

Competencies for Domestic Violence Forensic Medical Examiners

Medical personnel performing evidential examinations must be knowledgeable about:

- ◆ The interpersonal dynamics of domestic violence and the outcomes of victimization;
- ◆ How domestic violence and abuse may effect the patient's behavior or their response to the examination;
- ◆ Clinical approaches that may reduce patient's fears or concerns about the exam and may avoid further victimizing the patient in the health setting
- ◆ The types of domestic violence and abuse and the potential health consequences;
- ◆ State laws regarding the reporting of suspected violence or abuse related injuries;
- ◆ State laws regarding the performance of suspect and victim medical forensic exams for sexual assault, domestic violence and elder abuse;
- ◆ State and federal laws and protections for domestic violence victims who are immigrants or undocumented aliens;
- ◆ The roles of law enforcement, domestic violence advocates, medical examiners, criminalists, and deputy district attorneys on a multidisciplinary forensic team;
- ◆ The ethical and legal tenets of informed consent;
- ◆ Basic pathophysiology of injury and wound healing
- ◆ Proper procedures for the collection and preservation of evidence;
- ◆ Samples needed for toxicological analysis;
- ◆ The importance of reference samples;
- ◆ Prevention loss, degradation, deterioration and contamination of evidence;
- ◆ Limitations of the examination process and interpretation of findings;
- ◆ The range of services available through Victims of Crime Office.

Medical personnel performing evidential examinations must be able to:

- ◆ Perform a medical screening examination to assess the patient's clinical condition and to make appropriate and timely triage, consultation and referral decisions regarding medical care;
- ◆ Address any immediate safety needs of the patient;
- ◆ Obtain informed consent for the forensic medical examination;
- ◆ Perform an evidential examination with a language interpreter while preserving patient modesty and privacy;
- ◆ Accommodate to needs of victims with disabilities or victims with cross-cultural considerations;
- ◆ Ease patient's fears or apprehensions about the exam process and aftermath;
- ◆ Sensitively interview patients to obtain a complete domestic violence history;



- ◆ Document the medical history, domestic violence history and assault history of the patient according to the format of the state standardized medical exam form;
- ◆ Complete a general physical exam for the detection of physical findings;
- ◆ Document and describe injuries and other physical findings using narrative, diagrammatic and photographic formats;
- ◆ Use appropriate terminology to record findings on the forensic medical report form;
- ◆ Collect, label, document and preserve physical evidence;
- ◆ Perform venipuncture for the collection of toxicologic and references samples;
- ◆ Testify as an expert witness regarding the performance and documentation of the exam;
- ◆ Participate in a regular, on-going quality assurance program;
- ◆ Discuss findings with law enforcement and district attorney;
- ◆ Obtain crises intervention services;
- ◆ Facilitate referral to community domestic violence agencies, shelter services, mental health counseling, and social services;
- ◆ Arrange medical care and forensic care follow-up;
- ◆ Consult and coordinate care with CPS or APS when necessary;
- ◆ Provide patient with information regarding Victim of Crime services and restitution and assist in the application process.

