

Virginia Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Coordination Program

During the 2020 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly, policymakers created *Code of Virginia § 9.1-191* establishing the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Coordination Program at the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), effective July 1, 2020 (2020 Session, HB 475 (Mullin) and SB 373 (Deeds); 2020 Appropriations Act Item 404 #1c). The goals of the program include the development and enhancement of sexual assault forensic examiner programs across Virginia, establishing a partnership group to plan forensic nurse training, assisting with developing protocols and guidelines for the treatment of victims of sexual assault, and collecting and maintaining information on all available sexual assault forensic services in Virginia. A requirement of the position articulated in § 9.1-191(C) is to submit an annual report to the Governor and General Assembly on or before October 1 each year. The annual report “shall include a summary of activities for the year and any recommendations to address sexual assault exams within the Commonwealth, including budget needs to increase the availability of sexual assault exam services across the Commonwealth.”

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the specialized nature of the role, DCJS was unable to fill the sexual assault forensic examiner coordinator position until June 25, 2021, despite several rounds of recruitment. The individual hired to serve in this role, Gleibys Gonzalez, has extensive professional experience advocating for survivors of sexual assault and other forms of violence against women.

As a result of the extended delay in filling the position, there was nothing responsive to § 9.1-191(C) corresponding with the first annual report deadline of October 1, 2020. The first annual report fulfilling the requirements of § 9.1-191(C) for the year 2021, RD678, is [available](#) on the Reports to the General Assembly website.

