How to preserve evidence in rape cases – DPP

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The Director of Public Prosecutions in Lagos State, Mrs Yinka Adeyemi, has identified inadvertent destruction of evidences as a major setback in the prosecution of rapists.  
  
As such, she advised that parents and victims of rape must ensure that all traces and evidences were kept intact to aid the prosecution of sexual offenders.  
  
Adeyemi spoke on Tuesday at a virtual workshop with the theme, “The crime of defilement: Roles of parents, teachers and caregivers in ending the scourge,” organised the Lagos State Directorate of Citizens’ Rights.  
  
The DPP spoke alongside the Lagos State Attorney General, Mr Moyosore Onigbanjo (SAN); the state’s Solicitor-General, Ms Titilayo Shitta-Bey; the Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Lagos, Prof. Ayo Atsenuwa; Director, Directorate of Citizens’ Rights, Mrs Oluwatoyin Odusanya; as well as a family life therapist and a social activist, Mr Praise Fowowe and Ms Kikelomo Solomon-Ayeni, respectively.  
  
In her presentation, titled, ‘The crime of defilement from the prosecutor’s angle,” Adeyemi stressed the need for evidence preservation as the bedrock of successful prosecution in cases of rape.  
  
She said, “When issues of rape occur, timing is critical. Evidence should be collected within 72 hours; photographs of injuries sustained or the scene of the rape crime should be taken.  
  
“Victims should not take a bath or use the bathroom before undergoing medical examination. Clothes worn should be preserved and put in a box or bag. Also, the victim’s statement must be recorded.”  
  
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Atsenuwa, who was the lead speaker, identified lack of parental care, peer pressure and poor reporting as some of the factors fuelling the spike in sexual offences in the country in recent times.  
  
She said, “Government should disseminate mandatory reporting rules and make the reporting process user-friendly.  
  
“Measures to protect teachers and others who report sexual crimes should also be adopted.”  
  
In his remarks, Onigbanjo urged members of the public to stop condemning rape victims, stressing that what they need was support to ensure punishment for sexual offenders.  
  
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