

SEXUAL ASSAULT FIRST RESPONDER CHECKLIST

Michigan Model Policy on the Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault

The Basics: Individuals experiencing the trauma of sexual assault can display many emotions from crying to calm or seemingly cheerful. Trauma can also affect a victim's memory and ability to give a detailed or chronological statement. These are normal biological response to trauma. A traditional interview approach, focused on a chronological narrative, can make the impact of the assault worse without resulting in good information. First responders should conduct a minimal fact interview initially, to be followed by an in depth interview at a later date. The focus should be on victim safety and comfort, establishing trust, and documenting what the victim can remember. The officer does this by being attentive to the victim's comfort and by reassuring the victim that they are believed and that their concerns are taken seriously.

Show Caring and Understanding

I am sorry for what happened to you . . .

Thank you for reporting . . .

- Assisting the victim**
 - Ask if there is anyone that the victim would like to contact
 - Contact an advocate from a community-based sexual assault crisis program, if available
- Sexual Assault Forensic Medical Examination**
 - Refer victim to local emergency room /SANE for assaults within the previous 120 hours
 - Tell the victim that they cannot be charged for the evidence collect and examination—It is free
 - Tell the victim that they can have an exam regardless of whether they wish to talk to law enforcement
- Obtain Safe Contact Information for Victim**
 - Include alternate contact information and individuals who can reliably reach the victim in the future
- Secure Private Location for Brief Interview**
 - Accommodate wish to include a support person
 - Accommodate special needs such as an interpreter (not a friend of family member)
 - Use child advocacy center for victims of child sexual abuse or persons with a developmental disabilities

- Conduct a Brief Minimal Fact Interview**
 - Ask: Help me understand what you are able to remember about your experience
 - Allow victim to talk without interruption

Ask: Help me understand what you are able to remember about your experience . . .

- Identify and Document from Victim's Narrative**
 - The elements of the crime
 - Who did this and where they are now?
 - Where did it start and where did it end?
 - Were there any threats, expressed or implied weapons shown/objects threatened?
 - The victim's observable emotional condition and excited utterances
 - Victim and suspect injuries, observed and described
 - Potential witnesses to pre and post assault conduct and anyone the victim may have told
 - Drugs/alcohol involved in crime, if identified by victim
 - Existence of and location of additional evidence both physical and electronic (bedding, condoms, clothing, videos, photos, electronic messages)

Avoid Asking "Why," Instead Say

Tell me more about that . . .

Tell me your thoughts when . . .

Help me understand what you mean . . .

- Concluding**
 - Provide victim with the required statutory notices and contact information for you and or assigned detective
 - Explain next steps and, if you are the primary investigator, schedule a follow up in depth interview
 - Complete a written report



Polygraph: Do not ask the victim to take a polygraph examination. MCL 776.21

Written statement: Do not ask the victim to write out a statement in place of conducting an interview.

Prosecution Inquiry: Do not ask the victim if they want to pursue prosecution at this time.

