Notes on Forensic Exams

- Training levels vary and providers may be nervous or unsure of what they’re doing.
- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) have the best training.
- If meeting survivors at the hospital, encourage them not to eat, drink, douche, or urinate (or preserve).
- Encourage survivors to preserve/bring clothing they were wearing or bedding as evidence may be present there.
Purpose of a Forensic Exam

1. Provide medical care and treat injuries.
2. Can help identify/confirm a perpetrator.
3. Confirm recent sexual contact occurred.
4. Establish force was used, injury occurred, etc.
5. Back up survivor’s story with physical evidence.

Note: A survivor can receive medical care without initiating a forensic exam. The survivor can also ask evidence be collected without immediately making a decision about pressing charges.

A forensic exam does NOT confirm whether consent was or was not given, and so cannot determine if a sexual assault took place or not.
Notes on Forensic Exams

- Remember the survivor has the right to refuse treatment or a type of evidence collection, take a break, or ask questions at any point in the process.
- Always ask survivors what they are looking to get out of this process and keep letting them know what they might expect.
- Exams are most effective when conducted as soon as possible after an incident but can be effective up to 108 hours after a sexual assault.
- The process can last four or more hours.
- See handout of best practices for forensic exams.

Steps in a Forensic Exam

Help explain the “why” for each step. This can be very re-traumatizing and invasive.

Note treatment NOT testing for STIs/HIV.