



Sexual Assault Kit Changes

TO: Alaska Law Enforcement
Forensic Nurses and Medical Providers
FROM: Michelle L. Collins, Forensic Biology Supervisor *MLC*
THRU: David Kanaris, Laboratory Chief *DAK*
DATE: July 30, 2020

SUMMARY: *Significant improvements have recently been made to the SA kit instructions and forms. Smaller changes were also made to the evidence collection process.*

- *Users are encouraged to utilize new instructions and forms now available on the lab webpage*
- *New kits are anticipated to be available by the end of 2020*
- *Current kits should be used until the supply is exhausted*
- *It will always be acceptable to use the version of the paperwork found in the kit if the updated forms cannot be obtained*
- ***SA Kits should only be used for sexual assault investigations.** Agencies are encouraged to retain the unused portions of the kits for collecting swab samples in other types of investigations.*

EXPLANATION:

The Alaska Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory continuously seeks to improve both its internal processes as well as those that interface with our stakeholders. Recently, a working group was convened to review the Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits (SAKs) that are provided, at no cost, to law enforcement and medical facilities statewide for the collection of information and evidence related to sexual assault investigations.

Significant improvements were made to the kit instructions and forms. Smaller changes were also made to the evidence collection process. We are now in the process of implementing these changes, with the goal of having the new kits available by the end of 2020. In the meanwhile, the current kits are still appropriate for use and we will continue to distribute them until the supply is exhausted. Users of the kits will be advised when the revised paperwork is available on the laboratory's webpage, at which time we encourage you to obtain and use it. The paperwork in the kits will still be accepted as we recognize that internet access is not always available to the users of the SAK.

The following is a list of enhancements/improvements that users will see in the new kits and forms.

1. Redesign of outer kit label
 - a. To ensure that anonymity is maintained for victims who desire anonymous reporting
 - b. To alert the testing laboratory when the kit only contains a known reference sample
2. Revised collection of external genitalia samples
 - a. To ensure uniformity among collecting agencies
 - b. To align collections with the laboratory's testing procedures
3. Swab drying is no longer advised
 - a. Instructions now call for immediate repackaging of all swab samples to minimize opportunity for contamination of samples and/or sample switches
 - b. The drying rack is being removed and swab boxes are being added for internal swab collections
4. Significant revisions to the forms
 - a. Law enforcement prompts (see pages 1, 3, 5 and 8 of the victim's forensic history section) to create more trauma informed forms

Example from page 1 of forensic history: ***"The information and evidence that is being collected from you is critical to the success of the investigation of your assault. Some of the questions you will be asked may be very personal, but we ask them to help us provide you with medical treatment and also to make decisions about testing the evidence in this kit."***

- b. Collection of information regarding an individual's gender identity and medical procedures that may influence the interpretation of DNA results
- c. Collection of additional information to inform the medical provider in providing care
- d. Clarification of information in the forensic history to inform the laboratory when making processing decisions

Any questions with regards to the changes in the kits can be directed to Michelle Collins (907-269-5620 or michelle.collins@alaska.gov) or Jennifer Foster (907-269-4074 or jennifer.foster@alaska.gov), the Forensic Biology Supervisors at the Alaska Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory.

To obtain kits, please send an e-mail to dps.supply.orders@alaska.gov.

If you are in possession of expired kits, please e-mail michelle.collins@alaska.gov first, to determine if your stock should be replaced.