Guidelines for Responding to the Sexual Assault of Adult Victims

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish a uniform application for appropriate response to sexual assault of the adult victim. In order for police to effectively respond to these cases, victims must be encouraged to report and then cooperate in the prosecution of the crimes against them. This policy demonstrates law enforcement’s commitment to facilitate cooperation of the victim in reporting, investigating and prosecuting sexual assault crimes. This policy applies to offenses committed under the Illinois Criminal Sexual Assault Act and related sexual offenses committed against victims in Illinois.

Policy Statement
It is the policy of the Elgin Community College Police Department to respond professionally and appropriately to sexual assault crime reports. All sexual assault victims will be treated with respect and appropriate attention will be given to their emotional and physical needs. Each officer will conduct an investigation based on the facts presented. Interviews will be conducted utilizing appropriate techniques. Evidence will be properly identified, collected and preserved. All efforts will be made to achieve prosecution of sex offenders.

Policy Components
In order to achieve an effective, successful response to the sexual assault of adult women, this law enforcement agency will utilize and promote the following goals and procedures:

A. Interagency Cooperation
Interagency cooperation is a goal that requires a teamwork approach. Coordination of law enforcement, medical, court and evidence personnel, social service and victim advocacy agencies is necessary for a thorough response to a sexual assault crime. All efforts will be made toward developing and maintaining interagency cooperation in responding to sexual assault cases.

B. Training
Sexual assault is a complex crime which requires sophisticated intervention. Therefore, any member of the department who handles a sexual assault case should go through specialized training. Training will include sexual assault laws, offender motivation, victim responses, interviewing techniques, investigative strategies, evidence recognition and collection, and interrogation techniques. Like any profession, continuing education and skill-enhancement is critical for the development of expertise. Law enforcement professionals, veterans and recruits, will participate in ongoing education seminars.
C. Telecommunicator
The telecommunicator will:
• Determine the facts and whether the victim is in danger and initiate the appropriate response.
• Obtain name, address, phone number, location and other necessary identifying information from the victim.
• Dispatch law enforcement assistance promptly.
• Obtain offender location, existence of a weapon and necessary identifying information.
• Whenever possible, keep the victim on the telephone until patrol arrives in order to minimize the possibility of loss of evidence.
• Remind victim not to bathe or change clothes.
• Keep the victim informed of each stage of the police response.
• Make no judgments about the validity of the call based on the emotional state of the victim.

D. Pre-Investigation
The officer will:
• Know the prosecution standards set by the State’s Attorneys office for accepting sexual assault cases.
• Recommend to investigator that tape of call be saved.
• Maintain an on-going collaborative commitment to working with all agencies and institutions responding to sexual assault.
• Understand the role of police work in responding to the crime of sexual assault and the victim.
• Understand the role of the sexual assault advocate in supporting the victim.

E. Preliminary Investigation
The responding officer will:
• Evaluate the potential for violence.
• Identify him/herself by name and agency, and determine what crime occurred.
• Obtain preliminary crime report information and identify or describe the offender and broadcast offender information to effectuate location and arrest.
• Identify all witnesses, including outcry witness.
• Tell the victim what will be expected of her/him in the investigation, i.e., hospital, evidence collection, in-depth interview.
• Attend to the victim’s emergency medical needs, and transport, or arrange transportation for, the victim to a hospital for completion of a sexual assault evidence collection kit.
• Furnish the victim with information concerning her rights under the Crime Victim’s Rights Act. Advise the victim of the availability of rape crisis services or other social service providers. If victim is taken to hospital, check with hospital to see if a rape victim advocate has been called. If not, offer to make contact with the rape crisis center.
• Conduct an initial interview with the victim. Because of the victim’s emotional response to the assault, the preliminary investigator should limit the number of times and individuals interviewing the victim. Most often, a single interview is sufficient to obtain preliminary information, unless additional information is requested by the investigating officer or the crime scene or evidence technician.
• Confer with medical personnel to ensure special collection needs such as swabbing bite marks or photographs, and any additional evidence collection not included in the evidence collection kit materials.
• Identify and protect the crime scene until the crime scene technician arrives. In collecting evidence, avoid touching or moving potential evidence at the crime scene until properly marked.
• In the event a victim is unsure or unwilling to prosecute, advise the victim of her right to file a complaint at a later time and the procedure for so doing.
• Complete the necessary reports, departmental notifications and transfer information to the evidence collector and the continuing investigator, if another officer will assume those roles.
• Respect and protect the confidentiality and the wishes of the victim regarding the notification and participation of others throughout the investigation.

F. Evidence
The evidence collection technician or other officer who collects evidence will:
• Determine the available facts of the case by interviewing the appropriate responding and investigating officer(s). Examine the evidence collection checklist.
• Assess the crime scene for physical evidence, including fingerprints, body fluids, footprints, disturbed or disrupted objects or furniture.
• Photograph or videotape the crime scene before touching, moving or disrupting potential evidence.
• Conduct a comprehensive, non-destructive search for all available physical evidence.
• Photograph each item as it originally appeared at the crime scene prior to collection of evidence. Provide an indication of size or scale if appropriate.
• Collect, properly package and mark evidence from the crime scene. Note: Air dry evidence before packaging to avoid deterioration of specimen. This is essential for blood sample to be used for DNA testing.
• Complete the necessary documents to transfer evidence to the proper crime lab for processing.
• Contact the investigating agency with preliminary results of crime scene analysis and request follow-up information.
• Transport those items of evidence requiring laboratory analysis to the proper crime lab. Store remaining items of evidence in a secure storage area to properly maintain the chain of custody.
• At the hospital, with the victim’s consent, photograph injuries on the victim, or arrange for same sex medical personnel to do so. Re-photograph the victim as the injuries change appearance.
• Finish the final sketch of the scene.
• Complete the final report.

G. Continuing Investigation
The investigating officer will:
• Consult with the responding officer and any evidence collectors.
• Develop an investigative strategy.
• Conduct an in-depth interview with the victim. In order to establish rapport with the victim, the interviewer should recognize the victim’s emotional responses to the assault and utilize appropriate techniques such as conducting a nonjudgmental interview, explaining the interviewer’s role and purpose of the questions, and making the victim feel an essential part of the investigation. In determining the validity of a report, the investigator must consider the facts presented. Judgment should not be based on stereotypes or attitudes or the relationship of the victim and offender.
• Attempt to identify and locate all witnesses. Interview witnesses and collect all pertinent information.
• Contact a crime scene technician and ensure that all evidence has been identified, collected, properly stored and processed from the crime scene, the victim and the offender, including the evidence collection kit (SPECK) from the hospital, pursuant to the procedures set forth in the SCRIM.
• Develop and prioritize suspects, if the offender’s identity is unknown. Arrest suspect when probable cause is established and notify the State’s Attorney’s Office.
• Conduct a thorough interrogation of the offender using the appropriate investigative strategy.
• Complete necessary transfer of evidentiary standards from the victim and/or offender to the appropriate crime lab for processing. Maintain contact with the crime lab to determine and respond to development of evidentiary issues.
• Ensure that the victim has been advised of her rights under the Crime Victim’s Rights Act and that the victim has obtained referral information on how to contact a rape crisis center or other social service provider.
• Complete the necessary reports and transfer information to the State’s Attorney’s Office for prosecution.
• Respect and protect the confidentiality and the wishes of the victim regarding the notification and participation of others throughout the investigation.