enforcement or prosecution. Limited confidentiality
- Community-based: work for a non-profit. Have confidentiality.

Advocates: Support and Resources

- Listen and provide support
- Options for medical care, evidence collection, reporting
- Help victim gain confidence and information for decision making
- Individual and group support
- Resources

Advocates: Hospital, Law Enforcement and Court Accompaniment

- Emotional support
- Explain process
- Provide options
- Address physical and emotional needs

Advocate Communication

- Criminal justice process
- Sharing information as permitted
- Keeps victims engaged and informed

Confidentiality

- Federal law from the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) and Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) contain confidentiality requirements
- Releases of Information required to discuss client

University Response

- Clery Act: requires reporting by universities of crimes committed on campus
- Title IX: discrimination based on sex
- Campus SaVE: violence against women crimes must be disclosed, requires disciplinary procedures and education programs
- All are independent of criminal justice response

Victim-Centered Response

- Consider victim first; ensure safety
- Listen generously
- Promote victim self-agency
- Coordinate and collaborate
- Seek just solutions
- Hold self and others accountable

Trauma-Informed Responses

- Attend to victim's emotional safety as well as physical safety
- Strengthen victim's capacity to recover by providing information, resources, services and support
- Education for community, service providers and victims regarding impact of trauma on health and well-being

Trauma-Informed

- Understands that the brain processes trauma differently than regular experiences
- Recognizes the fight, flight or freeze responses

Core Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

Safety & Trust

Choice

Collaboration

Empowerment

Cultural Competence

Empowerment versus Rescuing

- Rescuing assumes survivor lacks strength, skills or resources
- Empowerment recognizes survivor's strengths

Foundations of Advocacy

- Provide victims with options
- Trauma-specific services
- Work with victim to develop action plans
- Listen and believe, no investigation or judgement
- Teamwork

Crisis Calls

- Identify immediate concerns; establish safety
- Explain options and services
- Answered 24/7
- Local and national hotlines

Crisis Intervention

- Support
- Normalize reactions to trauma
- Prioritize and solve concerns
- Support friends and family
- Crisis education, referrals, follow-up

Education


- Destigmatizing rape
- Reducing blame
- Normalize victim's response
- Recognize avoidance
- Discuss suicide risk

Referrals

- Basic needs must be met first (housing, food, finances)
- Psychotherapy (counseling)
- Support groups

Unique Systems of Support

- Social media
- Book clubs
- Art therapy
- Physical practice- yoga, breathing



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