

SART Exam

Also known as the Medical Exam for Evidence Collection, formerly a “rape kit.”

What is a SART?

SART stands for Suspected Abuse Response Team and is the term used to describe an evidentiary medical exam. If you decide to file a police report and that agency makes a decision to order a SART, the exam does two things: provides sensitive and thorough medical care and collects evidence that may be helpful to the prosecution of your case.

How is a SART Ordered?

- Whenever a medical professional in California treats an injury or illness caused by sexual assault, they are required to notify law enforcement. Once law enforcement is notified, you have the option of continuing involvement with them and you may have the option of undergoing an evidentiary medical exam, known as a SART. A SART examination is extremely helpful in an investigation, but it is not required for a police investigation to occur.
- You can also directly tell a medical professional that you would like to have a SART exam performed, though the decision to order a SART belongs only to the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction where the assault occurred.
- A SART is more likely to be ordered if the assault occurred within the past 72 hours (3 days). The decision to order a SART belongs to the local law enforcement agency. Criteria for ordering a SART are determined differently by individual police agencies.
- When SART exams are ordered, they are provided free of charge.

Another option is a Restricted SART. A Restricted SART is the same as a standard SART exam without having to immediately report to police. For more information please contact Safer.

Where Will It Happen?

SLO County Public Health Clinic Services
San Luis Obispo, CA

Phone: 805-781-4878 or after hours 805-781-4550

SART functions under the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department, to provide forensic services for residents of San Luis Obispo County, State agencies, and other Counties upon request. The program brings together specifically trained forensic doctors and nurses with Law Enforcement agencies, Child Welfare Services and advocates in a multidisciplinary team approach to provide compassionate, comprehensive and culturally-sensitive treatment for sexual assault survivors.

SART exams are done at the request of Law Enforcement or Child Welfare Services. The exam itself becomes part of the criminal investigation. SART exams are also available without law enforcement involvement. Call the office directly during office hours or call the rape-crisis hotline at (805) 545-8888 and they will explain the options available. If a SART exam is done, it is still reportable to Law Enforcement but the client doesn't have to speak to Law Enforcement immediately, and may do so when ready.

SART's can also be done at the Cal Poly Health Center during normal health center hours.

What Happens During a SART Exam?

- Remember, you have the right to refuse any part of the exam at any time.
- You have the option to have an advocate with you during the SART. The advocate can explain the process of the exam as well as your rights and choices. It is your choice whether the advocate stays with you in the exam room, waits in the waiting area, or leaves.
- The medical examiner will explain the exam and you will be asked to provide informed consent.
- You will be asked to describe the events of the assault, possibly in the form of your own narrative or an interview. These answers will then direct the course of the medical exam.
- The exam begins with a general health check: blood pressure, heart rate, looking at your eyes, ears and nose, etc.
- Physical evidence is collected from head to toe, in the form of hair and oral swabs, to identify both your DNA and that of the person who assaulted you. A lamp is used to look for evidence of semen or saliva.
- A pelvic exam may be done. Initially, the medical examiner will look at external genitalia, and may do an internal exam (vaginal or anal, depending on the assault). You have the right to stop the exam at any moment, if it becomes too physically or emotionally painful.
- Photographs may be taken of physical evidence (e.g. bruises, lacerations, tears), but these photographs are focused on such a small part of your body and attached to only your SART kit case number so that your identity will not be able to be inferred from any photographic evidence.
- Once all the evidence is collected, it becomes part of a SART kit that is signed over to the police. When the police finish their investigation, the evidence is turned over to the District Attorney's Office.
- Currently there is an unknown but high number of unprocessed SART Kits in California. Processing may take a long time or not happen at all.
- The District Attorney's office will make a decision regarding the case. If the case moves forward and enters criminal court, you may be called to speak in court as a witness.

Remember you have the option to have an advocate with you during your SART. If you have any questions please contact Safer during business hours at (805) 756-2282 or RISE 24 hours a day at 805-545-8888.