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Re: Temporary Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Response Protocol Change

The health and wellbeing of the community members we serve is a top priority for the Multnomah County District Attorney. Our office is working collaboratively with the court, defense bar, local law enforcement and other key system and community partners to carefully balance the needs of public health while maintaining public safety and supporting crime victims.

Required measures to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and protect the health of community members, volunteers and our employees have significantly impacted how we pursue our mission. However, this office is continuing to do all we can to minimize any disruptions to serving those who have been harmed by criminal conduct.

Our practices and policy decisions are informed by the latest local, state and national medical expertise to ensure we are able to safely and sustainably serve victims of crime, our community, system partners and members of our office. We have sought guidance from law enforcement agencies, our Sexual Assault Victim Advocates and the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force. All are recommending suspending in-person response for victims of sexual assault.

Effective Immediately:

Our in-person hospital sexual assault response is temporarily suspended until further notice. We will continue to provide advocacy services to survivors by phone.

This is the best overall decision for the safety of the community and survivors. Survivors of sexual assault will still receive the care, attention and support they deserve.

Our system and community partners are aware of this change:

- The Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC), which dispatches our advocates will continue to contact us.
- Rapid Save Investigation and the Providence Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, who provide the forensic sexual assault examinations, will continue to work with us.
- Local law enforcement and our community based advocates who provide sexual assault hospital response and our neighboring counties support this temporary change.
- If you are trying to access these services, our activation system will continue to be the same.

BOEC will continue to contact our advocates and provide them with the hospital, nurse and officer information that is available.

Here are a few things to consider:

- We are still contacted through dispatch.
- Every effort will be made to connect with survivors using a dedicated landline in the exam room or by using their phone.
- Many emergency rooms have poor cell phone reception. This can be improved by connecting the phone to the hospital Wi-Fi.

We recognize this is an extremely challenging time, but our staff remains fully committed to providing services to crime victims during this public health emergency. We are there for you. Please reach out with questions, concerns or to inform us of changes in your practice or services.