

SEXUAL ASSAULT—words that conjure up images that most don't want to think about. Indeed when I say to someone that I am a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) they quickly change the subject or suddenly walk away. Throughout history this has been a subject that has not been talked about until the impact of two waves of political feminism, one that developed in the mid-19th century, eventually bringing women the right to vote, and a second born of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. (California Coalition Against Sexual Assault) National organizations such as the Department of Justice began to take surveys, statistics were compiled and the numbers are alarming. What we have found is that Violence Against Women is universal. It injures or kills one in three women across the world. (Toward Ending Violence Against Women in South Asia, Oxfam Briefing Paper. August 2004) 1 in 5 women over the age of 18 in New Mexico have been forcibly raped at least once in their lifetime. (Rape in NM-A Report to the State)

What most people still think is that Rape is about being attacked by a stranger wearing a ski mask using a weapon. There are injuries requiring medical attention and the woman immediately reports this to law enforcement. It is true that there are some stranger rapes. The reality, however, is more horrifying: The New Mexico Interpersonal Violence Data Central Repository in its 2005 report states that victims of sex crimes are overwhelmingly female—most are victimized by age 12 by fathers, step-fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, cousins. (Even when males are victimized, most are also victimized by age 12 by family members.) The negative effects cannot be overstated. It is a precursor to experiencing a sexual assault in the future, and girls who are sexually abused are at greater risk of becoming pregnant as a teen. The long-term effects are Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder and include alcoholism, homelessness, substance abuse, prostitution, and poverty. Most sexual assault victims do not report. (Sex Crimes in NM IV)

Our society is permeated: sexual assault includes sexual harassment, molestation, incest, rape by dates, acquaintances, spouses, and significant others. There are links to other forms of violence: gang violence; domestic violence; violence related to drug and alcohol use; human trafficking; rape occurs routinely in prison life; and remains a despicable, yet universal, aspect of war. Men who rape come from all races, ethnicities, and social classes. They share a common negative, demeaning attitude toward women that enables them to justify their violent behavior. Indeed, many aspects of our culture—music, television, movies, advertisements, video games, and pornographic literature—openly condone violence against women. Clearly, this is an act of Power and Control, not one of lust, passion, intimacy, or sex--consider the sexual assault of children, disabled, and elderly.

The following is a personal narrative of an Otero County survivor of sexual abuse as a child. (Written by permission)

“I love my grandmother’s house. I ask to spend the night at Grandmas a lot. My Mom always says ‘yes’. So much of what happened I have hidden away so carefully that now it too seems like a dream. But I am willing now to pull every detail from my mind to finally free myself of this burden I have carried with me for so long. I’ve often wondered why kids don’t say anything when they are sexually abused. You never threatened me or even mentioned not telling, at least not that I can remember, but instinctively I know not to tell because what would happen to my grandmother if I told. Will she still love me? Will my family still love me? I am so jumpy at Grandma’s house now. I am not safe there. Nothing is the same. Does Mom notice? If she does she never says anything. Not that I would tell her the truth. I wonder, do you know what it’s like to live in fear? Do you know what you took away from me? Self-respect and dignity have been replaced with self-loathing and humiliation. I start drinking and smoking somewhere around 13 and now I’m partying all the time. My

behavior is becoming more over the top and out of control. I have lived in fear most of my life. At 47, I am just now starting to understand what happened to me. I have always wanted to ask you ‘Why me?’ ‘Why not one of my sisters?’ And so I surrender my story. I had no choices when I was so little but I have all the choices now, and I choose to live, to let you go, to leave my story, my anger, pain and resentment on these pages.”

In November of 2003, a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program was established in Alamogordo. Rape Crisis Counselors from The Counseling Center and Victim Advocates from the District Attorney’s Office began meeting with the first SANE nurses to collaborate on cases and bring a “Unified Approach” to sexual assault. Soon thereafter, they were joined by other agencies that had already been responding to sexual assault. In 2006, Otero County and Lincoln County joined forces as the 12th Judicial District Sexual Assault Response Team (SART).

12th Judicial District Sexual Assault Response Team
(SART)
Agencies that meet monthly:
12th Judicial District Attorney’s Office
Alamogordo DPS
Otero & Lincoln County Sheriff’s Office
Tularosa Police
Ruidoso Police
Ruidoso Downs Police
Kids, Inc.
Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD)
Holloman Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC)
Holloman Office of Special Investigations
Holloman Family Advocacy
The Counseling Center-Alamogordo & Ruidoso
Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program
Ruidoso EMS
Lincoln County Medical Center
Heritage Senior Services
COPE



The Sexual Assault Response Team is an Integrated Multidisciplinary Team committed to a Community Problem. We are also committed to standards of excellence that requires continuing education on sexual assault and violence against women.

“Collaboration is a process through which parties can see different aspects of a problem, can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited version of what is possible”. B. Gray. Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multi-Party Problems. 1989: Jossey Bass

- ❖ Our coordinated community response is victim centered to reduce re-victimization and provide the victim with information to be able to make choices.
- ❖ Adult victims can receive SANE services and Counseling services without making a report to law enforcement.
- ❖ Services are free
- ❖ The SART strives to provide a timely, compassionate, culturally sensitive, seamless delivery of services.
- ❖ We are concerned for the safety of the victim and the community.
- ❖ We support the victim’s recovery, treating the victim with dignity and providing access to a Rape Crisis Counselor during the SANE exam with follow-up of 5 free counseling sessions.
- ❖ SANEs assess for injuries; provide medicines to prevent sexually transmitted diseases; test urine for pregnancy; and provide pregnancy prevention.
- ❖ We strive to increase the prosecution of sex offenders by:

- Providing a Sexual Assault Nurse Examination to collect evidence and medically document the history of the assault. The SANE exam needs to be within 5 days of the assault for a 13 year old and older; within 3 days of the sexual assault for a 12 year old and younger.
- Thorough law enforcement investigation
- Child forensic interview to limit the number of interviews done on a child. The ages for this are 3 to 17. An interview can be done with delayed reporting.

Fundamental SART issues Critical to Success are:

- ❖ Change the public perceptions of Rape and Sexual Violence
- ❖ Ensure multidisciplinary services to facilitate healing from Sexual Violence
- ❖ Overcome barriers to prevention, intervention, and treatment for underserved populations
- ❖ Involve men and boys in the prevention of Rape and Sexual Violence
- ❖ Ensure responsive, effective criminal justice practices
- ❖ Promote Sexual Assault prevention education

Each one of the following numbers will initiate the coordinated Sexual Assault Response Team: If you are in danger or in need of medical services call 911. Rape Crisis Counselors at The Counseling Center-Alamogordo 437-7404 or Ruidoso 257-5038 (24 hour services can be reached at 437-7404 or 1-800-634-3666). DA's Victim Advocates at 437-3640. SANE Emergency cell phone 430-9485.