



HANCOCK COUNTY
SHERIFF

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ROBERT A. GERDES JR.
SHERIFF

February 7, 2023

My name is Rob Gerdes, and I am the Hancock County Sheriff. I have been in law enforcement for over 25 years. I truly see the need for more assistance with sexual assault investigations on the law enforcement side of things. Over my career I feel that we are doing a much better job of investigating these crimes. Some of the issues we do run into is the lack of SANE nurses in our rural areas.

I will explain one of the last situations that we encountered during an investigation. The victim reported to our local hospital for an examination. Law enforcement did not escort the victim because they were working on a search warrant along with interviewing the suspect. The victim waited at the hospital for a lengthy amount of time. Unfortunately, our local hospital couldn't provide a SANE nurse. The hospital did what they could with their limited resources. They called several hospitals in the north central Iowa area. The victim did not want to be seen in the Mason City hospital. One local hospital in a neighboring county would not do the examination because of evidence chain of custody issues. We hopefully have that resolved. The only option that was available was for the victim to go to Ames. The victim decided that she did not want an examination after all of that.

The next day we located a SANE nurse in Humboldt that was more than willing to assist us. We reached back out to the victim and the examination took place. There was an arrest in that case.

The county attorney and I attended a meeting with our local hospital. Sara Hulen from the Attorney General Office was on the phone for the meeting. Sara helped us very much during the meeting and after. We believe that we have a better plan going forward in regard to the use of a SANE nurse.

One concern I have is if we change something that only allows a SANE nurse to provide the examination. If a provider is willing to do it and a SANE nurse is not available, I think we should still get it done.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Robert Gerdes Jr.