



**ANTELOPE VALLEY
HOSPITAL**

A facility of Antelope Valley Healthcare District

Forensic Services Unit

The Forensic Services Unit (FSU) is a unique program, the only of its kind in the state of California. Realizing that violence is a healthcare issue, the Antelope Valley Hospital Healthcare District has supported community benefit programs helping victims of crime for over 35 years. In January 2010, the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Center expanded services to victims reporting not only sexual assault, but those reporting child abuse, elder abuse/neglect, domestic violence, trauma, and suspicious injuries. The FSU also works with suspects to ensure justice is served. In March 2010, the program changed its name to the Forensic Services Unit. The function of the unit is to assess, document, photograph, and collect evidence on all cases presenting to the hospital or referred by law enforcement. The FSU also coordinates the medical/legal needs of victims and provides compassionate care to those who have experienced life changing events. This program, largely unfunded, but supported by the hospital, functions out of the Emergency Department. The FSU is designated by the County of Los Angeles as a SART Center of Excellence.

Many patients reporting victimization benefit from the services provided by the FSU. In 2013, 1,135 cases were documented by the specially trained Registered Nurses on the team. Four full time, along with several per-diem nurses provide 24/7 coverage for forensic cases. The FSU has successfully contributed to and supplemented the investigations of law enforcement and the judicial process of criminal cases throughout the high desert. The FSU Director, Mary Reina, leads an advisory committee consisting of local law enforcement, the District Attorney's office, advocacy providers, Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS), California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), Edwards Air Force Base and other community partners. This committee meets on a regular basis for process improvement and quality assurance purposes.

The FSU conducts on-going training with employees in all Departments to improve the screening and detection of patients who can benefit from the services. The team is specifically screening for child abuse and domestic violence and utilizes the Safety and Security Department, headed by Tim Lidberg to notify the FSU of patients in need of intervention.

The FSU also has started a pilot program with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation providing mobile sexual assault examinations in Tehachapi, Lancaster and California City Prisons. Mary Reina has provided numerous training opportunities to agencies and community members of the Antelope Valley and surrounding areas on topics such as Non-Fatal Strangulation, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Child Abuse and many others. In order to raise awareness, not only of violence, but of the services available to the community, the FSU is always willing to present to any organization or group upon request.

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