

# THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA SYSTEM

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## **New SAFE Program Will Serve West Alabama**

August 30, 2017 (Tuscaloosa, AL) West Alabama is several steps closer to having a new Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) program and facility to provide comprehensive care to victims of sexual assault throughout the region.

The SAFE program is a community-based collaborative effort designed to serve the emotional, medical and forensic needs of sexual assault survivors.

Dr. Kathleen Cramer, a long-time community volunteer and retired University of Alabama administrator, has been tapped to lead efforts to launch the SAFE program in conjunction with numerous area entities. A non-profit agency, SAFE will be overseen by a volunteer board of directors.

“Providing the best quality care for those impacted by sexual assault is critical for our community,” said University of Alabama System Chancellor C. Ray Hayes. “I am proud of the collaboration and the partners that have come together to take this important step to develop a program to serve the entire West Alabama region.”

SAFE services will be provided in a stand-alone, centrally located facility. Patient-centered care will serve victims of trauma related to sexual assault, providing medical care, follow-up counseling, specialized therapy and information about reporting options.

The care will be provided by nurses certified by the SAFE organization. These nurses will have completed 40 hours of classroom training and additional hours of clinical training.

Partners include the DCH Health System, The DCH Foundation, The University of Alabama, the District Attorney’s Office, and local law enforcement groups as well as city and county leadership. About 17 DCH Emergency Department nurses are now taking SAFE classroom training, which should be completed by early October. Until the

new facility is operational later this fall, sexual assault survivors will continue to be treated at the DCH Regional Medical Center Emergency Department.

“Advancing the services and support we provide is at the heart of our mission,” said Bryan Kindred, DCH System president and CEO. “DCH has endorsed this type of program, and it is gratifying to see all of these community groups come together to ensure the new SAFE program provides a broad scope of professional services.”

### **Additional Comments from Community Partners**

UA President Dr. Stuart Bell: “The University of Alabama is proud to support the ongoing effort to establish a SAFE program serving the West Alabama region, including the Tuscaloosa area. These efforts, which began last fall, will provide community-based services to enhance the resources available to those within our local and campus communities.”

Tuscaloosa District Attorney Hays Webb: “We are pleased to be a part of this effort. A SAFE program in Tuscaloosa will better fulfill the needs of our community. This program will assist our office in seeking justice, providing us strong evidence as we analyze and prosecute cases.”

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