

**THE STRAITS TIMES**

# New one-stop centre for alleged rape victims

Facility at Police Cantonment Complex among new initiatives to protect victims of sexual crimes



The counselling room at the One-Stop Abuse Forensic Examination (OneSafe) Centre at the Police Cantonment Complex. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



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PUBLISHED FEB 18, 2017, 5:00 AM SGT

Victims reporting an alleged rape to the police will no longer have to suffer more stress of being taken to a public hospital for the necessary examination.

If the alleged sexual assault is reported within 72 hours of the incident, a victim can be attended to instead at a new centre in the Police Cantonment Complex, by specialists from the Singapore General Hospital.

The One-Stop Abuse Forensic Examination (OneSafe) Centre was one of the initiatives announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) yesterday, following a review of investigation and court procedures dealing with sexual crimes.

"One of the key issues is... to encourage victims to come forward and make the whole experience something that doesn't add to their trauma," Home Affairs and Law Minister K. Shanmugam said at a press conference yesterday.

# Supporting victims of sexual crimes



## Pilot of OneSafe Centre

Adult rape victims can have medical examinations by doctors in private facility instead of being taken to public hospital.



## Training video for officers

Video developed with Aware will help front-line and investigation officers be more sensitive to victims.



## Information pamphlet

Pamphlet to educate victims on investigation and court processes, encouraging them to come forward.



## Improvements to victim care

Interview models for intra-familial child abuse cases may change, to reduce victims' need to recount their experience repeatedly.



## Stronger law and court processes

MinLaw looking to reduce stresses on victims, by enhancing restrictions on cross-examination in court among other possibilities.

Source: MHA/  
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

This will make it easier for victims to lodge a report and undergo an examination.

The new centre began operations last month and, in its pilot phase, will see adult rape victims who do not require other medical attention.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Tan Chye Hee, who is also the director of the Criminal Investigation Department, said the police see an average of about 150 rape cases a year. Most are reported after 72 hours of the alleged offence.

Officers who come into contact with victims can always be better trained, said Mr Shanmugam, and the police are working with the Association of Women for Action and Research (Aware) to develop a training video to do so.

Based on the experiences of Aware's clients at its Sexual Assault Care Centre, the only specialised service here for victims, the video is intended to help sensitise officers to victims' experiences during the investigation process.

It is expected to be ready by the third quarter of this year, said MHA.

To encourage victims to come forward in reporting sexual crimes, the police and Ministry of Law (MinLaw) are also expected to publish an information pamphlet that will educate victims on investigation and court processes.

The pamphlet will include the care and support measures that are available.

New measures will extend to court processes too, with MinLaw looking at how to reduce stress on victims.

This could include enhancing restrictions on cross-examination in court and finding new ways to better protect their privacy.

Both ministries will review the punishment for sexual offences as well, said Mr Shanmugam.

"In many cases, women are assaulted and the assaulter deserves to be punished seriously," he said.

But he also recognised the need to strike a balance in measures, as some accusations are false.

"Within that framework, how to make the trial process less intimidating, more accommodating for the victim and also to make the process of cross-examination less vexatious for the victim - those are the things we are looking at."

MHA and the Ministry of Social and Family Development are also studying different interviewing models for sexual abuse of children that occurs within a family.

This longer-term collaboration aims to reduce the need for victims to recount traumatic experiences repeatedly to different officers.

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