



PRESS RELEASE

Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy and Funding Committee, Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention Submit Application for SAKI Grant

*Grant Would be Used to Test and Track Untested Kits; Aid in the Identification
of Perpetrators*

BALTIMORE, MD (May 1, 2018) – The Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy and Funding Committee and the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention will submit an application for a US Department of Justice (USDOJ) Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) grant. If awarded, the grant would help fund the testing of untested or unsubmitted sexual assault evidence kits (SAEKs) at law enforcement agencies across the state, the development of a statewide SAEK tracking system, and the hiring of specialized victim advocates to engage in victim-centered notification, communication, and support activities.

SAKI is a competitive grant program that provides funding to:

- support the inventory, tracking, and testing of SAEKs;
- develop policies and procedures to support coordination amongst labs, police, prosecutors and victim service providers; and,
- support the investigations and prosecutions that result from evidence produced by tested SAEKs.

Since the SAKI grant launched in 2015, more than 45,000 sexual assault kits in 26 states have been inventoried, over 12,000 kits have been sent for testing, and nearly 1,000 DNA hits have been made.

BACKGROUND:

In response to a nationwide effort to address a backlog of untested SAEKs, the Maryland General Assembly in 2016 passed Senate Bill 498, requiring law enforcement agencies in the State of Maryland to audit their untested kits and report the results to the Office of the Attorney General.

The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP), on behalf of the Office of Attorney General, surveyed 135 law enforcement agencies across the state regarding the untested sexual assault evidence kits (SAEKs) in their possession. Of the 135 agencies, 102 law enforcement agencies responded, revealing approximately 3,700 untested SAEKs statewide. About 60% of the kits were collected between 2009 and 2016. Five percent were collected between 1981 and 1997, and the rest were collected between 1998 and 2009. More than 90% of

the untested kits are in the custody of 13 of the 102 responding agencies – many of which serve the most populated counties or cities in Maryland, including the Montgomery County Police Department, the Baltimore City Police Department, and the Howard County Police Department.

Based on the findings of the audit, the Office of Attorney General released a [report](#) on untested SAEKs that included certain recommendations, including requiring the retention of untested kits for a minimum of 20 years, notifying victims before kit destruction, and creating a sexual assault evidence kit oversight committee – the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy and Funding Committee - chaired by the Attorney General. The first two recommendations were adopted by the General Assembly via House Bill 255/Senate Bill 349. The Maryland Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK) Policy and Funding Committee was established by [Senate Bill 734](#) in June of 2017, and tasked with creating effective statewide policies regarding the collection, testing, and retention of medical forensic evidence in sexual assault cases and increasing access to justice for sexual assault victims.

The SAEK Policy and Funding Committee released its [preliminary recommendations](#) this month. Additional information regarding the SAEK committee, including public meetings, can be found [here](#).