

Forensic Nursing - Excellence



Andrew Mahoney

New Orleans, Louisiana

Work Setting: Hospital, SANE for Adults & Adolescents; Nurse Educator for Forensic Nursing among other concepts; Assisting with day-to-day operations of running a SANE program during a transition period after Coordinator's resignation.

Andy has been a dedicated member of the New Orleans SANE program for well over a decade and serves as an excellent resource on forensic nursing and SANE concepts for the entire staff. He became a SANE over a decade ago after a long career as an Emergency Department RN.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina incapacitated the Medical Center of Louisiana New Orleans, otherwise known as Charity Hospital, where Andy was employed. That hospital system was not only the only Level One Trauma Center for the entire region, but also housed the only SANE program to serve the adult population in all of Southeast Louisiana

In the aftermath of the storm, the few hospitals that were able to function could only reopen with a skeleton staff, operating only the most critical departments.

A small group of SANEs, including Andy, convinced the hospital the SANE Program was vital to the community, despite initial opposition. Only one month after the storm, they reopened the program in a tent in the parking lot near the storm-ravaged hospital. Over several months, they continued to maintain the program in third-world conditions, transitioning into another tent in a Convention Center, then into a make-shift hospital housed in an old shopping mall, and eventually into a renovated hospital.

Eleven years later, Andy remains as committed to the program as ever. He is pursuing his second Master's Degree in Forensic Nursing while working full-time as a Nurse Educator and using his few, valuable days off to consistently take call for SANE. His initiative for continued education is quite admirable. Several times per year he attends conferences and trainings, which are self-funded, to maintain the most current knowledge in Forensic Nursing. As one of only twelve certified SANEs in Louisiana, he has sustained his certification as a SANE-A for several years despite a lack of monetary reward. For many years, Andrew has assisted with community trainings to Advocacy centers, Universities, Law Enforcement, the Military, and more that are such a critical component of a quality SANE program; oftentimes he has been willing to do this for me with very little notice when I am prevented from giving the training myself.

Occasionally, members of our community express surprise that a male would be employed as a SANE; that is, until they meet Andy. His patients report he immediately invoked a sense of trust, respect, safety, and empathy in a time where they were acutely traumatized and gave them top-quality care. I personally have always called him my "moral compass". He always knows how to address an ethical dilemma with an unprejudiced, well well-thought-out solution. Andrew's unwavering dedication to our program and sexual assault survivors exemplify strong moral character and high-level competence as a practitioner. We are fortunate to have him representing us as a Forensic Nurse.