

As a Forensic Nurse Program Coordinator for a large hospital system, our team is on the front lines of response to survivors and educating about domestic violence and the seriousness of strangulation. Forensic nurses respond to and provide specialized care to patient who are experiencing emergent and long-term health effects associated with interpersonal violence. During our examinations forensic nurses not only inform patients of their rights as a victim of crime, we provide medical interventions, collect evidence and document injuries on patients who have been victimized or who are accused of victimization.

In addition to direct care of patients a goal of forensic nurses is to raise awareness about the public health crisis caused from violence, not only in our communities but worldwide. Strangulation is not only one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence, it also is an intimate crime where perpetrators look their victims in the eye as they take the life from them. Our program has developed policies to respond to patients who have been victimized by domestic violence including strangulation. We collaborate with the medical team to educate them about the seriousness of the potential injuries even survivors of strangulation may have. We advocate for top of the line testing to assure physical injuries are not missed. We also recognize that aftercare support is just as important as the emergency care we provide and work closely with agencies to link survivors and their family to ongoing support.

Though forensic nurses respond to these patients laws in Ohio currently do not support domestic violence survivors who have been strangled. Many times when talking to law enforcement after a forensic exam of a patient who has been strangled and beat we are told “these are not felony injuries” and the victim then would need to go to the police themselves to file a report. Offenders often are not arrested and face little to no repercussions when charged with a misdemeanor for strangling their partner. Many victims return to the perpetrator because they know leaving is even more dangerous than staying because they do not feel protected by our laws.

We are in need of help to keep our patients and other survivor safe in our state. By passing legislation that reflects the seriousness of strangulation it will send a clear message to victims that Ohio cares about you and to offenders that Ohio will not stand for their actions and they will face serious punishment.

I support the passage of HB 3.

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