

VICTIM EYES

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Because Sexual Assault Affects Us All

Terri Wood

Response-Peninsula Sexual Assault Support Services

Response-Peninsula Sexual Assault Support Services provides services to survivors of sexual assault, rape, and child sexual abuse. These services are now available to residents of Isle of Wight County at no charge.

Response-Peninsula can provide a hospital companion to give support to a victim and their family at Southampton Memorial or Riverside. A 24-hour crisis line is also available to residents who need support, information, or just someone to talk to when they are having a difficult time. Court Support for those involved in a criminal proceeding is also available to survivors.

Currently, Response-Peninsula, in cooperation with Isle of Wight Victim Witness Assistance Program, is sponsoring a support group for teen survivors and their loved ones.

Survivors of sexual assault not only include the victims of the violent attacks, but also their

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Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner

Beverly A. Atkins

SANE Program

The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, "SANE", program at Riverside was started in 1996 and was the first program of its kind in the Tidewater area. The SANE team consists of specially trained Registered Nurses from the Emergency Department. The SANE nurses are chosen for their clinical qualifications and sensitive approach to patients. Certification consists of extensive classroom and clinical training to conduct sexual assault exams on adults and children. SANE nurses are experts in providing court testimony and work closely with the legal system to insure integrity and reliability of forensic evidence.

With SANE nurses, victims no longer have to wait in the Emergency Department until a physician is available to perform the exam. Upon presentation to the Emergency Department, sexual assault patients are placed in a private exam room and the SANE nurse is paged immediately. The interview, examination, and treatment are completed within 1-2 hours. A colposcope which is for magnification and photography of injuries allows the best forensic exam available.

Laboratory studies are taken to determine presence of sexually transmitted diseases and/ or pregnancy. HIV screening can be performed on all victims with follow up provided by the Health Department.

Treatment consists of prophylactic antibiotics and medical treatment of injuries. The "morning after pill" is offered to each patient if the assault was within 72 hours.

The incidence of sexual assault continues to

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families, friends, or any other persons who have contact with the victims and are affected by the crime. Others affected are people who pay taxes, people who watch the evening news, and people who read the paper. This violent crime creates problems for the entire community.

To better explain the needs of the survivors and the services offered, here is an example of a typical day at Response-Peninsula.

The phone rings; it is Riverside Hospital. The emergency room nurse tells us a 14-year-old victim is on the way to the hospital. A companion is contacted to respond within 30 minutes to support the victim and anyone with him/her during the PERK (Physical Evidence Recovery Kit) examination and the police questioning.

Shortly after arriving at the hospital, the Response-Peninsula Companion is introduced to the victim and her family. The police and the SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) Nurse arrive. The victim is examined by the SANE Nurse and then questioned by the police after being brutally attacked, she suffers the humiliation of the PERK Exam. The PERK exam takes anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes. It starts by having the victim remove her clothes on a sheet of white paper to catch any hair or fiber evidence. The victim then has blood drawn and at least 20 hairs removed from the head and pelvic area. She is examined all over (including a pelvic exam) and pictures of injuries are taken. The next step is filing a police report in case she decides to file charges. Some of the questions may seem embarrassing, offensive, and more personal than a fourteen-year-old can imagine.

The family and friends of the victim will also feel some guilt about what has happened and think there is something they could have done to prevent the attack. The victim may have additional feelings of fear, shame, embarrassment, anger, and frustration.

One of the most important functions of the companion at this point's it to reassure the victim and any loved ones that they did nothing to cause this, and they could have done nothing to prevent it.

If the client makes the decision to file charges

then there are more stresses. The court system is not at all what most victims expect. It is the court advocate's job to provide emotional support to the survivor and his/her support system. It is difficult for the survivor to get in front of a room of people and tell a story in detail that they want to try to forget. The survivor's family and friends also have a hard time listening to what happens in the courtroom. Some of the proceedings in court are difficult for victims to understand. A Response-Peninsula court advocate would be there to refer those kinds of questions and concern to the Victim Witness Program.

During the entire healing process the primary victim and secondary victim need support. The healing process takes as long as necessary. Response-Peninsula provides a list of services to support victims and their loved ones. A 24 hour crisis line is available to victims and secondary victims; court accompaniment services are also available. Response-Peninsula is also prepared to make referral to other agencies to assist clients with other identified needs. Individual counseling is also available to victims and their loved ones.

When someone becomes a victim of a crime, he/she has a lot of things to deal with. The sexual assault victim is shocked, embarrassed, feels guilty, blames her/himself and sometimes is more afraid of what their families and friends will think rather than being concerned about criminal charges. She/he is sometimes surprised when a news truck shows up in the neighborhood "protecting the survivors' identity" by not giving names but, interviewing the neighbors and family members and telling his/her story including the survivor's age on the 6 o'clock news. Many young victims then face problems at school when other children blame them, accuse them of lying because the perpetrator is a star football player or a favorite teacher. In some cases agencies entrusted to protect children seem too slow to respond to their needs. Many people such as teachers, police officers, community leaders, ministers, family, friends and others who deal with victims on a daily basis don't understand what has happened or how the victims' behavior is effected by the violent crime that has occurred.

Our mission is to provide support, treatment and advocacy to persons victimized by sexual

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NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

The National Crime Victims' Rights Week was first established twenty-three years ago. What started out as local event to honor and remember crime victims in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania soon spread throughout the country, as a celebration to acknowledge the estimated 39.9 million of Americans victimized each year. Now in 1999, and the twenty-fourth annual observance, the crime victims movement has selected a specific week for the purposes of remembrance. This special week addresses the need to both honor and commemorate victims of crime as well as to educate the public, thereby increasing community awareness of the rights and services available to all victims of crime.

The theme for this year's National Crime Victims' Rights is "Victims' Voices – Silent No More." This message reflects the power that can be generated when crime victims and their advocates work together to speak out against crime victimization, insuring comprehensive services and individual rights for all victims of crime.ψ

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

R.A.D.

Response-Peninsula Sexual Assault Support Services in cooperation with the Franklin, Southampton, and Isle of Wight Victim and Witness Assistance offices are offering R.A.D. (Rape Aggression Defense) classes for National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Classes will be starting April 19 through the 24th. For more information or to register contact Isle of Wight Victim and Witness Assistance at (757) 357-7403, or Response-Peninsula at (757) 825-2591.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

If you have the time then I got the job for you! Volunteers are needed to stuff, you got it, stuff the **NEW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT PACKETS**. If you are interested in becoming an Envelope Stuffer then contact Melissa Stankavich at (757) 357-7403 by May 17th, 1999 for more details.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Are you the type of individual that likes working on the computer? Or do you have a creative ability you would like to share? Then the Victim and Witness Assistance Program needs you! Currently, we are looking for a volunteer to assist in the development of the newsletter. Anyone who is interested in participating please contact Melissa Stankavich at (757) 357-7403 by June 14th, 1999 for more details.

increase in today's society and is a medical emergency that can happen to anyone at any time regardless of age, gender, or socioeconomic background. Sexual assault is traumatic, not only for the victim, but for families and loved ones as well. The staff at Riverside SANE are sensitive and aware of how frightening and devastating a sexual assault can be. We offer support, treatment, information and referral to facilitate the healing process.ψ



“The Burden of Freedom”

I stand at the stairway
 my back to the dungeon
 the doorway to
 freedom so close to my hand...
 Voices behind me still
 bitterly damn me
 for seeking freedom
 they don't understand...
 Lord help me to
 shoulder the burden of freedom
 and give me the courage
 to be what I am...
 And when I am wounded
 by those who condemn me
 please help me
 forgive them
 they don't understand.

By: Kris Kristofferson



assault, and guide the community toward the elimination of sexual violence. In order to complete this mission, we provide support to victims and their loved ones and provide community awareness and education. We need the support of the community to be successful in our mission. We would be glad to speak to your group about what you can do to join us in taking steps to eliminate sexual violence from your community. Volunteers are always needed to provide direct and indirect services to survivors. If you don't have the time to support victims, financial contributions are always welcome.

If you want to know more about getting someone to speak to your group about dating violence, safety issues, self-protection, sexual abuse and sexual assault, please contact us. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities or making a financial contribution, please contact us at:

Response-Peninsula Sexual Assault Support Services

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MYTHS AND FACTS

Myth: Marital rape is rare and unusual act and does not need legislative action.

Fact: Most experts consider sexual assault to be the most underreported of all crimes and marital sexual assault even more so. Over a third of women who appear at battered women's shelters report being forced to have sexual contact with their husband but they do not, however always identify forced sexual contact as sexual assault. It is seldom discussed. Humiliated and ashamed, marital sexual assault victims don't talk about it. They don't report it, hence the law does not help them. Society condones marital sexual assault unless society defines by law that marital sexual assault is criminally no different from other rapes. "If it is not against the law, it's OK to do." Is a generally accepted standard. In Virginia, marital sexual assault was recognized by law as a crime in July 1986.

Myth: Men who rape other men are homosexual.

Fact: The vast majority of males who sexually assault other males (including children) are heterosexual.. Men and women are assaulted for basically the same reasons:

Special Thanks...

Victim and Witness Assistance would like to say a Special Thanks to the Child Abuse Center in Virginia Beach for offering to speak to members of the Domestic Violence Support Group and discuss how domestic violence effects the children and discuss Shaking-Baby-Syndrome.

The Victim and Witness Assistance Program would also like to say a Special Thanks to Response-Peninsula for offering to speak to the Domestic Violence Support Group regarding Marital Rape.

A very Special Thanks to Terri Wood of Response-Peninsula and Beverly Atkins from the SANE Program for writing the articles in the newsletter. We appreciate all your assistance and support.



so the assailant can vent hostility and feel a sense of power. Fear of homosexuality ironically leads some men to attack gay men. The motivations for same-sex assault are power and anger. Sexual orientation is not a motivation for sexual assault.

Myth: Women who are raped are most disturbed by the sexual aspects of the crimes.

Fact: Women who have been raped are often most disturbed by the terror and violence that is involved. Often the immediate reaction of the women is, "I could have been killed." The fear is the most long lasting reaction from the rape; the feeling of being completely vulnerable is what many find to be the most difficult to cope with.

Myth: In a rape, the person who is raped is the only one who suffers.

Fact: Sexual assault affects the victim's family, friends, and neighbors. The fear of sexual assault affects all women. The economic cost of sexual assault affects us all. Sexual assault is a societal problem.

Source: VAASA Volunteer Manual, Second Edition

