

**Please Note:** If you are able to get to a hospital that participates in the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program the SANE nurse will be able to attend to your needs. The distinction of the SANE program is the capacity to store forensic evidence for up to six months. This allows victims/survivors time to decide whether or not to involve the police and to proceed with the legal process.

### **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program**

The SANE Program Will Provide:

- Emergency response, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, when called by emergency personnel;
- Response to the emergency departments of the IWK, QEII and Dartmouth General Hospitals;
- Services to both females and males, 13 years of age and older;
- Storage of forensic evidence for up to six months.
- Response line - provides information and referral after immediate sexual assault (up to 3 days (72 hours) after the assault)

You may contact the SANE Coordinator during office hours at 422-6503 or 422-7406 for further information. For counselling, support and referral, contact Avalon Centre 422-4240

**Avalon SANE Response Line:** 425-0122

Place Local Telephone Numbers Here:

## **About Avalon Sexual Assault Centre Who We Are**

Avalon Centre is the only sexual assault centre in the Halifax Regional Municipality. We are a registered, not-for-profit, community based, charitable organization. The agency was established in 1983 and incorporated in 1984. We are a women-centred organization and provide a leadership role in ending all forms of sexual violence against women and children. We are committed to providing support programs, counseling, education, and advocacy for women affected by sexual violence. Our vision is to eliminate sexual violence, social injustice and other forms of oppression.

We gratefully acknowledge the core funding support provided by the Province of Nova Scotia, Department of Community Services; Capital Health; and the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia.

All donations from the public are gratefully accepted. Tax receipts will be issued upon request. We are an Associated Member of the Metro United Way's Donor Option program.

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre  
1526 Dresden Row, 4th Floor  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3K3  
Business Line: (902)422-422-4240  
Avalon SANE Response Line:  
(902)425-0122  
Fax Line: (902)422-4628  
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## **Sexual Assault: What Happens at Hospitals outside of Metro?**

### **Avalon Sexual Assault Centre**

1526 Dresden Row, 4th Floor  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3K3

**Business Line:** (902) 422-4240

**Fax Line:** (902) 422-4628

**SANE Business Line:** (902) 422-6503

**SANE Fax Line:** (902) 422-4962

**SANE Response Line:** (902) 425-0122

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## What happens at a hospital outside of the Metro area?

### What Happens at the Hospital?

It is important that a victim/survivor of a recent sexual assault/abuse consider seeking medical attention for several reasons:

- To take care of physical needs resulting from the assault/abuse;
- To test for infections and pregnancy;
- To begin treatment if required;
- To collect evidence;
- To prevent undue worry later on.

The medical exam involves:

- Taking a medical history;
- Documenting details of the assault/abuse to help identify potential infections, injuries or treatment required;
- Taking blood and urine samples to test for pregnancy and/or infections (follow-up testing may need to occur in 6, 12 and 24 weeks);
- An internal exam (vaginal, rectal, oral) may also be performed at this time.



The victim/survivor may also ask to have a forensic examination for the purpose of assisting an investigation by the police. It should be conducted within 72 hours of the assault/abuse. It is preferable, but not mandatory, for the victim/survivor not to shower, bathe, douche, use the washroom, change clothes, eat/drink, or clean teeth, etc., until after the exam is completed, as this may destroy evidence. *Please note, the forensic examination will only be conducted if the victim/survivor has given consent. The victim/survivor can stop the forensic exam at any time, even after a consent form has been signed.*

### What is a Forensic Examination?

A forensic exam includes the steps listed for a medical exam, as well as the following:

- Collecting all clothing for evidence;
- Taking samples of head and pubic hair;
- A head to toe visual exam looking for bruises, cuts, scratches, blood stains, seminal stains, etc.
- Fingernail scrapings may be taken;
- Photographs may also be taken of injuries;
- Oral, rectal, vaginal swabs may be taken to examine for blood or semen.

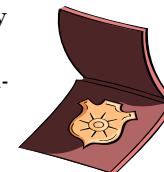


This process takes approximately two to three hours to complete. Only a doctor and a nurse need to be present during this exam. The victim/survivor may wish to have a support person present as well (e.g. a friend or a sexual assault worker). The police do not need to be present for the forensic examination. Support and advocacy may be provided by the local Women's Centre, Women's Shelter, Parent Resource Centre or other community based agencies that provide services for women.

### What Does All of This Mean?

When considering having a forensic examination done at a hospital that is not part of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program, it is important to note that:

- The police will immediately be involved in the victim/survivor's case as the forensic samples must be handed over to them to preserve the chain of evidence and because there is no capacity to store evidence.
- It will be assumed that the victim/survivor wants to immediately move forward with charges against the perpetrator and the police will investigate the sexual assault.
- The police will want to take a statement from you.



Victims/Survivors may choose **not** to have a forensic examination conducted when they go to the hospital after experiencing sexual assault. However, this does not mean that at a later date, the sexual assault can not be reported to police. Reports may be made a day, a week, a month, or years following the sexual assault.

It is important to note that medical treatment and the forensic examination are services that are available to everyone after a sexual assault. However, the response at the hospital emergency room may vary due to a number of factors: number of staff on call, other emergencies at the hospital, immediate access to forensic kits, police response, and someone available to perform the exam.

