



Alexandria Police Department

Directive 11.15



RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULTS

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11.15.01 POLICY/PURPOSE

It is the policy of this Department to use a victim-centered approach in the investigation of sexual violence. A victim’s distress may create an unwillingness or psychological inability to assist with the investigation. Officers and detectives play a significant role in both the victim’s willingness to cooperate in the investigation and ability to cope with the emotional and psychological after effects of the crime. Therefore, it is especially important that these cases be handled from a nonjudgmental perspective so as not to communicate in any way to a victim that the victim is to blame for the crime.

The Department recognizes the fact that sexual assaults (rape, forcible sodomy, sexual battery, object penetration, and attempts thereof) are personal violent crimes that have great psychological and physical effects on the victims. Those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identified may have specific privacy needs depending on whether the individual is "out" to others in their lives. Sensitivity and awareness about the particular obstacles and barriers victims of same-sex sexual assault face in reporting is of critical importance.

The purpose of this directive is to provide officers with procedures for responding to reports of sexual violence, assisting victims, and conducting brief, preliminary interviews with victims, witnesses, and suspects.

Pursuant to Virginia Code §19.2-9.1 neither the detective assigned nor any other law enforcement officer, attorney for the Commonwealth, or other government official shall ask or require a victim of an alleged sex offense to submit to a polygraph examination or other truth-telling device as a condition for proceeding with the investigation of such an offense. If a victim is requested to submit to a polygraph examination during the course of a criminal investigation, such victim shall be informed in writing and that the refusal of a victim to submit to such an examination shall not prevent the investigation, charging, or prosecution of the offense.

11.15.02 DEFINITION

Sexual Violence as used in this directive refers to felony crimes of sexual assault. Those crimes include rape, attempted rape, forcible sodomy, carnal knowledge (statutory rape), aggravated sexual battery, inanimate or animate object sexual penetration, crimes against nature and incest, and indecent liberties with child.

11.15.03 PROCEDURES

A. Dispatcher or Call Taker

1. When a caller reports a sexual assault, the Department of Emergency *and Customer* Communications (DECC) personnel should elicit the initial facts of the situation and determine whether the victim or others are in life-threatening danger or in need of emergency medical attention.
2. If the call is about a crime in progress or a crime that just occurred, the call taker should obtain information from the caller to assist in identifying and apprehending the suspect. Information about the relationship of the suspect with the victim, weapon use, and history of violence should be obtained. In order to minimize victim frustration, the call taker should explain that the questions being asked of the caller will not delay the dispatch of an officer to the caller's location.

[REDACTED]

B. Responding Officers

1. Make contact with the victim as soon as possible. Summon emergency medical assistance if needed.
 - a. If the victim is seriously injured:
 - I. Rescue should transport the victim to the nearest medical facility for treatment. If the victim's condition allows, the victim should be taken to Inova Fairfax Hospital where specially trained staff and equipment for forensic examination are available.
 - II. The primary officer should follow the victim to the hospital in his/her cruiser. If a crime scene needs to be secured, a second officer should be requested to respond and preserve the crime scene pending crime scene processing.
 - III. The officer should remain at the hospital with the victim until relieved by the responding detective.
 - IV. In cases where treatment for physical injury is declined or unnecessary, the victim can remain at the scene to assist in identifying the crime scene(s), evidence, witnesses, and/or the suspect.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4. Request assistance from the *Criminal Investigations Section* (CIS) and the *Crime Scene Investigations* (CSI) Section.

5. The primary officer should obtain basic information from the victim to include the location, time, date, and elements of the offense, and any suspect information. Once this is accomplished, further questions about the offense should be avoided. The patrol officer is NOT to conduct any extensive interview of the victim or suspect.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

13. The first responding officer should complete an incident report. That report should contain firsthand observations and briefly document what the officer did at the scene. Other officers on the call shall supplement their activity also.

C. First line Supervisors

1. Respond to assist officers investigating felony sexual assaults.
2. Exhibit sensitivity to victims and ensure that victims are dealt with properly by clarifying their expectations to line officers.
3. Call the on-duty Criminal Investigations Section supervisor as soon as a felony sex offense is confirmed. If the *Criminal Investigations Section detectives* are not on-duty, contact the commander of the Crimes Against Person Section.

4. Ensure that patrol officers complete a report that documents their actions at the crime scene.

D. Criminal Investigations Section

1. A detective will respond to handle a sexual assault investigation as soon as he/she is made aware of the offense.
2. As soon as a detective arrives, he/she assumes control of the crime scene and the investigation.
3. The investigation of the case will be handled in accordance with standard operating procedures of the Criminal Investigations Section.
4. All medical fees expended in the gathering of evidence through physical evidence recovery kit (*PERK*) examinations conducted on victims complaining of sexual assault under Article 7 (§ 18.2-61 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2 shall be paid by the Commonwealth pursuant to subsection F of § 19.2-368.11:1. Victims complaining of sexual assault shall not be required to participate in the criminal justice system or cooperate with law-enforcement authorities in order to be provided with such forensic medical exams.
 - a. *The PERK Tracking System was developed and implemented by the Virginia Department of forensic Science (DFS) through a federal Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Grant obtained by the Virginia Office of the Attorney General. Use of the system was mandatory as of July 1, 2020 code of Virginia 19.2-11.13.*
 1. *Law enforcement agencies must submit a PERK to DFS for analysis within 60 days of receipt. There are five exceptions:*
 - i. *The PERK is anonymous.*
 - ii. *The PERK is part of a routine death investigation and the medical examiner and law enforcement agree that analysis is not warranted.*
 - iii. *The PERK is connected to an out-of-state offense.*
 - iv. *The investigation associated with the PERK is being transferred to another law enforcement agency.*
 - v. *The PERK is not connected to a criminal offense.*
 2. *The detective who is assigned to the case will be responsible for the PERK and entering it into the mandatory PERK Tracking System within the 60-day requirement.*
 - i. *Detectives will obtain the tracking number and note the corresponding case number in the PERK Tracking System.*

5. Information on legal and community resources available to alleged victims of sexual assault will be provided by the assigned detective. Note, this may be accomplished by giving the victim a victim assistance card.

E. Crime Scene Investigation

1. ONLY Crime Scene Investigators will process evidence at the scene of any sexual assault.
2. The scene will be processed in accordance to the standard operating procedures of the Crime Scene Investigations Section.

BY AUTHORITY OF:

**Michael L. Brown
Chief of Police**