# Forensic Medical Exam Accompaniment via Phone

This document is intended to offer ideas, direction, and confidence. It is not a how-to guide. It will be edited as advocates experience the dynamics of hospital accompaniment via phone and have things to add.

## Considerations for on-call and/or staff back-up

Be in weekly/regular conversation with your local hospitals (SAFE nurse contact and/or ED triage) to get information about the current layout of the ED, including:

\_ screening for COVID,

\_ physical layout of the ED right now,

\_ where non-symptomatic COVID patients go, and

\_ visitor policy.\*

\*The SANE UNE Program advises that this might be changing daily.

## Personal preparations

As an advocate, you already have the tools and knowledge within you. Do some self-prep to ground yourself in the skills you have and your role in this moment.

Give yourself a few minutes to reflect on what you usually do during an accompaniment, what skills, phrases, do you like to use, maybe write them down. Ask yourself what you think is most important that you get across, write them down and lastly, what do you do for yourself to get in the right headspace before a call, do those things!

Also, if you usually pack water, a snack, and/or other comforts before heading off to a hospital accompaniment in person, prepare those things for yourself as well.

## If the hospital calls for an accompaniment

Gently make the hospital personnel aware that your center is not currently providing in-person accompaniments, but rather can connect with survivors by phone.

Ask them if they have received the COVID-19 accompaniment protocol, with instructions on phone support for survivors.

Ask to speak to the SAFE doing the Medical Forensic Exam to coordinate phone support.

If coordinating phone support doesn’t seem possible based on confusion or a lack of protocols, see the survivor would like a follow up call and get information for a referral:

1. Name
2. Call back number
3. County/town the person resides in
4. Okay to leave a voicemail?
5. What sort of on-going support does this person need?

## Initial call with the SAFE nurse doing the Forensic Exam

### Review advocate role and expectations.

*I can be on the call as long as the survivor wants. There should be a folder my agency has provided with information about follow up services and support, would you be sure the survivor has that?*

### Specific support or considerations the advocate should know.

*Are there concerned others present or waiting? Will there be an interpreter? How was getting to the hospital? Anything else I might need to know to support this person? Does the survivor have a ride to a safe place upon discharge?*

### Go over the logistics of the phone –

* Where is it in the room?
* Is it cordless?
* Does it have speakerphone capabilities?
* Confirm incoming call number so you can call back in the event you get cut off.

### Arrange for time to talk with the survivor then transfer to speakerphone.

*I* *will introduce myself and tell them about our services. Then, if they’d like I’ll stay on speakerphone in the exam room. Can you help them with the logistics of putting the phone on speaker?*

## Initial conversation with survivor/client

### Introduce yourself and name the situation.

*Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I’m an advocate with [agency]. We are here to support survivors of sexual violence today and in the days to come. I’m so sorry for what you’re going through right now, and I’m glad that you’re taking steps to take care of yourself by getting medical care.*

*Normally I would be at the hospital with you right now, but because of COVID-19, we can only provide support over the phone. It's your choice if you want to talk with me, or just have me on the line for as long as you want (even if it's for the entire exam).*

### Review role and mandated reporting.

*As an advocate, anything you talk to me about is private [confidential] within the limits of mandated reporting for minors who may have been abused or neglected.*

*The nurse has a packet of information that we usually give in person. [I can go through that with you at anytime or you can look through it on your own and let us know if you have questions].*

### Check in and assess for consent

*I know phone support can feel a little awkward, but I want to be available whether you have questions now or an hour from now. I am happy to be here as long as you’d like.*

*Do you have any questions for me? Any questions for the SAFE nurse?*

*Did anyone come with you and/or know you are here? I want to make sure that the people with you are people you want to have with you. If you would be more comfortable having those people out of the exam room, just say yes right now and I can arrange for the SAFE nurse to ask for those people to wait somewhere else.\**

\*Might be moot if visitors are not allowed.

*Would you like me to stay on the phone with you?*

*I can stay on speaker phone with you in the room, if you would like. You can talk to me as much or as little as you would like about what is going on.*

*I'll follow your lead about how much and what you want to talk about, but would it be ok if I check in with you? [You're in the driver's seat, so you can tell me what you want or need].*

*I’m happy to stay on the phone with you as long as you would like. Let’s also make a plan to follow up tomorrow. What is a safe number for me to call to reach you to see how you are doing?*

## On-going assessment of support needs and consent

### Check in occasionally when there is prolonged silence

*How are you doing?*

*Does it still feel okay for you to have me on the phone right now?*

*Sometimes when we’re dealing with something stressful, we forget to breathe. Would you like to try a breathing exercise with me?*

*Would you like to take a break from the exam and talk for a minute?*

*Sometimes I might ask you more than one question because I’m trying to assess how you’re doing.*

## Wrap-up

### Assess for safety and support

*Where is home? Who lives with you there? Does anyone know you’re here? Would it help to have someone know?*

*Anything you’re worried about heading home?*

### Arrange for follow up

*We also often call survivors the next day with their permission [note it’ll be you or if it may be another person]. Do you think you’re interested in that? [If so, ask for contact number, best time of day, what to do if goes to voicemail, and if it safe to leave a voicemail, let them know how many times you’ll try to reach them the next day.]*

*Do you want to go through any of the information in the packet?*

*We are here if you need something tomorrow or in the days to come. Whether you have questions about making a police report or would like a referral to a therapist or here about our support groups – there are people to support you.*

Reiterate that you or someone else from the agency will provide a follow call tomorrow (if they want one) and that they can always talk to an advocate, 24/7, at the Helpline number (may also note text/chat option and hours).

## If they do not want phone support

### Arrange for follow up

*We also often call survivors the next day with their permission [note it'll be you or if it may be another person]. Do you think you're interested in that? [If so, ask for contact number, best time of day, what to do if goes to voicemail, let them know how many times you'll try to reach them the next day.]*

*Do you want to go through any of the information in the packet?*

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