



Department of Justice



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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AWARDS NEARLY \$37 MILLION TO SUPPORT SEXUAL ASSAULT KIT TESTING, TRACKING AND INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice today announced awards totaling nearly \$37 million to help state, local and tribal government agencies improve the response to sexual assault and victim services, and analyze unsubmitted sexual assault kits in law enforcement custody. The grants will aid jurisdictions in reducing backlogs of sexual assault evidence and solving crimes of sexual violence.

“There is no greater injustice to a victim of sexual assault than a failure on the part of the system to exhaust its investigative possibilities,” said Alan Hanson, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs. “These awards will supply badly needed resources and manpower to our nation’s law enforcement agencies and prosecutors helping investigators and analysts do the urgent work of closing out cases and bringing answers to survivors.”

Administered through the National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative, managed by the Office of Justice Programs’ Bureau of Justice Assistance, 21 grant awards totaling more than \$35 million were awarded to improve the processing of sexual assault kits and strengthen jurisdictions’ capacity to act on evidence resulting from kit processing. Those awards are available online at: <https://www.bja.gov/funding/FY-2017-National-Sexual-Assault-Kit-Initiative-Funding-Awards.pdf>.

Solving sex crimes and bringing perpetrators to justice requires a thorough understanding of the value of sexual assault evidence and a solid commitment to submitting sexual assault kits for testing. OJP’s resources help jurisdictions reduce their inventory of unsubmitted kits, bring offenders to justice, provide answers to victims and restore the safety of our communities.

The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative provides competitive grants for teams committed to reforming how their jurisdictions deal with cases of sexual assault. SAKI helps jurisdictions address the issues that lead to delayed testing of kits by providing funds to inventory, test and track sexual assault kits, as well as collect and submit DNA from suspects to the FBI’s Combined DNA Index System and hire crime analysts. The grants also support the investigation and prosecution of resulting cases and support the victims of sexual assault.

In fiscal years 2015 and 2016, SAKI provided funding to 32 jurisdictions across the country. SAKI grantees are currently testing more than 150,000 kits.

Complementing the awards that can be utilized for testing sexual assault kit evidence, another \$1.9 million will be awarded from the National Institute of Justice to seven jurisdictions for tracking and reporting the status of sexual assault kits. The Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence – Inventory, Tracking and Reporting Program awards include: the City of Gautier, Mississippi (\$21,478); City of Lake Mary, Florida (\$6,130); City of Miami, Florida (\$264,263); the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners, Florida (\$58,771); the Iowa Department of Justice (\$796,985); the New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (\$483,666); and the Pasco County, Florida, Sheriff's Office (\$238,608).

Not directly included in the \$37 million total is NIJ's substantial investment to enhance capacity at DNA processing laboratories across the country, including processing of sexual assault kits in law enforcement custody. Grants awarded to 131 jurisdictions through NIJ's DNA Capacity Enhancement and Backlog Reduction program may be used to process, record, screen and analyze DNA evidence and to enhance the ability of crime laboratories to process that evidence. All recipients have the option to use the funding to conduct DNA testing on evidence submitted to crime laboratories, including evidence related to sexual assaults and other violent crimes. A list of those awards, including award locations, is available here: <https://go.usa.gov/xRhQc>.

Finally, a new blog by OJP Acting Assistant Attorney General Alan R. Hanson about the topic is posted online at <https://ojp.gov/ojpblog/blog-sakiinitiative.htm>.

The Office of Justice Programs, headed by Acting Assistant Attorney General Alan R. Hanson, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six bureaus and offices: 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 (SMART). More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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