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# Establishing A Continuum of Care to Improve Follow-Up Rates for Survivors of Sexual Assault

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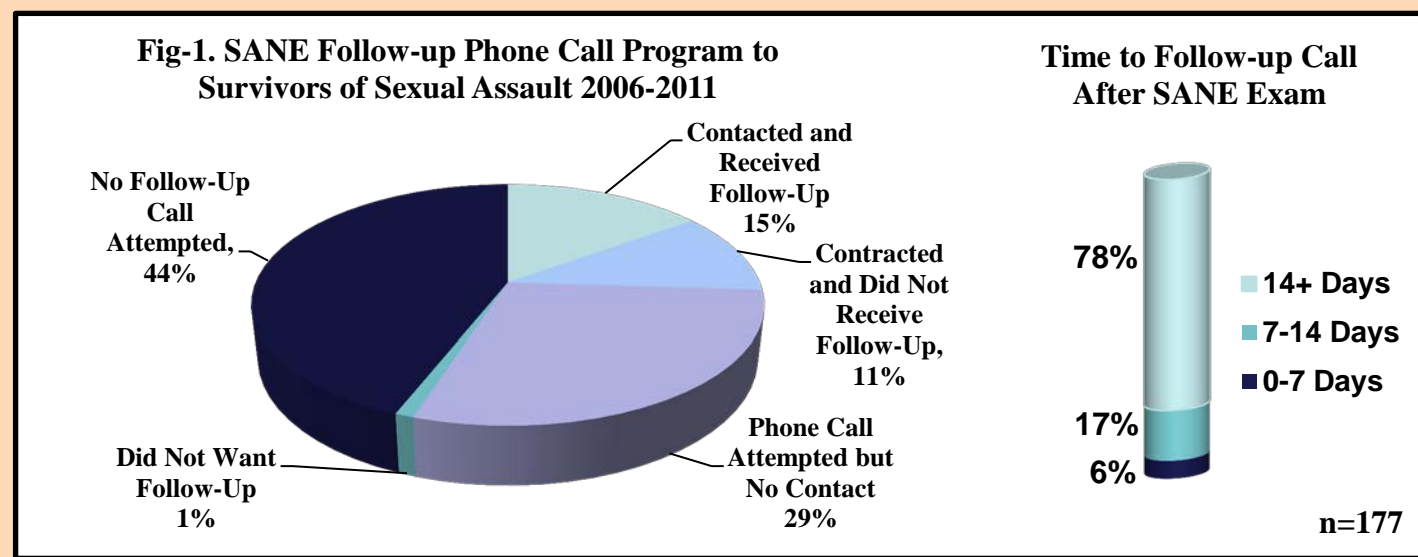
# Establishing a continuum of care to improve follow-up rates for survivors of sexual assault

Bole M<sup>1</sup>, Ellis J<sup>1</sup>, Hine W<sup>1</sup>, Larson J<sup>1</sup>, Nettlow D<sup>1</sup>, Price J<sup>1</sup>, Root K<sup>1</sup>, Vastine K<sup>2</sup>, and Gallant J<sup>1</sup>.  
<sup>1</sup>University of Vermont College of Medicine and <sup>2</sup>Burlington Community Justice Center

## Introduction

In 2011 there were over 1,000 reported survivors of sexual assault in the state of Vermont<sup>1</sup>. Of those survivors who presented to the Fletcher Allen Health Care (FAHC) Emergency Department (ED), 34 were over the age of 18, and received an exam by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)<sup>2</sup>. It is currently recommended that all survivors be seen by a health care provider within two weeks of their initial SANE exam to receive follow-up testing, treatment, and discuss recovery<sup>3</sup>. Less than 15% of survivors are known to attend a follow-up appointment. A published report has shown that if appointments are made before the patient leaves the ED, and support phone calls are made, follow-up rates can rise as high as 80%<sup>4</sup>.

**Objective: Identify barriers for survivors of sexual assault to accessing follow-up medical and psychosocial care after undergoing a SANE exam.**



## Material and Methods

### Literature Review

- Researched data regarding sexual assault and medical response to sexual assault
  - Physical and emotional healthcare for survivors of sexual assault (survivors)
  - SANE programs and follow-up care for survivors of sexual assault

### Review SANE data (Chittenden County)

- Received follow-up forms from FAHC ED SANE program
- Analyzed forms of adult (≥18 y/o) survivors.
  - See Figure-1

### Define Problem

- Underutilization of available health care resources following sexual assault.

### Design Focused Interview

- Interview designed to address system of care specific to Chittenden County.
  - Constructed an interview assessing survivors' transition from the ED to centers providing follow-up care.

### Conduct Focused Interview and Collect Data

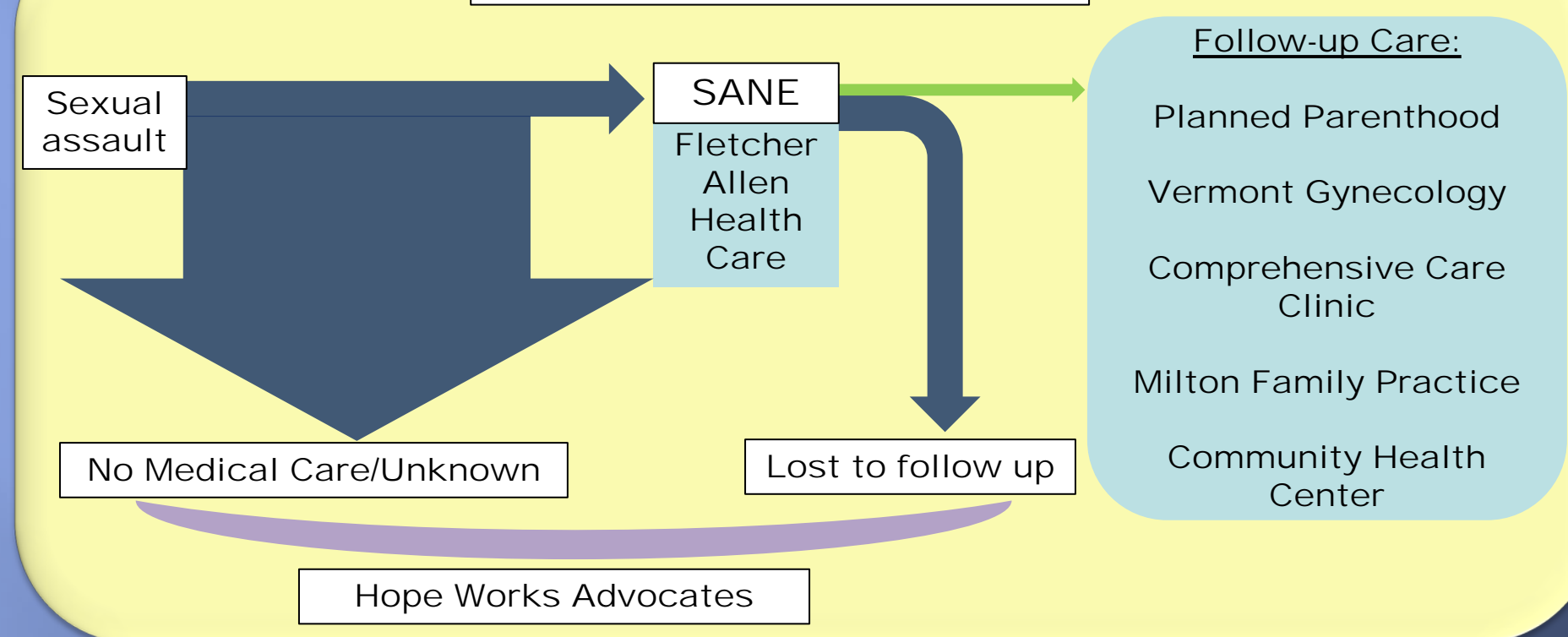
- Based on SANE follow-up forms, seven local organizations\* that provide care for survivors of sexual assault were identified. A standardized and focused interview was administered to thirteen individuals\*\* from these sites.

### Data Analysis

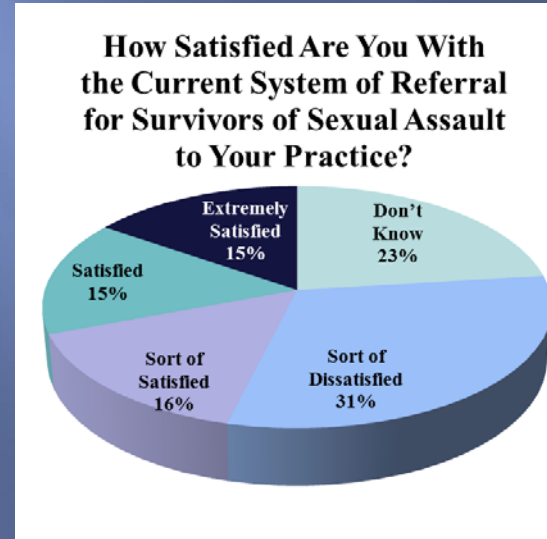
- Responses from the thirteen interviews were compiled and analyzed.
- Conclusions and recommendations were made based on literature review, analyzed data from SANE follow-up forms, and focused interview results.

\* FAHC ED, HOPE Works, Planned Parenthood, Community Health Center, Milton Family Practice, Vermont Gynecology, Comprehensive Care Clinic  
\*\* 2 victim advocates, 1 social worker, 1 NP, 1 PA, 1 RN SANE, 1 LPN, 1 call center coordinator and 5 practice supervisors/managers

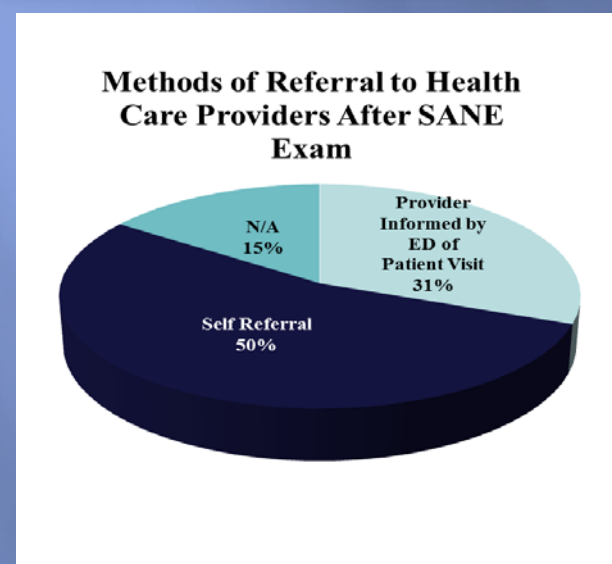
### Current Systems Map



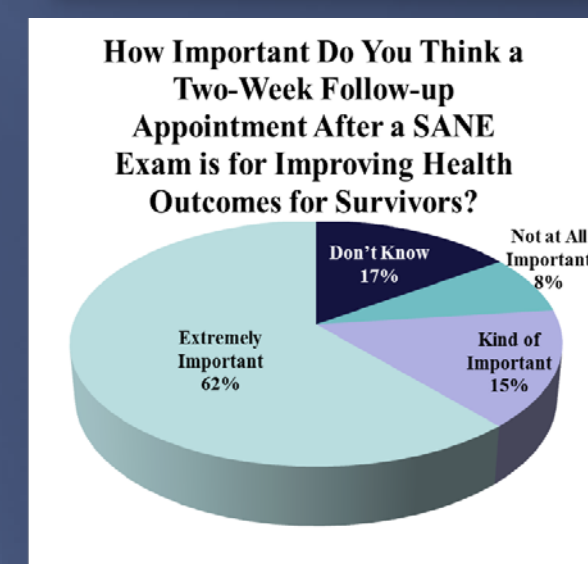
92% of those surveyed stated their organization would benefit from additional training regarding the care of sexual assault survivors



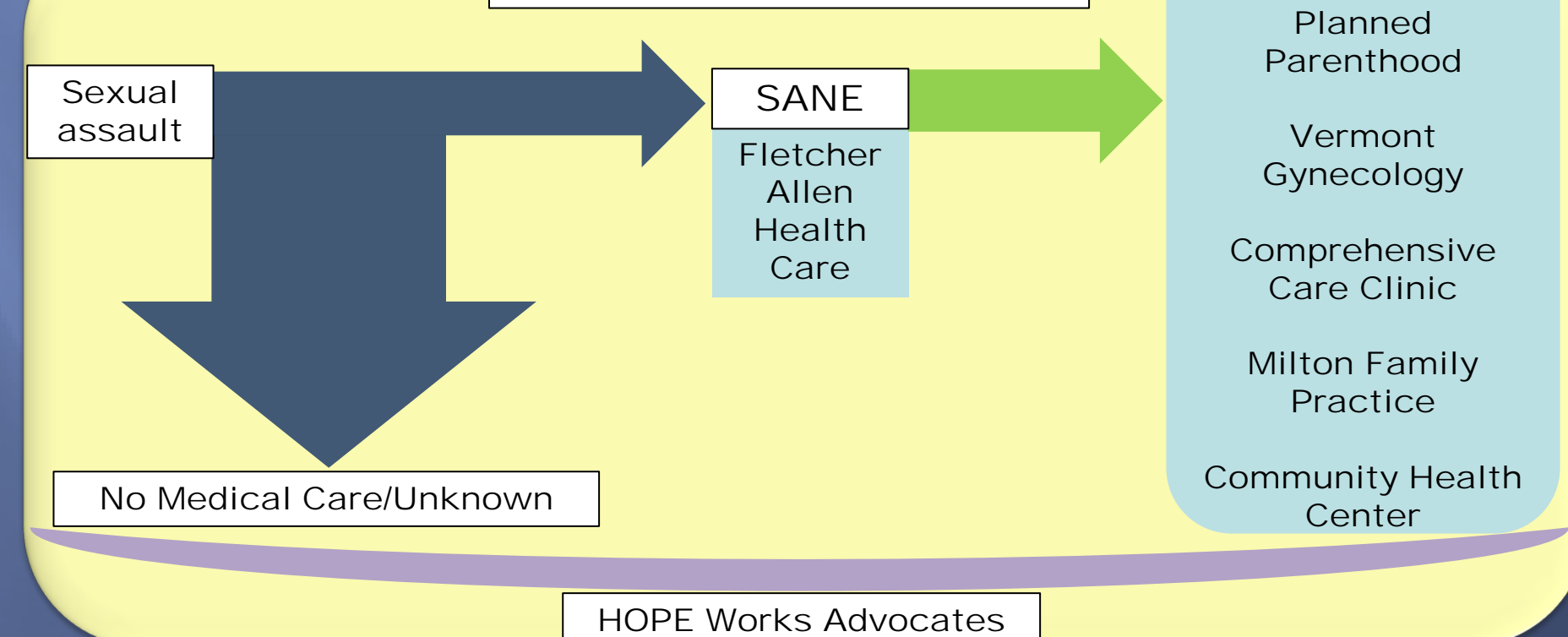
85% of survey respondents stated their organizations would be extremely likely to participate in a standardization of follow-up appointment scheduling for survivors of sexual assault, the remaining 15% said it was likely



85% of those surveyed stated the follow-up phone call is extremely important, the other 15% rated it as important.



### Proposed Systems Map



## Conclusions

- SANE programs are effective in providing consistent and comprehensive medical care, and improving psychological well being for survivors. The medical community highly values the work done by the SANE program.
- A published case report shows that follow-up appointments made before the survivor leaves the ED increase follow-up to ~80%. FAHC currently encourages the survivors to schedule their own follow-up health care appointment and the SANE nurses make follow-up phone calls where possible.
- Interview data indicates that most local health care providers:
  - Are not satisfied with the current system of referral for survivors.
  - Consider a follow-up appointment after a SANE exam extremely important.
  - Believe it is extremely important for SANE nurses to make follow-up phone calls to survivors.
  - Would like more training regarding care for survivors of sexual assault.
- In Chittenden county, there is currently no system to track the number of survivors who receive the recommended two week follow-up.

## Recommendations

- Encourage local organizations to increase public outreach, knowledge, and resources for survivors.
- Encourage greater visibility of resources available for survivors, i.e. websites and printed materials.
- Strengthen collaboration between local organizations serving survivors of sexual assault.
- Consider allocation of additional resources to SANE nurses in order to improve communication with survivors after the SANE exam and promote greater rates of follow-up care.
- Consider changes allowing SANE nurses to assist survivors in scheduling follow-up appointments before discharge from the ED.
- Promote education for health care providers and support staff regarding trauma informed care and local resources available for survivors.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organizations for their time and answers to our survey questions: Community Health Center, Hope Works, Milton Family Practice, Comprehensive Care Clinic, Vermont Gynecology, Planned Parenthood: Burlington Health Center, Burlington Community Justice Center and Fletcher Allen Health Care.

Thank you to the Parallel Justice Health Care Subcommittee, Raj Chawla, and Dr. Tom Delaney for their help and input with our project.

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“The biggest thing is making the transition from the emergency setting to the office setting as seamless as possible. Break down the barriers to accessing care. If we can do that it would be a big victory.” - Dr. Tom Lishnak, Milton Family Practice