



To: Mayor Bruce Harrell, City of Seattle
Chief Adrian Diaz, Seattle Police Department
King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg

Cc: Seattle City Council President Deb Juarez
Seattle City Council Members Lisa Herbold, Tammy Morales, Kshama Sawant, Alex Pedersen,
Dan Strauss, Andrew Lewis, Teresa Mosqueda and Sara Nelson
Andrew Myerberg, Director of Public Safety, City of Seattle

From: Abigail Echo-Hawk, Executive Vice President, Seattle Indian Health Board
Riddhi Mukhopadhyay, Director, Sexual Violence Law Center
Mary Ellen Stone, Chief Executive Officer, King County Sexual Assault Resource Center

Date: July 28, 2022

To our City and County leaders:

As leaders of community organizations that advocate for the needs of sexual assault victims, we appreciate hearing that the Seattle Police Department and the City acknowledge the need to improve the systemic handling of sexual assault case investigations, per the Mayor's Executive Order.

The order outlines a promising framework for better understanding gaps in the system response, and improving the response with greater transparency. We look forward to hearing more details on how these proposals will be implemented.

As your plan takes shape, we look for your strong commitment to full transparency and accountability. Years of research and experience tell us the initial response to survivors of sexual assault is crucial for their recovery and healing. A supportive response can help victims heal from the traumatic wounds of a sexual assault while holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Today, that is not the experience of most adult sexual assault victims who choose to report to Seattle Police Department and engage in the legal and criminal justice system.

News reports last month about [an internal memo](#) detailed SPD's approach to the handling and investigation of adult rape victim reports. The current City-wide response to sexual assault victims is inadequate and does not address the underlying disparities in the treatment and response to victims.

Now, as we shift into a world that is learning to carry out vital functions amid an ongoing public health challenge, the same inadequate systemic response cannot continue. It never has been nor is it now acceptable for a sexual assault report to go months without a vigorous response or investigation.

Our City-wide criminal justice response to sexual assault victims must improve.

Our advocacy-based community organizations support thousands of victims every year. We work alongside law enforcement, prosecution and judges every day, and we believe the individuals we

partner with care deeply about their work. We believe these individuals share our desire for a transparent and supportive response to victims of sexual assault. However, the established infrastructures for problem-solving, coordination and leadership within the current criminal justice system are not adequately addressing this crisis.

The City of Seattle, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) and the Seattle Police Department (SPD) need to immediately join together to prioritize the response to sexual assault victims.

By September 1, 2022, we ask for:

- Timely investigation of adult rape cases as outlined on page 53 in the [King County Special Assault Network Protocol](#), with a referral to the KCPAO within 60 days of the victim interview, which all law enforcement jurisdictions and KCPAO have agreed to follow;
- Compliance by SPD and KCPAO with RCW [70.125.110](#) and RCW [7.69.030](#), which require:
 - Victims receive referrals to sexual assault community organizations;
 - Victims receive notification of the status and updates on their case;
 - Victims receive notification of their rights as crime victims;
 - Immediate access to medical assistance and examination;
- Accounting for the additional reporting barriers for more vulnerable populations, BIPOC, homeless and other particularly vulnerable and marginalized survivors who report must receive a tailored, specific response from SPD;
- KCPAO to commit and identify concrete steps to solve this crisis, and to make adult rape victims a priority. This includes:
 - Putting in place immediately [the protocol between SPD and KCPAO that exists for other crimes](#) to enable prosecution and law enforcement to triage sexual assault cases and work in collaborative manner to move a case forward;
 - Monthly King County Sexual Assault Network meetings to ensure there is routine opportunity to address and resolve challenges;
- Compliance with RCW [5.70.040](#), requiring SPD to submit a request to the Washington state patrol crime laboratory for prioritization testing within 30 days of receiving a rape kit;
- Seattle's Mayor and Council to initiate a systemwide audit, conducted by an independent, outside auditor, to include a look at the unique role of community-based sexual assault advocates *to begin* in 2022;
- SPD to apply to the Sexual Assault Investigations Case Review conducted by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission before its deadline of Sept. 15;
- Participation by SPD leadership in the [WSCJTC Sexual Assault Investigations \(SAI\)/Start By Believing Summit](#) September 22, 2022;
- Creation of a "blue ribbon" panel to provide consistent oversight for this ongoing crisis and ensure implementation of any recommendations and protocols. This panel should make quarterly progress reports on action steps, including identifying which division/lead is accountable for implementation.

Victims deserve a responsive, transparent and trustworthy system held to the highest standards.

As advocates for victims, we are responding with care, compassion and knowledge. We are working together to urgently identify ways we can solve this problem and provide victims the support they deserve. We expect City and County leadership to do the same.