

City of Duluth Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI)

Project Update

May 15, 2018

Overview

The City of Duluth Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) is a multi-year, grant-funded project awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to the Duluth Police Department (DPD), St. Louis County Attorney's Office, the Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA), and the MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (MN BCA). The project is funded through three consecutive awards totaling over \$2 million through September 30, 2020.

This grant is being used to support:

- Development of policies and procedures to help prevent the accumulation of unsubmitted SAKs going forward
- Financial support to the MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to transition to the more efficient "Direct to DNA" testing method including the purchase of supplies and compensation for a forensic scientist
- Development and maintenance of a multi-disciplinary team to assist in the inventory, tracking, investigation, and prosecution related to the unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs)
- Data collection for tracking, performance measurement, and evaluation of the project
- Outreach to victim-survivors to notify them of the project, re-engage them with PAVSA services, and and, if they choose, re-open an investigation
- Upgrades to the Property and Evidence Unit including a new refrigerator and freezer and the purchase of a new evidence management system
- Training and technical assistance on promising practices related to victim notification, cold case sexual assault investigations and prosecution, trauma-informed interviewing, and the investigative value of DNA and Combined DNA Index System (CODIS)
- 5 full-time positions (Site Coordinator, 2 Victim Advocates, Investigator, and Evidence Technician) and additional financial support to the St. Louis County Attorney's Office and PAVSA Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program

Background

The project takes a comprehensive, system-wide approach to addressing the 578 unsubmitted SAKs inventoried with Duluth Police Department (DPD). These SAKs date from 1993 through 2015.

Project Design and Implementation

The City of Duluth has implemented all three components of the Bureau of Judicial Assistance (BJA) model:

- The Site Coordinator employed by the Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA) and co-located at the Duluth Police Department (DPD) was hired in December 2015.
- The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) Multidisciplinary Team was formed in February 2016 and meets quarterly.
- The Duluth Police Department (DPD) sexual assault kit (SAK) inventory was completed and certified by the BJA in April 2016.

The SAKI Multidisciplinary Team includes representatives from community-based advocacy, prosecution, law enforcement, forensic medicine, and academia. It has two subcommittees: (1) case review and (2) policy and protocol development. As a result of this initiative, the following protocols are in development as working drafts:

- Case Review & Prioritization
- Kit Handling
- Victim Notification
- Referral to Prosecution

By the Numbers

- 415 previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs) have been submitted for testing resulting in 69 uploads and 36 hits in CODIS. 300 SAKs have been submitted since September 2017 and have not yet been tested to completion.
- 61 unique victim-survivors have been re-engaged by the Victim Advocate.
- 9 suspects have been charged with Criminal Sexual Conduct-related offenses. 2 suspects have pled guilty.

108 SAKs are anonymous with victim-identifying information known only to the PAVSA SANE program. If these victims come forward to make a report to DPD, their SAK will be tested immediately.

Milestones

In April 2016, the victim advocate established a confidential information line and email address called the *Betty Skye Line* for survivors to reach out and discuss their options.

In October 2016, SAKI-designated investigator was appointed as a Special Deputy U. S. Marshal.

In December 2016, DPD hosted three nationally-recognized trainers in the fields of forensic nursing, cold case investigation, and prosecution for a three-day interactive training on trauma-informed investigations of sexual assault attended by advocates, patrol officers, investigators, prosecutors.

As of April 2017, Sex Crimes Unit investigators have been trained on Forensic Experiential Trauma Interviewing (FETI), a nationally-recognized promising practice for the investigation of sex crimes.

On June 6th, 2017, DPD sent 30 SAKs to FBI laboratory in Quantico for testing as part of the NIJ-FBI Sexual Assault Kit Partnership.

DPD was selected as a pilot site for testing Portland Police Bureau's Sexual Assault Management System (SAMS) database. The database was installed in July 2017.

All sexual assault kits (SAKs) collected as part of a standard report to law enforcement in the calendar year 2016 and 2017 were submitted to the MN BCA for testing.

Through collaboration with the MN BCA, the rate of SAK submittal increased from batches of 10 to 50 SAKs. Batches of 50 SAKs were submitted for testing starting in September 2017. All eligible SAKs have been submitted as of April 27th, 2018.

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