

March 4, 2020

General Josh Stein, Esq.
Attorney General for the State of North Carolina
9001 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-9001

Dear General Stein:

We wanted to quickly and directly address the concern you raised about the resources available at Angel Medical Center for sexual assault survivors. A sexual assault survivor who comes to Angel Medical Center receives the same services now that were available prior to HCA's acquisition of the Mission Health system. Since at least 2016, Mission Health has had a program for sexual assault survivors, known as the Forensic Nursing Program ("FNP"). HCA has not eliminated any FNP nurse position at Angel Medical Center or within the Mission Health system or any services available to sexual assault survivors. We are committed to and capable of providing the medical care and other social services that sexual assault survivors very much need and deserve. *No victim of sexual assault should hesitate to seek care at any HCA hospital.*

The FNP is a comprehensive program for sexual assault survivors that includes a team of 11 nurses who are trained as sexual assault nurse examiners. In 2019, HCA provided care to more than 450 patients in Western North Carolina through the FNP. The team is based at Mission Hospital in Asheville and available to care for a patient at Angel Medical Center or any other Mission Health hospital, twenty-four hours per day and seven days per week.¹ When a patient in a Mission Health emergency department ("ED") reports a sexual assault, she or he is provided with any necessary medical care by an ED physician. When the patient is medically stable, a FNP nurse is available to meet with the patient and discuss the forensic examination process in order to ensure the patient can make an informed decision about completing the forensic examination. If the patient decides to move forward with the examination, it is conducted by the FNP nurse in accordance with her training and expertise. Any evidence that is collected is provided to the appropriate law enforcement agency. The FNP also endeavors to address the personal and emotional needs of the patient, including by ensuring she or he is aware of the support and services available through various agencies, including the Buncombe County Family Justice Center.²

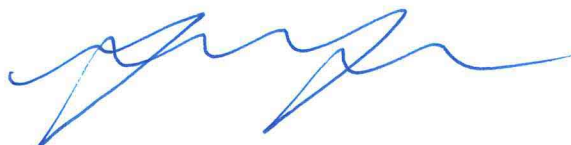
¹ In general, the FNP nurses provide specialized forensic services to patients, including: (1) sexual assault kit evidence collection; (2) sexual assault consultation; (3) domestic violence assessment/evidence collection; (4) pediatric assault assessment; (5) forensic phone consultations; and (6) other miscellaneous services, such as medical photography of assault victims.

² The long-standing collaboration between Mission Health and the Buncombe County Family Justice Center allows us to send nurses to their facility for forensic examinations, consultations and follow-up visits with victims.

A patient at Angel Medical Center who reports a sexual assault receives this same level and quality of medical and nursing services. The key difference is the consideration that must be given to the best place for those services, since several options are now and have been available to patients at Angel Medical Center for the past several years. For example, a FNP nurse may travel from Asheville to Angel Medical Center, if circumstances allow the patient to remain at Angel Medical Center.³ Alternatively, the patient may travel to Asheville, where a FNP nurse can meet with the patient in an exam room at Mission Hospital or the Buncombe County Family Justice Center. As you likely understand, every sexual assault survivor is different, and the Angel Medical Center staff works hard to ensure their individual choices about medical care and forensic examinations are honored.⁴

We hope this letter addresses your concern about Angel Medical Center, and we continue to gather the information needed to answer your other questions about the Mission Health system. We are extremely proud of Mission Health and the services that have been and will continue to be provided to our patients. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,



Greg Lowe
President, North Carolina Division
HCA Healthcare

³One such circumstance is the need for the FNP nurse to examine a sexual assault survivor within the “120-hour window” for viable evidence collection.

⁴For example, in 2019, three adult patients who were victims of sexual assault sought care at Angel Medical Center. Two of those patients met with a FNP nurse who traveled from Asheville to Angel Medical Center, while the third patient traveled to Asheville to meet with a FNP nurse at Mission Hospital.