

Availability of information about sexual assault medical forensic exams depends on state

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Abstract: Options for sexual assault medical forensic exams (SAMFE) following a sexual assault are unique to each state and clear information about those options can be difficult to find. This research project examined a random sample of states' laws/policies and resources for those seeking a SAMFE in order to understand what information is accessible in each state and how that information might inform help-seeking and decision making. Internet searches were conducted with standardized search terms to find what information is available to survivors. Some of the specific information gathered includes: who pays for a SAMFE kit to be collected; does who pays for a SAMFE vary depending on if a police report is filed; where and for how long non-report SAMFE kits are stored; if non-report kits are tested; if the survivor is notified before a kit is destroyed; if there is clear information about whether protections are provided in the instance that the reporting individual is not a documented citizen; if interpretation services are provided; and what situations require a mandatory report. Analysis is still underway, but results will communicate the availability of publically accessible information about SAMFEs across the United States. Implications for advocacy and medical response systems will be discussed, including areas in which clearer information might allow survivors to make more informed decisions about their post-assault medical care. Addressing these issues could allow traumatized individuals to more easily understand and, if desired, access their SAMFE options.

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