

Supporting Victims of Sexual Assault

Understanding the Services Available to Sexual Assault Victims in New Jersey

In November 2018, Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal issued the Attorney General Standards for Providing Services to Victims of Sexual Assault, Third Edition (“Standards”). The Standards provide a set of fourteen protocols that prioritize the needs and concerns of sexual assault victims in New Jersey. Most importantly, the Standards ensure that victims are treated with respect and understanding in the days, weeks, and months after reporting an assault.

The Standards focus on delivering services to victims in a timely and non-judgmental manner. This victim-centered approach includes:

- ensuring the victim’s safety is the top priority;
- respecting the integrity, choices, and autonomy of each victim;
- protecting the victim’s privacy and confidential information;
- identifying and responding to the obstacles some victims may face when seeking help; and
- recognizing the importance of victim feedback in improving responses to sexual assault.

Under the Standards, victims may seek the assistance of a Sexual Assault Response Team, or SART, which is available to any victim 13 years or older who reports an assault within five days. Each SART consists of a confidential sexual violence advocate (CSVA), a forensic nurse examiner (FNE), and a law enforcement officer. Victims may request SART services by calling **9-1-1** or presenting at a law enforcement agency, a healthcare facility or a sexual violence service organization.

The Standards are available at nj.gov/oag/end-sexual-assault and summarized below:

- 1. Confidential Sexual Assault Advocacy.** Victims of sexual assault shall be provided the opportunity to have the support of a confidential sexual violence advocate (CSVA) prior to and during all medical and legal proceedings, as well as through the entire healing process. (pp. 5-6)
- 2. Law Enforcement.** Victims of sexual assault shall be provided with thorough, compassionate, and objective assistance from all law enforcement officers responding to and investigating an incident of sexual assault. (pp. 7-10)
- 3. Standardized Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exam & Treatment.** Healthcare professionals shall provide every victim of sexual assault a thorough, compassionate, and timely examination, as well as related services. (pp. 11-13)

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4. **SAFE Kits.** All victims of sexual assault shall be advised of the time sensitive nature of a medical forensic exam and the importance of a Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence (SAFE) Kit and a Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault/Toxicology Kit. (pp. 14-16)
5. **Examination Facilities.** All victims of sexual assault shall be provided with a medical forensic exam and treatment in a timely, compassionate, and respectful manner. (pp. 17-19)
6. **Specialized Services for Child & Adolescent Victims.** Healthcare personnel, law enforcement officers, and CSVAs shall ensure that all child and adolescent victims of sexual assault and their families are treated with compassion and respect. All services shall be provided in a manner that is specific to the physical, emotional, and developmental needs of the child or adolescent. (p. 20)
7. **Special Considerations for Vulnerable Populations.** The special needs of vulnerable victims shall be recognized and addressed by law enforcement officers, healthcare providers, and CSVAs. (pp. 21-23)
8. **Discharge & Referral Information.** Every victim of sexual assault shall have the benefit of a discharge plan that addresses medical follow-up and provides additional resources. (p. 24)
9. **Assessment of SART Services by Victims & Service Providers.** Victims of sexual assault who choose to use the SART's services shall be afforded an opportunity to assess the services provided through a victim survey. Participating members of the SART shall also assess the SART response provided and recommend systems improvements through a SART member survey. (p. 25)
10. **Prosecution.** Recognizing the profound impact that crimes of sexual assault have on both child and adult victims and their families, prosecutors shall use a victim-centered approach when working with victims of sexual assault and in handling their cases. (pp. 26-27)
11. **SART Team Training.** Every county shall provide standardized SART training to all personnel assigned to respond as members of the County SART. (p. 28)
12. **County SART Advisory Boards.** Each county shall have a SART Advisory Board, which shall review SART programs, policies, and best practices. (pp. 29-30)
13. **Statewide SART Advisory Board.** A Statewide SART Advisory Board shall monitor the operation of the 21 County SART programs. (pp. 31-32)
14. **SART Complaint Procedures.** Procedures shall be implemented to address any complaints, issues, or unusual occurrences concerning a County SART. (p. 33)

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