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Legislative Document

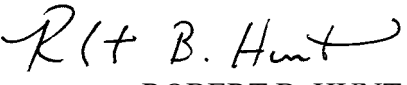
No. 1651

H.P. 1092

House of Representatives, April 15, 2025

An Act to Remove the Term "Alleged" When Referring to Victims of Sexual Assault in the Maine Revised Statutes

Reference to the Committee on Judiciary suggested and ordered printed.


ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative PUGH of Portland.
Cosponsored by Senator CARNEY of Cumberland and
Representatives: GEIGER of Rockland, GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach, KUHN of
Falmouth, MACIAS of Topsham, O'HALLORAN of Brewer, SATO of Gorham.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §3360-M**, as amended by PL 2017, c. 156, §1, is further amended
3 to read:

4 **§3360-M. Payment for forensic examinations for ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual assault**

5 **1. Payment.** The board shall pay the costs of forensic examiner training as well as the
6 costs of forensic examinations for ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual assault from the Victims'
7 Compensation Fund. The board shall track expenditures for forensic examinations
8 separately from all other expenditures. Forensic examination payments are not subject to
9 any other provision of this chapter. For the purposes of this section, "sexual assault" means
10 any crime enumerated in Title 17-A, chapter 11.

11 **2. Forensic examination; forensic examiner training and education.** The board
12 shall determine by rule what a forensic examination may include for purposes of payment.
13 An examination must include at least all services directly related to the gathering of forensic
14 evidence and related testing and treatment for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
15 The board shall pay a licensed hospital or licensed health care practitioner the actual cost
16 of the forensic examination up to a maximum of \$750.

17 The cost of sexual assault forensic examiner training and education provided by the sexual
18 assault forensic examiner program must be paid from the Victims' Compensation Fund in
19 an amount that may not exceed \$50,000 per year.

20 **3. Process for payment.** A licensed hospital or licensed health care practitioner that
21 performs forensic examinations for ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual assault shall submit a bill to
22 the Victims' Compensation Board directly for payment of the forensic examinations. The
23 hospital or health care practitioner that performs a forensic examination shall take steps
24 necessary to ensure the confidentiality of the ~~alleged~~ victim's identity. The bill submitted
25 by the hospital or health care practitioner may not identify the ~~alleged~~ victim by name but
26 must be assigned a tracking number assigned by the manufacturer of the forensic
27 examination kit. The hospital or health care practitioner that performs the examination
28 may not bill the ~~alleged~~ victim or the ~~alleged~~ victim's insurer, nonprofit hospital or medical
29 service organization or health maintenance organization for payment of the examination.
30 The ~~alleged~~ victim is not required to report the ~~alleged~~ offense to a law enforcement agency.

31 **4. Other reimbursement.** The fact that forensic examinations are paid for separately
32 through the Victims' Compensation Fund does not preclude ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual
33 assault from seeking reimbursement for expenses other than those for the forensic
34 examination. A victim seeking reimbursement from the Victims' Compensation Fund for
35 expenses other than the forensic examination is subject to all other provisions of this
36 chapter.

37 **5. Rules.** Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined
38 in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

39 **Sec. 2. 24 MRSA §2905-B, sub-§2**, as amended by PL 2021, c. 92, §1, is further
40 amended to read:

41 **2. Examination on unconscious ~~alleged~~ victim of sexual assault.** The health care
42 practitioner is authorized to perform the examination pursuant to section 2986, subsection
43 5; or

1 **Sec. 3. 24 MRSA §2986**, as amended by PL 2019, c. 94, §1, is further amended to
2 read:

3 **§2986. Performing forensic examinations for ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual assault**

4 **1. Standard forensic examination kit.** All licensed hospitals and licensed health care
5 practitioners shall use a standard forensic examination kit developed and furnished by the
6 Department of Public Safety pursuant to Title 25, section 2915 to perform forensic
7 examinations for ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual assault. For the purposes of this section, "sexual
8 assault" means any crime enumerated in Title 17-A, chapter 11.

9 **2. Victims' Compensation Board billing.** All licensed hospitals and licensed health
10 care practitioners that perform forensic examinations for ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual assault
11 shall submit a bill to the Victims' Compensation Board directly for payment of the forensic
12 examinations. The Victims' Compensation Board shall determine what a forensic
13 examination includes pursuant to Title 5, section 3360-M. The hospital or health care
14 practitioner that performs a forensic examination shall take steps necessary to ensure the
15 confidentiality of the ~~alleged~~ victim's identity. The bill submitted by the hospital or health
16 care practitioner may not identify the ~~alleged~~ victim by name but must be assigned a
17 tracking number assigned by the manufacturer of the forensic examination kit. The
18 Victims' Compensation Board shall pay the actual cost of the forensic examination up to a
19 maximum of \$750. Licensed hospitals and licensed health care practitioners that perform
20 forensic examinations for ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual assault may not bill the ~~alleged~~ victim
21 or the ~~alleged~~ victim's insurer, nonprofit hospital or medical service organization or health
22 maintenance organization for payment for the examination.

23 **3. Completed kit.** If the ~~alleged~~ victim has not reported the alleged offense to a law
24 enforcement agency when the examination is complete, the hospital or health care
25 practitioner shall then notify the nearest law enforcement agency, which shall transport and
26 store the completed forensic examination kit for 8 years. The completed kit may be
27 identified only by the tracking number. If during that storage period ~~an~~ ~~alleged~~ a victim
28 decides to report the alleged offense to a law enforcement agency, the ~~alleged~~ victim may
29 contact the hospital or health care practitioner to determine the tracking number. The
30 hospital or health care practitioner shall provide the ~~alleged~~ victim with the tracking
31 number on the forensic examination kit and shall inform the ~~alleged~~ victim which law
32 enforcement agency is storing the kit.

33 If the ~~alleged~~ victim reports the alleged offense to a law enforcement agency by the time
34 the examination is complete, the investigating agency shall retain custody of the forensic
35 examination kit.

36 If an examination is performed under subsection 5 and the ~~alleged~~ victim does not, within
37 60 days, regain a state of consciousness adequate to decide whether or not to report the
38 alleged offense, the State may file a motion in the District Court relating to storing or
39 processing the forensic examination kit. Upon finding good cause and after considering
40 factors, including, but not limited to, the possible benefits to public safety in processing the
41 kit and the likelihood of the ~~alleged~~ victim's regaining a state of consciousness adequate to
42 decide whether or not to report the alleged offense in a reasonable time, the District Court
43 may order either that the kit be stored for additional time or that the kit be transported to
44 the Maine State Police Crime Laboratory for processing, or such other disposition that the
45 court determines just. In the interests of justice or upon motion by the State, the District

1 Court may conduct hearings required under this paragraph confidentially and in camera
2 and may impound pleadings and other records related to them.

3 **4. Other payment.** A licensed hospital or licensed health care practitioner is not
4 precluded from seeking other payment for treatment or services provided to an ~~alleged~~ a
5 victim that are outside the scope of the forensic examination.

6 **5. Implied consent.** If an ~~alleged~~ a victim of sexual assault is unconscious and a
7 reasonable person would conclude that exigent circumstances justify conducting a forensic
8 examination, a licensed hospital or licensed health care practitioner may perform an
9 examination in accordance with the provisions of this section.

10 A forensic examination kit completed in accordance with this subsection must be treated
11 in accordance with Title 25, section 3821 and must preserve the ~~alleged~~ victim's anonymity.
12 In addition, the law enforcement agency shall immediately report to the district attorney
13 for the district in which the hospital or health care practitioner is located that such a forensic
14 examination has been performed and a forensic examination kit has been completed under
15 this subsection.

16 **6. Liability.** A licensed hospital or licensed health care practitioner in the exercise of
17 due care is not liable for an act done or omitted in performing a sexual assault forensic
18 examination under this section.

19 **Sec. 4. 25 MRSA §2915**, as amended by PL 2017, c. 156, §3, is further amended to
20 read:

21 **§2915. Uniform forensic examination kit for evidence collection in alleged cases of**
22 **sexual assault**

23 **1. Development of uniform forensic examination kit.** The Department of Public
24 Safety shall determine by rule what constitutes a uniform standardized forensic
25 examination kit for evidence collection in alleged cases of sexual assault. The rules must
26 define the contents of the kit, instructions for administering the kit and a checklist that
27 examiners must follow and enclose in the completed kit.

28 **2. Use of uniform forensic examination kit.** A licensed hospital or licensed health
29 care practitioner that conducts physical examinations of ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual assault
30 shall use the uniform standardized forensic examination kit developed by the Department
31 of Public Safety pursuant to subsection 1. A health care practitioner who conducts physical
32 examinations of ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual assault must be trained in the proper evidence
33 collection procedures for conducting a forensic examination.

34 Evidence collection results may not be excluded as evidence in any proceeding before any
35 court of this State as a result of the examiner's failure to use the standardized evidence
36 collection kit or as a result of the examiner's failure to be trained in the proper procedures
37 for the collection of evidence required by this subsection.

38 **3. Furnishing of uniform forensic examination kit.** The Department of Public
39 Safety shall furnish the uniform forensic examination kits to licensed hospitals and licensed
40 health care practitioners that perform forensic examinations of ~~alleged~~ victims of sexual
41 assault.

42 **3-A. "Sexual assault" defined.** For the purposes of this section, "sexual assault"
43 means any crime enumerated in Title 17-A, chapter 11.

4. Rules. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 5. 25 MRSA c. 407, headnote is amended to read:

CHAPTER 407

TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE OF FORENSIC EXAMINATION KITS FOR ALLEGED VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sec. 6. 25 MRSA §3821, 2nd ¶, as amended by PL 2023, c. 236, §1, is further amended to read:

If an alleged victim of sexual assault or strangulation has a forensic examination and has not reported the alleged offense to a law enforcement agency when the examination is complete, the licensed hospital or licensed health care practitioner that completed the forensic examination shall notify the nearest law enforcement agency. That law enforcement agency shall transport the completed forensic examination kit, identified only by a tracking number assigned by the kit manufacturer, to its evidence storage facility. The law enforcement agency shall store the forensic examination kits involving sexual assault for 20 years and forensic examination kits involving only strangulation for 6 years. If during that storage period the alleged victim reports the offense to a law enforcement agency, the investigating agency shall take possession of the forensic examination kit.

Sec. 7. 30-A MRSA §287, as amended by PL 1999, c. 719, §§5 to 8 and affected by §11, is further amended to read:

§287. Physical examination of crime victims

1. Payment of expenses by district attorney. Except as provided in subsection 2, in all cases reported to a law enforcement officer of sexual crimes against minors or assault when serious bodily injury has been inflicted, the office of the district attorney of the county in which the alleged crime occurred shall pay the expenses of a physical examination of the victim conducted for the purpose of obtaining evidence for the prosecution. Pursuant to Title 5, section 3360-M, the Victims' Compensation Board shall pay the expenses of forensic examinations for alleged victims of gross sexual assault.

2. Limitation. The district attorney is required to pay the expenses for the physical examination of a victim in accordance with subsection 1 only in the absence of medical insurance or other 3rd-party coverage of the expenses of examination and only from a fund or account appropriated for that purpose. The office of the district attorney is not liable for the payment of any charges, costs or fees for an examination under subsection 1 until the district attorney has received copies of all reports and records pertaining to the examination, if the copies have been requested.

2-A. Drug and alcohol testing. Notwithstanding subsections 1 and 2 and Title 5, section 3360-M, the district attorney shall pay the expense of any analysis of a drug or alcohol test performed as part of a forensic examination of an ~~alleged~~ alleged a victim of gross sexual assault when the purpose of the analysis is to obtain evidence for the prosecution.

3. Medical personnel not liable for furnishing reports, records or testimony. A physician, nurse, hospital, clinic or any other person, firm or corporation attending a victim

1 under subsection 1 is not liable in damages or otherwise for providing reports or records,
2 copies of reports or records or for their testimony relating to any examination performed
3 under this section when those reports, records or testimony are provided to a district
4 attorney, a law enforcement officer or a court for the purpose of prosecuting the alleged
5 crime, whether or not the reports, records or testimony are provided with the written
6 authorization of the victim examined under this section.

7 **SUMMARY**

8 This bill removes the term "alleged" when referring to victims of sexual assault in the
9 Maine Revised Statutes.