



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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GUIDE FOR MEDIA'S REPORTING ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE AVAILABLE

HONOLULU – Attorney General Holly T. Shikada and the Hawaii Sexual Assault Response and Training (HSART) Program Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) today announced the release of a “Media Guide for Reporting on Sexual Violence.”

The purpose of the Media Guide is to encourage media professionals to utilize a trauma-informed approach when reporting about sexual violence. Trauma informed is the ability to understand how trauma affects individuals, their families, and the community. Reporting on sexual assault in a sensitive manner is of the utmost importance when considering the impacts on victims and survivors. The Media Guide provides information on key considerations when reporting on sexual violence and interviewing victims; defines sexual assault terms, including victim blaming; provides suggested language to use; describes the impact of rape myths; and provides additional resources for the media to access to ensure informed, innovative, and ethical news reporting when reporting on sexual violence.

“The media informs, amplifies, and shapes cultural norms and understanding of sexual violence by the public,” Attorney General Shikada said. “I recommend that media professionals utilize the Media Guide to reduce biases and myths of sexual violence that often impact the reporting of sexual assault.”

Lynn Costales Matsuoka, Associate Director, Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children, The Sex Abuse Treatment Center said: “The media guide is a welcome and important tool for journalists when reporting on sexual assault cases. Sexual assaults have long been considered an underreported crime, and how the media handles a news report can, and often does, directly impact whether victims will come forward or remain silent about their assault. We applaud the work it has taken to draft the media guide with the hopes of educating the media on the dynamics of sexual violence, and what it looks, and feels like, through the lens of a victim. As a community,

protecting and respecting sexual assault victims is a shared responsibility that must be balanced with the need for public information.”

Dani Riggs, Former Clinical Director, Child and Family Service, Maui Sex Assault Center said: “The press has an important role and responsibility in reporting sexual assault cases. Information can heal or harm depending on how it is relayed. Ultimately, they are not reporting about a case but about an individual who has been violently and intimately traumatized and the media’s reporting needs to reflect that reality. If reporting happens in this way it informs the public and does not further traumatize the victim. Victims of sexual assault respond in ways that may seem unusual to the public and to the press, but the victims’ responses are in fact normal and natural human responses to serious trauma.”

The Media Guide was developed by HSART members to encourage reporting on sexual violence in a trauma-informed way. The purpose of HSART is to address the manner in which sexual assault evidence collection kits are processed and tracked, to ensure that victims of sexual assault are informed of their rights, and to strengthen and improve Hawaii’s response to sexual assault.

A copy of the guide is available [HERE](#)

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[Hawaii Sexual Assault Response and Training Program](#)

Who We Are and What We Do

The primary members of HSART, by discipline and role, are the: police, prosecuting attorneys, sexual assault treatment service providers, sexual assault forensic/nurse examiners, and the police crime lab director.

The primary roles of the police are to ensure that victims are offered and provided free forensic examinations regardless if a police report is made and that victims are not discredited or negatively judged when sexual assault reports are made. The police are to work collaboratively with sexual assault crisis counselors and sexual assault forensic/nurse examiners to address the victims' health care needs and to collect evidence suitable for possible use by the criminal justice system.

The primary roles of the prosecuting attorneys are to represent the jurisdiction in all criminal proceedings. Prosecutors advise and approve charging decisions, offer insight to police to advance the case, collaborate with experts about evidence, and present evidence to a jury. Prosecutors request victims' input before making any key decisions (e.g., plea offers) and work closely with advocates and other multi-disciplinary professionals to support victims throughout the case. [For source and additional information, click here: Advocacy Meets Prosecution](#)

The primary roles of the sexual assault treatment service providers are to ensure that appropriate and victim-centered notification and services and response to trauma are developed and implemented and statewide protocols for medical-legal services are sustained.

The primary roles of the sexual assault forensic/nurse examiners (SAFE/SANE) are to ensure that physical evidence is collected and preserved following an allegation or suspicion of sexual assault and to address medical concerns resultant from the sexual assault.

The primary roles of the police crime lab director are to ensure that sexual assault kits (SAKs) are tested within the time frames provided in [Hawaii Revised Statutes Chapter 844-G](#), communicate with police agencies to ensure the timely submission of sexual assault evidence including SAKs, and act as the CODIS administrator for the proper submission of DNA profiles into the CODIS system and immediate notification of results.

The primary members are assisted by a deputy attorney general to assist in the creation of a statewide SAK tracking system.

HSART will consist of decision makers from the sexual assault response systems from all four counties and will be led by a representative from the Attorney General. Members include:

- Department of the Attorney General - Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division
- Honolulu Police Department
- Hawaii Police Department
- Maui Police Department
- Kauai Police Department
- Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, City and County of Honolulu
- Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, Hawaii County
- Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, Maui County
- Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, Kauai County
- Kapiolani Medical Center for Women & Children, The Sex Abuse Treatment Center
- YWCA of Hawaii Island, Sexual Assault Support Services
- Child and Family Service, Maui Sexual Assault Center
- YWCA of Kauai, Sexual Assault Treatment Program
- Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE)

For additional information, you may go to the Hawaii Sexual Assault Response and Training Program website at:

Website Link: [Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division | Hawaii Sexual Assault Response and Training \(HSART\) Program](#)