



# MEDIA RELEASE

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY  
**Sheriff-Coroner**

5200 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95062  
(831) 454-7611 FAX: (831) 454-7608

**Jim Hart**  
Sheriff-Coroner

## Media Release: September 10, 2020 **Sexual Assault Forensic Medical Examinations return to Santa Cruz County**

Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) examinations have officially returned to Santa Cruz County. The SAFE is a vital part of Santa Cruz County's Sexual Assault Response Team's (SART) process to obtain evidence to investigate sexual assault cases and protect the public.

While SAFE exams have been available since 1985, for the past two and a half years they have taken place at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center (SCVMC) in Santa Clara. This was due to a shortage of nurses trained to provide the examinations in Santa Cruz County. Since the exams moved to SCVMC, the Sheriff's Office has been working diligently with the Health Services Agency, Dominican Hospital, Monarch Services (Santa Cruz County's Rape Crisis Center) and SCVMC to return exams to the County.

This program will provide survivors of sexual assault with a safe, confidential and local site to obtain this exam without traveling to Santa Clara County. The SAFE satellite location in Santa Cruz County will have trained medical professionals on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the sexual assault medical examinations. Nurses from the SCVMC SAFE Program, who live in the Santa Cruz area, are providing the staffing for exams.

Survivors of sexual assault seeking SAFE examinations may choose between two types of examinations: an investigative or non-investigative exam. If a survivor chooses an investigative examination, law enforcement will conduct a criminal investigation and will be provided with evidence collected during the exam. Alternatively, in a non-investigative exam, evidence is still collected, but law enforcement will not start a criminal investigation until the survivor chooses to do so. The evidence obtained during a non-investigative exam is confidential and will be preserved and stored indefinitely. SAFE exams are provided at no cost to the survivor.

Every survivor seeking a SAFE exam is entitled to a Monarch Services advocate. If you or someone you know requires a SAFE exam, call 911 or Monarch Services' 24-hour confidential, bilingual crisis line at 1-(888)-900-4232.

PREPARED BY:  
Ashley Keehn  
Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office  
Delphine Burns  
Monarch Services

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