



## Community Resources

- **Tehama County District Attorney's Office**  
(530) 527-3053
- **Tehama County Victim Witness**  
(530) 527-4296
- **St. Elizabeth Hospital**  
(530) 529-8000
- **Empower Tehama**  
(530) 528-0226
- **SHARP (Self Help Assistance and Referral Program)**  
(530) 527-8649

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**EMPOWER**  
*Tehama*  
1805 Walnut St. Red Bluff CA 96080  
24-Hour Hotline: (530) 528-0226  
www.empowerteama.org

# What to Expect

During a Sexual Assault  
Forensic Exam



To speak with someone about your case, call:

- Tehama County Sheriff (530) 529-7900
- Red Bluff Police (530) 527-3131
- Corning Police (530) 824-7000

Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_



Provided by Empower Tehama's Tehama County  
Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)

## What is a Forensic Exam?

A sexual assault medical forensic exam is an evidentiary medical exam performed after a sexual assault.

You have the right to a forensic exam after sexual assault. The exam does two things:

- Provides sensitive and thorough medical care
- Collects evidence that may be helpful to the prosecution of your case

## Where will it happen, and who can be with me?

- In Tehama County, most forensic exams are performed in a designated room at St. Elizabeth Hospital.
- You have the option of providing your own transportation, arranging for a ride from a friend or family member, or law enforcement ordering the exam may offer transportation.
- In the room with you will be a medical examiner who is trained to be sensitive to survivors of sexual violence.
- You have the right to have a certified sexual assault advocate present who can maintain privileged communication and will have knowledge of medical rights and the criminal legal<sup>1</sup> system.
- In addition to a sexual assault advocate, you may also have a support person such as a friend or family member with you.
- The **decision is yours alone** regarding which non-medical personnel are in the exam room with you. You may ask anyone to leave at any time.



## What happens during a Forensic Exam?

- Remember, you have the right to refuse any part of the exam at any time.
- A sexual assault advocate will meet you at the hospital. The advocate can explain the process of the exam as well as your rights and choices. **It is your choice** whether the advocate stays with you in the exam room.
- The medical examiner will explain the exam and you will be asked to provide informed consent.
- You will be asked to describe the events of the assault. These answers will then direct the course of the medical exam.
- The exam begins with a general health check: blood pressure, heart rate, etc.
- Physical evidence is collected from head to toe, in the form of hair and oral swabs, to identify both your DNA and that of the person who assaulted you. A lamp is used to look for evidence of semen or saliva.
- A pelvic exam may be done, and potentially an internal exam. **You have the right** to stop the exam at any moment, if it becomes too physically or emotionally painful. The sexual assault advocate is present to support you during the exam.
- Photographs may be taken of physical evidence (e.g. bruises, lacerations). These photos are focused on a small part of your body and attached only to your forensic exam kit case number to protect your identity.

## What happens after a Forensic Exam?

- Once the evidence is collected, it becomes a part of a forensic kit that is signed over to the police. When the police finish their investigation, the evidence is turned over to the District Attorney's Office.
- In Tehama County, a sample from the forensic kit is forwarded to the Department of Justice for rapid DNA processing.
- The District Attorney's office will make a decision regarding the case. If the case moves forward and enters criminal court, you may be called to testify as a witness.
- You are entitled to a copy of the forensic exam form when it is complete, along with a copy of the initial crime report related to your assault if requested, in writing.
- Your sexual assault advocate will contact you within 72 hours after the exam to follow up and provide any additional advocacy, counseling, services and referrals as needed.
- You may qualify for Victim Witness Benefits as a victim of a crime. A victim advocate from the District Attorney's Office should contact you regarding these benefits and court case information after your crime report has been filed.

You may wish to speak with a sexual assault advocate at:

**Empower Tehama**

**530-528-0226**

(24-Hour Crisis Hotline)

<sup>1</sup> The sexual assault advocate is the only one whose conversations with you are "privileged" under law. What you tell the advocate is confidential; law enforcement cannot compel the advocate to reveal privileged information.