

Contact and Support Information

Avalon Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner

24 hr Response line

902-425-0122

avaloncentre.ca

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre

902-422-4240

South House Sexual and Gender

Resource Centre

902-494-2432

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Unit

902-429-8167

Victim's Services Emotional Support

HRPD

902-490-5300

Halifax Sexual Health Centre

902-455-9656

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)

902-423-3607

Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre

902-420-1576



AVALON
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Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner:
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Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Who We Are

A SANE is a registered nurse who has advanced training in forensic examinations of sexual assault victims. The Avalon SANE program provides medical examination and forensic evidence collection at the IWK Health Centre, QEII Health Sciences Centre, Dartmouth General Hospital and Cobequid Community Health Centre.

Who We Serve

SANE serves people of all genders (including trans/two spirit/non-binary people) and all ages who have experienced a sexual assault in the past five days (120 hours.)

How to Access the Program

Go to the emergency room of one of the participating hospitals or health centres. The staff will call a SANE Nurse.

Call the Avalon SANE 24-hour Response Line (902-425-0122), 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Nurses on the SANE 24-hour Response Line provide clients with non-judgmental, confidential support as well as information about their options after an immediate sexual assault.

Why Access the SANE Program

It is important that a victim/survivor of recent sexual assault/abuse consider seeking medical attention for several reasons:

- To physically care for any immediate needs resulting from the assault/abuse
- To test for infections and pregnancy
- To begin treatment if required
- To collect evidence if requested by the victim
- To reduce undue worry later on

“I like the fact that the SANE nurses were very kind, gentle and understanding. They explained everything they were doing in great detail. They made me feel relaxed and comfortable. They made my ordeal much easier to handle. Thank you.”

After informing medical personnel about the sexual assault at the emergency room, or contacting the SANE 24-hour Response Line, the victim/survivor can meet with the SANE Nurse at the hospital for the medical examination and/or forensic evidence collection.

Medical and/or forensic exams will only be conducted if the victim/survivor has given consent. The victim/survivor can stop either of the examinations at any time.

Medical Examination

The medical examination, conducted by the SANE Nurse, involves:

- Taking medical history and performing a general physical exam
- Documenting details of the assault/abuse to help identify potential infections, injuries or treatment required
- Taking blood and urine samples to test for pregnancy and/or infections (follow-up testing may need to occur in 6, 12 and 24 weeks)
- An internal exam (vaginal)
- Provide information regarding follow-up testing and/or treatment

Forensic Examination

A forensic examination can be conducted within 120 hours (5 days) of the assault/abuse. It is preferable, for the victim/survivor not to shower, bathe, douche, use the washroom, change their clothes, eat/drink, or clean their teeth, until the exam is completed. Any of these things could destroy evidence.

A forensic examination is similar to a medical exam and may also include:

- Collecting clothing for evidence
- A head to toe visual exam looking for bruises, cuts, scratches, bloodstains, seminal stains, etc.
- Taking photographs of injuries

This process takes approximately 2 hours to complete. Only the SANE nurse(s) and other emergency department personnel need to be present during this exam. The victim/survivor may wish a support person to be present as well. If the victim/survivor chooses to report, the kits can be handed over to the police. Kits can also be frozen for up to six months if the victim/survivor wants time to consider reporting the assault to police.

“The SANE nurses provided the services needed in such a traumatic time with care, respect and sensitivity. I greatly appreciate the emotional support, as well as, the swiftness of the medical procedures carried out by these wonderful nurses.”
