

Important Definitions

Sexual Assault Kit

A package of items used by medical personnel to gather and preserve physical evidence from a person's body following a report of a sexual assault.

Unsubmitted Sexual Assault Kits

Sexual assault kits that are in police custody that have never been submitted to a crime laboratory for testing.

CODIS

The Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) is a system of federal, state and local databases that contain DNA profiles from both known offenders and crime scenes. CODIS is used to generate investigative leads.

CODIS-Hit

When a DNA profile is uploaded into CODIS and finds a matching DNA profile from a separate criminal offense or known offender, it is referred to as a "CODIS-Hit" and can be used as an investigative lead by law enforcement.

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Kansas Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Member Agencies

- › Kansas Bureau of Investigation
- › Kansas Office of the Attorney General
- › Kansas County and District Attorneys Association
- › Kansas Sheriffs' Association
- › Kansas Association of Chiefs of Police
- › Kansas Chapter of International Association of Forensic Nurses
- › Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence
- › Johnson County Sheriff's Office Criminalistics Laboratory
- › Sedgwick County Regional Forensic Science Center

"The KBI is committed to serving the Kansas criminal justice community and survivors of sexual assault. With the help of our partners involved in sexual assault response, our work will make a difference in the lives of victims and ultimately help remove dangerous predators from our streets. By critically evaluating how we have responded to sexual assault, we will identify and implement improvements."

- KBI Director Kirk Thompson

THE
KANSAS



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SEXUAL
ASSAULT
KIT
INITIATIVE

Kansas SAKI Project

This project is a proactive, objective evaluation of the issue of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits in the State of Kansas. The Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) has surveyed the state's law enforcement community to determine how many of these kits exist in Kansas. Additionally, they have set in motion a plan to test them. It is important to all involved in the project that victims of sexual assault receive appropriate services. In September 2015, the KBI was selected as one of twenty recipients nationwide of the National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) Grant and received \$2,000,000 from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. This money will be used to analyze previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits, enhance victim services and support, and develop recommendations to help prevent future accumulation of this valuable forensic evidence.

Goals & Objectives

- ▶ Reduce victimization
- ▶ Encourage reporting of sexual assault
- ▶ Enhance victim services/support
- ▶ Fully utilize available science and technology to prevent crime and prosecute offenders
- ▶ Identify and prosecute serial offenders
- ▶ Eliminate factors contributing to the accumulation of sexual assault kits
- ▶ Develop evidence-based best practice recommendations and model policy guidance to address the statewide inventory and prevent future accumulation of unsubmitted sexual assault kits
- ▶ Improve the quality and quantity of relevant trainings available throughout the state for sexual assault cases to law enforcement and prosecution

Kansas Response

The KBI has initiated a voluntary survey of local law enforcement agencies to identify the number of unsubmitted sexual assault kits they possess. Testing of these kits is underway. With help of their partners, the KBI hopes to:

- ▶ Identify underlying factors that have contributed to the accumulation;
- ▶ Develop a plan to test the previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits throughout the state; and
- ▶ Develop recommendations to help prevent similar accumulation of unsubmitted sexual assault kits in the future.

As these cases are being tested, the DNA evidence within some sexual assault kits may result in a CODIS-Hit which helps to identify the suspect. In these instances, local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors will work together with victim advocacy services to develop a follow-up action plan. This may include contacting victims from assaults that occurred several years ago in order to conduct new investigations and/or file charges against a suspect. The Kansas SAKI project has developed a victim notification procedure to ensure this process is completed with focus on victims' needs and wishes while aiming to minimize potential re-traumatization.

This SAKI project has led to the testing of your sexual assault kit.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why haven't some sexual assault kits been submitted?

Sexual assault kits are not submitted for a variety of reasons, and policies regarding submission vary between jurisdictions. The accumulation of unsubmitted sexual assault kits may be a result of inadequate criminal justice resources, a lack of advanced training, or a need to understand the importance of testing sexual assault kits to identify serial offenders and link cases together.

Why is my sexual assault kit getting tested now?

The KBI recognized the importance of proactively and objectively evaluating the issue of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits in our state. Research and case experience supports the value of collecting and testing sexual assault evidence. Advances in science and technology can be leveraged to the benefit of these investigations more today than ever before. Cases may be linked and serial offenders identified, which may prevent subsequent assaults. For further information regarding your case, we encourage you to talk with the investigator and/or attorney working your case.

What is being done to prevent accumulation of sexual assault kits in the future?

To evaluate and address an issue that has evolved over time is a very complex process and it continues to be a work in progress. The KBI will continue working with their partners to evaluate current practices, identify where change is needed, and develop a path forward. This is a systemic approach that will take time while they continue to be mindful of the immediate and ongoing needs the criminal justice community has for forensic laboratory services in the State of Kansas.