



## Position Statement

### Adult/Adolescent SANE Education and Certification

**Statement of Problem:** More than 40 years ago, rape crisis advocates and healthcare professionals identified pressing problems with the care provided to victims of sexual assault. Providers were inadequately trained, patients often waited hours to receive care, and if a victim's case happened to progress through the criminal justice system to trial, healthcare providers were frequently reluctant to testify. The development of sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) programs offered a targeted solution to many of these problems. As the health consequences of sexual assault—and its effect on individuals, communities, and organizations—have become better understood, legislation is being proposed about the care of victims and who should provide that care. Healthcare systems and policy-makers are identifying forensic nurses with specialized education and training in sexual assault care as the appropriate providers.

In 2002, the International Association of Forensic Nurses developed and awarded the first international board certification for sexual assault nurse examiners caring for the adult/adolescent population (e.g., the SANE-A®). Designed for the SANE-trained registered nurse who has been practicing in the role of a SANE prior to sitting for the examination, the certification recognizes nurses who demonstrate the highest standards of forensic nursing practice and validates their knowledge about the care required for a unique patient population. Many trained and practicing SANEs are not certified.

**Association Position:** A registered nurse who acts in the specialized role of a sexual assault nurse examiner by providing care to adult and adolescent patients should complete a minimum 40-hour curriculum that addresses the content outlined in the *Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Education Guidelines* (IAFN 2013), which comports with the *National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations: Adult/Adolescent* (DOJ 2013), the *National Training Standards for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examiners* (DOJ 2006), and the *Guidelines for Medico-Legal Care for Victims of Sexual Violence* (WHO 2003). To reinforce the didactic skills and build clinical competency, clinical training should follow the 40-hour course. If a nurse has not met these criteria, that nurse should refrain from referring to him- or herself as a “SANE” or even as a “SANE-trained” nurse.



The Association SANE certification programs were not developed to be an entry-level standard for performing sexual assault examinations. Certification should not be required before a registered nurse may practice as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner.

**Rationale:** As stated in the *National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations: Adult/Adolescent* (DOJ 2013), the care of the patient who has experienced sexual assault is unique; it requires both the provision of victim-centered and comprehensive health care, and the preservation of the evidentiary needs of the criminal justice system. Victims who seek care at facilities that lack SANEs or other appropriately trained healthcare providers frequently are re-victimized and their immediate and long-term healthcare needs fail to be met (Campbell et al 2001). To provide comprehensive care for these patients, a registered nurse must receive specialized education in the evaluation and documentation of trauma and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy. Registered nurses who receive this expert training are the appropriate clinicians to conduct a medical-forensic examination and to provide the specialized care that is necessary for patients who have experienced sexual assault.

**References:**

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