

2015 RESOLUTIONS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE



Addressing the Sexual Assault Kit Backlog

Submitted by: Forensic Science Committee, Police Investigative Operations Committee, and
Victim Services Committee
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WHEREAS, in the United States, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men reported experiencing sexual assault at some point in their lifetime⁸, and

WHEREAS, most perpetrators of sexual assault who are prosecuted are convicted on a single count of sexual assault, however studies show that the average number of victims for rapists interviewed was between seven and eleven⁹, and

WHEREAS, due to socially-perpetuated myths and misconceptions about sexual assault, fear of retaliation, lack of understanding of the criminal justice process, impact of the traumatic event, and other compelling reasons, studies show the vast majority of sexual assaults are never reported, and

WHEREAS, law enforcement agencies around the nation have discovered untested sexual assault kits in storage facilities and the federal government estimates that hundreds of thousands of sexual assault kits sit untested in police and crime laboratory storage, facilities¹⁰ and

WHEREAS, DNA evidence contained inside sexual assault kits can be a powerful tool to solve and prevent crime, and

WHEREAS, untested sexual assault kits are defined as those in police custody or other evidence storage locations that have never been submitted to a crime laboratory for testing, and

WHEREAS, submitting and analyzing DNA samples increases the likelihood of identifying unknown perpetrators of crimes and confirms the presence of a known assailant, and

WHEREAS, submitting and analyzing DNA samples can corroborate the victim's account of the assault that occurred, and

WHEREAS, submitting and analyzing DNA samples increases the likelihood of holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable and can connect the perpetrator to other crimes by allowing forensic scientists to compare the profile of the perpetrator against Combined DNA Index

⁸ Centers for Disease Control. (2010). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. Retrieved from Centers for Disease Control website: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/index.html>

⁹ Dr. David Lisak, Understanding the Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence. Sexual Assault Report, Volume 14, Number 4. March/April 2011 <http://www.davidlisak.com/wpcontent/uploads/pdf/SARUnderstandingPredatoryNatureSexualViolence.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/dna-resource-center/untested-sexual-assault-kits/about-backlogs-and-untested-kits>

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System (CODIS), the FBI's national database of millions of DNA profiles containing DNA profiles obtained from crime scene evidence, and

WHEREAS, submitting and analyzing DNA samples can help to prevent future sexual assaults from occurring by increasing the chances of removing the perpetrator from the streets and, in the event that prosecution is not possible, perpetrator DNA will be added to CODIS, making it easier to link perpetrators to future crimes, and

WHEREAS, submitting and analyzing DNA samples can exonerate the innocent, and

WHEREAS, submitting and analyzing DNA samples is an important part of the recovery process for victims of sexual assault and may increase their overall confidence in and satisfaction with law enforcement and the criminal justice system overall, and

WHEREAS, many jurisdictions nationwide have taken steps to address the backlog by implementing effective protocols and procedures, establishing partnerships and collaborations, and seeking available funding to submit and test sexual assault kits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that law enforcement agencies should implement comprehensive training efforts regarding the crime of sexual assault, including its impact on victims, the recidivism of sex offenders, and the importance of DNA evidence to all types of sexual assault prosecutions, and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that law enforcement and criminal justice partners should take the steps to collaboratively address the backlog, and prevent future backlogs, by allocating funding and staffing in order to process and test sexual assault kits, and follow up on investigative leads developed from these examinations, and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, the International Association of Chiefs of Police strongly urges the U.S. Congress to provide funding for law enforcement agencies so they have the necessary resources and personnel to test backlogged kits and prevent future backlogs.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the International Association of Chiefs of Police assembled at its 122nd Annual Conference and Exposition in Chicago, Illinois supports law enforcement leaders ensuring the submission of sexual assault kits to a crime laboratory for DNA testing in order to effectively address crime in their communities.