



Victim's Advocacy Programs

Our Outreach Efforts

In 2001, the Marshall University Forensic Science Center included Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) training in its cooperative agreement proposal to the National Institute of Justice. MUFSC has relied on its strong relationships with law enforcement, medical personnel, and the criminal justice system to organize community meetings which led to the development of the Cabell County Sexual Assault Task Force in June 2003.



In addition to advancing SART development, MUFSC promotes the SANE agenda at the state and local level by maintaining a close working relationship with West Virginia Rape Information and Services, Inc. (WV- FRIS), a network of sexual assault service providers in West Virginia. As a member of this partnership, MUFSC personnel serve on the WV SANE Advisory Board. The MUFSC IT Department participates in the SANE initiative by helping to develop a website providing information to victims and service providers as well as providing a web-based application to track and evaluate evidence from sexual assault kits.

Through legislation from the West Virginia State Senate, MUFSC is now the state's repository for non-reporting sexual assault kits. This program allows victims of sexual assault to have a full rape kit examination performed without forcing them to press charges against the perpetrator. At the time of examination, many victims are not ready to press charges. However, the immediate collection and preservation of potential evidence is critical to future prosecutions. This program will ensure the proper storage of evidence while giving the victim time to recover and carefully consider his/her options. Under the program, MUFSC will hold these rape kits for eighteen months or until the victim elects to press charges.

What is a SANE?

A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) is a registered nurse who has been specifically trained to provide comprehensive care to sexual violence victims. The SANE is trained to identify physical trauma, document injuries, collect evidence, maintain the chain of custody, and provide necessary referrals. To become a SANE, a registered nurse must successfully complete a 40-hour training, which is provided at MUFSC, plus an additional 40-60 hours of supervised clinical experience. MUFSC also offers special Pediatric SANE trainings which focus specifically on providing assistance to children who are victims of sexual abuse.

Dr. Linda Ledray, PhD, RN, FAAN, the director of Minnesota's Sexual Assault Resource Service and international SANE trainer, estimates that more than 300 SANE programs have been established since 1999. SANE programs have made a profound difference in the quality of care provided to sexual assault victims and are enhancing evidence collection procedures for more effective investigations and more successful prosecutions.

What is a SART?

A Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) is a group of community professionals who work jointly to minimize the trauma of sexual assault victims. SART members typically include emergency medical personnel, law enforcement, and a sexual assault advocate.

The goal of a SART program is to ensure a coordinated community response to deal with the needs of the rape victim. This is the primary focus whether members of the SART respond together to jointly interview the victim or work independently on a day-to-day basis while communicating regularly to discuss cases or solve mutual problems.

Research tells us 1 in 3 to 4 women and 1 in 7 to 8 men will be sexually assaulted in her or his lifetime. Few of these assaults will actually be reported. Reasons for lack of reporting include systemic breakdowns in the system, an extremely low conviction rate, and lack of available medical care. SART and SANE programs impact all of these issues, ensuring that survivors of sexual assault receive immediate, accessible, and comprehensive services by local, trained and caring professionals (www.fris.org).