

Sexual Assault Investigations

602.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the investigation of sexual assaults. These guidelines will address some of the unique aspects of such cases and the effects that these crimes have on the victims.

Mandatory notifications requirements are addressed in the Child Abuse and Adult Abuse policies.

602.2 INVESTIGATION CONSIDERATIONS

602.2.1 VICTIM CONFIDENTIALITY

Deputies investigating or receiving a report of an alleged sex offense shall inform the victim, or the victim's parent or guardian if the victim is a minor, that his/her name will become a matter of public record unless the victim requests that his/her name not be made public. The reporting deputy shall document in his/her report that the victim was properly informed and shall include any related response made by the victim, or if a minor, any response made by the victim's parent or guardian (Penal Code 293 § (a) and (b)).

- (a) Except as authorized by law, members of this department shall not publicly disclose the name or address of any victim of a sex crime who has exercised his/her right to confidentiality (Penal Code § 293 (c) and (d)).

602.2.2 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITY

Whenever there is an alleged violation of Penal Code §§ 243(e), 261, 261.5, 262, 273.5, 286, 288a or 289, the assigned deputy shall accomplish the following:

- (a) Immediately provide the victim with the "Victims of Domestic Violence" card containing the names and locations of rape victim counseling centers within the county and their 24-hour counseling service telephone numbers (Penal Code § 264.2(a)).
- (b) If the victim is transported to a hospital for any medical evidentiary or physical examination, the officer shall immediately cause the local rape victim counseling center to be notified (Penal Code § 264.2(b)(1)).
 - 1. Prior to any such examination the assigned deputy shall ensure that the victim has been properly informed of his/her right to have a sexual assault victim counselor and at least one other support person present (Penal Code § 264.2(b)(2)).
 - 2. A support person may be excluded from the examination by the deputy or the medical provider if his/her presence would be detrimental to the purpose of the examination (Penal Code § 264.2(b)(4)).

Sexual Assault Investigations

602.3 TESTING OF SEXUAL ASSAULT EVIDENCE

- (a) **Subject to available resources and other law enforcement considerations which may affect the ability to process and analyze rape kits or other sexual assault victim evidence and other crime scene evidence, any member of this department assigned to investigate a sexual assault offense (Penal Code §§ 261, 261.5, 262, 286, 288a or 289) should take every reasonable step to ensure that DNA testing of such evidence is performed in a timely manner and within the time periods prescribed by Penal Code § 803(i)(1)(A) and (B).**
- (b) In order to maximize the effectiveness of such testing and identifying the perpetrator of any sexual assault, the assigned investigator should further ensure that the results of any such test have been timely entered into and checked against both the Department of Justice Cal-DNA database and the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS).
- (c) If, for any reason, DNA evidence in a sexual assault case in which the identity of the perpetrator is in issue is not going to be analyzed within two years of the crime, the assigned investigator shall notify the victim of such fact in writing within no less than 60 days prior to the expiration of the two-year period (Penal Code § 680(d)).

602.4 VICTIM NOTIFICATION OF DNA STATUS

- (a) Upon receipt of a written request from a sexual assault victim or the victim's authorized designee, the assigned investigator may inform the victim of the status of the DNA testing of any evidence from the victim's case.
 - 1. Although such information may be communicated orally, the assigned investigator should thereafter follow-up with and retain a copy of confirmation by either written or electronic mail.
 - 2. Absent a written request, no member of this department is required to, but may, communicate with the victim or victim's designee regarding the status of any DNA testing.
- (b) Subject to the commitment of sufficient resources to respond to requests for information, sexual assault victims shall further have the following rights:
 - 1. To be informed whether or not a DNA profile of the assailant was obtained from the testing of the rape kit or other crime scene evidence from their case.
 - 2. To be informed whether or not there is a match between the DNA profile of the assailant developed from the evidence and a DNA profile contained in the Department of Justice Convicted Offender DNA Database, **providing that disclosure would not impede or compromise an ongoing investigation.**
 - 3. To be informed whether or not the DNA profile of the assailant developed from the evidence has been entered into the Department of Justice Data Bank of case evidence.

Sexual Assault Investigations

- (c) Provided that the sexual assault victim or victim's designee has kept the assigned investigator informed with regard to current address, telephone number and email address (if available), any victim or victim's designee shall, upon request, be advised of any known significant changes regarding the victim's case.
 - 1. Although such information may be communicated orally, the assigned investigator should thereafter follow-up with and retain a copy of confirmation by either written or electronic mail.
 - 2. **No investigator shall be required to or expected to release any information which might impede or compromise any ongoing investigation.**

602.5 DESTRUCTION OF EVIDENCE

Any destruction of evidence related to a sexual assault shall occur only after victim notification is made as required pursuant to Penal Code § 680 and only in compliance with the Property and Evidence Policy.

602.6 VICTIM INTERVIEWS

The primary considerations in sexual assault investigations, which begin with the initial call to SHASCOM, should be the health and safety of the victim, the preservation of evidence, and preliminary interviews to determine if a crime has been committed and to attempt to identify the suspect.

Whenever possible, a member of SART should be included in the initial victim interviews. An in-depth follow-up interview should not be conducted until after the medical and forensic examinations are completed and the personal needs of the victim have been met (e.g., change of clothes, bathing). The follow-up interview may be delayed to the following day based upon the circumstances. Whenever practicable, the follow-up interview should be conducted by a qualified investigator.

No opinion of whether the case is unfounded shall be included in the report.

Victims shall not be asked or required to take a polygraph examination (34 USC § 10451; Penal Code § 637.4).

Victims should be apprised of applicable victim's rights provisions, as outlined in the Victim and Witness Assistance Policy.

602.6.1 VICTIM RIGHTS

Whenever there is an alleged sexual assault, the assigned deputy shall accomplish the following:

- (a) Advise the victim in writing of the right to have a victim advocate and a support person of the victim's choosing present at any interview or contact by law enforcement, any other rights of a sexual assault victim pursuant to Penal Code § 680.2, and the right to have a person of the same or opposite gender present in the room during any interview with a law enforcement official unless no such person is reasonably available (Penal Code § 679.04).

Shasta County Sheriff's Office

Shasta County SD Policy Manual

Sexual Assault Investigations

- (b) If the victim is transported to a hospital for any medical evidentiary or physical examination, the deputy shall immediately cause the local rape victim counseling center to be notified (Penal Code § 264.2).
 - 1. The deputy shall not discourage a victim from receiving a medical evidentiary or physical examination (Penal Code § 679.04).
 - 2. A support person may be excluded from the examination by the deputy or the medical provider if his/her presence would be detrimental to the purpose of the examination (Penal Code § 264.2).

602.6.2 VICTIM CONFIDENTIALITY

Deputies investigating or receiving a report of an alleged sex offense shall inform the victim, or the victim's parent or guardian if the victim is a minor, that his/her name will become a matter of public record unless the victim requests that his/her name not be made public. The reporting deputy shall document in his/her report that the victim was properly informed and shall include any related response made by the victim, or if a minor, any response made by the victim's parent or guardian (Penal Code § 293).

Except as authorized by law, members of this department shall not publicly disclose the name of any victim of a sex crime who has exercised his/her right to confidentiality (Penal Code § 293).

602.7 COLLECTION AND TESTING OF BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Whenever possible, a SART member should be involved in the collection of forensic evidence from the victim.

When the facts of the case indicate that collection of biological evidence is warranted, it should be collected regardless of how much time has elapsed since the reported assault.

If a drug-facilitated sexual assault is suspected, urine and blood samples should be collected from the victim as soon as practicable.

Subject to requirements set forth in this policy, biological evidence from all sexual assault cases, including cases where the suspect is known by the victim, should be submitted for testing.

Victims who choose not to assist with an investigation, do not desire that the matter be investigated or wish to remain anonymous may still consent to the collection of evidence under their control. In these circumstances, the evidence should be collected and stored appropriately.

602.7.1 COLLECTION AND TESTING REQUIREMENTS

Members investigating a sexual assault offense should take every reasonable step to ensure that DNA testing of such evidence is performed in a timely manner and within the time periods prescribed by Penal Code § 803(g). Generally, SAFE/SART kits should be submitted to the crime lab within 20 days after being booked into evidence (Penal Code § 680), absent the collection of a rapid DNA service (RADS) kit which is sent directly to the DOJ Crime Lab when collected by a member of the SART Team.

Shasta County Sheriff's Office

Shasta County SD Policy Manual

Sexual Assault Investigations

In order to maximize the effectiveness of such testing and identify the perpetrator of any sexual assault, the assigned deputy shall ensure that an information profile for the SAFE/SART kit evidence has been created in the California Department of Justice (DOJ) SAFE-T database within 120 days of collection and should further ensure that the results of any such test have been timely entered into and checked against both the DOJ Cal-DNA database and the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) (Penal Code § 680.3).

If the assigned deputy determines that a SAFE/SART kit submitted to a private laboratory for analysis has not been tested within 120 days after submission, the deputy shall update the SAFE-T database to reflect the reason for the delay in testing. The assigned deputy shall continue to update the status every 120 days thereafter until the evidence has been analyzed or the statute of limitations has run (Penal Code § 680.3).

If, for any reason, DNA evidence in a sexual assault case in which the identity of the perpetrator is in issue and is not going to be analyzed within 18 months of the crime, the assigned deputy shall notify the victim of such fact in writing no less than 60 days prior to the expiration of the 18-month period (Penal Code § 680(d)).

Additional guidance regarding evidence retention and destruction is found in the Property and Evidence Policy.

602.7.2 DNA TEST RESULTS

A SART member should be consulted regarding the best way to deliver biological testing results to a victim so as to minimize victim trauma, especially in cases where there has been a significant delay in getting biological testing results (e.g., delays in testing the evidence or delayed DNA databank hits). Members should make reasonable efforts to assist the victim by providing available information on local assistance programs and organizations as provided in the Victim and Witness Assistance Policy.

- (a) Upon receipt of a written request from a sexual assault victim or the victim's authorized designee, members investigating sexual assault cases shall inform the victim of the status of the DNA testing of any evidence from the victim's case (Penal Code § 680).
 1. Although such information may be communicated orally, the assigned deputy should thereafter follow-up with and retain a copy of confirmation by either written or electronic mail.
 2. Absent a written request, no member of this department is required to, but may, communicate with the victim or the victim's authorized designee regarding the status of any DNA testing.
- (b) Subject to the commitment of sufficient resources to respond to requests for information, sexual assault victims shall further have the following rights (Penal Code § 680):
 1. To be informed if a DNA profile of the assailant was obtained from the testing of the SAFE kit or other crime scene evidence from their case.

Shasta County Sheriff's Office

Shasta County SD Policy Manual

Sexual Assault Investigations

2. To be informed if there is a match between the DNA profile of the assailant developed from the evidence and a DNA profile contained in the DOJ Convicted Offender DNA Database, providing that disclosure would not impede or compromise an ongoing investigation.
 3. To be informed if the DNA profile of the assailant developed from the evidence has been entered into the DOJ Databank of case evidence.
- (c) Provided that the sexual assault victim or the victim's authorized designee has kept the assigned deputy informed with regard to current address, telephone number, and email address (if available), any victim or the victim's authorized designee shall, upon request, be advised of any known significant changes regarding the victim's case (Penal Code § 680).
1. Although such information may be communicated orally, the assigned deputy should thereafter follow-up with and retain a copy of confirmation by either written or electronic mail.
 2. No deputy shall be required or expected to release any information which might impede or compromise any ongoing investigation.

602.7.3 DESTRUCTION OF EVIDENCE

Any destruction of evidence related to a sexual assault shall occur only after victim notification is made as required pursuant to Penal Code § 680 and only in compliance with the Property and Evidence Policy.

602.7.4 STANDARDIZED SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC MEDICAL EVIDENCE KIT

Members investigating a sexual assault should use SAFE/SART kits when appropriate and follow related usage guidelines issued by the California Clinical Forensic Medical Training Center (Penal Code § 13823.14).

602.8 DISPOSITION OF CASES

If the assigned investigator has reason to believe the case is without merit, the case may be classified as unfounded only upon review and approval of the Major Crimes Unit supervisor.

Classification of a sexual assault case as unfounded requires the Major Crimes Unit supervisor to determine that the facts have significant irregularities with reported information and that the incident could not have happened as it was reported. When a victim has recanted his/her original statement, there must be corroborating evidence that the allegations were false or baseless (i.e., no crime occurred) before the case should be determined as unfounded.

602.9 CASE REVIEW

The Major Crimes Unit supervisor should ensure case dispositions are reviewed on a periodic basis, at least annually, using an identified group that is independent of the investigation process. The reviews should include an analysis of:

- Case dispositions.

Shasta County Sheriff's Office

Shasta County SD Policy Manual

Sexual Assault Investigations

- Decisions to collect biological evidence.
- Submissions of biological evidence for lab testing.