CHAPTER 48 CRIMES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

POLICY

It is the policy of the Cecil County Sheriff’s Office to investigate all complaints of crimes of sexual violence.

PURPOSE

Acts of sexual violence are crimes against the peace and dignity of the State of Maryland. On average, only a small percentage of crimes of sexual violence are reported to the police. The needs of victims of crimes of sexual violence are as important as the needs of the victims of any other violent crime. Consideration must be given that victims of crimes of sexual violence are in a class of special victims because they have been violated in a manner that threatens not only their physical safety, but also their long term emotional well-being. The Cecil County Sheriff’s Office is dedicated to holding perpetrators accountable by bringing them to justice. The most effective way to address crimes of sexual violence is to have Deputies work in a “team approach” with respect to bringing perpetrators to justice. In this team approach, Deputies work with other professionals in the criminal justice system to insure that the needs of the victim are balanced with the investigative process to bring the best case forward for the State’s Attorney’s Office to prosecute.

INVESTIGATION

- When responding to crimes of sexual violence, the Deputy’s primary goals are:
  1. insure the victim’s safety
  2. identify and arrest the person(s) responsible
  3. secure and protect the crime scene
  4. secure vital information and evidence which will lead to a successful prosecution
  5. provide referrals to the victim to assist them through this traumatic experience

- Crimes of sexual violence are violent crimes; therefore, they will be dispatched and assigned the same priority as other crimes of violence, taking into account the degree of threat to the victim at the time of the call.

- The initial responding Deputy’s report is critical to the successful prosecution of the case. Therefore, every complaint of sexual assault will be investigated and reported thoroughly.

- The investigating Deputy shall combine sound and thorough police investigative practices with sensitivity to the needs of the victim. This approach creates an environment that supports victims in reporting crimes of sexual violence.

- Crimes of sexual violence are not the “fault” or “responsibility” of the victim, therefore, the Deputy will respond to each incident, treat each victim as an individual, focus attention on the crime and conduct and impartial and objective investigation.

- Full cooperation of the victim is essential to the successful investigation and prosecution of crimes of sexual violence. An environment of trust can be created and maintained by keeping the victim informed of the process needed to ensure his/her safety and to conduct the investigation. Communication with the victim is mandatory for the Deputy to maintain this environment of trust.

- Public attention often exploits and distresses the victim. Therefore, the Agency recognizes the victim’s right to confidentiality and privacy from publication of personal information in the media.

- The responding and investigating Deputy will ensure the following:
  1. A rape crisis advocate is contacted and requested to respond to support the victim
  2. The victim is transported to the nearest emergency medical facility
  3. Any family member or friend requested by the victim is contacted
  4. The victim is advised about testing with regard to HIV virus and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
5. The victim is informed that the State of Maryland pays for the cost of the evidence collection (if the crime is reported to police within 72 hours) and additional costs may be covered by the Victim’s Compensation Fund.

6. Provide the victim with written information contained in the pamphlet Recovering From Sexual Assault - Medical Issues, distributed by the Cecil County Department of Social Services will suffice for the victim notification requirements of this policy.

NOTIFICATION

In every case where a sexual crime is alleged, or has been committed, the responding Deputy will immediately notify their Shift Commander of all facts and information determined by the preliminary investigation. The Shift Commander will immediately dispatch the on-call CID Deputy to handle the case. The responding deputy will follow procedures as outlined heretofore in this policy until the CID Deputy arrives.

TRAINING

Sexual assault laws and issues change; therefore, it is the practice of the Cecil County Sheriff’s Office to provide contemporary sexual assault training to members of this Agency.

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Rodney E. Kennedy, Sheriff                          Date