



HOWARD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

## GENERAL ORDER OPS-05

# RESPONSE TO CRIMES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

EFFECTIVE MARCH 18, 2010

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This General Order contains the following numbered sections:

- I. POLICY
- II. RESPONSE TO CRIMES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE
- III. HOWARD COUNTY RAPE CRISIS/SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAM
- IV. CANCELLATION

### **I. POLICY**

The Howard County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) recognizes the Howard County Department of Police (HCPD) as the primary investigators of sexual assault cases.<sup>1</sup> The HCSO also recognizes acts of sexual violence as crimes against the peace and dignity of the citizens of Maryland. As such, the HCSO will work with the HCPD to provide assistance in any sexually violent crime that HCSO deputies may come across.

On average, only a small percentage of sexually violent crimes are reported or prosecuted. A team approach to crimes of sexual violence, with law enforcement, advocates, prosecutors and other key members of the criminal justice system working with mutual respect toward the same goal is the most effective way to address crimes of sexual violence.

### **II. RESPONSE TO CRIMES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

- A. The primary goals of a deputy responding to a crime of sexual violence are:
  - 1. Provide attention to the victim;
  - 2. Secure all vital information and evidence that will assist in the successful prosecution of the case.
  - 3. Supply referrals to assist the victim through the traumatic experience;<sup>2</sup>
- B. Crimes of sexual violence are violent crimes. Therefore, the HCSO will treat these cases in the same manner as other violent crimes, according to their degree of danger.
- C. The first responding deputy's reports are critical to the successful prosecution of the case. Therefore, every complaint of sexual assault will be investigated thoroughly, contacting and giving full cooperation to the Howard County Department of Police, recognizing them as lead investigators.<sup>3</sup>
- D. Crimes of sexual violence are not the fault or responsibility of the victim. Therefore, when responding to separate incidents, HCSO deputies will treat each victim as an individual, will focus attention on the crime that has been reported, and will conduct an objective investigation.
- E. Full cooperation of the victim is essential to a successful investigation and future prosecution of the perpetrator. An environment of trust may be created by keeping the victim informed of the processes needed to ensure his/her health and safety.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CALEA 42.1.4

<sup>2</sup> CALEA 55.2.3 a

<sup>3</sup> CALEA 42.1.4

<sup>4</sup> CALEA 55.2.3 b

- F. Public attention often exploits and distresses the victim. Therefore, the HCSO recognizes the victim's right to confidentiality and privacy from publication of personal information in the media. Responding deputies will not divulge any personal information about the victim to any media representative at any time.<sup>5</sup>
- G. Responding and investigating deputies will ensure that:
  - 1. The Sexual Assault Crisis Center Advocate is contacted; AND
  - 2. Any family member or friend requested by the victim is contacted.

**III. HOWARD COUNTY RAPE CRISIS/SEXUAL ASSULT PROGRAM**

**Sexual Trauma Treatment, Advocacy & Recovery Center, Inc.**  
10015 Old Columbia Road, Suite G-118  
Columbia, Maryland 21046

Tel: (410) 290-6432 Fax: (410) 290-6604  
**Hotline: (410) 997-3292**  
E-mail: [info@sttarcenter.org](mailto:info@sttarcenter.org)

**IV. CANCELLATION**

This General Order cancels and replaces General Order OPS-05, Response to Crimes of Sexual Violence, dated May 1, 2008.

Authority:

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James F. Fitzgerald  
Sheriff

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<sup>5</sup> CALEA 55.1.3 b