


# SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE COLLABORATION Implementation Plan for Systems Change

April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019



  
**RAMSEY  
COUNTY**  
Saint Paul –  
Ramsey County  
Public Health

## Introduction

Ramsey County has been actively working to improve the systems response to sexual violence. The Ramsey County Sexual Assault Protocol Team (RCSAPT) began convening in 1998 to address gaps in the systemic response to victim/survivors of sexual assault. Agencies like the Sexual Violence Justice Institute have advocated for legislation to improve the rights and experiences of victim/survivors of sexual violence. However, as can be seen in the Sexual Assault Systems Review released in April 2018 by the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, far too many gaps remain. The introduction to the report – written by John Choi – read, "We know nothing will substantially change unless we, as a community, invest in better outcomes." This Implementation Plan for Systems Change is an investment by criminal justice leaders, prosecutors and advocates in Ramsey County to improve outcomes for victim/survivors of sexual violence.

## Identification of Improvement Efforts

On November 29, 2018, Ramsey County criminal justice leaders – police chiefs of local law enforcement agencies and decision-makers at the Ramsey County Attorney's Office – met to discuss concerns about the response to sexual assault in Ramsey County. At the meeting, leaders identified more than 30 actions that could be taken to address these concerns.

Details regarding the meeting of criminal justice leaders are included in the *Report on the Ramsey County Leadership Meeting*.

The Implementation Plan for Systems Change was created for scalability, so that law enforcement agencies of varying size and resources can implement all improvement efforts. RCSAPT member agencies have committed to a victim-centered response and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to this effect. In order to continue with this commitment, it is essential to enact the efforts of the Implementation Plan through a victim-centered lens.

## Improvement Efforts

### **I. Initial Report and Patrol Response**

- Law enforcement will develop protocol to train all patrol officers on sexual assault advocacy services within one year of employment.
- Law enforcement, prosecution, and advocates will collaborate with Ramsey County Emergency Communication Center to provide trainings on handling sexual assault calls.
  - Train on protocol for emergency and non-emergency sexual assault calls.
  - Address response time to non-emergency sexual assault report calls.
- Law enforcement will identify a minimum level of training necessary for patrol officers to respond effectively to sexual assault cases.
  - Training(s) should be completed within one year of employment.
  - Principles of Trauma-Informed Victim/Survivor Interactions.
  - Training related to trauma-informed interviewing techniques.

## II. Development and Retention of Investigators

- Law enforcement will maintain investigators for long term assignments within sexual assault units, when feasible.
- Law enforcement will provide sufficient staffing levels for investigators to robustly address individual cases.
- Law enforcement will invest in the professional development of sexual assault investigators through formal training and mentoring.
- Law enforcement will consider criteria for assignment as a sex crimes investigator.
- Law enforcement will promote an internal culture that values investigation of sexual assault.
  - Develop practices to enhance the value and standing of assignment to sexual assault investigations.
  - Consider ways to address values and beliefs underlying the fact that sexual assault investigation is not a preferred position.
  - Provide regular professional development to sworn staff, including training and experience regarding skills and practices related to sexual assault investigation.
  - Identify training and resources to enhance sexual assault investigator mental and emotional resiliency.

## III. Cultivating a Victim-Centered Response

- Law enforcement will make every effort to conduct in-person interviews with all victim/survivors.
- Advocacy services will be offered by law enforcement to all victim/survivors who report within the agency's jurisdiction.
- Investigators will invite an advocate to meet the victim at the investigative interview.
- Advocates will update or develop new protocols to provide best practice when present for an investigative interview.
- Advocates will identify and pursue resources at the county, state and federal level to ensure thorough advocacy services are available for every victim in all stages of the criminal justice system.
- Law enforcement and advocates will develop practices to initiate and maintain ongoing communication with the victim/survivor.
- Law enforcement will identify facilities that can accommodate face-to-face, recorded interviews.
- Law enforcement will create shared soft interview rooms or arrange access to comfortable, supportive spaces outside law enforcement facilities.

## IV. Investigation of Case

- Law enforcement will identify current practices related to collection, storage, and submission for testing of sexual assault examination kits and ensure compliance with state legislation regarding sexual assault kit storage.
- Law enforcement and prosecution will develop a protocol for following up when a DNA "hit" occurs at the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.
- Law enforcement will identify and collect potential digital evidence in the investigation.

- Law enforcement will develop a practice of conducting a medical forensic examination of the suspect in cases when probable cause exists, and circumstances warrant the suspect exam.
- Law enforcement will discuss the use of non-sworn personnel to perform duties that don't require the use of sworn personnel.
- Law enforcement will research the use of transcription software to reduce time spent documenting the content of audio-recorded interviews.
- Law enforcement will research and seek funding and infrastructure for the use of dictation software to reduce time spent documenting investigative actions.
- Law enforcement will commit to implementing a tracking system to assure cases are completed and a final decision made.
- Law enforcement will train supervisors to evaluate staff on their investigative skills, understanding the dynamics of sexual assault, the rapport with the victim/survivor, report writing and record keeping.

## **V. Collaboration of Law Enforcement and Prosecution**

- Increase law enforcement access to experienced sexual assault prosecutors who will be available for case consultations with investigators as needed.
- Law enforcement and prosecution will develop and document practices for interagency collaboration on investigations.
  - Provide assistance regarding evidence collection, interviewing, or locating suspects within another jurisdiction.
  - Provide assistance through making specialized investigators available to provide procedural advice to other jurisdictions within Ramsey County.
  - Provide assistance through sharing of equipment and facilities.
  - Share information regarding active investigations with the same named suspect, matching DNA profile, similar circumstances, similar suspect descriptions, or the same victim/survivor.
- Law enforcement and prosecution will create bench marks of a complete investigation and prosecution, and an evaluation system to see that bench marks are met.
- Law enforcement and prosecution will improve data collection on race and other demographics to assess performance.

## **VI. Prosecution**

- Prosecution will establish criteria for designation of specialized sexual assault prosecutors.
- Prosecution will assign all sexual assault cases to specialized sexual assault prosecutors.
- Prosecution will involve community advocacy services in all cases in which the victim/survivor chooses.
- Prosecution will provide sufficient staffing levels so that prosecutors can thoroughly address individual cases.
- Prosecution will invest in the professional development of specialized sexual assault prosecutors through formal training and mentoring.
- Prosecution will develop a tracking system to capture cases referred from law enforcement and track them to a final charging decision.

## VII. Multi-disciplinary Collaboration

- Law enforcement, prosecution and advocates will establish criteria for selection of agency representative to participate in RCSAPT.
  - Level of knowledge of sexual assault issues.
  - Level of training/experience working with sexual assault cases.
  - Decision making authority related to policy and practice.
  - Individual interest in participation.
- Law enforcement, prosecution and advocates will commit to selecting and sending a representative to participate in RCSAPT meetings.
- Law enforcement will allocate resources to attend and participate in the RCSAPT Law Enforcement Subcommittee which regularly updates the RCSAPT law enforcement protocol.
- Law enforcement, prosecution and advocates will integrate RCSAPT protocol work and decisions about practice into policy and other guidance regarding the response to sexual assault.
- Law enforcement, prosecution and advocates will develop and document practices for distribution of RCSAPT protocol to agency personnel.
  - Develop practice for ongoing updates of protocol, agency policies, and criminal justice practices.
  - Review minutes of RCSAPT meetings as distributed by RCSAPT coordinator.

## VIII. Documentation of Commitments

- Law enforcement, prosecution and advocates will document and publicize ongoing commitments to improving the response to sexual assault.
- Law enforcement, prosecution and advocates will publish the *Implementation Plan for Systems Change* on agency's website, or share a link to the report and plan on the agency's website.
- Law enforcement, prosecution and advocates will conduct media briefings and distribute media releases related to the *Report on the Ramsey County Leadership Meeting* and the *Implementation Plan for Systems Change*.

## IX. Continuity of Commitments

- Law enforcement, prosecution and advocates will commit to approaching funders and budget departments to appropriate sufficient resources to support employees in doing their best work.

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Office of the Ramsey County Attorney

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Date

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Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health

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Maplewood Police Department

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Mounds View Police Department

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New Brighton Police Department

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North Saint Paul Police Department

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Office of the Ramsey County Sheriff

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Roseville Police Department

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Saint Anthony Village Police Department

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Saint Paul Police Department

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White Bear Lake Police Department

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