Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond The Sexual Assault Kit

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Houston Police Department
Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Law Enforcement Perspective
Law Enforcement Perspective

• Background
Law Enforcement Perspective

- Background
- Project research
Law Enforcement Perspective

- Background
- Project research
- Role of LE involving untested sexual assault kits
Law Enforcement Perspective

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- Project research
- Role of LE involving untested sexual assault kits
- Investigative impact of sexual assault kit screenings
Law Enforcement Perspective

- Background
- Project research
- Role of LE involving untested sexual assault kits
- Investigative impact of sexual assault kit screenings
- Moving beyond the sexual assault kit
Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Background
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- NIJ Grant – April 2011
Background

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- Sexual Assault Kits: 16,600*
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  - Never submitted for testing
  - Majority prior to 2006
Background

- NIJ Grant – April 2011
- Sexual Assault Kits: 16,600*
- Sexual Assault Kits Non-Submitted: 4,144
  - Never submitted for testing
  - Majority prior to 2006
- Oldest sexual assault kit – January 1982
Project Research

- Interviews/surveys with sex crimes investigators
- Interviews/surveys with crime lab personnel
- Interviews/surveys with prosecutors
- Sample of 506 cases involving sexual assault kits (UT)
- Forensic screening case review
- Priorities for testing sexual assault kits
- Sexual assault investigator training
- Cold case strategies and follow-up investigations
- Collaboration with victim advocates
Why were Sexual Assault Kits not submitted for testing?
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Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

U-SAKs
Law Enforcement

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Investigator Driven

U-SAKs
Law Enforcement

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U-SAKs

Case Components
Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Investigator Driven

Technology
Crime Lab Resources

U-SAKs

Case Components
Law Enforcement

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U-SAKs

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Technology
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Case Components

Cost
Case Review Following Forensic Screening of Adult Sexual Assault Kits

*Source:* Case Characteristics of Sexual Assaults Reviewed after Rape Kit Forensic Screening, Sam Houston State University – July 2012
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- Assessment by adult sex crimes investigators

**Source:** Case Characteristics of Sexual Assaults Reviewed after Rape Kit Forensic Screening
Sam Houston State University – July 2012
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- Assessment by adult sex crimes investigators
- Impact of sexual assault kit screening results

Source: Case Characteristics of Sexual Assaults Reviewed after Rape Kit Forensic Screening
Sam Houston State University – July 2012
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- Assessment by adult sex crimes investigators
- Impact of sexual assault kit screening results
- Results
  - 246 cases (95%) – no change in case status

Source: Case Characteristics of Sexual Assaults Reviewed after Rape Kit Forensic Screening
Sam Houston State University – July 2012
Why did investigators believe that 95% of the cases (246) would not be advanced?

- **70.9%** Victim did not participate in the investigative process
- **13%** Victim failed to provide sworn statement
- **10.3%** Victim credibility
- **8.5%** Expired statute of limitations
- **4.2%** Prosecutors declined charges
- **3.3%** Prosecutors accepted charges
- **2.8%** Claim of consensual activity
How did we move beyond the sexual assault kit?
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Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Victim Centered Approach
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Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Investigative Strategies

Victim Centered Approach
Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Investigative Strategies

Operational Issues

Victim Centered Approach
Law Enforcement

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Investigative Strategies
Operational Issues
Victim Notification
Law Enforcement

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Victim Centered Approach

Investigative Strategies
Operational Issues
Victim Notification
Victim Interviews
Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Victim Centered Approach

- Investigative Strategies
- Operational Issues
- Victim Notification
- Victim Interviews
- Justice Advocate
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Victim Centered Approach

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Investigator Training
Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Department Support

Investigative Strategies

Operational Issues

Victim Centered Approach

Investigator Training

Justice Advocate

Victim Interviews

Victim Notification
Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Victim Centered Approach

- Investigator Training
- Investigative Strategies
- Operational Issues
- Victim Notification
- Victim Interviews
- Justice Advocate

Department Support

Consistent Messaging
Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Department Support

Investigative Strategies

Operational Issues

Consistent Messaging

Victim Notification

Victim Centered Approach

Investigator Training

Justice Advocate

Victim Interviews

Strong Leadership
Law Enforcement

Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Victim Centered Approach

- Investigative Strategies
- Operational Issues
- Victim Notification
- Victim Interviews
- Justice Advocate
- Investigator Training
- Department Support
- Strong Leadership
- Communication Collaboration
- Consistent Messaging
UPDATE
September 2011 – Texas Senate Bill 1636

- …requires a law enforcement agency that receives sexual assault evidence collected in accordance with law to submit that evidence to a public accredited crime laboratory for analysis not later than the 30th day after the date on which that evidence was received…
September 2011 – Texas Senate Bill 1636

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February 2013 – City of Houston agreed to test:

- All un-submitted sexual assault kits
- All un-tested sexual assault kits (backlog)
- All sexual assault kits collected in 2013
- All non-sexual crimes (burglaries, robberies)
- $4.4 million / one-year completion
- 9,600+ sexual assault kits
Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

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BACKLOG

Crime Lab Untested SAKs
CLEARED

Property Room Un-submitted SAKs
CLEARED

CRIME LAB TECHNICAL REVIEW
INVESTIGATIVE CASE REVIEW
Investigative Response
Investigative Response

• Touch every case!
Investigative Response

- Touch every case!
- Added permanent and temporary investigator staffing to the Special Victims Division
  - Created CODIS Investigative Squads
Investigative Response

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- Victim notification protocols implemented
Investigative Response

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• Added permanent and temporary investigator staffing to the Special Victims Division
  • Created CODIS Investigative Squads

• Victim notification protocols implemented

• Created Sexual Assault Information Line (SAIL)
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Moving Beyond the Sexual Assault Kit

Research sponsored by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) found that potentially valuable forensic evidence in sexual assault cases has been sitting in police property rooms across the United States without being tested. These pieces of evidence have never been submitted to a crime laboratory for testing. Faced with this situation, NIJ issued a call for projects not only understand why evidence was collected and never submitted to a crime laboratory, but also to take a broader view and study the complicated nature of sexual assault investigations and prosecutions. The Houston Police Department stepped forward and convened a diverse group of stakeholders who responded to the NIJ call for research. The project in Houston was funded and continues to work on these issues.

The research being performed in Houston is not an ordinary academic undertaking. It is an "action-research" project that explicitly involves multiple stakeholders in the process of diagnosing problems and then identifying appropriate responses. The project learns through research to improve existing processes. This approach is predicated on the idea that effective solutions demand a solid understanding of the context and sources of problems. The goals of the project include improving services for victims and holding offenders accountable.

Safety Escape