

# VICTIM OF RAPE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT

# DON'T KEEP IT A SECRET

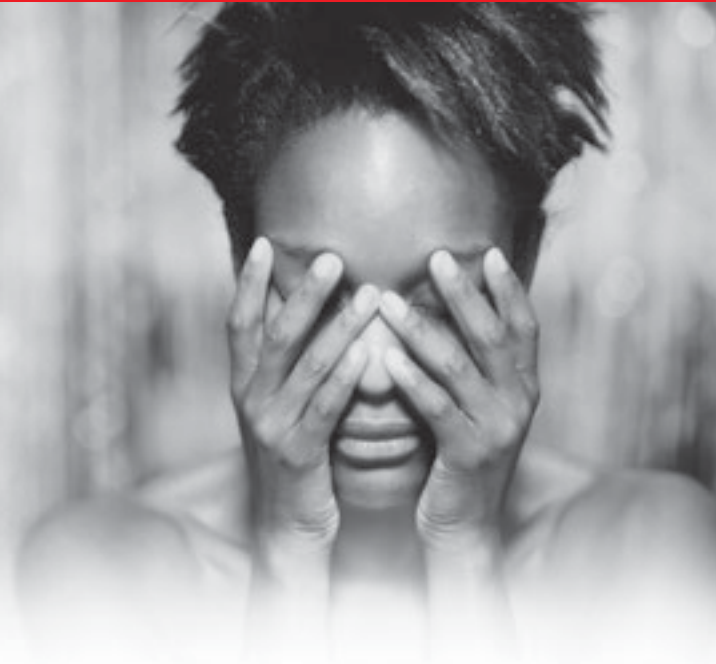
## Get SAFE... a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam

Sexual assault is a traumatic experience that leaves many survivors concerned about what they should do next. It's a crime and you need to take action to help yourself heal. Victim Assistance & Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) provides a number of services and options to people who have experienced sexual violence, including undergoing a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE). To help you better understand how SAFE works... SAFE is a medical forensic exam conducted by a trained medical professional, often a forensic nurse examiner. The exam is focused on addressing medical needs and the collection of potential forensic evidence (forensic means it may be used in court or in an investigation).

### SAFE INCLUDES

The SAFE includes a detailed head-to-toe physical examination that is thoroughly explained by the forensic nurse examiner at the hospital. During the exam process you may receive the following:

- Immediate attention to injuries requiring medical care;
- A head-to-toe physical examination which may include photographing injuries, swabs of the mouth, collection of biological and trace evidence, and a detailed genital examination;
- Sexually transmitted infection prevention treatment including HIV prevention (nPEP) and pregnancy prevention medication;
- Follow-up care referrals and information about local service providers.



## VASAP Will Be Your Advocate

Having a sexual assault forensic exam can be overwhelming and scary. Your advocate is either a VASAP staff member or a VASAP Sexual Assault Outreach Volunteer. VASAP is Montgomery County's local Rape Crisis Center who is available to support you through this process. Their experience and specialized training allows them to address a wide range of survivors' needs before, during, and after a SAFE. Your advocate often becomes part of a survivor's support network and can assist with the following:

- Processing the trauma you've experienced and providing support;
- Understanding the legal process;
- Linking you to follow-up services including crisis intervention and on-going counseling;
- Applying for victim compensation.

**Victim Assistance &  
Sexual Assault Program**



All services and medical care provided during a SAFE are FREE of cost.

## Advocacy During Covid-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic hospitals may not allow advocates to provide in-person hospital accompaniment for health and safety reasons. However, advocates remain available through VASAP to carry out their roles including offering support remotely, often via telephone.

Remember, you have the right to speak to an advocate at any time during the exam. Please do not hesitate to ask the forensic nurse examiner, or any hospital staff, to contact a VASAP sexual assault outreach volunteer advocate for assistance.

## Your Resources

**For Reporting:** If you have been sexually assaulted, you may want to consider reporting the assault to the police. If you are interested in speaking to the police, you can discuss reporting with your advocate or forensic nurse examiner. You can also report by calling 911. Police remain available to take reports of sexual assault and domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Anonymous Exams:** You have the right to receive a SAFE without reporting the assault to law enforcement; the exam is then classified as an anonymous exam. You do not have to make a decision about reporting the assault to police before arriving at a hospital or medical care facility for your SAFE. Once you arrive for care, the forensic nurse examiner and advocate can guide you through the anonymous reporting option. Even if you are not planning to report the assault to the police immediately, it is important that you still receive medical care. Collecting evidence after an assault can give you more options if you decide to seek prosecution in the future.

## FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES:

Advocacy services are available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For immediate assistance, call:

**VASAP**

**24-hour crisis line 240-777-4357 (HELP)**

You can also contact us by email at  
**vasap@montgomerycountymd.gov**  
or visit **www.vasap.org**

**Victim Assistance &  
Sexual Assault Program**



1301 Piccard Drive, Suite 4100  
Rockville, Maryland 20850  
240-777-1355



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