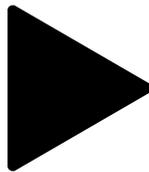


Inside Norfolk's one-stop shop for domestic violence and sexual assault victims

POSTED 5:04 PM, DECEMBER 20, 2019, BY MARGARET KAVANAGH, *UPDATED AT 10:55PM, DECEMBER 20, 2019*



Resources for those impacted by domestic violence



NORFOLK, Va. - Rape, sexual assault and violent attacks are horrific events that change a person for their entire life.

It's no pain any person should endure.

But now there is more help for those who do experience such tragedies.

"We are seeing more and more strangulation, and sexual assault often goes hand-in-hand," said Jennifer Knowlton, the director of the Chesapeake Forensic Specialists.

Knowlton treats many patients who are victims of these types of crimes.

"Evidence collection is very important," said Knowlton.

Friday, she showed us inside the new Norfolk Family Justice Center that has been open for a few weeks.

Knowlton said the process of getting help after you are attacked can be overwhelming for victims.

Sometimes victims have to go to several locations to get medical assistance, to get a physical exam, to file a police report or to receive additional services.

"The fact that we co-locate all the services here, it's just a great thing," said Knowlton.

Experts with the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention said the odds of homicide increases by 750% for victims who have previously been strangled. They said strangulation has been identified as one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Knowlton said the one-stop shop they just opened provides victims with a safe place to come.

Leaders with the Family Justice Center said in a press release:

"the onsite partners of the newly formed Norfolk Family Justice Center are Chesapeake Forensic Specialists, Norfolk Department of Human Services, Norfolk Police Department, Office of the Norfolk Commonwealth's Attorney, and YWCA South Hampton Roads. With grant funding from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the multi-agency center will co-locate law enforcement officers, prosecutors, victim witness advocates, social services specialists, a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) clinic where Physical Evidence Recovery Kits (PERKs) can be completed, and victim services including a crisis hotline and intervention, victim advocacy, counseling, support groups, wellness classes, and childcare."