

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement: Critical Roles, Responsibilities, and Practices

April 22, 2025



INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
**Forensic
Nurses**

IMPACT/JUSTICE

NATIONAL
PREA
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CENTER



Phebia Moreland

Program Director

National PREA Resource Center

pmoreland@ImpactJustice.org

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Mission

The mission of the PRC is to assist adult prisons and jails, juvenile facilities, lockups, community confinement, and tribal facilities in their efforts to eliminate sexual abuse by increasing their capacity for prevention, detection, monitoring, responses to incidents, and services to victims and their families.

The PRC is funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Logistics

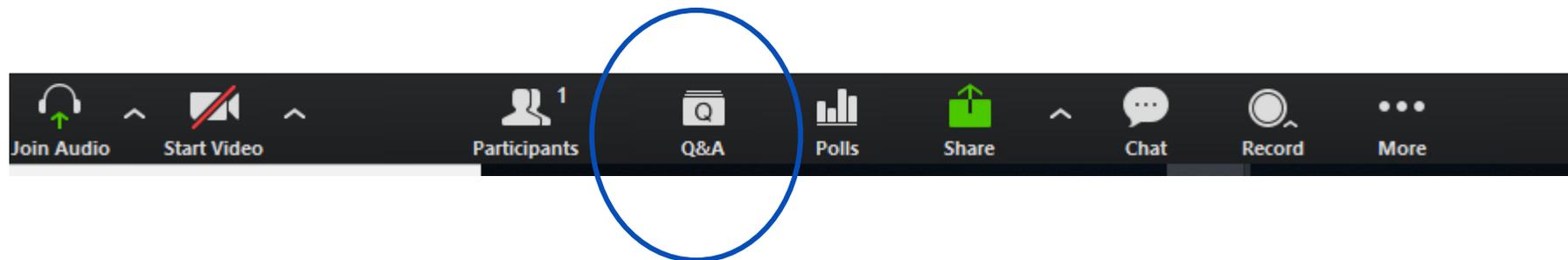
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Logistics

Submitting Questions

- To submit a question during the webinar, use the **Q&A feature** on your webinar toolbar as seen below.
- Presenters will address the questions at the end of the presentation.



The National PREA Resource Center Speaker



Monica DiGiandomenico

Senior Program Specialist
PREA Resource Center

International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) Speakers



Angelita Olowu

Forensic Nursing Director
International Association of
Forensic Nurses



Laci Smith

Forensic Nursing Specialist
International Association of
Forensic Nurses

Agenda Overview

- 2:00 p.m. **Introductions and Welcome.**
- 2:05 p.m. **Webinar Overview & Objectives.**
- 2:10 p.m. **PREA Standards and Terminology.**
- 2:25 p.m. **Medical Forensic Exams: Timing, Key Components, Role Responsibilities, Best Practices, Settings, and Special Considerations.**
- 3:20 p.m. **Navigating Access to Medical Forensic Exams: Examples & Considerations.**
- 3:20 p.m. **Q&A.**
- 3:30 p.m. **Closing.**

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Webinar Objectives

1. Provide an understanding of the Medical Forensic Exam (MFE) process including key roles, responsibilities, and other considerations.
2. Explore the differences and safety considerations when conducting MFEs in correctional facilities versus community based-settings.
3. Gain insight into the implementation of the PREA Standards specific to MFEs.
4. Analyze real-world scenarios involving MFEs, focusing on promising practices and lessons learned.

PREA Standards and Terminology

Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exam

Definitions

- A **sexual assault medical forensic exam (MFE)** is an examination of a patient who has experienced sexual assault, conducted by a health care provider, ideally one who has specialized education and clinical experience in the treatment of these patients and collection of forensic evidence.
- A sexual assault nurse examiner (**SANE**) and a sexual assault forensic examiner (**SAFE**) are licensed medical professionals who have received additional training to conduct sexual assault medical forensic exams.

Definition of Sexual Abuse

- 1. Sexual abuse of an adult or juvenile incarcerated person by another incarcerated person.**
 - Includes any of the following act's outline in Standard 115.6 (1-4), if the victim does not consent, is coerced into such act by overt or implied threats of violence, or is unable to consent or refuse.

Definition of Sexual Abuse (cont.)

2. **Sexual abuse of an adult or juvenile incarcerated person by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer.**
 - Includes any of the following act's outline in Standard 115.6 (1-8), if the victim does not consent, is coerced into such act by overt or implied threats of violence, or is unable to consent or refuse.

PREA Standards Relevant to Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

PREA Standards and the MFE Process

115.16 Incarcerated people with disabilities and who are limited English proficient

115.21 Evidence protocols and medical forensic exams

115.35 Specialized training for medical & mental health staff

115.64 Staff first responder duties

115.65 Coordinated response

115.82 Access to emergency medical and mental health care

115.83 Ongoing medical and mental health care for sexual abuse victims and abusers

Key Requirements of Standard 115.21

- **MFE must be offered** to all sexual abuse victims if reported.
- **Conducted by** a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) or Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), when possible.
- **Must follow** an age-appropriate, uniform evidence protocol adapted from or similar to the DOJ's National Protocol.
- **Victims must be offered** emotional support during the exam.

Other qualified medical practitioner to conduct medical forensic exams

- A health professional who, by virtue of education, credentials, and experience, is permitted by law to evaluate and care for patients within the scope of his or her professional knowledge.
- Who has also successfully completed specialized training to conduct medical forensic exams and treat victims of sexual abuse.

[DOJ FAQ June 14, 2023 & 115.5](#)

Victim advocate from a rape crisis center, qualified staff member from a community-based organization, or qualified agency staff member

- Requires the corrections agency to make available a victim advocate to accompany the victim during the MFE and investigation.
- Prioritize partnership with an advocate from a rape crisis center.
- If neither is available, the agency must provide a qualified agency staff person able to provide equivalent support.

[DOJ FAQ June 14, 2023 – 115.21/.121/.221./321](#)

Qualified community-based staff member or agency staff member is an individual who has been screened for appropriateness to serve in this role and has received education concerning sexual assault and medical forensic examination issues in general.

[DOJ FAQ June 14, 2023 – 115.21/.121/.221./321](#)

Medical Forensic Exams: Timing and Key Components

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Exploring the Nature of Sexual Abuse

Consequences of Sexual Abuse

- Injuries.
- Health risks.
- Sexually transmitted infections.
- Risk of pregnancy.
- Psychological & emotional risks.

Forms of Sexual Abuse

- Penetration (anal and/or vaginal).
- Oral Contact.
- Fondling/Groping (over and under clothing).
- Strangulation.

Health and medical needs are prioritized over evidence collection

Expanding Perspectives on Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Looking Beyond Timeframes

- Standard 115.21 (c) requires that victims be given exams "where evidentiarily or medically appropriate..."
- Timeframes are provided as guidelines, not a criteria for denying medical forensic exam or care to any patient who has experienced sexual abuse.

[National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach](#), page 18.

Overview of the Medical Forensic Exam



- Assessment, treatment, documentation of injury and verbal patient history and information surrounding the incident.
- Preventative care.
- Evidence collection.
- Development of a post-assault plan for safety (e.g., follow-up mental health services and medical care).

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Poll Question: Who holds the authority to initiate a MFE in your confinement setting?

- A. Facility medical or health care staff.
- B. Facility security or law enforcement personnel.
- C. Trained victim advocates.
- D. Facility PREA Coordinator.
- E. Other [Enter in chat].

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Poll Question: Should incarcerated individuals who disclose sexual abuse have a choice about receiving a medical forensic exam?

- A. Yes, they must give informed consent for the MFE, regardless of whether they cooperate with law enforcement.
- B. No, the MFE should be mandatory for all disclosures of sexual abuse.
- C. Unsure, more information is needed.

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Must Offer Victims of Sexual Abuse:

- Victim advocate hospital accompaniment.
- Emergency medical care.
- Ongoing medical care.
- Ongoing mental health care.
- Forensic evidence collection.
- Prevention measures.

Medical Forensic Exams: Best Practices, Settings, and Safety Considerations

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Poll Question: Who is the best person to offer a MFE to an individual who discloses sexual abuse in a correctional setting?

- A. Medical or healthcare staff.
- B. Facility security or law enforcement personnel.
- C. Trained victim advocates.
- D. Facility PREA Coordinator.

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Promising Practices for Offering a MFE

Facility
protocol

Medical
facility
selection

Engagement
with
SANE/SAFE
providers

Defer to
facility
medical
staff
experts

Facility
onsite
coordination

**Effective
communication
with survivor(s)**

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Obtaining Informed Consent to Initiate a MFE

Collaborative effort to ensure the confined person understands the what and why of the MFE and that their privacy and dignity are maintained.

Allow the confined person the opportunity to ask questions about the exam.

MFEs require ongoing consent throughout the exam.

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Facility Based vs. Community Based MFE Considerations

Availability of Resources

Access to trained
SANE/SAFEs

Confidentiality and Autonomy

Logistical Challenges

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Poll Question: Does your facility provide MFEs in a hospital-based or community-based setting?

- A. Yes, hospital-based.
- B. Yes, community-based.
- C. No, neither.
- D. I don't know.

Safety Protocols: Implications of Onsite MFEs vs. Offsite Transport for Care

Advantages

Onsite

- Reduces transporting risks.
- Maintains a controlled environment.

Offsite

- Access to specialized care.
- Neutral, trauma-informed environment.

Safety Protocols: Implications of Onsite MFEs vs. Offsite Transport for Care

Challenges

Onsite

- Requires secure, private spaces for MFEs.
- Limited availability of SANE/SAFEs.
- Limited medical equipment.
- Potential presence of security staff.

Offsite

- Transport logistics.
- Patient safety and privacy.
- Extended time out of facility.

MFEs Onsite vs. Outside of Confinement Facilities

Key Differences

- **Exam Consistency:** Same procedure, different logistics.
- **Private Space:** Important to identify within the facility.
- **MFE Access:** SANE access onsite or plan for incarcerated person transport outside facility.
- **Security Plan & Needs:** Address safety for patients and staff.
- **Confidentiality:** Maintain privacy, especially onsite.
- **Patient-Centered Care:** Prioritize emotion support and physical needs in either setting.

Navigating Access to Medical Forensic Exams: Considerations & Examples

The facility shall develop a written institutional plan to coordinate actions taken in response to an incident of sexual abuse, among:

**First
responders**

**Medical
practitioners**

**Mental health
practitioners**

Investigators

**Facility
leadership**

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Poll Question: What types of healthcare providers are available at your facility (check all that apply)?

A. Doctors

B. Nurses

C. SANEs (but don't conduct MFEs)

D. Physician Assistants

E. Nurse Practitioners

F. A, B, C, D, and E

G. None of the these

H. I don't know

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Poll Question: What is the coverage of medical services at your facility?

- A. 24-hour medical services.
- B. Medical services available during certain hours.
- C. No medical services onsite.
- D. I don't know.

MFE Example One

Background

- **A youth from a juvenile confinement facility needs a MFE.**
- **The facility has a protocol that requires the youth to be sent out into the community, to a hospital in an urban community.**

Navigating Access to Medical Forensic Exams

Considerations

- Hospital-based program supporting adolescent and/or pediatric patients.
- Notification process and privacy.
 - SANE/Forensic Nurse Program.
 - MOU/MOA.
 - Victim Service Provider.
- Importance of consent.
 - Communication.
 - Offering of MFE.
 - Transportation.

Navigating Access to Medical Forensic Exams

Considerations (cont.)

- Safety
 - Exam room safety protocol and privacy concerns.
 - Safety planning.
- Post-exam planning and discharge
 - Medical and mental health follow-up.
 - Communication.
 - Victim services.

MFE Example Two

Background

- **A limited English proficient (LEP) adult incarcerated person from a correctional facility needs a MFE.**
- **The facility has a protocol to use onsite medical forensic exam services, which are provided by trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) through a community partnership.**

Navigating Access to Medical Forensic Exams

Considerations

- Contractual considerations.
- Identify and address language access needs and barriers.
 - Initiate interpretation services.
- Offer of MFE.
 - Informed consent.
 - SANE/SAFE consultation.



Navigating Access to Medical Forensic Exams

Considerations (cont.)

- Notification process.
 - SANE.
 - Advocacy services.
- Privacy Considerations.
- Exam location and equipment.
- Safety planning.
- Follow-up medical and mental health care.

MFE Example Three

Background

- **An adult incarcerated person from a correctional facility needs a MFE.**
- **Due to limited MFE resources in this rural area, the facility follows a protocol that allows a Qualified Medical Provider to perform the MFE.**

Navigating Access to Medical Forensic Exams

Considerations

- Staffing options.
 - Scope of practice.
- Offer of MFE.
 - Informed consent.
- Notification process.
 - Qualified Medical Provider.
 - Facility staff.
 - Advocacy support.

Navigating Access to Medical Forensic Exams

Considerations (cont.)

- Exam location and equipment.
- Safety planning.
- Follow-up medical and mental health care.
- Additional guiding resources.



Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Key Promising Practices to Remember

- The importance of clear MOUs/MOAs to guide response protocols and partnerships.
- Prioritizing patient safety and dignity while maintaining security in correctional settings.
- Addressing the unique needs of different populations, including juveniles and individuals with limited English proficiency.

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Next Steps

- Review and update your facility's MFE protocols and agreements to ensure they are trauma-informed and PREA-compliant.
- Engage in ongoing training to strengthen collaboration between staff, healthcare providers, and community partners.
- Proactively address barriers to SAFE/SANE access by leveraging virtual training, alternative providers, and MOUs with external organizations.

Medical Forensic Exams for Individuals in Confinement

Resources

- The PREA Final Rule & Executive Summary may be read in its entirety at <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/resource/national-standards-prevent-detect-and-respond-prison-rape-final-rule>
- A National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations: Adults/Adolescents. UPDATED September 2024.
<https://www.safeta.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/SAFE-Protocol-3rd-Final.pdf>

Resources

Other Helpful Resources

- National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach at <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250384.pdf>
- Guide for Interpreter Services in Forensic Settings at <https://articulateusercontent.com/rise/courses/2vZWLP85GsCUkSw27UqHRbCUpYQ4ZIYA/ggmlmssZGKipWfnP-Guide%2520for%2520Interpreter%2520services.pdf>

Resources

National Training Resources

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) has published “National Training Standards for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examiners” available on the OVW website (www.justice.gov/ovw) at [Training Sexual Assault Forensic Edition \(justice.gov\)](#).

- Appendix C provides minimum training recommendations
- Qualified medical practitioners should have at least successfully completed this training or its equivalent, although DOJ recommends that they complete more in-depth training.

Resources

National Training Resources

- The International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) with OVW support has produced a training, “No SANE in Sight” that incorporates these minimum requirements. This training is available at [No SANE In Sight - IAFN \(forensicnurses.org\)](https://www.forensicnurses.org/no-sane-in-sight) free of charge and takes about 2 hours to complete.
- State sexual assault coalitions ([Local Resources | OVW | Department of Justice](#)) may have information on additional training available in the state, including trainings that provide more in-depth information and information specific to state protocols.

Resources

DOJ FAQ Guidance

- [DOJ Guidance: How do agencies determine if an agency staff member or staff member of a community-based organization is qualified?](#)
- [DOJ Guidance: When a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner \(SAFE\) or Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner \(SANE\) cannot be made available to perform a Sexual Assault Forensic Examination, Standard 115.21 requires that the examination be performed by “other qualified medical practitioners.” What are the criteria for determining whether someone is a “qualified medical practitioner” who can perform the examination in this circumstance?](#)

Resources

DOJ FAQ Guidance

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- [DOJ Guidance: When a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner \(SAFE\) or Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner \(SANE\) cannot be made available to perform a Sexual Assault Forensic Examination, Standard 115.21 requires that the examination be performed by “other qualified medical practitioners.” What are the criteria for determining whether someone is a “qualified medical practitioner” who can perform the examination in this circumstance?](#)

Resources

Archived Related Webinars

- PREA 115.65: How to Have a Successful Coordinated Response to Sexual Abuse <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/resource/prea-11565-how-have-successful-coordinated-response-sexual-abuse>
- Demystifying Medical Forensic Exams <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/implementation/training/webinars/demystifying-medical-forensic-exams>

Resources

Archived Related Webinars (cont.)

- Medical Forensic Exams for Incarcerated Survivors PREA Case Studies Webinar
<https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/implementation/training/webinars/medical-forensic-exams-incarcerated-survivors-prea-case-studies>
- PREA 115.21: Focusing on Collaborations
<https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/implementation/training/webinars/prea-11521-focusing-collaborations>

Questions?



Request Assistance

PRC Website

Jurisdictions can request assistance by completing a web form on the PRC website under the **“Implementation”** tab and clicking **“Request for assistance”** under **“Training.”**

The screenshot displays the National PREA Resource Center website. At the top left is the logo: NATIONAL PREA RESOURCE CENTER. The navigation menu includes 'About', 'Implementation' (which is underlined), 'Library', 'Audit', and 'DOJ FAQ'. Below the navigation is a dark blue header with the word 'Implementation' in white, and a sub-menu with 'Implementation | Training | Request for assistance'. On the left side, there is a vertical list of links: 'PREA Standards', 'PREA toolsets', 'PREA in action', 'Training', 'PREA Academy', 'Field training audit', 'Webinars', 'Upcoming events', and 'Request for assistance'. The 'Request for assistance' link is highlighted with a blue box. The main content area features the heading 'Request for assistance' with a blue underline. Below this heading, there are two paragraphs of text. The first paragraph explains that users should fill out a form to request PREA-related training and/or technical assistance, and provides instructions for jurisdictions less familiar with PREA, including a link to the 'Where to begin page' and a link to the 'Contact us form'. The second paragraph explains that users should refer to the 'Auditor feedback form' for complaints or concerns about a DOJ-certified PREA auditor. At the bottom of the form area, there is a blue button labeled 'Request Assistance'.

Mailing List Signup

First name *

Last name *

Phone

Email *

Confirm email *

Do you wish to name your employer? *

Submit

Sign Up for our PRC Newsletter

Jurisdictions can sign up for the PRC newsletter by completing a web form on the PRC website under the “How to use this site” tab and going to “Frequently asked questions” and clicking “Subscribe to our newsletter.”

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Dana Shoenberg

PRC Director

dshoenberg@prearesourcecenter.org

For more information about the National PREA Resource Center, visit www.prearesourcecenter.org.

To ask a question, please visit our [Contact Us](#) page.

IAFN SAFEta.org Source for Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Technical Assistance

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Thank You!

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