



THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

Department of Public Safety

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November 1, 2024

The Honorable Gary Stevens
Senate President
Alaska State Capitol Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Senator.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov

The Honorable Cathy Tilton
Speaker of the House
Alaska State Capitol Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Representative.Cathy.Tilton@akleg.gov

Subject: 2024 Report on Untested Sexual Assault Examination Kits

Dear President Stevens and Speaker Tilton,

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) has prepared the following report on untested sexual assault examination kits as required by AS 44.41.070(b).

The 2024 inventory identified 254 untested sexual assault examination kits in the possession of a law enforcement agency, a medical facility, or the Alaska Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. E. Cockrell".

James E. Cockrell
Commissioner

2024 Report on Untested Sexual Assault Examination Kits

2024 Inventory of Untested Sexual Assault Examination Kits

In 2024, 44 law enforcement agencies maintained case jurisdiction on sexual assault cases in Alaska. This year, the Department of Public Safety used the newly implemented sexual assault kit tracking system, Track-Kit, to conduct the annual untested kit inventory. All 44 law enforcement agencies are trained and are actively using the tracking system, and therefore complied with the inventory requirement.

The 2024 inventory, which included the existing inventory of untested Sexual Assault Examination Kits (SAKs) in possession of the DPS Alaska Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory (Crime Lab), resulted in a total inventory of 254 untested victim sexual assault examination kits. As of September 30, 2024, 253 of the untested kits eligible for this report are in possession of the Crime Lab, none are in law enforcement possession, and one is at a medical facility and assigned to an Alaska law enforcement agency.

Since the inaugural inventory in 2017, there has been a 93% reduction in the number of untested sexual assault examination kits.

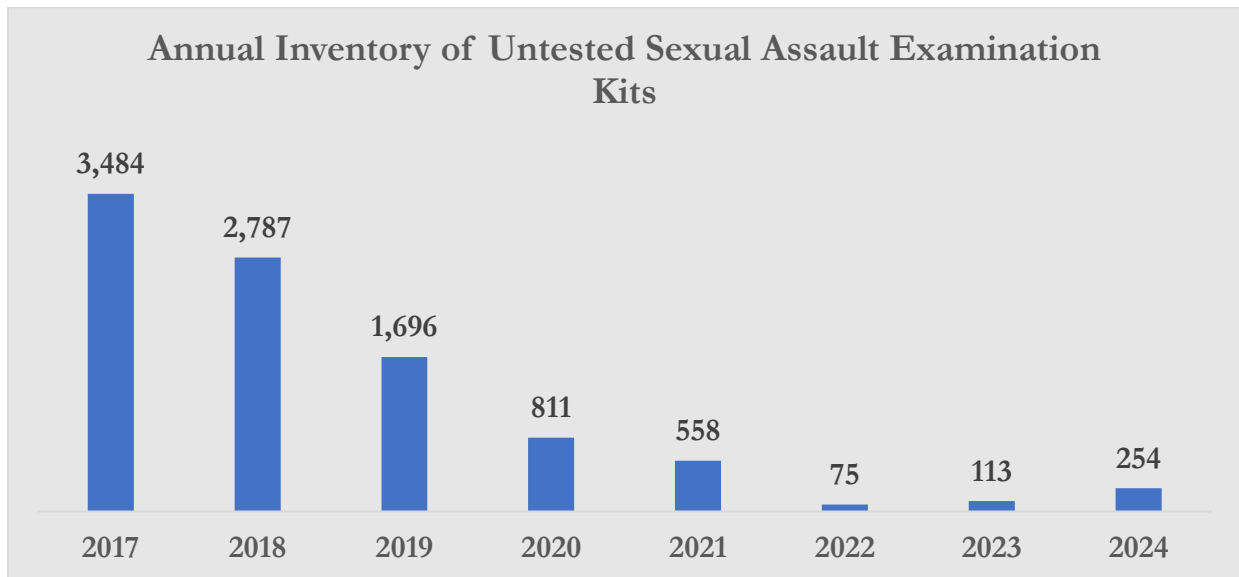


Figure 1. Annual inventory of untested SAKs per year, including those at law enforcement agencies, Alaska Crime Lab, and private labs.

2024 Report on Untested Sexual Assault Examination Kits

2024 Sexual Assault Examination Kits (SAKs) Ineligible for Testing

Between September 1, 2023, and August 31, 2024, 89 additional Sexual Assault Examination Kits (SAKs) were determined to be ineligible for testing per AS 44.41.070(e). These kits will be retained at the Crime Lab under the same evidence retention timeframes as all other SAKs. These SAKs are not included in the 2024 inventory of 254 untested SAKs because they are not being considered for testing.

Under AS 44.41.070 *Report on untested sexual assault examination kits* subsection (e) provides that a SAK is ineligible for testing if the law enforcement agency or state department finds that the kit:

1. Is scientifically unviable;
2. Does not meet eligibility requirements for inclusion in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS)¹; or
3. Was collected from a person who reported a sexual assault anonymously.

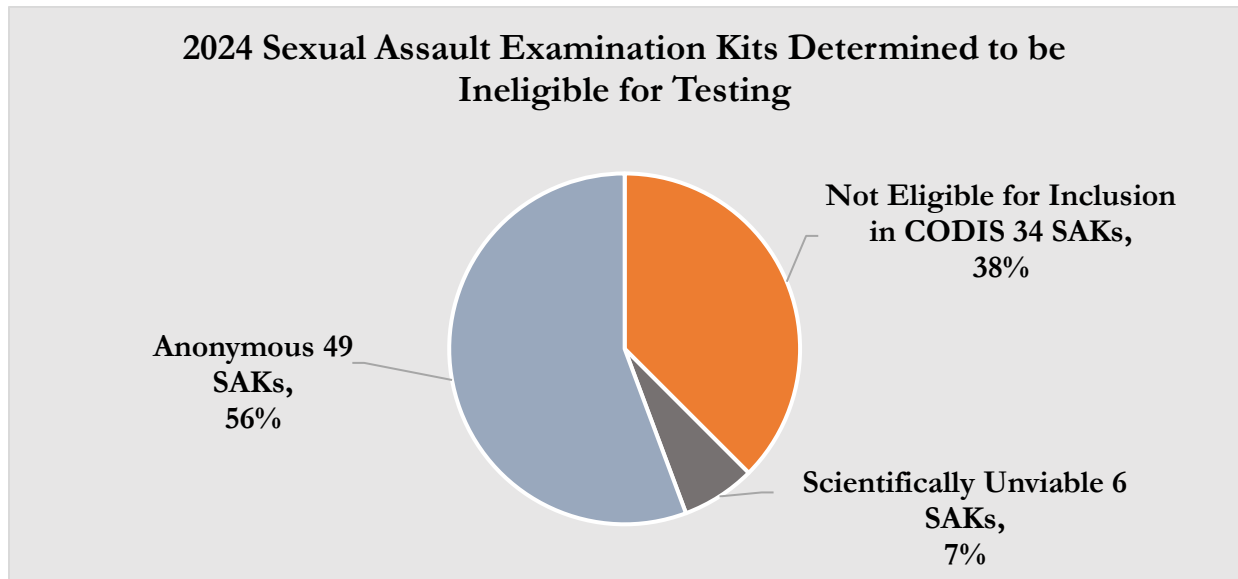


Figure 2. 89 SAKs not eligible for testing by reason for ineligibility.

Ineligible for Testing Categories	2023 inventory	2024 inventory	% Change
Anonymous	38	49	29%
Not Eligible for Inclusion in CODIS	45	34	-27%
Scientifically Unviable	4	6	50%
TOTAL	87	89	2%

¹ More information about the CODIS system and CODIS sample eligibility can be found on the DPS website at <https://dps.alaska.gov/Statewide/CrimeLab/Forensic-Biology/DNA> and on the Federal Bureau of Investigation website at <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/dna-fingerprint-act-of-2005-expungement-policy/codis-and-ndis-fact-sheet#CODIS>

2024 Report on Untested Sexual Assault Examination Kits

Plan to Prevent Future Backlogs of Untested Sexual Assault Examination Kits

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) major initiatives to address untested SAKs and prevent future backlogs are:

1. Reduction in Sexual Assault Kit (SAK) Testing Turnaround Time

Over the last few years, the Crime Lab has been able to add new positions to reduce testing turnaround time. These positions have helped make a significant impact to processing sexual assault kits. The average turnaround time for testing SAKs has gone from an average of 246 days in 2020 to an average of 113 days in state Fiscal Year 2024.

2. Case Review by a Department of Public Safety (DPS) Investigator

In order to continue to ensure compliance with AS 44.41.070(e), all SAKs that are submitted to the Crime Lab by a law enforcement agency for storage only are reviewed by a DPS investigator. The investigator has been assigned by the Department of Public Safety, Office of the Commissioner to improve consistency among law enforcement agencies across the state and to ensure analysis is performed for every SAK that should be tested under the law. Additionally, the investigator follows up with law enforcement agencies and provides technical assistance and training to the Department of Public Safety on the requirements of the law for SAKs.

3. Sexual Assault Examination Kit (SAK) Tracking Software System

In the spring and summer 2023, DPS implemented a tracking database to allow victim survivors and agencies involved in sexual assault response the ability to track the status and location of SAKs. The software tracks SAKs from the point of distribution all the way through storage at the Crime Lab.

The software provides accurate tracking of turnaround times between each milestone, some of which are mandated in AS 44.41.065. Prior to this software, there was not a cohesive data set to aggregate turnaround times before kits arrived at the Crime Lab. Additionally, the system enables DPS to track the SAK inventory in real time alleviating the administrative burden from law enforcement agencies to fulfil requirements of the annual inventory as well as ensure compliance with requirements of AS 44.41.070.