

For Immediate Release

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Contact:

Kenosha Davenport, SVC Executive Director
612-871-5100 x16 kenosha@sexualviolencecenter.org

Nicole Weiler, SVC Director of Systems Change
612-871-5100 x15 nicole@sexualviolencecenter.org

At-Home Rape Kits can't provide crucial support and resources to Survivors

MINNEAPOLIS— The Sexual Violence Center (SVC) expresses deep concern about new products being marketed to victim/survivors of sexual assault as at-home alternatives to the medical forensic exam—more publicly known as “rape kits.”

SVC works closely with highly trained Forensic Nurse Examiners (FNE) and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) in emergency rooms throughout Carver, Hennepin, and Scott counties to provide advocacy and support to victim/survivors. The exam is more than evidence collection; it also offers crucial medical attention like injury triage and STI treatment at no cost to the victim.

During the exam, a victim/survivor is asked to give affirmative consent to each portion. This small practice of saying yes or no can help to re-establish their sense of power after an assault. **And because most forensic programs partner with community-based advocacy, another major drawback of at-home kits is the lack of access to resources and support from [confidential sexual assault counselors](#).**

As other critics have pointed out, at-home kits pose potential barriers to prosecution in the criminal justice system. SVC highlights another serious concern: the potential for creating deeper isolation for victim/survivors after an assault. People who have experienced sexual violence often wait to share their story for several days, or several years. Some choose never to tell. There are many reasons survivors may decline to report an assault, including the fear of possible victim-blaming or a misunderstanding of consent (that leads many who have been assaulted to chalk it up as “bad sex”).

Trained rape crisis center advocates can listen nonjudgmentally and assist in processing such traumatic events. We are here for you. We believe you. Advocates can provide assistance long after the forensic exam.

SVC staff understand the many reasons victim/survivors may delay interaction with sexual assault response systems, including immigration status, substance use, gender identity, or outstanding warrants. For these and other reasons, an at-home kit may appear to be an excellent solution. **SVC wants to emphasize that completing a forensic exam does not require a police report. Victim/survivors get to choose whether or not they will make a report to law enforcement.**

SVC rejects attempts to use controversy around at-home evidence collection to incite misplaced concern about false accusations and reports. The reality: [approximately 2-8% of reports are false](#)—a statistic that is on

par with all other felony charges. This argument is yet another way to shift the narrative away from violence against victim/survivor and onto perceived danger for men. **SVC staff urge media to seize this moment to bolster the survivor movement and focus their stories on factual information for victim/survivors.**

If and when these products hit the shelves, they will be just one of many options available to victim/survivors of sexual violence. **The Sexual Violence Center encourages victim/survivors and/or their loved ones to contact their [local rape crisis center](#) to discuss *all* of their potential options after an assault. Trained advocates can help talk through a crisis, discuss resources, explain how processes work, and answer other questions victim/survivors often have.** You can always reach a trained, confidential Advocate at the Sexual Violence Center by dialing 612-871-5111.

About SVC:

Since 1985, the Sexual Violence Center has been serving victim/survivors of sexual violence 12 years of age and older. We provide a range of services in Carver, Hennepin, and Scott counties, including 24-hour crisis line at 612-871-5111, in-person counseling, facilitated support groups, crisis support in hospitals, aiding in navigation of the criminal justice system, and support during legal proceedings. We also serve the community through our education and training programs, as well as engaging in lasting systems change to cross-train our community partners and ensure a more victim-centered response to all victims of sexual violence.