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SAKI Training and Technical Assistance

# **SEXUAL ASSAULT UNIT ASSESSMENT REPORT**

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Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (FL)

Kevin J. Strom, PhD, RTI International

James Markey, MEd, RTI International

Amy Durall, International Association of Chiefs of Police

John Somerindyke, Lt., Retired, Fayetteville Police  
Department, NC

Crystal M. Daye, RTI International

Tom Scott, PhD, RTI International

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# **1. Sexual Assault Unit Assessment Overview**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Law enforcement's response to sexual assault directly impacts the criminal justice system's ability to deliver justice for victims and prevent future crimes. Creating a comprehensive and sustainable process for sexual assault investigations and improving agency response and case outcomes can benefit not only individual victims, but also the communities that law enforcement agencies serve. Ultimately, law enforcement is responsible for following national standards and recommended practices to ensure community safety while also addressing crimes in a victim-centered and trauma-informed manner.

The National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) is a Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) program that assists jurisdictions with addressing unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs). The National SAKI Training and Technical Assistance (SAKI TTA) Sexual Assault Unit (SAU) assessment provides a comprehensive review of an agency's sexual assault investigative process. Jacksonville, Florida, is one of a growing number of jurisdictions nationwide that is actively addressing their unsubmitted SAKs while also assessing response, investigation, and prosecution processes for sexual assault cases.

In 2016, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) initiated a coordinated effort to address the backlog of previously unsubmitted SAKs in Jacksonville by becoming a SAKI grantee. Since obtaining the SAKI award, JSO has made a concerted effort to address and improve sexual assault response within the agency by testing unsubmitted SAKs and implementing trauma-informed, victim-centered practices for all reports of sexual assault—old and new. JSO strives to provide a consistent internal process while continuing to coordinate efforts with community partners from the Women's Center of Jacksonville, sexual assault nurse examiner program, and the Office of the State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial District. In 2020, JSO elected to participate in a comprehensive SAU assessment to be completed by the SAKI TTA Team.

This SAU report details the main findings and recommendations identified during JSO's SAU assessment, which was conducted from April to August 2020. The SAU Assessment Team (referred to hereafter as the "assessment team") is part of the BJA SAKI TTA program, which is led by RTI International. The goal of the assessment is to support jurisdictions as they establish effective and sustainable practices for responding to, investigating, and prosecuting sexual assault cases; collecting and processing sexual assault evidence; and supporting survivors of sexual assault. The team members deployed for this assessment have a wide range of skills and expertise in sexual assault investigations, response, evidence identification and collection, forensic and criminal analysis for research and evaluation, victim advocacy and engagement, and prosecution.

## **1.2 Scope of the Assessment**

JSO collaborated with the assessment team to ensure a full review of the department's current sexual assault response procedures. The final report provides JSO with a foundation to recognize its strengths, identify areas for improvement and service gaps, and implement policies and practices to improve how the agency handles adult sexual assault cases.

## **2. Assessment Methods**

The assessment team included criminologists with extensive experience working with law enforcement agencies on their response to sexual assault and other violent crimes, police sexual assault investigators with over 75 years of collective experience in law enforcement—including supervision of sex crimes units, and a career victim advocate with expertise in all aspects of response to victims of sexual assault and advocacy organizational administration. The assessment team carried out the assessment across three stages:

1. Review of relevant Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) policies related to sexual assault response.
2. Virtual interviews with key internal staff and external community partners.
3. Systematic review of sexual assault investigative case files.

The assessment team also linked several recommendations to standards in the *National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach* from the SAFER Act Working Group (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). The National Institute of Justice (NIJ)—sponsored SAFER Act Working Group “was directed to address issues relating to evidence collection; prioritization of evidence and time periods for collection; evidence inventory, tracking, and auditing technology solutions; communication strategies; and victim engagement and notification” (NIJ, n.d.). The SAFER Act Working Group identified 35 recommended best practices for jurisdictions to consider when addressing sexual assault and unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs).

### **2.1 Policy Review**

The policy review was designed to assess (1) if JSO's sexual assault response policies could independently guide a detective through the investigation process; (2) whether policies align with national standards and recommended practices in adult sexual assault investigations; and (3) if policies are used for oversight, accountability, and performance management. JSO provided copies of all written policies and procedures relevant to sexual assault response and investigations.

In addition to the collective subject matter expertise of the assessment team, the following questions/criteria were considered:

- Is the policy standalone, or is it integrated in other general investigative procedures?
- Is the policy current (i.e., has it been updated within the past 5 years)?
- Does the policy accomplish each of the following?
  - Address a comprehensive approach to sexual assault investigations, which includes addressing dispatchers, first responders, detectives, and supervisors.
  - Outline specific roles and responsibilities of personnel who respond to or conduct sexual assault investigations.

- Provide standards for detectives who are assigned to an investigative unit.
- Provide standards for comprehensive training and continuing education in the area of sexual assault.
- Provide review and oversight guidelines for supervisors.
- Provide information about understanding victimization to include trauma-informed interviewing, victim-centered approaches, and offender characteristics.
- Provide case management standards for detectives that outline and describe how and when cases will be assigned, when follow up will be completed, and how cases will be documented and supplemented.
- Provide guidance about investigating crime scenes and handling evidence in sexual assaults, including SAK submission standards.
- Provide clear guidance about clearing and closing investigations, including a definition of “unfounded.”
- Provide agency guidance about developing and participating in multidisciplinary teams to maintain effective and ongoing communications.

## 2.2 Personnel Interviews

JSO employs a dedicated sex crimes unit called the Special Assault Unit—which is in the JSO Department of Investigations and Homeland Security Division. A lieutenant oversees the Special Assault Unit section and also supervises four investigative teams composed of 27 detectives and 1 civilian clerical employee. The staff includes a cold case sex crimes Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Unit with 1 sergeant, 4 dedicated detectives, and 1 civilian employee. This Cold Case Unit is exclusively responsible for investigation and follow up of DNA hits generated from previously untested SAKs. The Special Assault Unit is also responsible for conducting daily investigations involving juvenile victims and other sex-related crimes—including indecent exposure, public sexual indecency, and voyeurism.

Interviews were conducted with personnel who work on adult sexual assault cases or who support sexual assault victims. These interviews involved JSO staff and staff from outside JSO, which included state, county, and community-based organizations. Two-person teams completed the interviews, which typically lasted 30–60 minutes and involved using semi-scripted interview questions (see **Appendix A**). Notes were then compiled and reviewed by at least two reviewers to identify key themes and recommendations. No individually attributed information was compiled or used as part of the interview and reporting process. Overall, 14 JSO staff were interviewed—including Special Assault Unit and DNA detectives, patrol officers, supervisors and command staff, and crime scene technicians. Interviews were also conducted with JSO external stakeholders and included prosecutors, sexual assault nurse examiners, victim advocates, and crime laboratory personnel. **Table 2-1** describes the type and number of interviews conducted.



**Table 2-1. Personnel Interviews Completed**

Agency Affiliation	Role	Number
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO)	SAU Detectives (Inc DNA)	4
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO)	SAU Supervisors (Inc DNA)	4
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO)	Patrol officers/supervisors	3
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO)	Victim Services Advocate	1
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO)	Command staff	2
Women's Center of Jacksonville RRT—Advocacy	Administrator & Advocate	2
Office of the State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial District	Line prosecutors	2
Florida Department of Law Enforcement Crime Laboratory	Supervisor	1
Women's Center of Jacksonville RRT—Forensic Nurses	Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner	1

## 2.3 Case Review

Reviewing investigative case files was a critical component of the project as it allowed for the evaluation of investigative procedures and department response, along with case outcomes. The assessment team requested and received from JSO a random sample of sexual assaults that occurred during calendar year 2018 or 2019. Eligible cases were defined based on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) definition of rape as "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (FBI, 2014). The JSO provided case files that included incident numbers, dates, offense type, evidence log, suspect and victim information, original and supplemental reports, and prosecutorial charging sheets.

Assessment team members were assigned case files for review and coded the case files using a set of predetermined data metrics that were discussed with JSO and agreed upon during the pre-site planning process. (See **Appendix B** for a list of data variables and definitions.)

To ensure confidentiality, the information recorded in the case file review does not include any personally identifiable information. All assessment team members signed confidentiality and nondisclosure agreements to ensure information will not be shared. The methodology was approved by the RTI Institutional Review Board, which protects human subjects in research.

### 3. Assessment of Policies and Procedures

A strong and effective response to sexual assault can influence agency culture; furthermore, an agency's policies and procedures can directly reflect such a response. A standalone, detailed policy for adult sexual assault cases provides clear guidance to officers and detectives and establishes a mechanism for agency oversight—ensuring standardized and sustainable practices within the department. These policies should include a comprehensive response, the agency's vision, for sexual assault investigations. Investigative policies should provide direction for the initial officer through the investigative follow-up. Additionally, these policies should address the complexities of sexual assault cases and include—at a minimum—effective trauma-informed and victim-centered response methods; how to incorporate victim advocacy; approach, contact, and interviewing of victims and offenders; work as a multidisciplinary response; coordination of medical care to include the sexual assault forensic exam (SAFE); and evidence collection, storage, and laboratory submission. Written policies that address the expectations of the officers/detectives involved in these investigations are critical to providing a response that creates internal and external uniformity and accountability.

The following Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) policy/operating procedures were reviewed:

- Special Assault: **Order**  
Responsible Personnel: Commanding Officer of Special Assault Unit  
Order Number: 325  
Dated: August 29, 2019
- Patrol Function: **Order**  
Responsible Personnel: Chief of Patrol  
Order Number: 210  
Dated: March 20, 2020
- Special Assault Unit: **Procedure**  
Responsible Personnel: Commanding Officer of Special Assault Unit  
Order Number: 325  
Dated: March 17, 2020

There are two distinct JSO documents that direct JSO and the Special Assault Unit activities; one is categorized as a Special Assault **Order** and the second as a Special Assault Unit **Procedure**. Information germane to the Special Assault Unit response is provided in each document, and JSO operating procedures and orders showed that both documents reflect up-to-date information (Order, August 2019; Procedure, March 2020). These policies also pertain to crimes of child abuse and other sexually motivated offense reports that fall under the purview of the Special Assault Unit.

Several strengths were noted in the current policy documents. These include direction for initial response and guidance for follow-up investigation processes—including Special Assault Unit call-out and response for acute sexual assault reports that help guide patrol personnel and Special Assault Unit detectives. Additional policy guidance is provided about effectively interacting and interviewing sexual assault victims, including how to facilitate the

administration of a SAFE in the appropriate time frame for these exams and proper handling of sexual assault evidence. As noted, JSO has two agency policies that both provide some direction to the Special Assault Unit and patrol for the sexual assault response. With two policies directing the response, it might be difficult for officers to obtain clear direction regarding officer responsibilities and resource coordination during sexual assault responses. Combining key elements of these document into one standalone Special Assault Unit policy document would help ensure that JSO consistently employs a clear and appropriately coordinated response.

### **3.1 JSO Special Assault: Order**

The policy provides general direction about how patrol officers should respond to sexual assault calls. Several sections discuss how interactions should occur with victims, including direction about acquiring basic victim statements and providing medical assistance and advocate support. Although this assessment did not include any specific review of the child sex crime response, there are places in the order where adult and child sex crime responses become blurred. Having two distinct policies, one for each area, would provide clear and strengthened direction. Additional observations and recommendations on the JSO Special Assault Order policy include the following:

- Outline expectations for coordinating and participating in a sexual assault multidisciplinary team—including describing who participates from the JSO, how they participate, and how often.
- Review the initial callout process for when a SAFE is warranted. Currently, patrol is directed to call the advocate for an assessment of the victim’s need for an examination, and the decision to have an exam conducted appears mainly to lie with the advocate. We recommend adding details for who can approve an examination. This topic is also addressed in the SAFE and Advocate sections.
- Address current policy, which does not provide written guidance for when or where an in-depth victim interview should be conducted in an effort to support a victim-centered and trauma-informed practice. This should be clarified. Consideration should also be given to delaying the interview as recommended by various research—including from End Violence Against Women International, which recommends that this interview be conducted 2–3 days after the incident.
- Revisit and address policy, which currently does not provide direction for recording the victim interview; recording is a strongly recommended and supported practice because it allows for the most accurate account of the victim’s statement and encourages the detective to listen to and connect with the victim. We recommend that JSO adopt a policy of recording victim interviews and provide the necessary equipment for this to occur.

Additional specific recommended revisions include the following:

- **Section III.A.3.** Provide more detail about the types of questions and limitations for the officer to ask; also recommend that officers record all victim, witness, and suspect interviews. Additionally, provide some basic appropriate questions that the patrol officer should ask.

- **Section III.A.7.** Define and outline with greater detail the appropriate use of when a report should be classified as “Information Report.”
- **Section III.A.8.** Review the current order, which indicates a SAFE within 120 hours or more—as other circumstances may dictate. This appears to conflict with Section III.B.1.a., where the examination time frame suggests 72 hours. Having a consistent direction or explanation as to why the two time frames are different would help clarify what is expected for impacted personnel.
- **Section III.A.12.a.** Consider requiring that an advocate be notified and respond to victims associated with all sexual assault cases.
- **Section III.A.12.b.** Ensure clarity for the determination of victim cooperation. All staff are encouraged to document behaviors and actions of themselves and others. Documentation of victim “cooperation” is subjective and lends itself to a negative portrayal of the victim’s current desire in a case. Cases reviewed by the assessment team revealed that use of this term was not always appropriate in its context.
- **Section III.A.13.** Reassess the use and presentation of the victim refusal form. A victim may perceive this form as a hurdle or deterrent to reporting the incident or to continuing to engage with the system.
- **Section III.D.** Provide additional direction and clarification in the following areas:
  - Determine if this section is directed at patrol or detective-victim interviews.
  - Ensure the interview is being recorded, which is a best practice.
  - Provide more clarity in subsection 2 as to what constitutes “confidentiality.”
  - Explore including an advocate when detective-victim interviews are being conducted.
- **Section III.D.11.a.** Clarify for the officer/detective the purpose of the SAFE so they are able to understand the process and effectively provide information to victims and victims’ families.
- **Section III.E.** Clarify interviewing of the suspect by patrol officers and consider additional circumstances and options. There may be times when the suspect is **willing to speak or make a statement on scene, restricting patrol’s ability to** obtain critical statements that could be vital to the case. Additional direction and interview training for all officers would be beneficial and help improve this part of JSO’s response.

### 3.2 JSO Special Assault: Procedures

Current policy, as written, is a general nature format that addresses sexual assault response similar to the previously mentioned JSO Order. Having general policies and response direction in two separate documents could lead to conflict and some confusion for those tasked with adhering to these guidelines. Combining **Procedure** policies with the **Order** policies for sexual assault response is recommended to help alleviate any confusion. Additional observations and recommendations on the JSO Special Assault Unit Procedures policy include the following:

- Current procedures address general response, as previously discussed, leaving the reader unclear about whether the information is directed to detectives, patrol

officers, or others. Providing clarification about who is expected to follow these procedures is recommended. Fundamental responses outlined—such as “conduct interviews as soon as practical” and “review all the facts and complete all interviews and interrogations”—are blanket directions that offer no specific support for these tasks. Having nonspecific and overly general statements does not provide clarity and expectations for those who are responsible for following policies and agency orders. Removing these general statements or defining information further—such as the time frame of when this task should be completed and documented—will help alleviate any confusion and is recommended.

- An advocate response that is proactive, strong, and consistent supports a victim-centered response to sexual assault. Incorporating an advocate outside of the SAFE procedure was not observed during the on-site interviews, nor in the case review. Within these procedures, there is no mention of providing advocacy support for victims from initial report through case resolution. There is no guidance in the policy about when a detective will contact an advocate outside of a SAFE, nor clarification on when to contact JSO advocates or those employed at the Women’s Center of Jacksonville. Relying on a victim advocate in these notifications is necessary in keeping with national best practices with the stated purpose of a multidisciplinary, coordinated community response. Mandating the use of an advocate, as well as communicating with the advocate before and after investigative tasks, would be appropriate. Clarification should be made to this section about mandating notifications and documenting contact.
- Personnel are key to a highly effective, functioning, and specialized sex crimes investigative unit; personnel selection and training are important to ensuring the sex crimes unit is staffed by highly motivated and qualified individuals. These procedures should address and include personnel selection or training for Special Assault Unit detectives. Defining this policy further and creating a selection and training process are recommended next steps.
- Submission or filing standards of a case with the prosecutor’s office is only briefly outlined. The policy directs detectives to, “File the case with the prosecutor.” No additional direction or parameters for outlining the process are provided; without clear direction about filing standards or the process, inconsistent submissions could occur. Clearly defining this process would add clarity, consistency, and accountability.
- Collection and storage of evidence is only generally addressed. In particular, this section quantifies that the JSO will *take possession* of a SAFE sexual assault kit (SAK) within 5 working days and immediately transfer it to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Crime Laboratory. Based on National Institute of Justice SAFER Recommendation 16 (which is to submit the SAK for testing within 7 days), we recommend that JSO revise their policy to include a defined timeline for SAK submission to the laboratory; this revision will align with SAFER.

## 4. Case Review Findings

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) investigative case file review included a sample of **106** sexual assault cases that were randomly selected across calendar years 2018 and 2019. The assessment team collected and extracted case information from JSO's sexual assault investigative files. In some instances, the assessment team conducted follow-up contact with JSO staff to collect additional information (e.g., updates for pending cases) or to address specific questions. **Table 4-1** summarizes case characteristics for the JSO sexual assault cases reviewed.

During the case file review and data extraction, the assessment team noted numerous files in which important and instrumental case information was missing or not documented. As a result, the final assessment was limited to the information contained and documented in the investigative case files, and this final report acknowledges and reflects this limitation.

**Table 4-1. JSO Case Review Data**

Sexual Assault Case Review			Results		
Number of Cases			106	100%	
Case Demographics					
Incident Location					
Victim's Residence	35	33%			
Suspect's Residence	24	23%			
Vehicle	14	13%			
Outdoors/Alley/Public	14	13%			
Business/Hotel	9	8%			
How Call Received					
911	77	73%			
Hospital	15	14%			
Rape Crisis Center	5	5%			
Case Characteristics					
Suspect Known to Victim	78	74%			
Alcohol/Drugs Used by Suspect	27	25%			
Alcohol/Drugs Used by Victim	24	23%			
Victim Reported Incapacitation	18	17%			
Victim Age					
18-30	51	48%			
31-94	55	52%			
Suspect Age					
18-30	38	36%			
31-77	55	52%			
Investigation Process					
Victims Contacted by Detective Within 2 Days	59	56%			
Detective-Victim Interviews	94	89%			
Interviews Recorded (Patrol + Detectives)	5	5%			
Follow-Up Activity					
Witnesses Identified	53	50%			
Witnesses Interviewed	30	28%			

<b>Sexual Assault Case Review</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Case Resolution		
Cleared by Arrest	13	12%
Cleared by Exception	22	21%
Unfounded	6	6%
Clearances Meets UCR*	26	25%
Definition		
Case Submitted to	30	28%
Prosecutor		
Charges Filed	9	8%
Rationale Not Submitted		
Uncooperative Victim	29	27%
No Probable Cause	11	10%

\*Uniform Crime Reporting

## **5. Case File and Personnel Interview Assessment**

This section details the main observations and recommendations from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Training and Technical Assistance (SAKI TTA) Sexual Assault Unit (SAU) assessment using information gathered from investigative case files and personnel interviews. These findings are intended to assist in either developing or strengthening sustainable practices within the JSO sexual assault response.

This section begins with the initial response (by patrol and detectives) to the reported crime, followed by investigative case follow-up and case closure. This section also addresses important findings related to the multidisciplinary partners associated with sexual assault response in the city of Jacksonville.

### **5.1 Initial Response to the Reported Crime**

The JSO's initial response to reports of sexual assault was found to be timely and overall attentive to the needs of victims. In most cases, victims received a standardized level of service and care from first responders. Initial police interviews appeared to gather basic but essential information that assisted in furthering agency response and follow-up actions.

JSO policy does provide clear direction about transporting the victim for medical treatment and examination. Detectives from JSO's Special Assault Unit were regularly notified by responding patrol of sexual assaults and appeared to respond appropriately. In addition, external partners—including advocates from the Women's Center of Jacksonville (WCJ) and sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs)—were routinely contacted to assist with providing support and medical care for victims. Some opportunities to improve the initial response were identified, and these are outlined in the following sections.

#### **5.1.1 Initial Response by Patrol Officers and Detectives**

Research about homicide scene response has shown that a detective's timely response to the crime scene is one of the key predictors of case clearance (Wellford & Cronin, 2000). With this research in mind, having an experienced sex crimes detective conduct the initial scene response for a sexual assault can support positive case outcomes. In the JSO investigative case file review, the initial on-scene patrol officers notified sex crimes detectives 70% of the time, and the case files indicated detectives ultimately responded to the scene in only a quarter of cases. The notification of detectives by patrol in most case files was documented by officers and appeared to fall within the limited guidance provided by JSO's policy. Staff raised concerns during interviews about the effectiveness of the current Special Assault Unit callout procedure due to inconsistency in how and when detectives are notified by patrol and how Special Assault Unit detectives are directed to respond. Having Special Assault Unit detectives respond on-scene to sexual assaults is a



recommended practice that can help build trust and familiarity with victims and provide a seamless and robust investigative response.

At times, patrol officers and sex crimes detectives did show a general understanding of their roles in the initial response in both the case file reviews and personnel interviews. However, a few areas—including case file classification and appropriate detailed case content, time spent working on the case, and additional types of actions associated with the initial patrol response—varied by officer. For instance, the case files showed that some patrol officers documented essential information—such as conducting an initial victim interview, completing notification to detectives, and assisting in facilitating a medical exam for the victim. In other cases, patrol officers made additional concerted efforts to locate a crime scene and various attempts to contact and interview witnesses and suspects. Some of these actions taken by patrol could be extremely beneficial to the investigation; however, there is a balance as these additional actions—such as the timing and contact with a suspect—may prove to have a negative downstream impact on the investigation, especially if the contact is made too early in the investigation without prior preparation.

Another item noted was the responsibility of patrol to coordinate SANE and medical response for victims. Currently, patrol makes a phone call to WCJ; following phone contact between the victim and the on-call advocate, a decision is reached about whether an examination will be conducted. If the victim is willing to complete the examination, the on-call advocate arranges for a medical screening with the on-call SANE. There were cases in which an examination was declined or delayed, and officers had no opportunity to address this decision because the responding officer typically has no on-scene contact with the SANE during this process. Having clear lines of communication is critical in such situations to best serve sexual assault victims. Clearly defining and articulating patrol officers' role and expectations—as well as avenues of communication with partners during sexual assault calls—in formal policy and reinforcing this policy in training would help address observed differences across the patrol response.

### *Documenting the Initial Response*

The case file review showed that patrol officers generally documented an appropriately focused scope for their on-scene interactions with victims. As described in the case file report, patrol officer interviews and interactions with victims were directed towards obtaining the basic facts needed to establish a criminal act, which aligns with JSO policy and direction. Of the 80 cases in which patrol interviewed a victim, 65 cases were coded as initial or cursory and the other 15 were coded as comprehensive and detailed. During the review process, assessors also noted there were minimal instances documented in which the officers used interviewing strategies that blamed or questioned a victim's actions, which can have a negative impact on reporting and engagement.

Patrol officers varied in how they documented making contact and following up with witnesses. For example, witnesses in some cases would be mentioned during the officer interview but not documented in the structured fields of the police report. In other cases, the role that a potential witness played was not clearly articulated. It should be noted that Section 5.2 of this report discusses the need for consistent, detailed documentation throughout the police response.

Specific examples of missed opportunities for investigative follow-up with witnesses include a store clerk not interviewed who had assisted the victim after the assault, a victim's parents who were threatened by the suspect, and friends who were with the victim when they all met the suspect. These opportunities should be recognized and pursued by officers, which will improve case resolution. An analysis of data produced from the case review supports this observation. Witnesses were identified in half of the cases reviewed, typically early on during the initial response and often on-scene. However, identified witnesses were interviewed in only 28% of all cases. Ensuring witnesses are properly identified, documented, and followed up with should be a standard practice. Having clear direction, standards, and oversight review of the investigative process would also ensure a consistent level of response.

### **5.1.2 Victim and Witness Contact and Interviewing**

Initial victim contact, provision of ongoing support, and victim engagement with law enforcement are some of the most critical aspects of the sexual assault response. Delayed or poor initial interactions may contribute to a victim choosing not to participate or to withdraw from the investigative process and may increase negative psychological effects for the victim. Research has shown that positive interactions with police can improve a victim's confidence in their ability to participate in the legal process (Patterson & Campbell, 2010). A victim-centered, agency-level response should reflect a professional police response that incorporates understanding, empathy, and support for victims when gathering narrative statements about the assault.

Overall, in 89% of cases, a victim's statement was taken by a Special Assault Unit detective closely following the initial patrol response and interview. This timeline can support the victim in that it provides a critical "immediate" law enforcement response to them. The written details provided by the victim statements varied significantly across cases. Sometimes this appeared to be due to poor documentation by the detective, and other times the victim appeared to be unable to provide significant details about the incident. Most victim interviews were documented in a "just the facts" manner as to who, what, when, and where. During personnel interviews, most officers reported having received minimal formal departmental or external training in trauma-informed victim interviewing. Yet even with limited trauma interview training, it was noted there were only isolated

instances in which a patrol officer or detective had questioned a victim in a way that would be construed as victim blaming.

Taking the steps to obtain all relevant information in an investigation is a core standard practice (<https://sakitta.rti.org/toolkit/index.cfm?fuseaction=tool&tool=145>) for any detective or officer. To accomplish this, the law enforcement officer must conduct interviews with all victims, witnesses, and suspects. In some of the reviewed case files, there were missed opportunities to gain additional information from the victim and others during both the initial contact and when a follow-up in-depth, comprehensive interview was completed.

When conducting victim interviews, employing a trauma-informed “cognitive style” interview is important and has been shown to retrieve the most accurate and complete information (Memon, Meissner, and Fraser, 2010). For the victim, the interview is an opportunity to provide an uninterrupted open-ended narrative of events. With this in mind, the detective should avoid unnecessarily interrupting or halting an interview when the individual is providing a free-flowing narrative of events. This open-ended process can also enhance the opportunity for the detective and victim to employ additional memory recall strategies. Current JSO policy and practice appears to allow detectives to employ this strategy. However, the documentation of victim (and suspect) interviews in the case files often reflected only a short synopsis of what the victim stated. Strengthening policy and practice is recommended so that (1) JSO supervisors ensure trauma-informed cognitive interview strategies are being used and (2) subsequent interview report documentation can be improved. This is an opportunity to enhance officers’ skills by using clear instruction, training, and oversight through a directed training plan. When agencies provide specialized training and outline effective interview strategies, these actions can help improve all aspects of the interview process—including the quality of information and level of detail provided.

**Audio/video recording of victim interviews.** As noted, a thorough investigation must include accurate and detailed documentation of the victim’s statement as this information is a crucial element in a police report and for purposes of the overall investigation. A recommended method for improving accuracy is to ensure officers are recording statements (via audio or video) made by victims, as well as statements made by witnesses and suspects. Recording victim interviews is also accepted as a national best practice (Archambault & Lonsway, 2008). Based on the case file review, JSO detectives do not appear to be consistently recording investigative interviews with sexual assault victims. The patrol division does have the ability to record their victim interactions using body-worn cameras, which would help facilitate recording the initial contact. However, it is unknown if this is occurring because documentation of these recordings was rarely seen in case files. There is also no JSO policy directing the recording of victim statements in sexual assault cases. Additionally, JSO policy does not provide the resources for, and specific guidance to, personnel in this area. During the personnel interviews, detectives generally believed that recording interviews would support and enhance their documentation and overall

investigation. We recommend that JSO provide all personnel with the means, resources, and direction for recording interviews to ensure accurate and complete documentation.

**Interview location.** Making victims feel comfortable and supported during initial contact is critical to the success of a sexual assault investigation (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2007). A patrol officer can facilitate a successful interview by choosing an appropriate and private location to talk. Case files revealed that where the first responder interviewed victims varied and was, at times, situationally dependent; an interview location may include the location of the victim/call or whether the suspect or other potential witnesses were present. In general, patrol officers conducted interviews at the location where the victim called to report the assault or where police responded. There were several instances in which patrol officers conducted the victim interviews in open public areas where other individuals, including potential witnesses or even those not involved in the investigation, were present. As mentioned previously, patrol would notify WCJ when facilitating the sexual assault forensic exam (SAFE). At times, a WCJ advocate would ask to speak with a victim over the phone. This practice is not the most efficient and effective method for coordinating a SAFE, which is a topic that will be addressed later in this report. Overall, JSO could effectively address ineffective or harmful interview approaches on a case-by-case basis by providing and reinforcing ongoing training and techniques. All personnel should use supportive and private interview locations when speaking with sexual assault victims. By offering a safe environment for the victim to speak, a law enforcement official provides the greatest opportunity for continued engagement with the criminal justice system. For JSO detectives, most comprehensive victim interviews were conducted at the main police department building within the Special Assault Unit area. Some victims were required to travel to the building, though others were provided with transportation to be interviewed in a private room. On several occasions, victims were interviewed at a location other than the police building and detectives were accommodating to the victims' circumstances in all of these cases. Consideration should always be given to vulnerable victims who may not want to or have the means to travel to the police station for interviews. Policy should be drafted to establish a clear operational and logistical method for conducting interviews. The assessment team did not have the opportunity to physically observe the interview rooms and their layout. JSO personnel did advise that they have worked to update the room layout and make it a victim-centered, calming environment. It was noted that suspect interview rooms are in the same general area as victim rooms. It is extremely important to ensure that suspect interviews are not conducted at the same time and within close proximity to a victim.

### **5.1.3 Detective Assignment and Victim Follow-Up Practices**

Timely detective case assignment is another important element of a successful law enforcement sexual assault response. Upon completion of the on-scene response, the patrol officer report was forwarded to the Special Assault Unit in the JSO records management

system (RMS). Cases were then reviewed by a Special Assault Unit supervisor and assigned to a detective. The median number of days for these cases to be assigned to a detective after the initial report was 1 day. Delays in either completing and submitting the initial report or assigning detectives can have adverse impacts on victim participation, evidence collection, and suspect follow-up. Although most cases appear to have been assigned to detectives fairly quickly, additional quality control processes could be implemented to avoid unnecessary delays. We recommend that JSO (1) review current policy and (2) include specific direction about the actions and timeline for each step in the assignment process. These actions will help ensure that the assignment process is timely, consistent, and institutionalized within the organization.

Once a case has been assigned to a detective, conducting appropriate follow-up with the victim provides an opportunity to connect the victim to support services and keep the victim engaged in the criminal justice process (Campbell, 2006, Laxminarayan, 2012). Among the case files reviewed ( $n = 106$ ), all reports were assigned to a detective; however, only 33% of case files documented that the victim was referred or connected to support services. Current JSO policy contains limited details for detectives and supervisors about how and when victims are contacted and referred to victim services; however, the Special Assault Unit generally appears to follow the overall direction that is provided. To eliminate any confusion or inconsistent practices, we recommend establishing a written policy that guides detectives and supervisors in this area to ensure a consistent practice is applied.

Detectives successfully contacted the victim in 97% of JSO cases, with slightly over half (56%) of these contacts occurring within 48 hours of the initial report. The median number of days between the call for service and detective contact was 2 days, but 20% of contacts occurred 7 or more days after the crime report. During the staff interviews, Special Assault Unit detectives indicated that they attempt to contact the victim as soon as possible. JSO policy has a general statement that the victim should be contacted “as soon as possible” but does not recommend a specific and defined timeline.

After detective contact, an in-person victim interview was conducted in nearly 9 out of 10 cases (89%). Currently and per policy, JSO patrol officers indicated that they operate under the premise that they will complete only a cursory initial interview and Special Assault Unit detectives will initiate a second, more comprehensive interview—when appropriate. Conducting a comprehensive victim interview is considered a foundational step in case progression. Conducting this interview can help strengthen the detective-victim relationship and lead to positive case outcomes.

Special Assault Unit detectives conducted their comprehensive follow-up in-person victim interviews almost exclusively at JSO Special Assault Unit offices located in the police headquarters building. When an immediate on-scene or callout detective interview was not completed, detectives would contact and interview the victim at a scheduled later date. This

process primarily included having the victim appear in person at JSO main headquarters for the detective follow-up interview. During personnel interviews, detectives expressed a desire to have the option to interview victims at WCJ or the hospital, which was not generally considered as an option at the time of this assessment because of logistical concerns—such as a lack of interview space available at the hospitals and WCJ. JSO does not have a written standard policy detailing interview procedure or practice and should assess the need to provide consistent evidence-based guidance.

The timing of the Special Assault Unit detective's comprehensive interview should also be considered. The median number of days between the police report and the detective interview was 3 days. In some cases, the assigned Special Assault Unit detective would attempt to interview the victim at the initial reporting stage while on scene. Of the 106 cases, 18% included a detective interview on the same day as the report, and 20% included a detective interview on the day after the report. Although interviewing a victim immediately following the police report may have some benefits, conducting a comprehensive interview with a sexual assault victim in the minutes or hours after an assault can be problematic as victims may still be experiencing major challenges due to the traumatic event and struggle with their ability to recall information.

Finally, contacting and interviewing the victim again after some time has passed is an area that can further enhance the case by obtaining additional facts and information, clarifying statements, and providing the victim with time and space for decision-making. This practice also provides the opportunity for the victim to obtain resources and information, victim advocacy support, and other services. In many instances, detectives could not locate the victim or the victim did not return phone calls, which resulted in the case being suspended or closed. The JSO does not appear to have a clear sexual assault policy or procedures for detectives to reference when following up with victims, including how and what information should be recorded in the investigative supplement. Overall, we found that victim interviews were not consistently documented across detectives (see Section 5.2, Case File Documentation, for additional information). In the reviewed cases, there was limited documentation about continued contact among the detective, advocate, and victim beyond the first follow-up/initial contact interview. It is possible that detectives are making further contact but not documenting these details in their reports; such details would be helpful in case assessment.

#### **5.1.4 Utilization of Victim Advocates and Follow-Up with Victims**

Connecting victims with advocacy support, both during the initial stages after reporting and throughout the investigation or criminal justice process, ensures a victim-centered response. One challenge to evaluating the use of victim advocates in JSO sexual assault cases was the minimal documentation about advocacy involvement or activity within the investigative case files.

JSO has the Victim & Witness Services Unit (VWSU), which is a full-time victim services unit staffed by advocates. However, based on both the case file review and staff interviews, the JSO detectives rarely utilize the VWSU to provide victim support. JSO did appear to engage WCJ advocates more frequently, although this was primarily an action taken by patrol officers to facilitate the SAFE process at the medical facility. JSO does have a separate written policy that addresses the use of JSO victim services and advocacy; however, there is no formal policy that specifically addresses advocacy response for sexual assault cases. Interviews conducted with JSO personnel for clarification about advocacy response indicated that there was a lack of procedures, coordination, and direction when responding to sexual assault victims.

WCJ is a community-based advocacy organization that also provides services to sexual assault victims. WCJ advocates most often communicate with patrol officers and detectives at the point when victims present to JSO after an assault. After that point, WCJ advocates are responsible for coordinating and facilitating the SAFE in the hospital. There are 14 full-time and 4 part-time WCJ advocates who respond to and evaluate JSO SAFE requests. During stakeholder interviews, WCJ advocates were positive and enthusiastic about a collaborative partnership with JSO at the executive level. However, WCJ advocates' role and involvement were unclear related to providing ongoing victim support after victims return home. Beyond the initial response, there appears to be limited contact or coordination among WCJ advocates, JSO advocate personnel, and victims. The JSO VWSU advised that they are not involved in this victim engagement at the time of initial police response. All advocates (both from WCJ and the JSO VWSU) expressed a strong desire to keep identifying ways to improve the level of partnership between their organizations. Continuing to develop the sexual assault response team (SART) and pursuing cross-disciplinary training can help strengthen the coordinated response.

Defining JSO VWSU and WCJ roles and responsibilities as they pertain to victim advocacy and engagement would prove to be highly beneficial towards eliminating uncertainty or redundancy. According to the case files, the type and frequency of services that WCJ advocates provide are unclear. Having detailed policies that document victim advocates' roles, including how and when officers or detectives should engage victim advocates, would be a crucial next step.

## **5.2 Case File Documentation**

### ***5.2.1 Accuracy and Consistency in Documentation***

Complete, accurate, and consistent documentation of sexual assault cases from initial response through case closure is essential to successful investigations. This allows for transparent, complete review and oversight of investigations. Accurate documentation includes the language used to describe (1) police actions and (2) victim, suspect, or witness

statements (see Section 5.2.2 for additional information). In addition, detailed documentation should include justification for completing (or not completing) investigative activities, updates about victim contact and follow-through, outcomes (e.g., did the prosecutors file the case?), and case closure. In assessing case file documentation, the assessment team observed that about one in five cases lacked critical details. Current JSO sexual assault investigative policy does not clearly indicate when formal investigative documentation is required.

It was also observed that officers have an option to create an “information-only” report. The purpose this would serve in reported cases of sexual assault and the exact circumstances of when to employ this type of report are unclear. Using a “non-crime” designation for any initial reports of sexual assault is discouraged. This action can be perceived by communities as an effort to not transparently investigate and document reported assaults. Agency leadership should review this policy and practice to ensure that every reported sexual assault is being fully investigated and that each investigation is being fully documented in a detailed manner. Additionally, when seeking a robust, detailed-oriented, and transparent documentation process, agency leaders—including first-line supervisors—need to provide clear direction for officers. A sound JSO response and review both support efforts to improve response and can help identify why there may be gaps in challenges to documentation.

The case file review demonstrated that the information patrol officers and detectives documented (level of detail and type) was not consistent. These inconsistencies may have stemmed from the use of various JSO RMS functions. It appears pre-narrative sections could be utilized to a greater degree to allow for more critical analysis of information captured; this approach would support more detailed and accurate documentation. Some form of basic crime analysis was conducted in most files, but it was limited to routine record checks on the victim and suspect. There was limited or no documented analysis in other potential areas for gathering intelligence—including linking less severe or more serious cases, connecting persons between cases, or identifying common features regarding suspect patterns and behaviors. We suggest reviewing the JSO RMS to determine if an internal mechanism is available that permits conducting more detailed intelligence analyses of sexual assault cases. The value of analysis can be hampered when critical data, including data about victims and suspects, in the pre-narrative structured fields are missing or incorrect. Establishing policy and implementing a quality assurance oversight function and practice to the current RMS would be beneficial to ensure complete and accurate crime reporting and case analysis.

In general, patrol officers included only basic data and case information in the narrative section. The use of the narrative open-text section varied across case files reviewed. Examples of this inconsistency include documented notification of advocates, complete victim statements about the incident, various suspect descriptions, lack of identification and



response to potential crime scenes and evidence, and limited witness discovery. When this type of data was documented, clear details and actions taken (e.g., important witness biographical information) were sometimes missing.

As expected, detectives' written documentation was consistently more detailed, but there were several areas in which documentation could have been improved. For example, several documented suspect interviews simply indicated the suspect denied the assault, and one documented interview included only three sentences. No other information was provided about how the denial was made and if the detective attempted to clarify information about any suspect involvement (e.g., knowledge of victim, alibi, suspect witnesses). Additionally, detectives would close this section of the report with wording such as, "See recording for further details." The assessment team did not have access to any recordings and was unable to further explore this practice. Additionally, supervisors who review and approve the detective supplement might find it more time-consuming to review these materials. The supervisors would benefit from requiring and reviewing more detailed case documentation.

It should also be noted that many cases included a complete criminal history of the victim and the suspect. Including information about the victim's history, although mostly accurate, can have a negative impact on the overall approach to the case. Other documentation issues included case disposition that lacked a standardized method for indicating how and why the case status was changed to "closed" or "investigation suspended" (pending status). Currently, there appears to be no agency policy or written procedure to provide guidance about improving documentation and the manner in which case outcomes are recorded. (See Section 5.2.3, Case Resolution and Disposition, for further observations.) To establish a consistent method of documentation, the JSO policy should be enhanced to provide a clear template and written guidelines about how sexual assault cases should be documented—including a consistent set of areas that need to be covered in the narrative of the report, as well as requirements for supervisory review of the cases files. Clear disposition standards support an agency's credibility and transparency to the community.

### ***5.2.2 Language Employed and Descriptive Content***

The first impression that a victim has of law enforcement can set the stage for further engagement in the investigation and can also impact the victim's healing and recovery. Positive interaction and communication with the victim in the initial patrol response can increase the likelihood of gathering additional accurate investigative information. A highly beneficial practice is for the interviewer, which could include patrol and/or detectives, to develop rapport and approach the victim in an empathetic manner. Equally important is how these initial conversations are portrayed through documentation because the language used can set the tone—positively or negatively—and influence the course of the investigation. Ultimately these practices will impact an agency's community reputation and citizens' and victims' ability to trust.

With few exceptions, JSO patrol officers and detectives documented their investigation in an unbiased, objective manner and refrained from including personal opinions about the victim or circumstances of the assault. As described in the previous section, employing a preformatted and structured interview questionnaire will assist with and provide a consistent trauma-informed approach to the interviews. Gathering event details is an important aspect of these cases; phrasing, language, and victim interactions are also important because they can negatively impact the victim and other individuals who play a role in the case. A detective's ability to establish and build victim trust through positive rapport while also obtaining and documenting accurate investigative information will ultimately be reflected in improved case outcomes.

Victim participation and engagement in the case and investigation are two of the most fundamental factors for case success. Among reviewed cases closed by detectives, 24% indicated the victim was "unable" to follow up with the officer or detective or was "uncooperative," essentially dropping out of the process. However, detectives seldom documented or explained why this may have occurred. Developing a clear requirement for documenting and providing investigative rationale to support the "uncooperative" conclusion (e.g., left message numerous times with no response, victim unable to come to JSO for interview at this time, victim undecided about whether they can emotionally proceed) is essential. Also, consideration for unit supervisors is to regularly evaluate whether the interaction with officers may have played a factor in the victim's response to not engage. Further examination into this area would be beneficial to JSO.

### **5.2.3 Case Resolution and Disposition**

As discussed previously, how an agency resolves sexual assault cases—including how it categorizes and reports the final case disposition—is an important process to review. When sexual assault cases are closed, ensuring that detectives and supervisors use a uniform standard of practice to approve cases will help establish consistency and accuracy across Special Assault Unit cases. Currently, there is no identified JSO policy that outlines and defines (1) appropriate case resolution for different sexual assault scenarios and (2) information about how to document and support these determinations. Furthermore (as previously stated), case status, final case disposition, or the rationale for closing an investigation was not consistently documented—with only 30% of cases having some record of official standardized case disposition. There also appeared to be a wide range of practices used for documenting how and when an investigation was closed—including the use of a "suspended" status. The justification for a "final disposition" was provided; however, the justification rationale response varied—from the victim not cooperating or not wanting to prosecute (22%), to the case not meeting prosecution standards (15%), to the case lacking sufficient evidence (7%).

Another type of case classification is the determination that certain sexual assault cases were “unfounded,” signifying that no crime occurred. There is no national standard definition or process for what it means to “unfound” a case. Based on the case file review conducted, only a small portion of JSO cases (6%) were closed as unfounded, which lies in the nationally recommended range of 2%–8% of rape cases (Lonsway, Archambault, & Lisak, 2009; Police Executive Research Forum, 2013). The assessment team determined the use of the unfounded disposition in these JSO cases was appropriate based on the case details documented in the case file reports.

#### **5.2.4 Follow-Up with Potential Witnesses**

Essential (<https://sakitta.rti.org/toolkit/index.cfm?fuseaction=tool&tool=145>) follow-up practices should involve pursuing information that is relevant to the investigation. This encompasses identifying and processing a crime scene and collecting potential physical evidence—as well as interviewing relevant witnesses, obtaining information on social media, and contacting and interviewing the suspect. (See Section 5.2.7, Locating and Processing Crime Scenes.)

During the case file review, there were several missed opportunities that could have benefited cases and potentially impacted final case outcomes. Some of the more commonly missed investigative opportunities included the following:

- Attempting to identify (or locate identified) potential witnesses named in the report
- Conducting comprehensive follow-up victim interviews that yielded additional information and subsequent investigative actions
- Obtaining, reviewing, and documenting medical records from victim treatment at the hospital to identify additional corroborating information
- Following up on a potential crime location or documenting the location
- Failing to (1) follow up on a potential sexual assault suspect mentioned in the original police report and (2) conduct a thorough and comprehensive interview of that individual.

Identifying, locating, and interviewing all witnesses with information about a crime is a core and accepted investigative standard (<https://sakitta.rti.org/toolkit/docs/Core-Standards-for-Sexual-Assault-Investigations.pdf>). In 50% of the case file reports, officers and detectives documented the presence of named potential witnesses or other persons with knowledge about events prior to, during, or after the assault. Of these potential witnesses, only 28% were interviewed by detectives. Names of potential witnesses were contained in many cases in the narrative section. Information that was not consistently documented in the pre-narrative RMS section and found only in the report narrative created investigative and analytical challenges. Including this information in the formatted pre-narrative RMS data fields creates the necessary documentation for effective analysis and promotes case follow-up. In addition, much narrative witness information generally appeared as simply a name,

without (1) supporting documentation of the individual's relationship to the crime or (2) contact information. Witness information rarely appeared in the pre-narrative section of the RMS, which is the most appropriate area to consistently document and analyze this information. Not capturing this information in the pre-narrative section inhibits effective crime analysis and research in a case; additionally, potential suspects and their defense team may seek out these witnesses as a case moves through the judicial system. Having these interviews conducted early on helps to show a complete investigation was performed and information was collected and acted on. Providing quality control and supervisory review can help identify the prevalence of missing interviews. We recommend addressing this by conducting additional training and updating agency policy. SAKI TTA has created *Core Standards for Sexual Assault Investigations*, which is an available resource for identifying best investigative practices (<https://sakitta.rti.org/toolkit/docs/Core-Standards-for-Sexual-Assault-Investigations.pdf>).

### **5.2.5 Contact and Interview of Suspects**

Locating and contacting a suspect, and obtaining a suspect statement, are valuable steps in a sexual assault investigation. The detective must carefully plan this process—including determining when and how to interview a suspect—while applying sound interview strategies. All contact attempts should follow all legal standards, and subsequent interviews should be completed in a professional and ethical manner. Following these rules should be a standardized and institutionalized agency practice that is supported by written policy.

Based on the case review, a suspect was named or identified in 78% of cases, located in 55% of cases, and interviewed in 47% of cases. As with any investigation, there are multiple factors that influence the decision and ability to conduct an interview with a suspect (e.g., no probable cause to arrest, suspect refused to be interviewed, potential threat to victim as suspect is a current or former partner, or the suspect's location is unknown). Ultimately, conducting these interviews is important in capturing investigative intelligence and achieving positive case outcomes.

Understanding the dynamics of sexual violence and suspects who commit these crimes is important to detectives when developing a legally established and effective interview approach and strategy. During case file review, the assessment team was generally unable to effectively determine the quality and type of interviews conducted. No clear strategies emerged in the review of these interviews, and the detectives' documentation often indicated (or appeared to suggest) that the suspect was simply asked if they had assaulted the victim—with very little information about the overall interview. The assessment team's observations in this area suggested that detectives questioning suspects was approached as a step needed to complete a list of tasks, not as an opportunity to gain intelligence and further an investigation. Additionally, interview assessments determined that a majority of the interviews lacked details, documentation, and key detective questions.

It was observed and confirmed through interviews and policy that JSO uses audio recording for interviewing suspects. This is a universal standard of practice that has numerous benefits—including providing an accurate portrayal of the interview, which can further the investigation. The assessment team was unable to review the audio recordings and therefore may not have had a complete picture of (1) detective/suspect interactions and (2) statements and information that may have been provided during interviews. Recording suspects allows detectives to review interviews, which naturally leads to an accurate and complete portrayal of the statement. Recording suspects during interviews also provides supervisory oversight and review to identify areas in which detectives can improve their skills. These recordings also have been proven to be beneficial in court to validate or refute statements attributed or not attributed to the suspect.

Suspects' interview statements are also important when assessing the overall effectiveness of the interview and case strategy. Of 51 suspects interviewed by detectives, general statements were as follows:

- 23 stated contact was consensual,
- 21 denied the assault,
- 3 invoked their right to an attorney,
- 2 stated that they were not present, and
- 2 made an admission or a confession.

On occasion, there appeared to be follow-up opportunities after interviewing the suspect; for example, a suspect who named potential witnesses that were not pursued. It was observed that upon completion of most initial suspect interviews, additional case follow-up was conducted on a very limited basis—if conducted at all; there were only a few indications of any coordinated effort to conduct follow-up activities based on information obtained from suspect and victim interviews. Interviewing a suspect a second time, even when the detective discovered new investigative information, was rare. Why this occurred is unclear but may be a function of limited investigative time, training, or experience in interviewing. JSO currently has no written direction or policy about strategies and approaches for initiating suspect contact and any post-interview follow-up.

#### **5.2.6 Conducting Confrontational or Controlled Calls**

Sexual assaults are one of the most complex types of cases to investigate, and sexual assault detectives must utilize a variety of investigative tools for case resolution. One tool that may be available is a “controlled” or “confrontational” call, which involves using a monitored phone call or—in some cases, a text message—between the suspect and the victim under the close guidance of a trained detective. Confrontation calls are not recommended in all cases and require that the victim be willing and emotionally able to participate in a monitored phone call with the suspect using the strategy of surprise.

Coordination with advocacy is a critical and recommended part of this process. This investigative method can be compromised if the suspect is contacted and made aware of the investigation early on in the process, as we discussed in the initial response section of this report. However, if successful, this tactic can provide valuable information and assist in moving a difficult case forward. Detectives should not stop other investigative strategies by relying solely on completing a control call to further the case. Of the cases reviewed, 18% included a confrontation call. We recommend that JSO explore this type of investigative technique further, which would support case progression and resolution. Additionally, we recommend that JSO—when reviewing this tool—provide support and guidance through policy and training.

### **5.2.7 Locating and Processing Crime Scenes**

Crime scene examination is another important avenue that can lead detectives to identify key investigative information. This practice can corroborate victim and witness statements and assist in analyzing suspect statement(s) for validity. Identifying and collecting items of evidentiary value beyond collecting a sexual assault kit (SAK) are critical components of a thorough and effective sexual assault response. This potential evidence may be physical, forensic, electronic, or video. Recovering evidence is contingent on searching for and successfully identifying the crime scene. JSO's response in this area for both patrol and the Special Assault Unit falls into what is typically observed for crime scene response. Officers and detectives appear familiar with crime scene response and how to proceed when a potential scene is identified and accessible. There is detailed information about administering a SAFE, but JSO has minimal direction in either the Special Assault Unit Order or Procedure that provides guidance and supports crime scene follow-up.

File review revealed that in 89% of reports, the narrative section identified at least one potential crime scene in the case. Approximately 55% of cases documented that a crime scene was located. Only 20% of cases had a crime scene that was processed in some fashion (e.g., examined, evidence identified and collected). There were several situations in which limited or no follow-up by patrol occurred and—as a result—an opportunity may have been missed. Occasionally patrol officers indicated they would attempt to complete an initial scene follow-up investigation by searching for any scenes that the victim described. This was limited in nature and scope because most on-scene patrol follow-up involved providing transportation for a victim to a SAFE. If a crime scene was located on-scene, officer response varied from just observing the area to “holding the scene” and notifying a crime scene or detectives to assume responsibility.

Personnel interviews and subsequent case review revealed that there is “not a lot of” crime scene involvement. When processing a scene is needed, JSO deploys a dedicated unit. They are notified by either patrol or Special Assault Unit detectives. In general, members of the Special Assault Unit feel as if the crime scene unit is effective and an asset to JSO. It is

possible that more crime scenes were processed than indicated in our data due to poor documentation of these activities in the case file and detective supplement. Our results suggest a greater effort needs to be dedicated to locating and processing crime scenes, documenting these activities, or both.

The Special Assault Unit crime scene response was observed to be inconsistent, with missed opportunities. When detectives do not respond to a scene, the ability to gain additional facts is greatly diminished. If the Special Assault Unit cannot respond, it is important to have an established process that allows an experienced and knowledgeable crime scene detective to respond. Current crime scene response is based on the discretion of the officers or detectives who may be at the scene. We also observed that detectives seldom revisited the crime scene to follow-up on information gained from victim and suspect interviews. Within JSO Special Assault Unit policy, there is no specific guidance for detectives about the response and investigation of crime scenes. We recommend that JSO assess their policy to include criteria and responsibilities about sexual assault crime scene response.

Collecting additional information and evidence is fundamental to any investigation. When a scene is processed, additional probative evidence from crime scenes is identified and/or impounded in 50% of the scenes processed by JSO. Evidence collected included crime scene photographs; text and emails; and physical evidence, such as victim clothing and bedding. The identification, collection, and laboratory analysis of evidence are key components in an overall effective and thorough investigation. Having an established, understandable agency policy and practice in place ensures that (1) scenes are processed and (2) personnel are trained properly to respond—both of which help establish a foundation for an improved comprehensive sexual assault response.

### **5.2.8 Accessing and Gathering Electronic and Social Media Data**

Electronic and social media evidence in sexual assault cases can provide valuable information about suspect or victim relationships and activities, corroborate information, or identify previously unknown witnesses or associates. Electronic evidence includes cell phone data (e.g., texts, call logs, and Global Positioning System locations) and information from social media (e.g., emails and posts on Instagram, Facebook, and other sites).

During the case file review, the assessment team observed that electronic/smartphone information was available in 33% of cases. Detectives sought and—when available—accessed this information, including seeking cell phone data in 13% of cases and social media data in 12% of cases. It was unclear and there was no additional documentation about whether legal or other restrictions inhibited this potential investigative avenue. However, in cases that indicated a mobile device had been involved in a victim-suspect interaction, there was not sufficient documentation about (1) whether mobile device data were accessed and (2) what information—if obtained—was collected and utilized in the investigation. Currently, JSO has no established written Special Assault Unit policy or

protocol for obtaining, documenting, and preserving this type of data. In this current world, the potential for collecting electronic media is ever growing and should be a key tool for detectives. We recommend that JSO provides additional policy guidelines, coupled with specialized training. Doing so can increase the use of this investigative tool and provide direction, which develops this type of investigative practice for improved case follow-up and outcomes.

### **5.3 Physical Evidence and Laboratory Analysis**

The collection and processing of forensic evidence can provide critical information and intelligence to support victim medical needs, establish the elements of a crime, place the suspect at a scene, and produce other investigative leads. Among JSO cases, 58% documented that a victim had received a SAFE and had a SAK collected. Case files clearly documented when the victim agreed to participate and undergo the examination. When a forensic exam is completed, detectives can also utilize this information to assess the case and develop investigative strategies that may enhance positive case dispositions.

Patrol officers generally noted when they provided transportation to victims for the SAK exam at WCJ. JSO's standardized response plan involves assisting with facilitating in the completion of a medical exam and collection of important evidence, while likely increasing the opportunity for communication between law enforcement and medical personnel. However, as noted later in this report, there was very little file documentation about any communication between officers and medical personnel. This was reflected in personnel interviews in which individuals expressed that little communication occurs between police (patrol and detectives) and medical providers. Having the SANE as a partner and enhancing this resource are both valuable assets to any investigation. Taking advantage of this partnership by increasing cross communication provides an opportunity to improve the response process through identifying important physical evidence information.

JSO does have a clear policy about the possession and transfer of SAKs. Florida state law mandates law enforcement to submit all SAKs to a crime laboratory within 30 days of taking possession. JSO routinely meets this standard; in fact, SAKs were submitted to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) within 30 days in 100% of observed cases. The process for submitting SAKs appears to meet state submission requirements. There is no formal JSO policy that identifies and supports the state statute and provides clear direction for impounding SAKs.

JSO has a standard practice in which all SAKs are picked up and secured by Special Assault Unit detectives. WCJ emails JSO when a SAK is ready for pickup, and an assigned Special Assault Unit detective retrieves the SAK and transports it to the JSO property room. Per JSO personnel, this process appears to be functioning well; however, JSO does not have a formal policy outlining the process and detectives are trained on the job to complete this



function. We recommend exploring whether SAK pickup can be handled by personnel other than detectives (e.g., non-sworn personnel who could also assist in the tracking and managing of other forensic evidence within the Special Assault Unit). This approach would relieve detectives from managing SAKs and free them up to concentrate on their caseloads.

JSO does not have their own forensic crime laboratory, and any evidence collected as part of a JSO sexual assault investigation is submitted to the FDLE. Based on reviewed case files, the laboratory completed DNA analysis in 51 cases of the 58 cases in which a SAK was submitted. We recommend that JSO explore this area to (1) ensure this process is clear and (2) identify opportunities that may help improve this process beyond testing SAKs. This recommendation aligns with Chapter 6 of the SAFER report, which states, “Jurisdictions should develop a communication strategy to increase transparency and accountability to stakeholders within their communities regarding the response to sexual violence.”

The FDLE Crime Laboratory provides a full range of services to law enforcement agencies across the state of Florida. In interviews with state laboratory personnel, staff indicated that communicating with law enforcement agencies across the state can be challenging due to the (1) lack of internal laboratory resources and staff who are focused on communication and (2) absence of an effective communication mechanism for conducting targeted outreach to law enforcement. In 2009, the laboratory implemented a new email system for communicating laboratory results and Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) information to submitting agencies. However, this process is limited because there is no way for laboratory personnel to know whether the correct person received and opened the email. The laboratory took an average of 71 days (median = 73 days) to complete testing and notify detectives. Although there is no national guidance about turnaround time for testing SAKs, FDLE appears to be within what experts currently consider acceptable. FDLE does not have any written policy addressing testing times but did indicate that timeliness is often contingent on the current caseload size of laboratory DNA analysts.

As previously mentioned, DNA CODIS hit notifications—which the FDLE laboratory CODIS administrator manages—are emailed directly to the JSO general inbox ([JSOSAU@jaxsheriff.org](mailto:JSOSAU@jaxsheriff.org)), and a copy of the report notification is sent to the unit supervisor (Lieutenant Weber). Assigned Special Assault Unit detectives check the inbox daily and forward reports to the appropriate case detective. Although this process appears to be working, there may possible gaps that need to be addressed in the future to ensure this process is operating as intended and that the final points of contact receive and review their emails. In addition, there appears to be neither a feedback channel to the laboratory nor a larger quality control mechanism in place to ensure that JSO receives CODIS hit reports and is working on them. Furthermore, JSO does not have a clear standardized written policy for ensuring all CODIS-related information is assigned to, and followed up on by, detectives. Cases did include CODIS-associated documentation; however, there was often little additional documentation about what actions the detective may have taken. We recommend

that JSO review their current policy and establish clear direction for following up on CODIS-related information. This recommendation aligns with Chapter 4 of the SAFER report, which states, “Law enforcement agencies should establish a system of accountability to ensure the timely follow-up on CODIS hits.”

## **5.4 Special Assault Unit Resources and Workload**

This SAKI TTA SAU assessment has several goals—one of which is to examine the Special Assault Unit staff’s current status, including their roles and responsibilities within the agency and the availability of other support personnel to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the collective sexual assault response. The following paragraphs highlight these findings and recommendations specific to staffing resources and workload.

### **5.4.1 Special Assault Unit: Detective Caseload**

At the time of this assessment, the JSO Special Assault Unit had four squads of detectives, three assigned to investigating “hot”/incoming sexual assault cases and one assigned to a cold case DNA unit; a detective lieutenant oversaw both squads. Based on information provided by JSO, 22 Special Assault Unit detectives were assigned to work incoming cases in 2019 up through July 21, 2020. Detectives were responsible for a total of 3,117 cases in 2019 and 2,201 cases during the previously mentioned time frame in 2020. The Special Assault Unit investigates both adult and child sex crimes, although the case type could not be determined in the case numbers provided. For each Special Assault Unit detective, the average caseload was 118 per year in 2019 and 59 per year during the first 6 months of 2020. On average, approximately 10 new investigations were assigned per detective, per month. Based on the limited available research in this area, this figure is slightly above the recommended norm.

The average JSO-reported clearance rates are in the low range, according to figures provided by JSO. In 2020, rates were in the 10% range; in comparison, the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s national clearance rate is generally in the 35% range. A low clearance rate can be attributed in part to high caseloads (Roberts & Roberts, 2016) and other factors. There are various nationwide recommendations that an average caseload for a sex crimes detective should be about eight new cases per month. However, a more detailed assessment of JSO detectives’ caseloads should also consider that these staff are responsible for a variety of other sexually motivated crimes. These crimes include victims 13 years or older, criminal exposure to HIV, photography in violation of privacy, stalking, peeping tom, kidnapping, indecent exposure, statutory rape, and pornography.

There are several additional factors to consider related to staffing and efficiencies. Sexual assault cases are some of the most complex and time-consuming investigations. As previously noted, JSO Special Assault Unit detectives continue to investigate numerous other criminal cases in addition to balancing administrative duties. These additional factors

all impact a detective's ability to dedicate investigative time and focus to sexual assault cases, which can then impact their ability to incorporate many of the recommended investigative follow-up activities. Achieving an appropriate victim-centered response requires more time spent per case, as well as additional staff resources. Furthermore, JSO detectives explained during staff interviews that fatigue and burnout were significant issues within the unit.

With regard to Special Assault Unit staffing and workload, a more detailed and ongoing agency review of caseloads could assist in ensuring manageable caseloads. The review could include reassigning responsibilities for non-rape cases to other JSO units. This shift would help to distribute workloads more evenly across the agency and help balance resources, which would benefit the quality of adult sexual assault investigations. JSO leadership should consider adding more personnel to manage expanding caseloads and explore taking other steps to enhance resources that could free up detectives' time (see Section 5.4.4, Agency Professional Staff). The assessment team also identified other opportunities for improvement—including (1) ensuring current response, cold case, and other JSO investigative detectives regularly share information to identify case connectivity, (2) creating a formalized process for identifying and recruiting the most suitable candidates for Special Assault Unit investigative positions, and (3) developing guidelines and qualifications for Special Assault Unit detectives and supervisors (see Section 5.4.2).

#### **5.4.2 Training and Experience of Special Assault Unit Staff**

Experience level in the Special Assault Unit varies by detective. Most detectives understand their roles and responsibilities in investigating sexual assaults, but they possess limited previous investigative experience or they participated in very few formalized training courses. The assessment team observed that some critical understanding of certain investigative processes may be lacking. JSO does employ a modified "training detective" for onboarding new detectives. Newly assigned detectives have a 1-month onboarding process and are paired with a senior detective who follows a checklist-type assessment of the various tasks performed. This approach ensures new detectives become familiar with the administrative and technical investigative aspects, which promotes on-the-job learning. The assessment team believes creating a formal written policy for this process would help with establishing a clear, standardized understanding of detective training expectations and requirements. Ensuring that detectives are knowledgeable, experienced, and trained properly is a standard of a highly functional Special Assault Unit because this supports a robust and improved response. It is recommended that JSO create a process to identify, recruit, and retain Special Assault Unit detectives. The current process should be evaluated with the importance of this aspect in mind, and a clear process that can be included within policy should be developed.

Special Assault Unit personnel reported that they had received some specialized training for their position, but most of what they learned occurred on the job. The type and amount of training varied across officers and detectives. Those interviewed were not familiar with any consistent and formal organized effort to provide specific training—including trauma-informed training—to key personnel. Some community groups do offer targeted training, but there is no formal process for offering joint training. Personnel at all levels expressed a desire to receive additional and ongoing training in sexual assault response and investigations. They believed this training would help improve their response to victims and the quality of their investigations. As a reoccurring theme, personnel discussed interest in receiving additional crime scene and evidence collection training. The assessment team observed a need for the JSO to review, assess, and mandate specialized sexual assault training and recommends that this be completed at all levels within the agency.

#### **5.4.3 Mentorship and Supervision Opportunities**

Appropriate assignment and personnel selection are pivotal to running an effective Special Assault Unit. As mentioned previously, JSO currently has no operational procedures or policy standards for identifying and selecting Special Assault Unit detectives and supervisory personnel. If an employee wants to transfer to this specialized unit, they submit an application. Qualified personnel are then invited to an interview that covers skills, knowledge, and training in investigations. A list is created in which candidates are selected upon Special Assault Unit openings.

The assessment team observed that three current Special Assault Unit supervisors have previous investigative experience in sexual assault. Experience is key to ensuring effective oversight and review of investigations and will provide in-house mentoring opportunities for unit detectives. Recruiting, mentoring, and retaining Special Assault Unit detectives at all levels set the foundation for a sustainable response to sexual assault cases. JSO would benefit from reviewing the current transfer policies and implementing an effective job qualification, transfer, and selection process exclusively for sex crimes detectives and supervisory positions. These actions would help communicate and elevate the importance of this part of JSO, emphasizing (to agency leadership and to the community) JSO's commitment to improving how they respond to sexual assault victims in Jacksonville.

#### **5.4.4 Agency Professional Staff**

A final staffing component to consider is utilizing agency professional personnel to assist Special Assault Unit detectives with activities such as data collection; case and offender crime analysis; case tracking; data entry; data management; filing; answering phones; SAK management; and victim advocacy coordination for victim status updates and engagement, as well as other day-to-day administrative activities. The Special Assault Unit has one administrative assistant who completes the described clerical activities. Other in-unit support for the Special Assault Unit is not present. During interviews, Special Assault Unit

personnel mentioned that they routinely conduct their own crime analysis, but sometimes they contact the JSO Crime Analysis Unit staff for assistance. It is not clear how often this occurs and what specific type of direct support is provided. Individuals from the Special Assault Unit believed that additional support personnel would allow them more investigative follow-up time and relieve them of some occasional administrative duties, including transferring and impounding SAKs. Across a growing number of U.S. jurisdictions, new information is emerging about the prevalence of serial sexual assaults and crossover offenses with other types of crime (Lovell et al., 2017). Developing a process for identifying these offenders through crime analysis and forensic evidence is a critical aspect of conducting strong sexual assault investigations. We recommend that JSO assess and consider establishing a Special Assault Unit–dedicated crime analysis position.

#### **5.4.5 Physical Work Location and Facilities**

Three Special Assault Unit response squads and one cold case squad are currently part of the JSO. The response squads are housed in the JSO main police facility, and the cold case team is housed at the prosecutor’s office. All squads are together in one physical area within the main station. This design helps facilitate important communication between detectives and supervisors. The design also encourages participation in Special Assault Unit daily briefings, which provide an open discussion forum for new and ongoing cases for unit and detective evaluation and case assistance.

As previously discussed, interview rooms for sexual assault victims and suspects are also physically located within the Special Assault Unit offices near the detectives’ desks. This area was not observed during the assessment, but both types of rooms are designed to interview victims and suspects separately. The victim rooms have been designed as soft rooms most conducive for completing interviews. There are some inherent logistical, investigative, and safety issues for police and civilian personnel. For example, both the suspect and victim may be held in separate interview rooms at the same time, or some suspect interviews may be conducted after hours with only one detective. JSO is working to assess these issues to improve the overall interview process as well as to increase (1) investigative outcomes and (2) safety for officers and all personnel.

Another noted concern was that the sound (e.g., conversations) from the general detective area can bleed over into the interview rooms and end up being recorded as part of the victim and suspect interviews. As per JSO policy, only the suspect rooms are equipped for tape recording. There is no specific directive or protocol to address the recording of victim interviews. Recording the victim interview is an accepted national standard of practice. It would be beneficial for JSO to explore allowing this and equipping victim interview rooms to support this practice. Special Assault Unit personnel feel they have the essential tools—including adequate computers, printers, and personal workspace—to complete their

investigations. Overall, JSO felt although adequate, the working area is in need of rehabilitating and updating.

## **5.5 Case Submission to the Prosecutor**

The Office of the State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial District (OFJD) handles all sexual assault prosecutions for JSO. Their roles and responsibilities related to the JSO Special Assault Unit include conducting case reviews, charging, and prosecuting both active current cases and cold case sexual assaults. The case submission process was discussed during the personnel interviews with both JSO detectives and staff with the OFJD in Jacksonville. Staff from both agencies indicated that their current relationship was strong and that communication was active and positive. Representatives from both agencies noted some areas for improvement. The current process involves JSO initially requesting that OFJD review a case to issue an arrest warrant. It is unknown if this procedure is practiced in all of Florida's judicial circuits. Having this practice does, at times, inhibit JSO from making some arrests on their own when they have probable cause. There has been some concern with this process and JSO felt there is room to improve. Currently, there is no direction within JSO or OFJD policy that outlines arrest and submission standards or procedures.

Reviewed case files indicated that all JSO sexual assault investigations were formally submitted to the prosecutor 28% of the time. Other documentation observed that the detective "met" with a prosecutor to review the case. It was unclear if this was considered a formal prosecution submittal or not.

Case submissions and filing dispositions were neither consistently nor clearly documented in most case files. The assessment team had difficulty with accurately assessing the agency's performance in this area. Consistently documenting this type of information would improve the (1) quality of the agency's internal review, (2) future assessments of the agency's sexual assault response, and (3) relationship with the prosecuting attorney. It was observed that cold cases (i.e., DNA Unit cases) from the backlog were reviewed in a consistent and standard manner; these reviews generally were completed in person and included input from a multidisciplinary team (MDT). JSO should consider developing a similar review process for current case submittals and reviews.

Many case files lacked supporting rationale for the ultimate submission and declination decision. JSO personnel verbally indicated that detectives review all cases with the OFJD where probable cause exists and the victim is actively participating. The assessment team observed multiple investigations that could have undergone additional follow-up and investigative steps prior to being submitted to the prosecutor. As previously mentioned, JSO currently has no written policy and standards for submitting cases and conducting the subsequent review process. It is unclear whether JSO supervisor approval is required to

submit a case to OFJD. Both JSO and OFJD believe clarifying submission standards and practices would assist in a more effective and efficient process.

## **5.6 Multi-Agency Communication and Collaboration**

Research has shown that working collaboratively as an MDT in the response to sexual assault is advantageous for local communities (Greeson & Campbell, 2013). An MDT can foster sharing resources and expertise, improve identification of successful response strategies, and provide a seamless service to sexual assault victims. The JSO Special Assault Unit staff participate in an active SART that comprises key disciplines that are part of the Jacksonville response. One exception was noted, the JSO DNA Unit (i.e., cold case unit) does have an MDT as part of their response to the SAK backlog. During this assessment, team members considered and were provided input and information from community partners who are a part of the response to sexual assault within the city of Jacksonville. Formal interviews were conducted with SAFEs, victim advocates, prosecutors, and crime laboratory personnel—all disciplines that work to provide a holistic, victim-centered response; their input is documented in the following sections.

### **5.6.1 Forensic Medical Providers**

Both on-duty and after-hours contract nurses conduct forensic medical examinations. Exams are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Some personnel believed the forensic nurses were volunteers; this misunderstanding may lead to less coordination with the nurses. This issue could effectively be addressed within the SART.

With few exceptions, the general time frame for administering a SAFE is within 120 hours after an assault. The forensic nurse program is aware of this standard; however, JSO policy indicates a 72-hour limitation. This policy time frame conflicts with the FDLE Crime Laboratory's 5-day (120 hours) timeline. To initiate the exam process, WCJ facilitates all SAFE requests to victims in the city of Jacksonville and the greater Duval County area. Additionally, WCJ facilitates SAFE requests that (1) originate from hospitals in Duval, Baker, and Nassau counties and (2) are for victims who are transported to WCJ for the exam process. WCJ is a well-established organization with 25 years in the community that provides initial and ongoing support to victims.

Overall, there appeared to be a positive relationship between JSO personnel and WCJ and their SANE medical staff. However, based on both the case review and feedback from staff interviews, JSO patrol officers and detectives often appeared to have limited or no direct contact with the SANE before or after the examination. There was also a general lack of (1) JSO documentation related to SAFE results and (2) communication with the SANE about victim statements or medical exam findings. Furthermore, the processes to request a SAFE typically require multiple steps that are not efficient. For example, JSO personnel are required to facilitate phone contact between victims and on-call WCJ advocates prior to

examinations. During these contacts, if victims indicate they want an exam, a WCJ advocate contacts a SANE who responds to either WCJ or the hospital. There were multiple instances in which the exam was delayed or denied altogether when JSO staff felt that the exam should have been completed. Developing an improved and shared understanding of the communication between the (1) advocate and victim and (2) advocate and the SAFE, and also having an improved and defined approval process will help alleviate confusion and challenges related to obtaining a medical examination and then communicating the results to the necessary JSO staff. Another factor for possible delays and victim disengagement for the examination is that one nurse occasionally covers three potential examination sites. It is recommended for the forensic nurse to explore potential options addressing this area.

Several opportunities for improvement have been identified to increase the consistency and levels of coordination and communication between the JSO and SANEs. One opportunity is to increase the amount of cross-training that SANEs provide to JSO personnel, and—in return—have JSO personnel provide training for SANEs about the law enforcement response and investigative processes. The Jacksonville SART meetings could also be used as a forum to increase understanding of partner roles while emphasizing the importance of communication and developing more specific communication protocols. During personnel interviews, all disciplines vocalized strong support for using these avenues as a way to increase the effectiveness of the medical and investigative responses to sexual assault.

### **5.6.2 Prosecution**

Members of OFJD are the prosecutorial arm in Jacksonville. During personnel interviews, OFJD staff expressed their commitment to pursuing sexual assault cases, improving the overall system-level response, and facilitating open communication with the JSO and their detectives. The OFJD determines how sexual assault cases are filed and prosecuted in Jacksonville. The OFJD reported that they review all sexual assault cases submitted by JSO, including cold cases that JSO and their office are working on currently. The OFJD does not have a specialized adult sexual assault/rape unit currently, though the office works on cold cases as an exception. As a result, they do not employ a “vertical prosecution” process for current sexual assault cases.

OFJD staff did not express specific concerns about the quality of JSO investigations and indicated that they have a good relationship with JSO detectives and leadership. Prosecutors regularly meet with the JSO cold case unit but have limited interaction and contact with current response detectives in the Special Assault Unit outside of the case submission process. The OFJD does have a prosecutor on call around the clock (i.e., 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) and encourages JSO detectives to contact them at any phase of the investigative process. OFJD prosecutors commented that they would like to increase their own staffing and resources for sexual assault cases and believe this would improve their ability to respond to and communicate about sexual assault cases.



One current limitation in the case submission process is that there is no formal policy or defined protocol regarding which cases JSO detectives submit to prosecutors. As a matter of practice, OFJD prosecutors can base their filing reviews and opinions only on cases that are formally submitted to them. Our review indicated that a formal or an informal written submission policy would help with improving communication, expectations, and processes for JSO.

Another observation is that there appeared to be limited communication post-filing between prosecutors and detectives. This included the practice of OFJD conducting an independent interview with the victim pre-filing decision, without the presence of case detectives. It was expressed that there were times after this interview that cases would be declined with limited feedback to detectives as to why. Improving the communication and practice for these interviews would help improve coordination among disciplines.

The OFJD does participate in the interagency SART but indicated that they are always seeking areas for improving the current relationship and process. Additional cross-disciplinary training, including DNA training, was mentioned—as was the utilization of tracking systems for SAKs and forensic evidence. OFJD also indicated that they manage a heavy prosecution caseload with a shortage of internal staff, resources, and legal support staff. Despite these challenges, staff reinforced their commitment to working with JSO and other law enforcement agencies to improve all aspects of the sexual violence response.

### **5.6.3 Crime Laboratory**

The FDLE Crime Laboratory plays a significant role in the JSO response to sexual assault. The laboratory provides forensic services to the agency, including testing SAKs and other forensic evidence. Members of the FDLE Crime Laboratory expressed their support for the JSO and for all law enforcement in Florida as they address sexual violence crimes.

The crime laboratory's access to available resources greatly affects their ability to provide timely and important forensic testing for sexual assault cases. Per state statute, all SAKs are submitted to the laboratory within 30 days. The FDLE Crime Laboratory attempts to complete SAK analysis within 110 days and, as previously mentioned, they complete SAK testing (on average) within 71 days.

Communication with partners is limited. Most information about sexual assaults and their related circumstances is taken from SANE reports. Detectives receive limited communication prior to testing, and any results from initial submission through testing completion are sent via email. The FDLE Crime Laboratory's current lack of resources and their coverage area restrict their ability to communicate broadly with JSO and law enforcement agencies across the state, which include SARTs and MDTs. Nevertheless, the crime laboratory is committed to providing timely and excellent service to its partners.

In interviews with crime laboratory staff, the assessment team discussed communication and resources, including how CODIS hits are sent to notify case detectives. As described previously, notification is made through email and detectives have the ability to download analysis reports. Currently there is not an in-person or a telephonic notification system for follow-up. Additionally, the laboratory does not generally receive feedback from law enforcement, nor is there any upstream feedback in place to ensure essential communication is transferred from the laboratory to law enforcement, and vice versa. Improving communication is a priority for both the crime laboratory and the JSO Special Assault Unit, and both parties expressed their commitment to working on this effort. We recommend that JSO and the FDLE Crime Laboratory identify other specific mechanisms and processes for improving communication, including engaging in enhanced discussions and meeting with the SART and MDTs.

#### **5.6.4 Agency Advocates**

During interviews, staff discussed that the JSO does have the VWSU—an in-house advocacy unit. Personnel in this unit are available to provide support to crime victims, witnesses, survivors, and their significant others in the aftermath of victimization. Personnel utilize knowledge of community resources to address victims' needs and are available to assist law enforcement officers at crime scenes by providing emotional support and crisis intervention. JSO also relies and interacts exclusively with only WCJ for victim SAFE coordination and advocacy support. Following interviews with both internal and external partners, the assessment team noted minimal involvement of JSO victim advocates during sexual assault cases, with the exception of one advocate who is primarily utilized for their language abilities. Gathered information shows that JSO victim advocates are involved with sexual assault cases only upon request. This process is notably different than JSO advocate involvement with other crime types. Personnel interviews indicated there is overall minimal communication between JSO victim advocates and WCJ staff.

One recommendation is to explore this current relationship with WCJ and determine if gaps could be addressed through partner learning exchange opportunities, cross-training events, frontline staff attending MDT meetings, intentional efforts at role clarification, and parameters of service provision for both JSO VWSU and WCJ. Ideally, processes can be developed for warm hand-offs, consistent interview accompaniment, and regular victim contact throughout investigative timelines. This could ultimately save time for the detectives in the unit and improve the unit's ability to serve victims throughout the entire sexual assault investigation and victim engagement process.

## **6. Recommendations**

Having a high-functioning, trauma-informed, and victim-centered response to sexual assault is the goal of any law enforcement agency. The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) has many established components that support a strong response to sexual assault. Patrol officers and detectives carry out these responsibilities in a professional and efficient manner. JSO assigns specialized detectives in both current and cold case sexual assaults and employs many positive and promising practices in their response to these cases. As with all organizations and processes, there is a desire to address gaps and challenges in order to continually improve. The following sections highlight JSO's key strengths, as well as opportunities and recommendations based on this National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Training and Technical Assistance (SAKI TTA) Sexual Assault Unit assessment.

The assessment team's recommendations are, where appropriate, linked to recommendations from the SAFER Act Working Group, (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). For further information about these national recommendations, visit <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250384.pdf>. While identifying and making recommendations, the assessment team also attempted to outline specific resources for agency support to address this report's recommendations. This support is offered through briefs, virtual technical assistance, and online coursework and training via SAKI TTA webinars, the SAKI TTA Toolkit, and the SAKI TTA Virtual Academy. Opportunities for in-person training are also available. Additional details about assistance can be accessed through [www.sakitta.org](http://www.sakitta.org).

### **6.1 Strengths**

The following strengths were identified during the assessment and can serve as foundations for continued improvement:

- A specialized investigative unit addresses sexual assault reports.
- All reports of sexual assault were documented through written reports. These initial patrol reports were all assigned to a specialized sexual assault detective unit for an efficient follow-up investigation.
- A standardized practice for the response process is in place to give sexual assault victims the opportunity to receive medical care, including a forensic examination by a trained sexual assault nurse examiner.
- An established sexual assault response team (SART) is in place in Jacksonville, one in which JSO actively participates.
- An established JSO agency policy that fundamentally and clearly outlines the basic duties for patrol and detectives is in place. First responders demonstrated this standardized response based on how they handled on-scene reports of sexual assault, including facilitating a sexual assault forensic exam and identifying witnesses and crime scenes.

- The Special Assault Unit conducts daily internal briefings to address current and ongoing investigations and to help facilitate resource assignments and case connectivity.
- A victim-centered interview process has been established and a building that provides appropriately designed interview rooms for victims is available.
- A practice has been established that ensures all sexual assault kits (SAKs) are transferred to the crime laboratory within the 30-day state statute requirement.
- A fundamental “callout” procedure that supports the use of Special Assault Unit detectives. This process creates efficiencies and ensures skilled personnel are utilized to follow up and complete sexual assault investigations.
- All Special Assault Unit supervisors and detectives are committed to overseeing cases and ensuring a high-quality response by continually supporting sexual assault victims. Leadership’s commitment is demonstrated by their request for this assessment and cooperation throughout the process.

## **6.2 Gaps, Needs, and Prioritized Recommendations**

As with any organization, there are opportunities to identify and address areas that would benefit from improvement. These recommendations are intended to build on JSO’s already established foundation. The assessment team identified the following overarching opportunities for improvement or enhancement in JSO’s policies, procedures, and training.

### ***6.2.1 Review and develop a comprehensive victim-centered and trauma-informed written sexual assault policy that includes regular training on responding to and investigating sexual assaults***

A written and detailed policy for sexual assault response can provide consistency and sustainability as personnel and staff changes impact the Special Assault Unit. Documenting the dynamics and process behind victim-centered and trauma-informed practices promotes support for victims and creates a standardized level of agency response, which promotes a clear understanding of the impact sexual assault has on its victims. This policy should be a standalone, independent document for adult sexual assault response and investigation only (i.e., not combined with policy for other crimes, such as child crimes). This type of written direction and implementation is seen as a best policy and practice.

### ***6.2.2 Improve interdisciplinary communication and collaboration***

Sexual assault victims and communities benefit from the coordination of critical resources. A SART convenes in the greater Jacksonville area. This collaboration—when effectively executed—can enhance overall responses to victims in a seamless, coordinated manner. The assessment team believes that the current SART could improve their goal and objectives through increased communication, training, and engagement of all partners. JSO should be a leader in encouraging and supporting this team.

**6.2.3 Update and improve agency policy for patrol and detectives on responding to and investigating sexual assault**

All sexual assault response and investigation should have clearly defined directions for law enforcement personnel. These directions should align with accepted investigative procedures for agency personnel to follow—from first response, case assignment to case follow-up, and case closure—to ensure consistency and efficiency throughout the investigation, as well as to protect evidence handling and submission. Ensure that this policy, as mentioned in Section 6.2.1, is a standalone document. Consider providing detailed directions and expectations for response, which could include defined checklists for the various personnel and aspects of a consistent sexual assault response.

**6.2.4 Establish policy for entering cases in the records management system (RMS)**

Within the greater sexual assault response policy, ensure that written sexual assault reports and subsequent documentation are entered into the RMS in a detailed, consistent, and complete manner. This will create standardization and transparency, which will benefit both the agency and victims alike. Such practices will provide opportunities to improve investigative oversight and quality control, resulting in a clearer assessment of case closure and outcome.

This recommendation aligns with the broader *SAFER Recommendation 23: Law enforcement agencies should implement electronic records management systems that incorporate investigative workflows to improve case investigations and communication.*

**6.2.5 Establish formal standards for RMS-automated supervisory report and case review function**

Improving the consistency of supervisor case review and approval within the RMS will help ensure that recognized standards for investigation documentation are being upheld and will promote the completeness, accuracy, and consistency of all JSO sexual assault reports. When the assessment team observed missed follow-up opportunities, the supervisor provided very limited feedback to the detective about completing additional work. This recommendation also will provide accountability and direction in identifying and addressing gaps or opportunities in sexual assault response. Supervisory review and feedback should be completed for both the patrol documentation and the detectives.

This recommendation aligns with *SAFER Recommendation 23: Law enforcement agencies should implement electronic records management systems that incorporate investigative workflows to improve case investigations and communication.*

**6.2.6 Provide adequate facilities, staffing, and resources**

The working environment and resources should address the type and volume of sexual assault cases to ensure that detectives have the opportunity and means to fully investigate and resolve assigned cases. Key areas to address include recording interviews, ensuring all Special Assault Unit work areas are stocked with adequate equipment and materials, increasing specialized trainings, and assessing the incorporation of various professional staff.

This recommendation aligns with the broader *SAFER Recommendation 22: All law enforcement personnel involved in sexual assault investigations should receive training in the neurobiology of trauma and specialized skills for interviewing sexual assault victims.*

Having an established training program aligns with *SAFER Recommendation 35: Mandatory training for those responding to sexual assault should be incorporated into every agency's strategic plan.*

**6.2.7 Review and evaluate the current detective caseload and investigative responsibility**

The quality of an investigation is directly impacted by time and available resources, which can also impact morale and create “burnout” for personnel. Units tasked with investigating sexual assault cases should have the appropriate personnel to ensure thorough investigations. It is recommended that JSO evaluate current agency- and unit-wide caseloads and ensure equitable case assignment within the entire agency. Consideration should be made for specializing within the Special Assault Unit and separating adult cases from other sex crimes, including child crimes.

**6.2.8 Establish formalized procedures for the submission and review of completed current sexual assault investigations with the prosecutor's office**

Having an agreed-upon case submission and review process is a best practice for sexual assault investigations and will help improve communication and assist in expediting cases. Meeting regularly, employing a submission checklist, and having a memorandum of understanding about case submission are ways to coordinate effectively with the District Attorney's Office; these actions improve the quality of investigations.

**6.2.9 Implement a comprehensive training program for sexual assault response that includes professional staff and academy, patrol, and investigative levels**

Provide increased direction and support for implementing mandatory and reoccurring training for sexual assault detectives and other involved staff and personnel. Beginning with academy recruits and up through Special Assault Unit detectives, enhanced training can help ensure standardized processes, response direction, and responsibilities are in place for

all personnel. Additionally, this approach will enhance the ability of supervisors to evaluate all sexual assault responses and subsequent job performance of personnel across the department.

**6.2.10 Conduct regular self-evaluations to determine how effective the department's response to sexual assault cases has been**

Develop processes to assess the department's performance. This assessment should include annual community and partner surveys that seek feedback about response satisfaction from both victim and response partners, exploring the (1) types of cases that are not being reported to JSO and why and (2) community perceptions about trust and confidence in the police department. (For example, are victims more likely to engage with the police if there are improved patrol interactions? Are all JSO SART partners collaborating effectively?)

This recommendation aligns with the application of *SAFER Recommendation 4: The multidisciplinary approach should seek out and include voices from underserved or vulnerable populations in the community's response to sexual assault cases.*

Having an established method of evaluation and review aligns with *SAFER Recommendation 19: Law enforcement agencies should perform an annual audit verifying that all SAKs in the property room are present and in their specified location.*

### 6.3 Comprehensive List of Recommendations

The following table provides the detailed and complete list of recommendations identified for JSO.

**Table 6-3. Detailed List of Special Assault Unit Assessment Recommendations**

<b>Initial Response by Patrol Officers and Detectives</b>
Identify and implement comprehensive sexual assault training for all personnel, beginning with the academy recruits. The curriculum should also include trauma-informed response.
Review and clarify procedures and written policies to improve patrol response and interaction with SAU detectives for notification and callout to the scene.
Ensure policy clearly outlines the coordination and communication between Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) personnel and nurses about when a sexual assault forensic exam is (1) offered and (2) conducted—including information about who conducts the exam and under what circumstances—to ensure that examinations are being effectively administered.
<b>Documentation of Initial Response</b>
Establish clearly defined written procedures and provide specialized documentation training for sexual assault cases to ensure that the official reports contain clear, concise, accurate, and impartial information that has been consistently documented across JSO.
Review the use and practice of classifying sexual assault reports as "information only." If continued as a practice, then clearly outline the circumstances when this practice would be applied and ensure supervisory oversight.
<b>Victim Contact and Interviewing</b>
Ensure that patrol officers are trained in trauma-informed interview practices. Consider establishing a program within patrol that can deploy specially trained officers who will respond to calls involving reports of sexual assault.
Establish the means and manner (including clear policy) that allow for recording statements of sexual assault victims, witnesses, and suspects.
Review and assess the current practice of conducting a follow-up interview with a victim immediately after the assault. Identify options to complete this at the optimal time and location for the victim.
Identify and assess the current suspect and victim interview locations within the Special Assault Unit. Ensure that these rooms provide privacy and security and are separated from each other.
<b>Detective Assignment and Victim Follow-Up Practices</b>
Review and evaluate investigative caseload across the agency. Identify areas to improve and balance workloads.
Improve on current policy to ensure case management expectations and responsibilities for detectives are consistently and thoroughly followed and documented accurately to reflect all efforts made.
Increase a victim advocate's involvement through proactive means in all phases of adult sex crime reports. Ensure the victim advocate's involvement is documented and accurately reflects services provided.



<b>Accuracy and Consistency in Documentation</b>
Develop a consistent and structured documentation format that all detectives are required to follow. Include the potential deployment of an investigative checklist to assist in this process.
Ensure a technical and administrative review process for all investigative case files is being administered in a standardized manner. Review the need to add policy in order to provide clear expectations and guidance in this area.
Conduct reviews to ensure that victim, suspect, and witness statements and demographic data are completely and accurately entered into the investigative case file for every case. Ensure persons listed in report narratives are included in the pre-narrative records management system (RMS) fields.
Explore options to enhance accuracy and documentation through the recording of all victim and witness statements.
Ensure thorough and standardized supervisory and administrative oversight for final case dispositions. Ensure these dispositions are clearly outlined and documented with supporting written justification in all reports. If necessary, provide written policy on case closure standards.
<b>Investigative and Crime Scene Follow-Up</b>
Review and update Special Assault Unit callout procedure. Ensure there is clear understanding about roles and responsibilities of both patrol and detectives when they are summoned to respond after hours.
Provide mandated and updated ongoing training about investigative strategies—including crime scene training—for all detectives who work sexual assault cases to decrease missed opportunities to identify or follow up on case leads and potential evidence.
Review the current detective response for interviewing witnesses and associates. Through oversight, ensure that detectives follow up with all key witnesses in cases and that all contact information is properly documented in the RMS.
<b>Suspect Interviews</b>
Provide mandated training for detectives about sex crime suspect interview strategies. Establish standards that ensure detectives pursue investigative leads that emerge from suspect interviews.
Review the current suspect and victim interview room arrangement. Assess whether there are options available to improve safety and privacy when conducting these interviews.
<b>Confrontational or Control Calls</b>
Consider the availability of increasing the use of confrontational or control calls on appropriate cases. Provide formal written policy and guidance for detective and advocacy involvement, including training and resource provisions.
<b>Electronic or Social Media Data</b>
Provide additional guidelines and training about accessing and searching electronic or social media data to further develop this type of investigative practice for case follow-up. Ensure detectives have appropriate support and training in this area. Consider identifying a personnel position in this area to use as an active support function.
<b>Crime Scene Identification and Processing</b>
Provide additional guidelines and training about crime scene identification and processing that would increase how many available crime scenes are processed.
Increase detectives' knowledge by providing mandatory training about crime scene processing, types of potential scene evidence, and laboratory analysis using DNA and other methods.

<b>Physical Evidence and Laboratory Analysis, Assessing of Evidence</b>
Provide additional guidelines and training to encourage detectives to increase communication with sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs) about new facts that may have been discovered during the forensic examination. Review all information, including victim medical statements, to determine if any statements made to the SANE would assist with the investigation.
Improve accurate and consistent documentation of sexual assault kit (SAK) management, submission, and laboratory testing results in police reports. Consider assessing the opportunity to employ personnel who would specifically manage SAKs from possession to impounding and laboratory submission.
Review current policy and practice regarding the timeline for administering the forensic examination. Ensure all personnel and community partners involved in this process have clear direction and agreement in this area.
<b>Case Submission to the Prosecutor</b>
Work with the Office of the State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial District (OFJD) to review the potential of providing a standard policy when submitting cases to the prosecutor, including the subsequent review process. The policy/practice should provide guidelines that ensure consistency across investigations and provide guidance for detectives. This policy/practice should provide guidelines that ensure consistent communication of charging/filing decisions. The policy should be mutually agreed upon by JSO and OFJD.
Coordinate with OFJD to identify a method for providing prosecutorial feedback to detectives on all case submissions and reviews conducted by OFJD. Consider developing more formal communication plans for addressing prosecutorial needs in these cases.
<b>Special Victims Unit: Detective Caseload and Selection Process</b>
Develop and evaluate a process to routinely monitor JSO unit and individual workloads; when needed, recommend additional personnel for the Special Assault Unit.
Formalize through policy the solicitation and requirements for selection of Special Assault Unit detectives and supervisors.
<b>Professional Staff</b>
Evaluate the current utilization of the JSO victim advocacy unit for sexual assaults. Establish policy that requires victim advocate notification and communication on all sexual assault reports. This information should be documented in the police investigative file.
Consider establishing a full- or part-time crime analyst position dedicated to the Special Assault Unit.
Identify a mechanism for conducting more detailed intelligence analyses of sexual assault cases. Consider employing an “in-unit” crime analyst for the Special Assault Unit. This would facilitate linking less severe and more severe cases, connecting persons between cases, or identifying common features regarding suspect patterns and behaviors. This would also relieve detectives of this mainly administrative task.

### **Training for Special Assault Unit Personnel**

Review the training provided to Special Assault Unit detectives and mandate the provision of new and continued specialized sexual assault training (up to 40 hours of initial training, as well as annual updated training) for officers and detectives, including—but not limited to—comprehensive sexual assault training that addresses the following topics:

- Victim dynamics and trauma, including the continuation of trauma-informed victim interviews (officers/detectives)
- Evidence in sexual assault (e.g., identifying, documenting, and processing of crime scenes) (officers/detectives)
- Suspect behavior, including effective interviewing and interrogations (detectives)
- SANE essentials for law enforcement (officers/detectives)
- Investigative follow-up strategies (detectives)
- Report writing and case documentation (officers/detectives)
- Case preparation, submittal, and prosecution (detectives)
- DNA and crime laboratory capabilities (officers/detectives)

### **Mentorship and Supervision Opportunities**

Have supervisory staff formalize a process for identifying and recruiting the most suitable candidates for detective work in the Special Assault Unit.

Implement an effective job qualification process exclusively for transitioning personnel to Special Assault Unit supervisory positions. Consider a formal sex crimes career development plan for interested personnel. This could include expanding and refining the current shadowing process that is practiced.

Create a designated “training detective” position for assimilation of new detectives and development of training practices. Include a formal assessment and review of the current process for onboarding and training new Special Assault Unit detectives.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Guides**

## SAU Assessment Purpose Statement

- Interviewer self-introduction
- Describe purpose and focus of the assessment

Explain the SAKI grant and the overall goal of the grant to include improving the overall response to sexual assault.

Sample wording: As part of this goal [AGENCY] has requested and agreed to host a Sexual Assault Unit Assessment. This is not an audit or inspection but a multi-disciplinary assessment of the current response to cases of sexual assault with the [AGENCY]. When completed a final assessment report will be generated that will provide leadership with timely information, highlight good practices, and identify opportunities and provide recommendations.

- The interview today is part of the entire assessment and will focus on you and the tasks, duties and responsibilities you have in responding to sexual assault. Feel free to ask any question of the interviewers.
- Interviewees will not be individually or personally identified, all statements, comments, or responses to questions will not be attributed to any one person. Statements may be documented of anonymous nature, when and if they are included in the final assessment report.

# Law Enforcement Stakeholder Interviews

## SAU Detective

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Investigation Division:

1. Describe your job duties as a detective
  - a. What is your role in investigating sexual assaults?
  - b. At what point do you become involved in a reported sexual assault?
  - c. Do you record interviews for sexual assault cases?
2. Are there written agency guidelines specifically addressing sexual assault investigations?
3. What types of training and education have you received in the investigation of sexual assault cases?
  - a. How often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
4. Describe the case management process.
  - a. What is the case assignment process?
  - b. What is your monthly caseload? (estimates are acceptable)
  - c. How are cases supplemented?
  - d. How are cases closed?
  - e. How are cases submitted to the prosecutor?
5. How are evidence/crime scenes in sexual assault cases handled?
  - a. Is there a specific policy for handling sexual assault evidence and/or crime scenes?
  - b. What is your policy for impounding and submitting sexual assault kits?
6. Do you communicate with other disciplines outside of your agency (e.g., advocates, SANEs, prosecution)?
7. Does your agency participate in a SART or MDT? If so, how often do you meet?
8. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
9. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?



## SAU Detective Sergeant (supervisor equivalent)

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years as Supervisor in Investigation Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Investigation Division:

1. Describe your role or job duties as a Detective Sgt. in sexual assault cases?
  - a. At what point in a reported sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
2. What types of training and education have you received in the investigation of sexual assault cases?
  - a. How often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
3. Are there written agency guidelines specifically addressing sexual assault investigations?
4. Describe the case management process.
  - a. What is the case assignment process?
  - b. What is your monthly caseload? (estimates are acceptable)
  - c. What types of cases do you investigate?
  - d. How are cases supplemented?
  - e. How are cases reviewed and closed?
5. What is your agency's selection process for supervisors and detectives in the sexual assault unit?
  - a. How do you measure and evaluate your detectives' performance?
6. Do you communicate with other disciplines outside of your agency (e.g., advocates, SANEs, prosecution)?
7. Does your agency participate in a SART or MDT? If so, how often do you meet?
8. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
9. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

## SAU Lieutenant (or rank equivalent)

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years as Supervisor in Investigation Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Investigation Division:

1. Describe your job duties as a SAU lieutenant when responding to sexual assault calls.
  - a. At what point in the sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
  - b. Is there a sexual assault response policy? Does it include protocols for after-hours response?
2. What is your agency's selection process for supervisors and detectives in the sexual assault unit?
  - a. How do you measure and evaluate your detectives' performance?
3. What types of training and education have you received in the investigation of sexual assault cases?
  - a. How often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
4. Describe the case management process.
  - a. What is the case assignment process?
  - b. What is your monthly caseload? (estimates are acceptable)
  - c. What types of cases do you investigate?
  - d. How are cases supplemented?
  - e. How are cases reviewed and closed?
5. How are evidence/crime scenes in sexual assault cases handled?
6. Describe your process for the review and crime lab submission of sexual assault evidence.
7. What are the case submission standards for sending cases to the prosecutor?
8. Do you communicate with other disciplines outside of your agency (e.g., advocates, SANEs, prosecution)?
9. Does your agency participate in a SART or MDT? If so, how often do you meet?
10. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
11. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

## Patrol Officer

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Patrol Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Patrol Division:

1. Describe your job duties as a patrol officer when responding to sexual assault calls?
  - a. Do you record interviews for sexual assault calls?
  - b. What is your role in processing, collecting and impounding sexual assault evidence?
2. Does your agency sexual assault response policy/protocol clearly outline the role of patrol officers when responding to sexual assault calls?
3. Are you responsible for any follow up activities when responding to a sexual assault?
  - a. What are your duties at a sexual assault crime scene?
  - b. Do you contact the Detectives, SANE, or victim advocate?
  - c. Do you write a report?
4. What is your involvement in the sexual assault medical examination?
5. Do you communicate or interact with detectives in the sexual assault unit after the initial call/report?
6. What type of training have you received in sexual assault response?
  - a. How often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
7. What would be helpful in assisting you in your response to sexual assault?

## Patrol Sergeant

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Patrol Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Patrol Division:

1. Describe your job duties as a patrol sergeant when responding to sexual assault calls?
  - a. Do you respond to the scene?
2. Are you responsible for any follow up activities when responding to a sexual assault?
  - a. What are your duties at a sexual assault crime scene?
  - b. Do you contact the Detectives, SANE, or victim advocate?
3. Does your agency sexual assault response policy/protocol clearly outline the role of patrol officers when responding to sexual assault calls?
4. Do you communicate or interact with detectives from the sexual assault unit after the initial call/report?
5. What type of training have you received in sexual assault response?
  - a. How often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
6. What would be helpful in assisting you in your response to sexual assault?

## SAU Major Crimes: Assistant Chief or Commander

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years as Supervisor in Investigation Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Investigation Division:

1. Describe your role in responding to and investigating sexual assaults.
  - a. At what point in the sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
2. Describe your agency's sexual assault response policy.
3. How do you communicate with your SAU?
4. On average, how many sexual assault investigations does your agency conduct in a year?
5. What is your agency's selection process for supervisors and detectives in the sexual assault unit?
  - a. How do you measure and evaluate your detectives' performance?
6. What types of training and education does your agency provide for responding to sexual assault cases?
  - a. How often does your agency conduct training specific to sexual assault response?
7. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
8. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

## Victim Advocate (agency/system-based)

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Years at current position:

Total years in advocacy:

1. Describe your job duties as a system-based advocate in the sexual assault investigation process.
  - a. At what point in the sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
  - b. Do you have a policy to describe your role in sexual assault investigations?
2. What types of sexual assault cases do you respond to?
3. What sexual assault training did you receive prior to becoming an agency advocate?
  - a. How often do you receive continuing education?
4. How often do you communicate with detectives about sexual assault cases?
5. Do you communicate with other disciplines outside of your agency (e.g., advocates, SANEs, prosecution)?
  - a. Do you participate in SART or MDT meetings?
6. Describe your relationship with community-based advocates.
7. Are you involved in the victim notification process?
  - a. If so, what is your agency's protocol for victim notification?
  - b. Are you involved with victim notification in cold case sexual assaults?
8. What area of improvement can be made to better serve sexual assault survivors (not specifically for advocate improvements only)?
9. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
10. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

## Crime Scene/Evidence Technician

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Crime Scene:

1. What is your role in responding to sexual assaults?
  - a. How are you notified of sexual assault calls?
  - b. Do you follow a written policy when responding to a sexual assault call?
2. What type of training and education have you received in crime scene processing?
  - a. Have you received training specifically on collecting sexual assault evidence?
3. Describe your follow up activities for sexual assault cases after your initial response.
4. How often do you communicate with detectives in the SAU?
5. What is your role in impounding and submitting sexual assault evidence to the crime laboratory?
6. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
7. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

# Community Stakeholder Interviews

## Prosecutor

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position and agency:

Total years of experience as a prosecutor:

Total years of experience in sexual assault prosecutions:

1. Describe your role in sexual assault cases?
  - a. At what point in the police investigation do you become involved sexual assault cases?
  - b. How are sexual assault cases submitted to your office?
2. Does your office have a specialized sexual assault unit?
  - a. Is there a dedicated cold case prosecutor?
3. What type of specialized training have you received in sexual assault?
4. What types of cases do you prosecute? What is your monthly caseload?
5. Describe your communication with law enforcement—specifically the sexual assault unit and/or with detectives.
  - a. Does your office train on sexual assault with law enforcement?
  - b. Are there submission standards or requirements for sexual assault cases?
6. Does your agency participate in the SART or MDT?
7. Do you respond on scene to assist on LE sexual assault investigations?
8. Does your office have specific procedures or policies that you follow when reviewing, charging, prosecuting a sexual assault investigation?
9. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
10. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?



## Victim Advocate (community-based)

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Years at current position:

Total years in advocacy:

1. Describe your job duties as a community-based advocate in the sexual assault investigation process.
  - a. At what point in the sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
  - b. Do you have a policy to describe your role in sexual assault investigations?
2. What sexual assault training did you receive prior to becoming an agency advocate?
  - a. How often do you receive continuing education?
3. How often do you communicate with law enforcement/agency victim advocates about sexual assault cases?
4. Describe your relationship with other community partners regarding sexual assault investigations.
  - a. How often do you communicate with SANEs?
  - b. How often do you communicate with prosecutors?
5. Do you participate in SART or MDT meetings?
6. Are you involved in the victim notification process?
  - a. If so, what is your agency's protocol for victim notification?
  - b. Are you involved with victim notification in cold case sexual assaults?
7. What area of improvement can be made to better serve sexual assault survivors (not specifically for advocate improvements only)?
8. How do you feel you could be better utilized in the criminal justice system?
9. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
10. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

## Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position and agency:

Total years of experience:

Total years of experience in SANE examinations:

1. Describe your role in sexual assault response?
  - a. What is the process for notifying you of an assault?
  - b. Describe the process after the initial call.
  - c. Do you have a SANE on call 24/7?
2. Is there a timeframe for which a sexual assault exam is completed following the assault?
  - a. Do you offer to do a forensic medical exam without law enforcement?
  - b. What happens to the SAK after the exam?
3. Is an advocate called and when does this happen?
  - a. Who is responsible for calling or notifying the advocate?
4. What communications do you have with law enforcement prior to, during, or after the exam?
5. Do meet regularly with other partners (law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, crime laboratory) as part of sexual assault investigations?
6. Do you participate in the SART or MDT?
7. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
8. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

# Crime Laboratory Personnel

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position and agency:

Total years of experience:

Total years in current position:

1. Describe your process for handling and processing sexual assault evidence.
2. Describe your communication process with sexual assault detectives.
  - a. Do you communicate law enforcement on the submission of evidence?
  - b. Are you involved in the evidence submission conversation?
  - c. How are the testing results communicated to detectives?
3. Do you have an opportunity to provide feedback to the quality of evidence collection to SANEs or crime scene technicians?
4. Do you have a submission or prioritization policy for testing sexual assault kit evidence?
  - a. Are there any reasons a sexual assault kit would be declined for testing in the laboratory?
5. How are CODIS hits communicated to partners?
6. Do you participate in the SART or MDT?
7. Is there any training you can recommend to sexual assault investigators, SANEs or prosecutors?
8. Are there any laboratory challenges you see in your current position?
  - a. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
  - b. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

## Appendix B: Key Database Variables and Definitions

SABiR Data Fields
Number of cases in this report
Cases assigned to detectives
Number of victim-initiated reports
*Most common location (e.g., apartment/house/outdoors)
Cases in which the suspect was known (e.g., friend/acquaintance/coworker)
Cases in which the suspect was a student
Cases in which the victim was a student
Cases in which the suspect used alcohol
Cases in which the victim used alcohol
Cases in which drug-facilitated sexual assault is suspected
Victim reported incapacitation
Cases in which prosecution asked by patrol
*Attempts in which detective tried to contact victim
Average days detective tried to contact victim
# Victims interviewed by follow-up detective
Reports unfounded false/baseless
*Interview type—Comprehensive Completed
*Interview type—No Additional Information Documented
*Interview type—Phone Contact Only
# Interview was recorded
Documented advocate contacts
Cases submitted to prosecutor
SAFEs/sexual assault kits (SAKs) completed
SAKs submitted to crime laboratory
SAK collection to submission
SAKs completed by crime laboratory
Crime scenes located/processed
Other evidence was collected
Suspect/Investigative Lead identified (named)/contacted
Arrests
Case witness/es identified
Witness/es interviewed