

**Montana Department of Justice**  
**Sexual Assault Kit Initiative**  
**Course “Coordinated Community Response”**

## **Intro**

**Slide 2:** Welcome to the course Coordinated Community Response.

**Slide 3:** Content Warning: We will be talking about sexual violence, which may trigger personal feelings. Please remember to take care of yourself and do what you need to help yourself.

**Slide 4:** Disclaimer: This project was supported by Grant No. 2017-AK-BX-0022 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice."

**Slide 5:** In this course, you will learn that a survivor-centered, trauma-informed sexual assault response is a team effort. We will give you an overview of each team members role, as well as how they collaborate with each other.

### **Slide 6: What is a Coordinated Community Response?**

No single agency can meet all the needs of a sexual assault survivor. Advocates, medical professionals, law enforcement, and prosecutors have recognized the benefits of collaborating to support the needs of sexual assault survivors. Collaboration through coordinated community response hopes to reduce trauma felt by the survivor while moving through the various systems they are involved in.

**Slide 7:** The term "coordinated community response" refers to immediate and longer-term community response to sexual assault that is coordinated among involved responders. The idea is that while each responder provides agency-specific services, they also work with responders from other disciplines to ensure that they coordinate responses. A coordinated community response can be as flexible as creating an MOU between different agencies. The focus lies on establishing a referral system to collaborate with one another and ensure that the survivor is supported and receives the services they need.

### **Slide 8: What is a Sexual Assault Response team or SART?**

Some communities have created Sexual Assault Response Teams, or SARTs. A SART is a group made up of disciplines responding to a sexual assault crime. These are intentionally developed and sustained inter-disciplinary groups that host regular meetings between all disciplines involved in response to sexual assault survivors. SARTs collaborate to determine shared goals and visions, and implement best practices, protocols, and procedures. They are intended to increase expertise and competency for all members, especially in cases where individual members or agencies seek to improve their specific competency around sexual assault.

**Slide 9:** You don't need to create an official SART to have a successful coordinated community response. However, you should know and understand each discipline's role and how you can utilize each other to maximize the best outcome for the survivor. Let's take a look at each responder's role.

## Menu

**Slide 10:** Get to know each team member by selecting their image.

- [SANE](#)
- [Law Enforcement](#)
- [Prosecutor](#)
- [Victim Advocate](#)
- [911 Dispatchers](#)
- [Forensic Scientist](#)
- [Conclusion](#) (*button will show after all other sections have been visited*)

## SANE

**Slide 11:** Jane: Hi, I'm Jane, the sexual assault nurse examiner. I want to tell you about my mission. Ask me any question and I'll be happy to tell you more.

**Slide 12:** Pick a question!

- [What is a SANE?](#)
- [Why is a SANE important?](#)
- [What does a SANE do exactly?](#)
- [Are SANEs available in every medical facility across Montana?](#)
- [How do SANEs collaborate with advocates?](#)
- [How do SANEs collaborate with law enforcement?](#)
- [How do SANEs collaborate with prosecutors?](#)

### **Slide 13: What is a SANE?**

Jane: SANE stands for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. As a SANE I work in this medical facility and am specifically trained to treat sexual assault survivors. To be exact, as a SANE I am a registered nurse who has completed specialized education. I've undergone clinical preparation in the medical forensic care of a patient who has experienced sexual assault.

### **Slide 14: Why is a SANE important?**

Jane: In the majority of sexual assault cases a medical professional will be the first responder. Sexual assault is a crime of violence against a person's body and will, that can result in physical trauma, mental anguish, and potential long term mental and physical suffering.

**Slide 15:** Having to examine parts of the survivor's body that were recently violated can cause more distress. It's essential to support a survivor during this time, as they are coping with this traumatic event.

**Slide 16:** The support I show as a SANE might help mitigate some of those consequences.

### **Slide 17: What does a SANE do?**

Jane: The medical treatment for sexual assault survivors may require a provider, such as myself, to examine parts of the body that were recently violated. Although a survivor may not be required to

report their sexual assault to law enforcement, I will use a forensic sexual assault kit to gather evidence. I may also serve as an expert witness in court cases.

**Slide 18:** These are some key approaches for SANEs:

- Understanding that the purpose of the exam process is to address the patient's health care needs and collecting evidence suitable for possible use by the criminal justice system.
- Performing and documenting a sexual assault and forensic interview accurately.
- Performing a complete physical and forensic evidence collection examination, including a head-to-toe assessment for trauma, detailed genital examination, forensic specimen collection, and documentation, including photography, and assessing for mandatory reporting status, reporting when appropriate.
- Integrating medical and evidentiary procedures where possible.
- Knowing what information is confidential and with whom confidential data can be shared, and ensuring the patient knows this up front. It's important to know that conversation and medical reporting can be shared with law enforcement and may be shared during a trial.
- Developing culturally responsive care and being aware of issues commonly faced by survivors from marginalized populations. Cultural identities may influence a person's experience during the exam process.
- Addressing options, such as the forensic rape examination program, or FREPP. The purpose of FREPP is to ensure that the survivor cannot be held responsible for paying the cost of the forensic examination.

**Slide 19: Are SANEs available in every medical facility across Montana?**

Jane: No, unfortunately not. Currently, if no SANE is available at the medical facility, the survivor could be sent to a hospital with an available SANE or they could be examined by a physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or other qualified medical staff.

**Slide 20: So how do SANEs and advocates collaborate?**

Jane: Okay, so let me preface this and make clear that SANEs, by profession, are not victim advocates. Sure, as a SANE I support survivors during the exam by providing caring, respectful, and efficient emergency medical-legal treatment. But that is not a substitute for services offered by an advocate.

**Slide 21:** Staff from sexual assault advocacy programs have specialized training, experience, and access to program resources that allow them to address a wide range of survivor needs during the emergency medical-legal process and beyond.

**Slide 22:** Although survivors should decide for themselves whether they would like an advocate present during the exam, I can inform them of all the opportunities and benefits of advocate assistance. For example, when advocates provide emotional support for survivors during exams, SANEs can more easily maintain a neutral and objective stance.

**Slide 23:** For one, survivors are usually able to talk with advocates in confidence, whereas statements they make to SANEs may become part of the medical-forensic report that is passed on to detectives.

**Slide 24:** On the other hand, these defined roles benefit the advocates as well. Trusting that SANEs will provide sensitive and competent care and forensic nursing evaluation, advocates can more fully

concentrate on providing crisis counseling, emotional support, and information to survivors and their families.

**Slide 25:** When SANEs and advocates can concentrate on the survivor by resolving differences, recognizing the benefits of working collaboratively, and clarifying roles, SANEs and advocates can support one another in their effort to serve survivors.

**Slide 26: And what about SANEs and Law Enforcement?**

Jane: When the survivor comes to us to report a sexual assault, the medical facility will inform law enforcement while we do the exam and provide first aid.

**Slide 27:** In other cases, a survivor will report the sexual assault to law enforcement first. Then, after an initial interview, the officer will bring the survivor and release them into our care.

**Slide 28:** As you can see, law enforcement officers and SANEs will have a close relationship, no matter who was the first responder.

**Slide 29:** In general, a SANE's first and foremost responsibility lies with the patient. We try to keep survivors calm, comfortable, and informed.

**Slide 30:** It is important to restore a survivor's control by offering options, including the decision to report to law enforcement. The Patient Consent Form provided to survivors includes the following options:

A forensic medical examination can, with your consent, be conducted to collect evidence of a sex crime. The forensic/medical examination consists of the following:

- Obtain pertinent patient/assault history.
- Perform physical examination.
- Administer appropriate medical treatment.
- Screen for pregnancy and/or administer medications for pregnancy prophylaxis, if appropriate.
- Screen for sexually transmitted diseases and/or administer medications for STD prophylaxis, if appropriate.
- Collect evidence including clothing, hair samples, vaginal/rectal swabs, and fingernail scrapings.
- Collect blood and urine specimens for drug/alcohol testing (toxicology), if indicated.
- Photograph physical injuries – which may include genital area – to be used as evidence.
- Release evidence collected and information obtained to law enforcement.

**Slide 31:** Many times, police reports are longer and more detailed when using more complete documentation of the crime. SANEs can provide meticulously collected forensic evidence and extensive documentation that complements the crime scene evidence and witness statements.

**Slide 32:** All in all, survivors are more likely to engage in the investigation and prosecution, because the nursing care provided was supportive and empowering. SANEs can be instrumental in helping police establish a rapport with survivors.

**Slide 33: User: Do you also work with the prosecution?**

Jane: Because SANEs are often called as witnesses in trials for either the prosecution or defense, it is imperative that we conduct objective, competent, and consistent evidence collection. As a SANE I am often seen as a credible witness in court because of my extensive experience and expertise in conducting evidentiary exams.

**Slide 34:** It is important as a SANE to work closely with the attorney who has asked me to testify, because it's important for me to know what is expected of me in a court setting.

**Slide 35:** When it's time to speak as an expert or a fact witness, I need to state clearly that a SANE's duty is to provide comprehensive health care to patients, and that evidence collection is a service to those patients.

**Slide 36:** In addition, SANEs should respect the privacy and confidentiality of all patients. We must strictly follow all HIPPA rules and any of our employer's protocols regarding patient information. And of course, we can't discuss our patient's case with colleagues, other attorneys, or any other third party unless we are given permission by the patient and the attorney.

[Back to Menu](#)

**Law Enforcement**

**Slide 37:** Ross: Hi, I'm Ross and I work with the Law Enforcement agency. You want to learn more about my mission? Ask away!

**Slide 38:** Pick a question!

- [What do you do, Ross?](#)
- [What's the most important part about investigating sexual assault cases?](#)
- [How do you respond to sexual assault survivors?](#)
- [How do you collaborate with SANEs?](#)
- [How do you collaborate with victim advocates?](#)
- [How do you collaborate with prosecutors?](#)

**Slide 39: What do you do, Ross?**

Ross: Among other things, I investigate sexual assault cases. I'm often the first responder to a sexual assault scene, but many other times I might be called to a hospital to speak with a sexual assault survivor. I'm responsible for taking reports of a sexual assault and conducting investigations when a crime has occurred. This can involve collecting statements from the survivor, witnesses, and suspects, as well as collecting and sending evidence to the state crime lab, including the sexual assault evidence kit. I want to stress the importance of sending the sexual assault evidence kit to the lab for forensic analysis if the survivor chooses to report the sexual assault to me.

**Slide 40: What's the most important part about investigating sexual assault cases?**

Ross: The primary considerations in sexual assault investigations should always be the health and safety of the survivor, preservation of evidence, and preliminary interviews to determine if a crime has been committed and attempt to identify the suspect.

**Slide 41:** When I respond to a scene, I follow these guidelines:

- **Protect and preserve the scene of the incident.** I need to collect evidence relevant to the investigation so the evidentiary value is preserved for trial.
- **Conduct interviews of the survivor, suspect, and potential witnesses.** My goal here is to determine if a crime occurred. But remember, my number one consideration is the health and safety of the survivor. In this first interview I ask the survivor questions in an empathetic, experiential way to elicit as much information as I can reasonably obtain. I will also conduct an in-depth follow-up interview, but not until after the medical and forensic examinations are completed and the personal needs of the survivor have been met (for example change of clothes, showering, etc.).
- **Facilitate further forensic evidence collection.** This is crucial step in gathering as much evidence as possible, such as DNA samples, etc. This is done through a detailed forensic examination by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, or SANE for short. The survivor might have gone through intense physical trauma, mental anguish, and potential long term mental and physical suffering. The thought of having parts of their body examined after this recent violation may cause them more distress, but it is essential to advise them about the importance of a forensic exam.

**Slide 42: How do you respond to sexual assault survivors?**

Ross: The way survivors are treated by responding officers who arrive at the scene, and the detectives investigating cases, shape survivor expectations about how they will be treated throughout the criminal justice process.

**Slide 43:** When interacting with survivors of sexual assault, law enforcement officers should:

- Give survivors choices and options whenever possible.
- Give survivors time to process information.
- Demonstrate sensitivity by using nonjudgmental questions, comments, and body language.
- Provide survivors with timely updates on the status of investigations and final dispositions.
- Advise survivors of their rights, including their right to an advocate or support person.
- Refer survivors to organizations that can assist them with their emotional, medical, legal, or financial needs.

**Slide 44: User: How do you collaborate with SANEs?**

Ross: As a law enforcement officer I can't emphasize the importance of good relationships with SANEs enough.

**Slide 45:** In many cases, a SANE will be the survivor's first experience within the sexual assault investigation process. This experience might shape the survivor's decision to pursue and open a case.

**Slide 46:** It is crucial that the survivor undergoes the forensic examination as soon as possible, so that important evidence, such as DNA, can be processed. It is true that a survivor can choose not to report to law enforcement. Their forensic exam experience might shape that decision, as well as my relationship with the survivor.

**Slide 47:** In addition, SANEs provide us law enforcement officers with competent and consistent evidence collection, which we can use to build strong cases. However, you must understand that a SANE does not solely work to support the work of law enforcement.

**Slide 48:** The evidence collection must be an objective undertaking because it may be used by either the prosecution or defense, and sometimes both.

**Slide 49:** Another important point to remember: SANEs will not offer their personal opinions on a patient. It is not their job to tell me if the survivor is telling the truth.

**Slide 50:** What SANEs see and hear is one piece of an intricate puzzle. Let their documentation of the patient history and medical forensics speak for themselves. It takes a full investigation for the entire complexity of a case to reveal itself.

**Slide 51: How do you collaborate with victim advocates?**

Ross: To law enforcement officers, all advocates are not the same. We work with two different advocates: community-based advocates and system-based advocates. Both advocacy roles provide the survivor with accompaniment, support, information, and referrals to address individual needs. However, there are a few major differences.

- Community-based advocates serve survivors regardless of whether they report to the criminal justice system. Their support is much more personal, as well as confidential. Community-based advocates will not share any information without the survivor's explicit permission, except in rare circumstances.
- System-based advocates, on the other hand, usually serve survivors whose cases have entered the criminal justice system. Their support is also personal, but more geared toward court dates, case statuses, and dispositions. System-based advocates do not qualify for confidentiality exceptions and therefore information shared is often not confidential within the criminal justice system.

**Slide 52:** In both cases, advocates can take an active role in maintaining positive and engaged communication between survivor and law enforcement by ensuring the survivor understands the information, reminding them that law enforcement does not want to cause additional stress, and ensuring that communication moves at the survivor's pace.

**Slide 53:** It is a smart move to involve advocates in sexual assault cases. Both types of advocates have access to numerous community resources that may benefit survivors, including information about counseling, shelters, mental health, and substance abuse treatment.

**Slide 54: How do you collaborate with prosecutors?**

Ross: I guess the most obvious relationship is that of law enforcement officer and prosecutor. Prosecutors advise law enforcement agencies concerning sufficiency of evidence, warrants, and similar

matters relating to investigation of criminal cases. And, after law enforcement officers investigate sexual assault and arrest suspects, cases are referred to prosecutors for criminal charging decisions.

**Slide 55:** Prosecutors evaluate cases submitted by law enforcement to determine if there is sufficient evidence for prosecution, which is why it is so important for a first responding officer to collect and document as much evidence from the initial crime scene as possible.

**Slide 56:** Remember the initial response is the most important response. The initial response of law enforcement to a crime scene sets the tone.

**Slide 57:** An officer's interaction with a survivor might affect how or if a survivor reports further information and whether the survivor cooperates with the judicial process. Our actions or inactions affect how the case proceeds.

**Slide 58:** Some important information to collect:

- Next of kin information and any contact info, such as emails, numbers, and addresses.
- Take notes of who was with the survivor in the waiting room, or who accompanied the survivor to report the assault. Get everyone's info.
- Take good photos – jurors are visual.
- You are not done when you leave the scene, so expect to follow-up on the case. Trust your county attorney.
- Ask clarifying questions. When you are asked to do an interview, take photos, etc., don't hesitate to clarify and make sure you get what is needed.

**Slide 59:** Ongoing, open, and positive communication between law enforcement officers and prosecutors is key when it comes to collecting and documenting evidence. As law enforcement, I need to understand what it is the prosecutor needs and I should not shy away from asking questions to clarify.

[Back to Menu](#)

## Prosecutor

**Slide 60:** Lou: Hi, I'm Lou, the prosecutor. Learn more about my mission. Ask away!

**Slide 61:** Questions available:

- [What do you do, Lou?](#)
- [What are your primary responsibilities?](#)
- [How do you evaluate cases?](#)
- [How do you collaborate with SANEs?](#)
- [How do you collaborate with law enforcement?](#)
- [How do you collaborate with victim advocates?](#)

**Slide 62: What do you do, Lou?**

Lou: As a prosecutor I am the government attorney who charges and tries cases against individuals accused of crimes, and in this case sexual assault crimes.

**Slide 63: What are your primary responsibilities?**

Lou: The primary responsibility of prosecution is to see that justice is accomplished. As a prosecutor, I am tasked with holding offenders legally accountable for their actions and achieving justice for survivors.

**Slide 64:** To accomplish this task, prosecutors must work in collaboration with law enforcement, victim advocates, medical personnel, crime lab personnel, and the survivor.

**Slide 65:** Prosecutors are responsible for reviewing sexual assault investigations to determine if enough evidence exists or could be obtained to file criminal charges. If the survivor chooses to participate in the investigation and prosecution of the case, prosecutors then have the added challenge and responsibility of responding in a survivor-centered way that meets the needs of the survivor as well as the needs of the community.

**Slide 66: How do you evaluate cases?**

Lou: Typically, a criminal case comes to the prosecutor in two ways:

- 1) Law enforcement arrests a suspect; or
- 2) Law enforcement presents a case to the prosecutor requesting charges be filed against a suspect.

**Slide 67:** As a prosecutor I must then consider the ability to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt before initiating or proceeding with charges. Just as a crime scene does not get better with time, a prosecutor's case does not usually get better after it has been charged. Though case outcomes are never guaranteed, prosecutors must evaluate their cases and ensure they have the evidence needed to obtain a conviction before proceeding. Additionally, I should consult with the survivor before initiating charges.

**Slide 68: How do you collaborate with SANEs?**

Lou: SANEs are an integral part of evidence collection, particularly evidence corroborating lack of consent.

**Slide 69:** If a case goes to trial, SANEs may be asked to provide testimony about forensic evidence they collected during survivor and suspect exams. Prior to testifying, SANEs often communicate with us prosecutors, so that they are informed about the issues involved in the case.

**Slide 70: How do you collaborate with law enforcement?**

Lou: The relationship between law enforcement and prosecutors is obviously the most common. Together, we work to build criminal cases that bring violent offenders to justice.

**Slide 71:** One of the most important aspects of law enforcement and prosecutor relationships is to have direct and open conversations about expectations as well as legal and professional requirements.

**Slide 72:** Prosecutors rely on law enforcement to conduct thorough investigations and collect probative evidence that establishes the elements of the crime to create a strong court case.

**Slide 73:** In turn, law enforcement expects prosecutors to bring their investigative efforts to fruition, file charges, and try cases.

**Slide 74:** Some investigative requirements may vary among cases. However, it is essential to have a mutual understanding of the fundamental prerequisites and investigative steps that need to take place before cases are submitted. Prosecutors should communicate with law enforcement regarding the expected timeline for reviewing each case referred to them, and the criteria they will use to evaluate cases.

**Slide 75: How do you collaborate with advocates?**

Lou: Collaboration between advocates and prosecutors throughout the investigation encourages a survivor's participation in their case and facilitates the best outcome for the survivor regardless of case disposition.

**Slide 76:** Advocates can provide prosecutors with additional insights into how trauma affects the survivor and can help integrate that understanding into the prosecution's response.

**Slide 77:** As prosecutors we work with two different types of advocates: community-based advocates and system-based advocates. Both advocacy roles provide the survivor with accompaniment, support, information, and referrals to address individual needs. However, there are a few differences.

- System-based advocates serve as liaisons for survivors when they interact with prosecutors. They support survivors throughout the legal process and help prosecutors communicate sensitively with these individuals about sexual assault kit testing and the case. System-based advocates are bound by the prosecutor's obligations, which restrict their ability to serve as confidential resources for survivors.
- Community-based advocates, on the other hand, provide confidential support to survivors. They will not share any information without the survivor's explicit permission, except in rare circumstances. Much like system-based advocates, community-based advocates can serve as liaisons for survivors when they interact with prosecutors.

**Slide 78:** I want to stress that by working with advocates, prosecutors gain a better understanding of the survivor's history, vulnerabilities, and experience of the crime, as well as their lives in the aftermath of the assault. Advocates can help facilitate trust-building between prosecutors and survivors, increasing the likelihood that survivors will remain engaged with the criminal justice system.

**Slide 79:** But this close collaboration between prosecutors and advocates will also benefit survivors. By communicating with the prosecutor about survivors' needs and the assault, I will be able to take steps to minimize or avoid survivor re-traumatization. These steps include planning for survivor interviews when convenient for the survivor and advocate and taking breaks during the interviews based on the survivor's needs. Advocates can also help assess additional support the survivor may need such as using a therapy animal during a defense interview or at trial.

**Slide 80:** I'm also a proponent of engaging in meaningful communication outside of cases. That way prosecutors and advocates can identify relevant emerging legal issues and recognize areas of need for survivors.

[Back to Menu](#)

## Victim advocates

**Slide 81:** Laura: Hi, I'm Laura and I'm a victim advocate. Ask me anything and let me tell you about my mission.

**Slide 82:** Pick a question!

- [What is a victim advocate?](#)
- [What is the difference between community-based and system-based?](#)
- [How do you reach survivors?](#)
- [How do victim advocates and SANEs collaborate?](#)
- [How do victim advocates and law enforcement collaborate?](#)
- [How do victim advocates collaborate with prosecutors?](#)

**Slide 83: What is a victim advocate?**

Laura: In many jurisdictions, sexual assault victim advocacy programs offer a range of supportive services to survivors before, during, and after the exam process. There are two different systems of advocacy: community-based advocacy and system-based advocacy.

**Slide 84: What is the difference between community-based and system-based?**

Laura: Our role as community-based advocates is to provide survivors and their loved ones with support through trauma-informed, empathetic crisis intervention and counseling, criminal justice accompaniment, including accompanying survivors to interviews with police and prosecutors, medical accompaniment, including accompanying survivors during a forensic medical exam, and information and referrals to address individual needs. Community-based advocates also provide confidentiality. Except in rare circumstances, nothing will be shared without the survivor's explicit permission. System-based advocates also provide survivors with support through accompaniment, information, and referrals to address individual needs. System-based advocates are experts at providing information specific to moving a survivor through the criminal justice system, including information on court dates, case status, and disposition. However, system-based advocates do not qualify for confidentiality exceptions, called "advocate privilege" under Montana law and therefore information shared is often not confidential within the criminal justice system.

**Slide 85:** In some cases, community- and system-based advocates work together to ensure survivor needs are met within the criminal justice system and in survivors' everyday lives. Both types of advocates and their teamwork are necessary and benefit sexual assault survivors, their families, and the community at large.

**Slide 86: How do you reach survivors?**

Laura: Many times, we're contacted by medical facilities or law enforcement agencies.

**Slide 87:** Ideally, advocates should begin interacting with survivors in a language the survivor understands prior to the exam, as soon as possible after disclosure of the assault.

**Slide 88:** Survivors who come to exam sites in the immediate aftermath of an assault are typically coping with trauma, anticipating the exam, and considering the implications of reporting.

**Slide 89: How do advocates and SANEs collaborate?**

Laura: SANEs, by profession, are not victim advocates. SANEs support survivors by providing caring, respectful, and efficient emergency medical-legal treatment. However, survivor support provided by SANEs is not a substitute for services offered by advocates.

**Slide 90:** Staff from sexual assault advocacy programs have specialized training, experience, and access to program resources that allow them to address a wide range of survivor needs during the emergency medical-legal process and beyond.

**Slide 91:** It is up to the survivor if they would like to have an advocate present during the examination, but SANEs can inform survivors of opportunities to use advocacy services and can explain the benefits of advocate assistance.

**Slide 92:** When advocates provide emotional support for survivors during exams, SANEs can more easily maintain a neutral and objective stance.

**Slide 93:** Survivors are usually able to talk with community-based advocates in confidence, whereas statements they make to SANEs may become part of the medical-forensic report that is passed on to detectives (if the case is reported).

**Slide 94:** It is important that SANEs and advocates recognize the benefits of working collaboratively. By clarifying roles, SANEs and advocates can support one another in their effort to serve survivors.

**Slide 95: User: How do victim advocates and law enforcement collaborate?**

Laura: Together, victim advocates and law enforcement play a pivotal part in establishing and sustaining survivor engagement throughout the criminal justice process. We are liaison between law enforcement and survivors and can explain to survivors that law enforcement is working on their behalf. We can help establish trust and rapport.

**Slide 96:** Survivors are often fearful or hesitant when working with law enforcement. Advocates have the experience and knowledge to assist in encouraging a relationship.

**Slide 97:** We work through the survivor's possible hesitation or resistance to collaborate with law enforcement.

- Before meeting with a survivor, the advocate should work with their law enforcement partner to develop a communication and safety plan. This plan should outline what information each partner will share with the survivor, as well as how the advocate will explain the separate roles and responsibilities of each team member to ensure that the survivor understands the partnership.
- Ensure that the survivor understands the information provided by law enforcement.
- Remind the survivor that law enforcement wants to provide a chance to regain focus on the sexual assault case and does not want to cause additional stress.
- Ensure that the communication moves at the survivor's pace.
- Be mindful of the survivor's communication preferences.

**Slide 98: User: How do victim advocates collaborate with prosecution?**

Laura: A collaboration between advocates and prosecutors throughout the investigation encourages a survivor's participation in their case. In general, a prosecutor does not represent the survivor directly, but rather represents the community in the case against the defendant.

**Slide 99:** Advocates can bridge the gap, since they are advocating for the survivor.

**Slide 100:** By working with advocates, prosecutors gain a better understanding of the survivor's history, vulnerabilities, and experience of the crime, as well as their lives in the aftermath of the assault. Advocates can provide prosecutors with additional insights into how trauma affects the survivor and can help integrate that understanding into the prosecution's response. Advocates can also help facilitate trust-building between prosecutors and survivors, increasing the likelihood that survivors will remain engaged with the criminal justice system.

**Slide 101:** Close collaboration between prosecutors and advocates will also benefit survivors. By communicating with the prosecutor about survivors' needs and the assault, prosecutors will be able to take steps to minimize or avoid survivor re-traumatization. These steps include planning for survivor interviews when convenient for the survivor and advocate and taking breaks during the interviews based on the survivor's needs.

**Slide 102:** I'm also a big proponent of engaging in meaningful communication outside of cases. That way, prosecutors and advocates can identify relevant emerging legal issues and recognize areas of need for survivors.

[Back to Menu](#)

**911 Dispatchers**

**Slide 103:** Chris: Hi, my name is Chris. I'm a Public Safety Communicator. Ask me anything. I'd love to tell you about my role.

**Slide 104:** Pick a question!

- [What do you do, Chris?](#)
- [What are your primary responsibilities?](#)
- [Do you coordinate closely with other disciplines?](#)

**Slide 105: What do you do, Chris?**

Chris: I'm a Public Safety Communicator, or 911 Dispatcher. I obtain as much information about a particular call or emergency as possible, through a set of protocols that are pre-programmed in my dispatch terminal.

**Slide 106:** For example, if I were to receive a sexual assault call, I would follow a pre-programmed screen with step-by-step instructions to obtain information and forward the call accordingly. The call can come from the survivor, a witness, medical facility, or law enforcement.

### **Slide 107: What are your primary responsibilities?**

When survivors call 911, that first contact with the dispatcher is critical to gaining survivor's trust. For example, while dispatchers are determining initial facts about the assault, we can explain that our questions will not delay an officer's response to the scene.

**Slide 108:** Dispatchers will also assess a survivor's medical and safety concerns and tell them about the importance of not bathing, brushing teeth, eating, drinking, combing hair, changing clothes, or urinating prior to medical forensic exams. In addition, dispatchers may

- Ask for information about suspects, including gender, physical description, clothing, vehicle description, weapon possession, and whether there is a relationship between the suspect and survivor.
- Assign priority ratings according to protocol.
- Alert the survivor to crisis response services, such as victim advocates.
- Preserve 911 tapes for possible use in court.

### **Slide 109: Do you coordinate closely with other disciplines?**

Chris: We don't have "close" relationships with other responders in regard to sexual assault. However, when dispatchers are invited to participate in coordinated community response meetings, the cross-disciplinary communication and training can help ensure that survivor's needs are addressed immediately and procedures to safeguard the integrity of the evidence are followed.

[Back to Menu](#)

## **Forensic Scientists**

**Slide 110:** Leyla: Hi, I'm Leyla, a forensic scientist. Ask me anything!

**Slide 111:** Questions available:

- [What is a forensic scientist?](#)
- [How do you work on a sexual assault case?](#)
- [Do you work closely with SANEs?](#)
- [Do you collaborate with law enforcement and attorneys?](#)

### **Slide 112: What is a forensic scientist?**

Leyla: A forensic scientist uses scientific methods to determine if DNA or biological evidence exists linking individuals, clarify case facts, and provide toxicological analysis, especially for suspected drug-facilitated assaults.

### **Slide 113: So, how do you work on a sexual assault case?**

Leyla: Forensic scientists analyze evidence collected in sexual assault forensic examination evidence kits. We also receive evidence from law enforcement agencies and use scientific methods such as serology, DNA, and toxicology to identify biological fluids or drugs and alcohol. Informative evidence may be found on body swabs from a sexual assault kit, clothing, or bedding. In addition, we may

- Use the national DNA database to upload eligible DNA profiles to compare to local, state, and national DNA databases for DNA matches.
- Communicate with attorneys and law enforcement agencies.
- Provide court testimony.
- Provide feedback to medical forensic examiners for quality assurance purposes.

**Slide 114: So, you work closely with SANEs then?**

Leyla: No, we don't work closely with SANEs. However, we work directly with the evidence that SANEs collect during a sexual assault forensic exam. We also provide medical staff with training and outreach and are available to answer questions.

**Slide 115: How about law enforcement and prosecutors?**

Leyla: Forensic science is one of the most important aspects of a sexual assault criminal investigation.

**Slide 116:** Once the sexual assault forensic examination kit is analyzed, we report our results to law enforcement to build a case which is then passed on to prosecutors. We often communicate with law enforcement to make sure that the analysis we are performing is proper and informative. We ask questions about the evidence to aid in our analyses. If, in some cases, we are unable to answer the agencies questions with the work that we have completed, we may require additional evidence so that we can provide a complete analysis. The reports we provide to law enforcement are passed on to the attorneys involved in the case and may be used throughout the court process. We are neutral parties who work for both sides, which means that all parties, defense and prosecution receive our reports.

**Slide 117:** Attorneys, defense as well as prosecution, use forensics to support the evidence they present in court. For that reason, forensic scientists are often called as witnesses to provide testimony in court. We also communicate with attorneys to make sure that the evidence we have analyzed is sufficient for the adjudication process, to discuss and explain our analyses, to prepare for trials, and we may require authorization to use evidence as necessary.

[Back to Menu](#)

## **Conclusion**

**Slide 118:** blank

**Slide 119:** In this course, you have learned that a survivor-centered, trauma-informed sexual assault response is a team effort.

**Slide 120:** Apply your knowledge in our conversation scenarios. (Linked images to the scenario courses)

**Slide 121:** Thank you for completing this course. Select "close" to exit.

[Back to Menu](#)