



Forensic Examinations of Sexual Assault Victims and Suspects: Role of the Examination in Sex Crimes Investigations Part I: Types and Purposes of Evidence

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Course Description

The purpose of this module is to improve the use of forensic examinations to collect evidence from the bodies and clothing of both victims and suspects during a sexual assault investigation. The module goes beyond simply explaining the procedures that are used during victim and suspect forensic examinations. It also explores the different types of evidence that may be gathered during these examinations and describes how this evidence can be used to advance a sexual assault investigation. It also gives participants an opportunity to apply what is learned through case study activities.

Ultimately, the goal of this module is to encourage professionals involved in these cases to push past traditional ways of thinking about evidence, to critically analyze how each piece of information gathered fits into the complicated puzzle of a comprehensive investigation.

Estimated time for completion: 15 hours

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Expert Contributions

OLTI training content is created and updated with input from professionals in a variety of disciplines, including law enforcement, prosecution, health care, victim advocacy, and related fields. Please see the acknowledgements page of each module, for a list of the individuals who served as contributing authors or expert reviewers.

Course Evaluations

At the end of each module participants are asked a number of questions, including the overall quality of the module, as well as its difficulty. They are also asked to

indicate how likely they are to apply the information they learned on the job. Because this module launched in February 2019, evaluations are not yet available. They will be provided once a sufficient number of participants have provided them.

Course Objectives

At the end of this training module, the learner will be better able to:

- Explain the primary goals of a forensic examination conducted with a victim or suspect in a sexual assault investigation.
- Describe the full scope of evidence that may be identified, documented and collected during a forensic examination of a sexual assault victim or suspect.
- Articulate the investigative purposes of evidence collected and documented during the forensic examination of a sexual assault victim and suspect.
- Discuss the importance of the victim's history of the assault to the investigation.
- Explain the need for law enforcement professionals to communicate with forensic examiners and crime scene technicians to maximize evidence collected and documented, and to address any documentation discrepancies.
- Discuss how different types of evidence can help establish the elements of the crime, corroborate or challenge statements made by a victim, suspect, or witnesses, and address potential defenses.
- Describe the investigative value of documenting statements, observable behaviors, and demeanor of victims and suspects during forensic examinations.
- Explore the investigative value of photographic evidence, including photographs of genital and nongenital injuries.
- Explain what can and cannot be concluded on the basis of a forensic examination of a sexual assault victim or suspect.
- Practice documentation of examination findings for law enforcement purposes.
- Discuss investigative decision-making regarding what evidence collected or documented in a sexual assault investigation is likely to be the most probative.

- Apply newly acquired knowledge regarding the investigative uses of evidence collected and documented during forensic examinations via case study activities.

Course Outline

- I. Introduction
 - a. Missed Opportunities for Justice
 - b. Obtaining Physical Evidence
 - c. Incorporating Evidence into an Investigation
- II. Goals of the Forensic Examination
 - a. Victim Examinations
 - b. Suspect Examinations
 - c. Not Just DNA Evidence
 - d. Case Example
- III. Multidisciplinary Coordination for Examinations
 - a. Forensic Examiners
 - b. Law Enforcement Involvement
 - c. VAWA Forensic Compliance
 - d. Pre- and Post-Exam Consultation
 - e. Clarify Discrepancies in Documentation
 - f. Update Crime Scene Personnel
 - g. Implementation Guidance in Part II of Module
- IV. Managing Forensic Exam Records and Photographs
 - a. Standardized Reporting Forms
 - b. Storage of Victim Records and Photographs
 - c. Suspect Records and Photographs
 - d. Responding to a Subpoena
- V. Purposes and Types of Evidence
 - a. Scope of Evidence
 - b. Physical Findings
 - c. Evidentiary Samples
 - d. Investigative Purposes
 - e. Identify or Exclude Suspects
 - f. Document Evidence of recent Sexual Contact
 - g. Document Evidence of Force, Threat, Fear, or Incapacitation
 - h. Corroborate Statements of Victims, Suspects, and Witnesses
 - i. Case Example
 - j. Initial Focus on the Victim's Account
- VI. Types of Evidentiary Samples and Items
 - a. Documented Statements, Behaviors, and Demeanor
 - b. Foreign Material on/in Body Surface and Orifices
 - i. Body surface Swabs
 - c. Semen/Seminal Fluid

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- i. Recovery of Semen Over Time
 - d. Saliva
 - e. Blood Evidence
 - f. Hair Evidence
 - g. DNA Reference Standards
 - h. Clothing Evidence
 - i. Items Collected with Clothing
 - i. Photographic Evidence
 - j. Toxicological Samples
 - k. Examples of Potentially Probative Evidence
- VII. Identification and Documentation of Injury
 - a. Nongenital Injuries
 - i. Location of Nongenital Injuries
 - ii. Prevalence of Nongenital Injuries
 - iii. Patterned Nongenital Injuries
 - b. Genital Injuries
 - i. Location of Genital Injuries
 - ii. Prevalence of Genital Injuries
 - iii. Factors that Impact Genital Injury Identification
 - iv. Does Genital Trauma “Prove” Sexual Assault?
 - c. What if There are No Injuries?
- VIII. Conclusions from Victim and Suspect Examinations
 - a. Victim Examinations
 - b. Suspect Examinations
- IX. Law Enforcement Documentation of Exam Findings
 - a. Transportation by Patrol
 - b. Investigator’s Follow-Up Documentation
 - c. Documentation of Injuries and Medical Treatment
 - d. Medical Forensic Examination and Evidence
 - e. Examination of an Adult with an Intellectual Disability
- X. Which Evidence is Likely to be Most Probative?
- XI. Practical Application: Case Study Analyses
 - a. Case Study #1: Forcible Rape of a 16-Year-Old Female by a 28-Year-Old Male Soccer Coach
 - i. Collecting Victim Clothing
 - ii. Investigator Assessment
 - iii. Prioritizing Items for Analysis
 - iv. Laboratory Findings
 - v. Testing Process
 - b. Case Study #2: Forcible Rape, Digital Penetration, and Oral Copulation of a Female by Two Male Suspects
 - i. Investigator Assessment of Suspects’ Forensic Examinations
 - c. Case Study #3: Suspected Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault of a Female by One or More Male Fraternity Members

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- d. Case Study #4: Forcible Rape and Sodomy by a Male Who Met a Female at a Party and Offered Her a Ride Home
 - e. Case Study #5: Attempted Sexual Assault of a Female by a Male Stranger in a Park
 - f. Case Study #6: Forcible Oral Copulation of 22-Year-Old Male by a Male Acquaintance
- XII. Conclusion
 - XIII. Appendix
 - XIV. References