

Getting Started in SAKI: Virtual Learning at Your Fingertips

The National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Training and Technical Assistance (SAKI TTA) program provides various resources to offer guidance on SAK-related issues including inventory, testing, and tracking of SAKs; training to increase effectiveness in addressing the complex issues associated with unsubmitted SAKs; and guidance for multidisciplinary coordination, investigation, prosecution, and victim advocacy engagement regarding unsubmitted SAKs.

We recognize that sites have varying policies and procedures for addressing their previously unsubmitted SAKs and creating a victim-centered, trauma-informed response to sexual assault. Although we strongly recommend taking a look into our foundational resources listed in this document, we also encourage you to explore our online learning platforms available on our website. The [SAKI Toolkit](#) offers hands-on resources tailored for the community of practitioners working to respond to cold case sexual assault. The [SAKI Virtual Academy](#) is an online learning platform offering five e-learning curricula covering the key steps to sexual assault response reform.

Approaching Cold Case Sexual Assaults

The following webinars build the foundation for creating a reformed response to sexual assault and addressing previously unsubmitted SAKs. We recommend that each representative of your SAKI multidisciplinary team (MDT) view these webinars, as they are critical to the success of each SAKI site.

Addressing the Problem of Untested SAKs— Archival

Dr. Rebecca Campbell, professor of psychology at Michigan State University and member of the SAKI TTA team, presented this webinar. Participants were provided with information to better understand issues pertaining to unsubmitted SAKs including assessing the scope of untested SAKs, understanding the underlying causes that result in the accumulation of unsubmitted SAKs, and developing testing and victim notification plans that promote an improved

response to sexual assault. Dr. Campbell leveraged her experience as the lead researcher for the National Institute of Justice-funded Detroit Sexual Assault Kit Action Research Project, which was a 4-year multidisciplinary study of Detroit's untested rape kits, in combination with her extensive research conducting community-based research on violence against women and children, with an emphasis on sexual assault.

[View the "Addressing the Problem of Untested SAKs" webinar](#)

Utilizing CODIS for Unsubmitted Sexual Assault Kits—Archival

To address common questions regarding CODIS use, the SAKI TTA team collaborated with Amy Jeanguenat of Mindgen, LLC, to produce this webinar. Mrs. Jeanguenat has spent her career working in the private forensic industry supporting efforts to prevent and eliminate DNA backlogs. The following information was presented: How data and communication flows between CODIS levels, eligibility requirements for sample input, 'HIT' categories and notifications, and factors to consider to achieve database search success with unsubmitted kit projects. This webinar also included case scenarios to practice the understanding of NDIS eligibility requirements.

[View the "Utilizing CODIS for Unsubmitted Sexual Assault Kits" webinar](#)

DNA 101 for Law Enforcement Agencies— Archival

This webinar, presented by Amy Jeanguenat of Mindgen, LLC, introduced participants to the science behind forensic DNA testing and how it is performed on a sexual assault kit. Learning objectives included: Basic science behind forensic DNA testing, how DNA recovery is affected in a SAK, typical crime laboratory workflows for processing SAKs, and interpreting common reporting statements.

[View the "DNA 101 for Law Enforcement Agencies" webinar](#)

Investigation of Cold Case Sexual Assaults—Archival

Sgt. James (Jim) Markey, MEd utilized his 30 years of experience with the Phoenix Police Department investigating sexual assaults and cold case sex crimes in order to holistically address the investigation and analysis of cold case sexual assaults. This webinar session addressed the current strategies and key considerations for the investigation of cold case sexual assaults as a result of testing previously unsubmitted SAKs. This session provided information for the identification, management, and improved response associated with previously unsubmitted SAKs. The webinar discussed best practices for developing a cold case investigative strategy, which include the overall management of cold case investigations, case review, crime scene interpretation, understanding forensic evidence, CODIS hit follow up, interviewing strategies, and case preparation. This webinar provided the tools and steps to identify the necessary resources for addressing untested evidence in sexual assault, and discussed considerations for developing an appropriate victim notification process.

[View the “Investigation of Cold Case Sexual Assaults” webinar](#)

Successful Prosecution of Cold Case Sexual Assault—Archival

The webinar was presented by Patti Powers, JD, from AEquitas, a member of the SAKI TTA team. Sexual assault cases are admittedly some of the most difficult to prosecute, and cold cases present even greater challenges due to the passage of time. Technological and strategic innovations, along with well-established investigative and prosecutorial best practices, allow prosecutors to achieve justice in these cases. To hold offenders accountable for crimes committed years ago, prosecutors must continue to work collaboratively with allied professionals to overcome the underlying factors that contributed to the delays in the first place. This presentation focused on the unique challenges to investigating and trying cold case sexual assaults involving offenders known and unknown to the victim, providing strategies to overcome those challenges. The presenter discussed best practices in sexual assault prosecutions as well as promising practices in response to the time-intensified issues in older cases, such as renewed investigations of dormant cases, victim notification, identification of evidence, pretrial proceedings, and trial strategy. At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be better able to

- ◆ collaborate with allied professionals on trauma-informed investigations that identify corroborating evidence;

- ◆ identify and respond to pretrial issues, including victim protection and privacy and response to due process claims of preaccusatorial delay; and
- ◆ re-create the reality and the urgency of the crime at trial, from jury selection through closing argument.

[View the “Successful Prosecution of Cold Case Sexual Assault” webinar](#)

Strategies for Victim Notification—Archival

Representatives from the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) and the Joyful Heart Foundation teamed up to present this SAKI TTA webinar. *Strategies for Victim Notification* focused on why victim-centered, trauma-informed notification policies and procedures are integral to the overall success of addressing previously unsubmitted SAKs. In communities addressing previously unsubmitted SAKs, the process of creating a victim notification policy with their SART/MDT is an important beginning step. This webinar assisted sites in the decision-making process for which cases to provide notification, how to notify, and who will provide the notification. The presenters also discussed how to respond to common questions from victims and what resources should be provided at the time of notification. This webinar also presented information on best practices for following up with survivors after notification and self-care plans for those who are conducting the notification. The goal of this webinar is to help sites critically think about their victim notification policies and to provide information on incorporating victim-centered, trauma-informed practices into their notification processes.

[View the “Strategies for Victim Notification” webinar](#)

The Prosecutor’s Role in Survivor Notification—Archival

Reopening a cold case sexual assault can be a traumatic experience for survivors. Many will have pressing questions about the next steps within the investigation and prosecution of their case. Being prepared to respond to these questions in a trauma-informed manner is key to maintaining survivor engagement. Prosecutors play a critical role in keeping survivors informed and engaged in the criminal justice process. This presentation built upon the previous SAKI TTA webinar, *Strategies for Victim Notification*. The speakers focused on approaches to notification that address the survivor’s need for information, all while maintaining the integrity of the case for prosecution.

At the conclusion of the presentation, participants were better able to:

- ◆ Prioritize survivor's safety and privacy throughout the investigation and prosecution of a case.
- ◆ Evaluate situations in which a survivor's right to information must be balanced with maintaining the integrity of the case.
- ◆ Coordinate with allied professionals on decisions concerning notification and disclosure of information.

[View "The Prosecutor's Role in Survivor Notification" webinar](#)

Technical Webinars

These webinars focus on the more technical aspects of addressing previously unsubmitted SAKs, including topics such as conducting an inventory and evidence tracking systems.

SAK Inventory Process: Strategies & Considerations—Archival

The webinar was presented by representatives from the Iowa Department of Justice, Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office, and City of Portland (OR) Police Bureau, all of which are SAKI grantee recipients and have started or completed an inventory of their unsubmitted SAKs. Each agency gave a short presentation describing their inventory process, lessons learned, and challenges to successfully completing their unsubmitted SAK inventory. A panel discussion and Q&A session followed the presentations.

[View the "SAK Inventory Process: Strategies and Key Considerations" webinar](#)

Neurobiology of Trauma Parts 1, 2, and 3—Archival

In part one of the three-part series, The Neurobiology of Trauma, Dr. Rebecca Campbell presented on how the brain and body react to major traumas, including sexual assault. This series has emphasized understanding victim behavior during an assault and the immediate aftermath. Dr. Campbell leveraged her extensive experience and research in conducting community-based research on violence against women and children, with an emphasis on sexual assault to promote improved investigative tactics for interaction with sexual assault victims.

Part 1: [View the "Neurobiology of Trauma, Part 1" webinar](#)

Part 2: [View the "Neurobiology of Trauma, Part 2" webinar](#)

Part 3: [View the "Neurobiology of Trauma, Part 3" webinar](#)

SAK Evidence Tracking: Features & Considerations—Archival

This webinar was presented by representatives from Michigan State Police and the City of Portland (OR) Police Bureau, both of which are SAKI grantee recipients. Each agency gave a short presentation highlighting the features of their evidence tracking system(s) and the reasons they chose this system. They also leveraged their experience to discuss lessons learned and challenges for implementation and success. A panel discussion and Q & A session followed the presentations.

[View the "SAK Evidence Tracking: Features and Key Considerations" webinar](#)

Sexual Assault Kit (SAK) Evidence Tracking: From the Voices of Experience—Archival

Idaho State Police Forensic Services developed a sexual assault kit tracking tool from scratch with an in-house team and programmers. Presenters discussed the challenges of implementation and resolution of issues that have been presented over the last year and a half of full implementation use. Portland Police Bureau presented on understanding the benefits of an evidence tracking system by analyzing user needs and leveraging the data agencies already collect. Representatives from the Washington State SAKI site presented about the rollout of their sexual assault kit tracking system; the benefits, problems, and feedback they have received; and their plans for the systems that will be used in the future.

[View the "Sexual Assault Kit \(SAK\) Evidence Tracking: From the Voices of Experience" webinar](#)

Lawfully Owed DNA Part 1—Archival

Representatives from the Cuyahoga County SAKI site discussed using SAKI funding to address lawfully owed DNA including efforts to collect lawfully owed DNA, as well as legal concerns and issues encountered during this process. Data were presented on several lawfully owed DNA profiles that were not in CODIS in Cuyahoga County.

[View the "Lawfully Owed DNA, Part 1" webinar](#)

Lawfully Owed DNA Part 2—Archival

This webinar was presented by Amy Jeanguenat, Principal Consultant with Mindgen, LLC, and Jayann Sepich, Founder of DNA Saves. This webinar focused on recognizing the importance of obtaining and processing lawfully owed DNA samples in adequate time to recognize the full benefits of the CODIS database. Jayann Sepich discussed the relevance of lawfully owed DNA databases and the complexity of

data collection. Amy Jeanguenat discussed considerations and strategies for assessing the scope of sample collection, tracking, and processing within a jurisdiction and the impact to the crime laboratory.

[View the “Lawfully Owed DNA, Part 2” webinar](#)

Research in SAKI

The SAKI TTA program has recently created a researcher/analyst working group that meets via conference call the third Wednesday of each month from 1–2pm ET. The purpose of these calls is to provide a forum to discuss research partnerships and analysis issues and a means to share knowledge and information across sites. This group will discuss data collection, analysis, findings, and implications/uses of data, as well as practical/operational issues related to research (e.g., data use agreements, institutional review boards, memoranda of understanding). In addition to the working group calls, the Research in SAKI Webinar Series will highlight key findings from the research being conducted in SAKI sites and provide information to sites that are interested in developing a research partnership.

SAKI Research: Practitioner Relationships—Archival

In this webinar, Dr. Rebecca Campbell explained how to create researcher–practitioner partnerships on the topic of untested SAKs. She discussed the benefits of adding a research/evaluation component to community efforts to resolve untested SAKs. Strategies for finding a research partner, such as a university researcher, professional evaluator, or crime analyst, were presented. This webinar also explored how to get a partnership started and the importance of developing a memorandum of understanding, data use agreements, and institutional review board approval. Dr. Campbell spent time brainstorming ideas for research questions and topics for study.

[View the “Research Basics in SAKI: Developing Researcher-Practitioner Relationships” webinar](#)

SAKI TTA Performance Metrics and Research Webpage

This webpage from the SAKI TTA website highlights performance metrics from SAKI grantee sites since the inception of the SAKI project in 2015. Additionally, this page is used to house sexual assault–based research deliverables that have been developed by SAKI grantees, SAKI TTA partners, and other research-based entities.

[View the SAKI TTA Performance Metrics and Research Webpage](#)

Understanding Case Connectivity: How SAKs Can Link to Crimes—Archival

This webinar explained the potential utility of case connectivity and discussed how case connectivity can be established through sexual assault kit DNA testing. The webinar also provided step-by-step guidance on how to organize and analyze the data needed to establish case connectivity.

[View the “Understanding Case Connectivity: How Testing SAKs Can Link Criminal Cases” webinar](#)