



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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National Institute of Justice Releases Special Report on Testing Evidence in Sexual Assaults

WASHINGTON – The National Institute of Justice, the research, development, and evaluation component of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, today released, [*Down the Road: Testing Evidence in Sexual Assaults*](#), a discussion of recent studies examining unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKS) and SAK evidence testing. It was released at the United State of Women Summit, convened by the White House Council on Women and Girls.

Today’s publication is a follow-up to NIJ’s 2011 special report, [*The Road Ahead: Unanalyzed Evidence in Sexual Assault Cases*](#), which explored the issue of untested sexual assault kits stored in law enforcement evidence facilities around the nation. The new report builds on this work to provide the most recent scientific findings from NIJ-supported research about the role of evidence testing in sexual assaults, including results from NIJ-funded action research projects in Detroit and Houston.

“With the advent of DNA technology and the creation of the national DNA database, also referred to as CODIS, we understand the value of sexual assault evidence to help solve and prosecute cases, to exclude potential suspects during the course of an investigation, and to exonerate the wrongfully convicted. We have also gained greater understanding about the critical need for victim-centered approaches to sexual assault response and investigation,” said NIJ Director Nancy Rodriguez. “Sexual assault is one of the most difficult and complex issues facing our nation’s criminal justice system and the goal of NIJ’s research is to help jurisdictions understand the problem and develop evidence-based solutions.”

In 2011, NIJ awarded research grants to the Houston Police Department and the Wayne County (Detroit), Michigan Prosecutor’s Office to form multidisciplinary teams to examine the issue of unsubmitted SAKs in their jurisdictions. The subsequent results and recommendations from those studies, including protocols for notifying victims in SAK cases, are included in the report.

More information on the programs of the National Institute of Justice is available at www.nij.gov.

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The Office of Justice Programs, headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation’s capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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