

Amanda Price
Commissioner

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Department of
Public Safety

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPS Receives Grant to Acquire Sex Assault Kit Tracking Software

November 2, 2020 (Anchorage, Alaska) — The Department of Public Safety (DPS) was awarded the Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence— Inventory, Tracking and Reporting ([SAFE-ITR](#)) grant this month from the Bureau of Justice Assistance to begin the process of implementing a program to track sexual assault kit (SAK) testing. The grant provides \$998,791 to the state over the next three years and will go toward the cost of software as well as two positions to manage the tracking program. The rollout of the SAK tracking software is expected to occur before the end of 2021. This system will also be a statewide mechanism for survivors to check the status of their kit at any time as well as provide them with notification at the completion of testing.

Under the Governor Mike Dunleavy's [Omnibus Crime Bill- HB49](#), timeframes for submission and testing were enacted. Under [AS 44.41.065](#), SAKs must be submitted by law enforcement within 30 days of collection and must be tested by the crime lab within 12 months of receiving the kit. Additionally, the law now requires that law enforcement notify the victims from which a kit was collected, that testing has been completed. A tracking system will help bring accountability to law enforcement agencies striving to achieve this mandate.

“For too long, Alaska has experienced a backlog of untested sexual assault kits. The implementation of modern software will help to remove sexual predators from the streets and hold them accountable. It is our hope that the timely tracking and testing of sexual assault kits will bring hope to victims, survivors, and their families while further increasing the safety of all Alaskans” said **Governor Mike Dunleavy**.

“The implementation of a tracking program will allow victims to choose to opt into that notification as well as track their kit every step of the way. This is incredibly important because it lets them decide what is best for their healing,” said **Commissioner Amanda Price**, Department of Public Safety. “The DPS will continue to make concerted efforts with our law enforcement partners to bring consistency and high standards to law enforcement’s response to sexual assault reports and to provide victims and survivors with the support, resources and understanding they deserve.”

Alaska has used the [six pillars](#) laid out by the Joyful Heart Foundation to guide our sexual assault investigation reform efforts over the past five years.

“While Alaska is not one of the 10 states that already accomplished all six, we are close and much further along than other states. Our incredible staff at the Crime Lab has done amazing work to diligently stay on task during our reform efforts to offer more transparency and to give survivors more control over their cases,” said **Commissioner Price**. “Our continued efforts are in line with the spirit of the six pillars.”

In FY19, the DPS was appropriated \$2.75 million to test all SAKs that had previously never been submitted to the crime lab for analysis. In all, 2,568 SAKs were identified through the inventory to be tested by this appropriation. The DPS now has 436 remaining from that backlog. The [capital project](#) to eliminate the backlog of previously untested SAKs will be complete by September 2021.

The DPS has made significant progress in reducing the sexual assault kit backlog. The 2020 inventory identified 811 untested SAKs in the possession of either a law enforcement agency or the crime lab. This is 52% percent less than the number of untested SAKs identified in the 2019 report (1,696). The [2020 Report of Untested Sexual Assault Examination Kits](#) is published on the DPS website.

Sexual assaults continue to occur at a high rate in all corners of Alaska; however, between 2018 and 2019, the rate slightly decreased. The [2019 Felony Sex Offense report](#), compiled by the Division of Statewide Services, is published on the DPS website.

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