

April 2, 2020

Dedicated Forensic Nursing Specialists are available at the IAFN to assist in individualized support and planning in this unprecedented environment. Please contact us at 1-877-819-7278 or contact@safeta.org. Look for frequent updates on our [COVID resources page](#).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, IAFN is providing guidance and support to maintain patient access to medical forensic exams when they have experienced violence. IAFN encourages Forensic Nursing programs to remain creative and flexible so that access to care is not compromised or delayed. The focus should remain on the acute healthcare needs for this vulnerable population including standardized prevention of pregnancy and prophylactic treatment for STDs and HIV.

- Continue to practice standard precautions and utilize PPE to decrease suspected exposure to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.
- Communicate to patients seeking treatment, and the community at large, that the healthcare system is open and safe for them to access, this includes access to a medical forensic exam.
- Seek alternate care locations (other than the emergency department) to provide medical forensic evaluation and treatment (e.g. another area of the hospital or health campus, off-site location).
- Do not use or promote the use of do-it-yourself (DIY) evidence collection kits. [Please see the rationale and previous guidance regarding the use of these kits.](#)
- Maintain HIPAA-compliant platforms/venues. Recognize the need for HIPAA compliance; privacy and security for the patient and staff.
- Prioritize collaboration with your multidisciplinary team. It is important to know what your community partners can and cannot do during this pandemic in order to establish a response that meets the patients' needs. If you are in a community that lacks a coordinated team, reach out to individual agencies to develop a plan.
 - Community-based advocacy agencies to implement alternate processes (e.g. phone or video advocacy, safety-planning and shelter)
 - Collaborate with local law enforcement agencies to implement alternate processes (e.g. reporting, victim interviews, evidence retrieval)
- Inform multidisciplinary partners of adjustments in place to ensure the safety of the patient and the responding partners when providing care for patients.
- Even if your patient volume has decreased, interpersonal violence will escalate during and following this health crisis. Where possible, strategize a plan for managing this increase.
- Adequately plan and prepare for implementation of a telehealth approach to the medical forensic exam if this is not already an established service. Telehealth is a viable alternative for medical forensic exams, but requires significant planning and preparation in order to maintain a patient-centered, trauma-informed and evidence-based approach.

We salute, honor and offer our support to all nurses who are dedicated to providing the highest level of care to their patients and communities.