**Competency and Certification**

It is important for examiners to understand the difference between *competent* and *certified*. Though you may be competent to conduct a forensic exam, certification is a credential that can only be obtained by successfully passing and maintaining requirements put forth by the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) and the Forensic Nursing Certification Board. A certified sexual assault nurse examiner for adults and adolescents may use the designation of SANE-A. Those who have not achieved certification may not.

**What does competent mean?**

Florida does not have specific requirements for who may conduct a forensic exam. Section 395.1021, Florida Statutes states:

> Any licensed facility which provides emergency room services shall arrange for the rendering of appropriate medical attention and treatment of victims of sexual assault through:

1. Such gynecological, psychological, and medical services as are needed by the victim

2. The administration of medical examinations, tests, and analysis required by law enforcement personnel in the gathering of evidence required for investigation and prosecution

3. The training of medical support personnel competent to provide the medical services and treatment as described in subsections (1) and (2).

The Florida Statutes do not define what “medical support personnel competent to provide medical services and treatment” means nor is it listed in the Adult Sexual Assault Protocol: Initial Forensic Physical Examination published by the Office of the Attorney General. Thus, there are no training requirements in the state of Florida to conduct a forensic exam. However, the IAFN outlines competency objectives. They are listed in the *Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Examination Candidate Handbook*. A complete copy of this handbook is included in your course binder. Generally, the competent sexual assault nurse examiner is able to do the following:

- Explain/inform patients about consent in the state they practice in, procedures and equipment, rights to privacy and confidentiality, and the purpose of multidisciplinary team members

- Perform thorough patient-centered, medically focused assessment to include but not limited to chief complaint, vital signs, health history (medical and surgical), all medications, and forensic history.
- Use established forensic collection techniques and has basic understanding of forensic photography principles. Is able to collect appropriate blood and urine samples in suspected drug facilitated assaults.

- Follow assessment guidelines and standardized procedures for age-specific and special populations

- Provide appropriate medication administration, discharge instructions and health care referrals according to established local policies and procedures.

- Participate in professional activities to continually improve practice

Who determines competency?

Competency is determined by the preceptor that the sexual assault nurse examiner has chosen to work with. In many cases this is a supervisor or another individual who has experience in the field, who is also a medical professional, and who is willing to sign off that the examiner is competent. Often the examiner and their preceptor will agree to a number of requirements that must be met before the examiner will receive the written competency. For example, the preceptor may require that in order to be deemed competent, the examiner must complete 20 supervised speculum exams, shadow during 5 complete forensic exams, and be monitored while completing 5 forensic exams on their own. If the preceptor views the examiner to have done each of these tasks properly and is confident that the examiner can do this properly on their own without supervision, they may then choose to sign off on competency.

How do I become a certified SANE-A?

To become a certified SANE-A, individuals must:

- Hold an active, unrestricted license as a registered nurse for a minimum of 2 years

- Have successfully completed a sexual assault nursing education program that includes a minimum 40 hours of course work that provides 40 nursing continuing education contact hours or academic credit from an accredited educational institution.

- Have had supervised practice as a sexual assault nurse examiner within the past 3 years, until competency has been validated by a medical professional.

- Pass the SANE-A national exam

After this class will I be SANE-A Certified?

No. Certification is only obtained after completing each step listed above. After you have completed this course we encourage you to pursue competency and eventually take the national exam.