

At-Home Rape Kit FAQ

ValorUS® (VALOR) supports survivors and their right to choose services tailored to their specific needs. Over the last few years, companies selling products marketed as “at-home rape kits” or “early-evidence kits” have been targeting college students as customers for unrealistic DIY forensic evidence collection kits, while free services are readily available. These kits have been denounced by sexual assault advocates and state Attorney General offices across the country, and barred for sale in Michigan. VALOR wants survivors to be able to make fully informed choices, and to be aware of the specifics of both in-person services, as well as at-home products.

What services are available for survivors of sexual violence?

Campus health centers, local medical centers and rape crisis centers each provide various services as part of a trained Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Some services available are forensic exam, counseling, post exposure prophylaxis, STI testing, pregnancy testing, medical care, court accompaniment, legal advocacy, and title IX guidance. Some campus clinics can also test for the presence of “date rape drugs.”

Manufacturing companies sell at-home DNA testing kits. Some kits come with access to a care team for chat and video support, STI testing kits and Plan B.

Who is eligible to receive services?

Any college student is eligible for student health services. SART exams and services from rape crisis centers are free to all survivors, regardless of citizenship or participation with the police.

Private companies require customers to be 18 years old or older to purchase at-home testing kits.

Any college student is eligible for student health services. SART exams and services from rape crisis centers are free to all survivors, regardless of citizenship or police involvement.

How much will services cost me?

Forensic evidentiary examinations are free of cost to survivors. In California, payment of these exams is the responsibility of the local law enforcement agency. These services are free, regardless of citizenship or police involvement.

Manufacturing companies typically charge per member, rather than per kit. Costs start around \$60 per member and do not specify the number of kits included. Additional costs may apply.

What will happen to the evidence that is collected?

SART exams are intended to acquire DNA evidence and test it against the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), a national FBI database for matching suspects. Photographs, clothing, and injury descriptions are also collected to be used as evidence.

Manufacturing companies are not clear about what happens to evidence that is turned in to them for testing. They may simply confirm the presence of foreign DNA. There are no specifications about what happens to the survivor's DNA sample. Kits that survivors choose to keep may not be reliably tested at a later date.

Can my evidence be used in a court case?

It would be up to the trial judge if your evidence can be used in a court case. Evidence collected in a SART exam follows a strict chain of custody that has been established and overseen by law enforcement and is typically a trusted form of evidence.

Private companies claim that their kits have a process to track chain of custody but it is not overseen or approved by law enforcement or the legal system which decides if it is admissible as evidence. There have been no public cases of at-home kits being admitted as evidence. The results of at-home kits are often not admissible in court proceedings.

Who will have access to my information?

Survivor information collected during a SART exam is subject to HIPAA laws. Any information shared with outside agencies would require signed consent of the survivor.

No such laws protect information that is disclosed to private companies.

In April 2022, the California Department of Justice issued the following warning to survivors of sexual assault regarding the use of self-administered "at-home" evidence kits:

"These "at-home" kits may be advertised as "evidence kits" however, trained medical professionals are essential in collecting samples, examining and treating the victim, and preserving and testing evidence that is obtained during the exam. At-home kits should not be used where the identity of the perpetrator is at issue and we strongly encourage victims to obtain medical exams from trained professionals."

Read the entire advisory [here](#).

What if I want my information to be confidential?

Survivors also have the choice to participate in an anonymous medical forensic exam (often called abbreviated or Jane-Joe Doe exams). In these exams, DNA evidence is collected and assigned a unique number. It is stored without immediate processing depending on whether the survivor wants to submit the kits as evidence. Sexual assault advocates/counselors and licensed medical providers are obligated by law and ethical rules to protect the confidentiality of your information.

At-home kits do not have a statement guaranteeing confidentiality for any submitted information. Many manufacturers require the use of your information for business purposes.

If I want an exam, do I have to work with law enforcement?

In California, a survivor of sexual violence has the right to decline participation in any investigation or court proceedings. Under Title IX, certain staff members are mandated to report their knowledge, but survivors are able to choose their involvement. Confidential advocates are available to provide options prior to deciding to involve Title IX or law enforcement. Local rape crisis center hotlines are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to discuss options and resources that are completely unconnected from law enforcement and/or school/university.

While manufacturers claim to work with law enforcement, and encourage reporting, their products may interfere in the process of evidence collection.

If I'm uncomfortable with parts of an exam, do I have to continue?

No. Any part of an exam, forensic or at-home, can be declined at any point. Survivors maintain the right to make choices about their bodies.