



# Florida Council Against Sexual Violence

Because Sexual Violence Shatters Lives, Wounds Communities, and Perpetuates Injustice

Updated August 24, 2020 to include reference to: CDC's [Guidance on Interpreting COVID-19 Test Results](#)

## **CORONAVIRUS, CERTIFIED RAPE CRISIS CENTERS AND THE MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAM (MFE) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DOCUMENT**

Certified Rape Crisis Centers (RCCs) have a duty to stay up to date and follow the CDC guidance / recommendations for preventing spread of COVID-19. This guidance was developed to assist all RCCs with their Coronavirus Prevention Plan and is based on the CDC and the Florida Department of Health's recommendations. The CDC recommends that health care providers screen all persons for symptoms of COVID-19 before entering a healthcare facility. This is in alignment with preventing spread of COVID-19 and it is recommended that the CDC screening questions for Coronavirus, as outlined below, be implemented.

If it is possible to screen survivors prior to their arrival at the RCC this would be appropriate. If it is not possible then it may be done upon their arrival. The person conducting the screening questions should wear a face mask until all screening questions have been answered.

### **SCREENING FOR CORONAVIRUS:**

All survivors who arrive at your RCC should be screened for COVID-19 symptoms. See flowchart to determine course of action.

- Per the CDC, (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> accessed May 6, 2020) people with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness.
- Symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure to the virus.**

People with these symptoms or combinations of symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

#### **Or at least two of these symptoms:**

- Fever (*A fever is considered 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit / 38 degrees Celsius or higher*)
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

### **SCREENING QUESTIONS FOR ALL ENTERING INTO THE RCC:**

1. Have you travelled outside of the United States or have been on a cruise within the last 14 days? If yes, were you tested and cleared from the CDC airport staff to be in the general public? Were you instructed to self-isolate or were you quarantined for the amount of time to be cleared to be in the general public?

- a) Have you shared close quarters (at work, social settings or at home) with anyone who has travelled outside of the United States or have been on a cruise within the last 14 days?
  - b) Have you shared close quarters (at work, social settings or at home) with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19?
  - c) Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
2. Do you have:
- a) Fever (*A fever is considered 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit / 38 degrees Celsius or higher.*)
  - b) Chills
  - c) Repeated shaking with chills
  - d) Muscle pain
  - e) Headache
  - f) Sore throat
  - g) New loss of taste or smell   **OR**
3. Do you have a cough, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath?  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> accessed May 6, 2020

*Answers to these questions will impact the RCC’s action. Therefore, to assist the RCC with the action to be taken, the tables below provide you with question, a possible answer and the steps the RCC should follow based on the answer given.*

**If “no” is the answer to all of the questions**, proceed with the MFE and the SANE should follow the MFE protocol of wearing a face mask and gloves during the exam. The SANE may consider taking additional precautions by wearing a gown and eye protection.

**FOR ANY SURVIVOR who must self-isolate / self quarantine, ask:** “Are you safe to go home and self quarantine?” If the answer is no, provide assistance to the survivor to obtain a safe place for 14 days or more.

**It is best practice not to share pens with a survivor.**

<p><b>Question #1 Series:</b> Have you travelled outside of the United States or on a cruise within the last 14 days? If yes, were you tested and cleared from the CDC airport staff to be in the general public? Were you instructed to self-isolate or were you quarantined so you could be cleared to be in the general public?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Have you shared close quarters (at work, social settings or at home) with anyone who has travelled outside of the United States or have been on a cruise within the last 14 days?</li> <li>b) Have you shared close quarters (at work, social settings or at home) with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19?</li> <li>c) <b>Have you had viral testing for COVID-19, and tested positive, in the last 14 days?</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Answer:</b> Yes, the person has travelled outside of the country or been on a cruise within the last 14 days, and the person <u>has not been cleared</u> to be in the general public <b>OR yes to 1 a), 1 b) or 1 c)</b></p>
<p><b>Steps to Follow:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STOP and provide the person with a face mask and gloves to wear</li> <li>• Instruct the survivor to go home and self-isolate for 14 days</li> <li>• Give them the Florida Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline number, 866-779-6121</li> </ul>

Per the CDC, provide the following information to the survivor prior to them leaving your facility:

- The following steps should be taken to monitor your health and practice social distancing:
  - Take your temperature with a thermometer two times a day and monitor for fever. Also watch for cough or trouble breathing.
  - Stay home and avoid contact with others. Do not go to work or school for this 14-day period. Discuss your work situation with your employer before returning to work.
  - Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares during the time you are practicing social distancing.
  - Avoid crowded places (such as shopping centers and movie theaters) and limit your activities in public.
  - Keep your distance from others (about 6 feet or 2 meters).
  - Instruct the survivor to call their health care provider or the Florida Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline number, 866-779-6121 if they develop a fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and / or a new loss of taste or smell and/or a cough, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.

**MFE Considerations:** The SANE should coordinate with the survivor to obtain the medical history and the forensic history over the phone (be sure to document this and why it was over the phone). The RCC must weigh the benefits and risk of each individual case to determine if an MFE is done prior to the survivor leaving the facility. If it is determined the MFE should be done due to the sexual assault circumstances, the SANE should follow infectious disease / personal protection equipment (PPE) protocols – a face mask, a gown, gloves and eye protection. However, prior to the MFE, the SANE should have a conversation with law enforcement regarding other evidence that may have been collected by them. If LE has collected evidence that has a high potential of rendering DNA (underwear worn at the time of the assault) then conducting an MFE might be omitted (benefits vs risk to SANE).

**Question #1 Series:** Have you travelled outside of the United States or on a cruise within the last 14 days? If yes, were you tested and cleared from the CDC airport staff to be in the general public? Were you instructed to self-isolate or were you quarantined so you could be cleared to be in the general public?

**Answer:** Yes, the person has travelled to one of these countries, and the person has been cleared to be in the general public and does not have a fever, cough or trouble breathing.

**Steps to Follow & MFE Considerations:**

- Proceed with an MFE using SANE protocol (face mask, gloves, gown and eye protection).

**Question #2:** Do you have a fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and / or a new loss of taste or smell?  
*(A fever is considered 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit / 38 degrees Celsius or higher.)*

**Answer:** If yes to only this question (the survivor has two or more of the symptoms), consider the survivor at risk for COVID-19

**Steps to Follow & MFE Considerations:**

- The survivor and RCC personnel should wear a face mask as soon as there is in-person contact and consider the survivor at risk.
- Consider obtaining all medical history questions and the forensic history via the phone or at a distance of six feet or greater.

- The SANE may conduct the MFE and the SANE should follow infectious disease / personal protection equipment (PPE) protocols – a face mask, a gown, gloves and eye protection
  - If gowns are unavailable, instruct all personnel to not have physical contact with the survivor.
  - Eye protection – consider buying goggles / protective glasses that can be sanitized between SANEs or buy one for each SANE.
- Instruct the survivor to call their health care provider or the Florida Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline number, 866-779-6121 if they develop a cough, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath and continue with a fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and / or a new loss of taste or smell.

**Question #3:** Do you have a cough, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath?

**Answer:** Yes to **only** this question, **consider the survivor at risk for COVID-19**

**Steps to Follow & MFE Considerations:**

- The survivor and RCC personnel should wear a face mask as soon as there is in-person contact and consider the survivor at risk.
- Consider obtaining all medical history questions and the forensic history via the phone or at a distance of six feet or greater.
- The SANE may conduct the MFE and the SANE should follow infectious disease / personal protection equipment (PPE) protocols – a face mask, a gown, gloves and eye protection.
  - If gowns are unavailable, instruct all personnel to not have physical contact with the survivor.
  - Eye protection – consider buying goggles / protective glasses that can be sanitized between SANEs or buy one for each SANE.
- Instruct the survivor to call their health care provider or the Florida Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline number, 866-779-6121 if they also develop a fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and / or a new loss of taste or smell and continue with a cough, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.

**Questions #2 & #3:**

**#2** Do you have a fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell?

**#3** Do you have any respiratory problems, cough, or difficulty breathing (shortness of breath)?

**Answer:** Yes to **both** questions.

**Steps to Follow & MFE Considerations:**

- Consider the survivor at high risk for Coronavirus.
- Have the survivor put a face mask on immediately and provide them with gloves to wear.
- Send home to self-quarantine.
  - MFE should not be done at the standalone center. The MFE should be delayed and instruct the survivor to call their health care provider or the Florida Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline number, 866-779-6121.
- If at the hospital, follow their protocols regarding PPE and MFE.
- Survivor to avoid contact with others.
- The SANE may coordinate, with the survivor, to obtain the medical and forensic history over the phone (be sure to document this and why it was over the phone).

**If the RCC receives word that a survivor has tested positive for Coronavirus, is hospitalized and desires a forensic exam.....**

The RCC must weigh the benefits and risk of each individual case to determine if an MFE will be done. If it is determined the MFE should be done, the RCC should make arrangements with the hospital for the exam to be completed. However, the RCC / SANE should have a conversation with law enforcement regarding other evidence that may have been collected by them. If LE has collected evidence that has a high potential of rendering DNA (underwear worn at the time of the assault) then conducting an MFE might be omitted (benefits vs risk to SANE). All of this must be documented.

**If the RCC receives word that a sexual assault survivor has tested positive for Coronavirus, has symptoms, is NOT hospitalized and desires a forensic exam.....**

**The MFE cannot be done (the survivor should be in self quarantine),** the survivor is to follow their health care provider's instructions. The RCC / SANE should have a conversation with law enforcement regarding other evidence that may have been collected by them. If LE has collected evidence that has a high potential of rendering DNA (underwear worn at the time of the assault) then conducting an MFE might be omitted (benefits vs risk to SANE). All of this must be documented.

**If the survivor has symptoms but is negative for Coronavirus...**

Have the survivor come in for the MFE but since a false negative is possible, follow the instructions below for the survivor at risk.

The SANE may conduct the MFE and the SANE should follow infectious disease / personal protection equipment (PPE) protocols – a face mask, a gown, gloves and eye protection.

- If gowns are unavailable, instruct all personnel to not have physical contact with the survivor.
- Eye protection – consider buying goggles / protective glasses that can be sanitized between SANEs or buy one for each **SANE**.

Instruct the survivor to call their health care provider or the Florida Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline number, 866-779-6121 if they develop additional symptoms, such as, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and / or a new loss of taste or smell and/or a cough, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath **OR** any of the symptoms worsen.

## **ADVOCATES AND THE MFE**

If an MFE is performed on a survivor at risk and the advocate is present, they should wear a face mask, gown, eye protection and gloves. If a survivor has answered no to all the screening questions, the advocate may consider wearing a face mask only. It is also acceptable for the advocate to provide advocacy services via the telephone.

**Per the CDC:** [Mode of transmission](#): Early reports suggest person-to-person transmission most commonly happens during close exposure to a person infected with COVID-19, primarily via respiratory droplets produced when the infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs of those within close proximity. The contribution of small respirable particles, sometimes called aerosols or droplet nuclei, to close proximity transmission is currently uncertain. However, airborne transmission from person-to-person over long distances is unlikely.

## REFERENCES

[CDC website](#)

[Florida Department of Health](#)

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