



POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

Chapter:	Service Delivery		
Title:	Victim Advocacy Services – Hospital Accompaniment		
Policy: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Procedure: <input type="checkbox"/>	Review Cycle: Triennial Author: Dir Prev. & Outreach	Adopted Date: 08.2020 Review Date: 04.2024	Related Policies: Service Philosophy Confidentiality & Privacy

Purpose:

Hopeful Horizons (HH) provides advocacy services in the form of hospital accompaniment (HA) to victims of sexual assault and /or domestic violence. This policy clarifies HHs’ authority to provide these services and the expectations for the provision of HA advocacy services.

Scope:

This policy applies to:

- All HH Staff Selected HH Staff, as specified: Staff and volunteers providing HA advocacy services
- HH Board Members HH Volunteers: Volunteers providing HA services
- Other:

Policy:

In accordance with Public Law, Survivors’ Bill of Rights Act of 2016, HH shall provide sexual assault victim advocate services in the form of HA. HH may provide HA when requested for domestic violence cases. All HA services shall be provided consistent with these guidelines:

A. Voluntary Service and Right to Accompaniment: HH shall have a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with hospitals in the HH catchment area that provide service/treatment to persons experiencing sexual assault and/or domestic violence. The MOA shall address the hospitals responsibility to inform the victim of their right to HA services and support. The Hospital that provides emergency services to a victim of sexual assault, human trafficking or child sexual assault shall, at the request of the victim, permit a victim advocate to accompany the victim to any examination or consultation that is performed at the hospital because of the assault.

HA is a voluntary and free service provided to survivors at their expressed request.

B. Confidentiality and Privacy: Community-based HA advocate shall not ask the survivor questions about the assault at any time. The advocate may only share information about the case with law enforcement or medical responders at the request of the survivor or regarding the survivor’s immediate safety and in accordance with HHs’ Confidentiality and Privacy policy.

C. Advocate’s Role: The advocate’s primary role is to believe the survivor and their story, to advocate for the survivor with medical, law enforcement, and other systems, and to maintain the survivor’s right to confidentiality. The advocate shall perform the advocacy role consistent with HH’s HA procedure and the HH “Hospital Accompaniment Guide” and in accordance with the following:

1. Discuss the short-term and long-term impact of sexual assault
2. Gather and evaluate information during survivor contact
3. Provide crisis intervention from a non-judgmental and victim-centered perspective
4. Provide information about legal procedures and victim’s assistance programs

5. If law enforcement is not already involved, the advocate shall explain the survivor's right to an anonymous sexual assault kit.
6. Provide information about coping with sexual assault and/or domestic violence.
7. Provide information about services available for sexual assault and/or domestic violence. Assist the survivor in identifying support systems, provide proper referrals (including special considerations for individuals who live in rural communities, Latinas, males, individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBTQ), the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and institutionalized individuals)
8. The advocate shall remain at the hospital with the survivor based on their expressed needs and wishes.:
 - If an advocate must leave the hospital while the survivor still needs and requests advocacy support, the advocate shall contact HHs' Support line and request a replacement advocate. This should be done only under very unusual circumstances.
 - If the survivor has extensive injuries that must be treated before the sexual assault evidence collection kit is performed or is temporarily unable to consent to medical treatment because of severe drug or alcohol intoxication, the advocate can leave and request that ER staff call for another advocate when the survivor is being prepared for the evidence collection process and if an advocate is requested.
 - The survivor may request an advocate of another gender, The initially arriving advocate shall contact HHs' Support Line and request a replacement advocate of the preferred gender.
9. Assist the survivor in creating a safety plan, if necessary.

The advocate shall not:

1. Talk or text on their cell phone, read or engage in other inattentive behavior if the survivor is awake.
2. Leave the survivor unaccompanied for extended periods of time (if the advocate must leave the exam room to assist the survivor or for personal reasons, the advocate should not leave his/her personal items, such as a purse or cell phone, in the room).
3. Spend money on the survivor for food or beverage but can ask medical staff to order food or beverage for the survivor. The community-based advocate also cannot provide transportation to survivors but can assist in coordinating transportation with law enforcement or with sexual assault service center funds, if available.
4. In consideration of the survivor, the advocate shall not eat or drink in the presence of the survivor if the survivor is being encouraged not to eat or drink prior to the forensic exam.

D. Medical Procedures: The HA advocate shall not assist with the medical procedures or touch anything related to the sexual assault evidence collection kit or evidence resulting from an examination for domestic violence. The advocate can turn on/off the lights for medical staff, bring pages of labels, or leave the room to get medical equipment, food, or clothing for the survivor.

If the survivor is discharged before receiving medical care, the advocate shall encourage and direct the survivor to another medical location. The advocate shall also assist the medical staff in finding appropriate shelter for the survivors, if necessary.

E. Information and Referral: The community-based advocate shall provide applicable referrals, to include but not limited to the local domestic violence shelter, Children's Advocacy Center, and the sexual assault service center's hotline number. If the survivor does not live in the

advocate's service area, the advocate shall provide a referral to the appropriate sexual assault services agency or to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network ("RAINN") hotline (if out of state). No matter the survivor's residence, the survivor will receive follow up from sexual assault service center, if he/she requests it and provides consent to contact.

F. Required Documentation: The HA advocate shall complete required documentation as specified by HHS' related procedure at the conclusion of the HA and submit the documentation to the HH Volunteer Coordinator and the Director of Prevention and Outreach within 24 hours or the next business day of the accompaniment. Documentation shall indicate the survivor's request for follow up and how/when that follow up should be conducted with the least impact to survivor.

L. Exclusion:

- a. By the Victim: The victim may request the exclusion of the HA advocate at any examination or consultation that is performed at the hospital because of the sexual assault and/or domestic violence, the HA advocate is required to comply with the request.
- b. By the Hospital: A specific HA advocate may be excluded by the hospital for any of the following reasons:
 - i. The HA advocate obstructs necessary medical care to the victim
 - ii. The HA advocate fails to comply with hospital policies governing the conduct of persons accompanying a victimIf the hospital excludes a specific HA advocate, the hospital shall, at the request of the victim, permit a different HA advocate to support the victim.

Communication and Training:

The Board shall receive a copy of the policy at the time of periodic review and will have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions during the approval process. Employees and volunteers shall receive notice of the Board's policy review and approval including notice of any substantive changes. The notice will provide a link to the policy located on the HH website.

This policy and related procedures shall be reviewed with all employees and volunteers assigned HA advocacy duties as part of their initial orientation. Persons new to the role shall be paired with a qualified advocate on initial visits until the new advocate demonstrates proficiency with the role and related requirements.

Definitions:

1. Victim Advocate: An Individual who is an employee or volunteer for an organization the purpose of which is to provide counseling, assistance of support services free of charge to a victim.

Other Related Materials:

Hospital Accompaniment Procedure
HH Hospital Accompaniment Guide

References/Legal Authority:

[Guideline for Victim Advocate Accompaniment During Hospital Exams and Consultations, State of Wisconsin Department of Health, 2016.](#)

[Sexual Assault Survivor Notification Grants, Survivors Bill of Rights Act of 2016, Public Law, Oct. 2016.](#)

[Victim Survival Guide, South Carolina Victim Assistance Network, 2024](#)

Change Log:

Date of Change	Description of Change	Responsible Party
4.2024	Updates the policy to the new template; adds communication and training, definitions, other materials and references & legal authority.	N. Miller Prog. Eval Cons. In consultation with J. Morrall, Dir. Prev & Outreach