

Introduction

Kirsten Barber: This episode contains subject matter that may not be appropriate (or even triggering) to some listeners. All resources mentioned in this episode of the Safety Scoop are posted in the show notes. Help is available. If you or someone you know has been a victim of violent crime in North Carolina, the Office of Victim Compensation Services is here to help.

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Kirsten: You're listening to the NCDPS Safety Scoop, a podcast that dives into the stories of the people, programs and resources within the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. Each episode, we'll give you the scoop from department personnel on how NCDPS enhances the safety of the people of North Carolina.

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Season 4 Episode 5

Kirsten: Hello, everyone! In this episode, we're going to be talking about the Rape Victims' Assistance Program, RVAP, as it may be referred to. This is the second Victim Compensation Services podcast episode this season. The first one

covered the Victim Compensation Program. For this episode, we have Tracy Douglas, who has been working with the Office of Victim Compensation Services since August of 2024. Tracy, thank you so much for joining us. Can you introduce yourself to our listeners and tell us a little bit more about yourself?

Tracy Douglas: Sure, and thank you for this opportunity. We are honored to be a part of the podcast. Well, I'm passionate about being an advocate for victims' rights and spent many years doing so with several non-profit organizations across the Carolinas. I actually took this work on professionally in 2022 as a family visitation supervisor and victim advocate in Chatham County, and I plan to continue to dedicate my life to supporting victims of crime.

Kirsten: Thank you so much, Tracy, for, um, just giving our listeners a little bit more information about yourself, and we're so happy to have you on the Safety Scoop. Can you give us a brief introduction to the Rape Victims' Assistance Program?

Tracy: Absolutely. North Carolina policy now allows victims of rape and sexual assault to obtain forensic medical examinations free of charge. Whenever a forensic medical examination is conducted because of rape or sexual assault against anyone in the state, the Rape Victim Assistance Program will pay for the examination. The medical facility or medical professional that performs the forensic medical examination must seek payment for the examination from the program.

Kirsten: That's a helpful resource for anyone across North Carolina. Can you tell us more about what this process looks like? What can people expect?

Tracy: So, if anyone has been a victim of rape or sexual assault in the state, they can go to a hospital or medical facility and get a forensic medical exam. This is a sensitive topic, so the North Carolina general statute allows victims to complete the exam anonymously, if they choose. Additionally, the victim will not have to pay for the exam because it is covered by the program. In other words, victims shall not be billed for a forensic medical examination in the state of North Carolina.

Kirsten: So, I know that there's an application process involved in this. Is there a deadline involving this particular application?

Tracy: Yes, the application is the Sexual Assault Nurse Examination, or SANE form, that is filled out by the medical professional. There is an application deadline which is one year from the date of the exam. In other words, the medical service provider must submit the form within that time frame. RVAP will make the payment directly to the medical provider.

Kirsten: So, how does someone know they are covered through this program?

Tracy: The program covers first degree rape, second degree rape, first degree sexual assault, second degree sexual assault and statutory rape. The exam should be conducted within five days of the offense for it to be eligible for compensation.

Kirsten: And so in saying that, what expenses does the program cover?

Tracy: The program will pay for the hospital visit, the SANE nurse fee and any lab work or tests related to the forensic medical exam.

Kirsten: Got it. Is this program related to the Crime Victims' Compensation Program?

Tracy: Yes, it is. I would say they are complimentary because our office, the Office of Victim Compensation, manages both programs. The expenses related to the forensic medical exam are covered by RVAP while additional expenses must be considered for payment with the Crime Victim Compensation Program.

Kirsten: Just to add, if you are interested in learning more about the Crime Victim Compensation Program, check back in season four on episode three, and you can listen to it.

Tracy, can you elaborate to our listeners about the additional expenses that must be considered for payment with the Crime Victim Compensation Program?

Tracy: Absolutely. For example, let's say a woman was a victim of sexual assault during a domestic violence incident. RVAP will cover all expenses related to the forensic medical exam, such as pregnancy test, STI testing, etc. Any other injuries that occurred, such as assault wounds, let's say, may be eligible for payment under the Crime Victim Compensation Program. This is why we ask medical providers to encourage victims to file an application through our website, ncdps.gov/4 (the number four) victims.

Kirsten: And that URL is added in the show notes for those who are interested or need to pass that along. And thank you for sharing that, Tracy. I am sure this is useful for our listeners. Where should the hospitals mail the SANE forms you're talking about?

Tracy: The hospital should mail the SANE forms to NC Department of Public Safety Victim Compensation Services, 4232 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699, or they can call our office toll free at 1-800-826-2600 within North Carolina or 919-733-7974 outside of North Carolina.

Kirsten: Thanks for sharing that. I hope everyone can find, um, some value in what the information that's being shared. And those phone numbers again are 1-800-826-2600 for in North Carolina, and people outside of North Carolina can call 919-733-7974.

Tracy: Yes. We want to be helpful and support victims of crime as much as possible. Suffering through a crime is a difficult experience, and this resource can help victims financially and assist in restoring their physical and mental health. Additionally, we're working on our online portal which will be available soon.

Kirsten: That's so encouraging to hear, and it's really important to recognize the financial and emotional toll that crime can have on victims. It's great that there's a network of support in North Carolina that can provide assistance in such a comprehensive way. Not just financially, but also working towards mental and physical recovery, like you said. And the fact that Victim Compensation Services is developing an online portal is convenient to file the application, so hopefully it'll streamline the process even more. That will make accessing the resources that are available so much easier, as well. Thank you for your time, Tracy, and good luck with your work.

Tracy: Thank you so much, and I appreciate it.

Kirsten: So now, let's summarize today's episode. In this Safety Scoop episode, we talked about the Rape Victims' Assistance Program, RVAP, in North Carolina. The program covers the cost of forensic medical examinations for victims of rape and sexual assault, ensuring they don't have to pay for the exam, and they can file anonymously. We provided additional details on the process for submitting applications, which must be done within a year of the incident. The program covers costs like hospital fees, lab work and tests related to sexual assault. It

complements the Crime Victims' Compensation Program which covers other crime related expenses, such as counseling and medical expenses. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the Office of Victim Compensation Services. That number is 919-733-7974, or visit their website, which is also listed in the show notes: ncdps.gov/4 (the number four) victims. Thank you.

Conclusion

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Kirsten: This is the Safety Scoop, a podcast written, produced and edited by the NCDPS communications team. The mission of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety is to safeguard and preserve the lives and property of the people of North Carolina through preparation, prevention and protection with integrity and honor. Follow the department on social media for a closer look at ongoing initiatives and resources. We're on Facebook, X and Instagram at NC Public Safety. If you enjoyed today's episode, be sure to subscribe to the Safety Scoop on your favorite podcast app. I'm your host, Kirsten Barber. Thanks for listening.

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