



**2018-08**

**NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS THE INVENTORYING, TESTING, AND TRACKING OF ALL RAPE KITS CONNECTED TO A REPORTED CRIME**

**WHEREAS**, every 98 seconds someone in America is sexual assaulted<sup>1</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, after an assault, a victim may choose to have evidence of the crime collected and preserved in a rape kit. The process, conducted by a doctor or nurse, is an exhaustive and invasive four- to six-hour examination of the victim's body for DNA evidence left behind by the attacker; and

**WHEREAS**, when tested, DNA evidence from rape kits can be an incredibly powerful tool to solve and prevent crimes. It can identify unknown assailants, confirm known suspects, identify serial offenders by linking crimes together, and exonerate the innocent; and

**WHEREAS**, analyzing DNA samples from sexual assault cases can help prevent future attacks by taking violence offenders off the streets; and

**WHEREAS**, across the country law enforcement agencies have found untested rape kits and the Joyful Heart Foundation estimates that there are more than 225,000 previously unsubmitted rape kits in storage; and

**WHEREAS**, many communities' rape kit testing efforts are taking violent offenders off the streets—many whom have escaped justice for decades—and improving public safety; and

**WHEREAS**, researchers studying backlog testing in Detroit found that testing rape kits from both stranger and acquaintance cases led to the identification of 18 serial offenders through case-to-case associations, and researchers studying backlog elimination efforts in Cleveland found that over half of backlogged kits were connected to serial perpetrators; and

**WHEREAS**, As of January 2018, testing unsubmitted kits in Cleveland, Detroit, and Memphis has resulted in the identification of nearly 1,313 suspected serial rapists. These serial offenders, linked to kits in just three cities, have committed crimes across at least 40 states and Washington, D.C. They have not just committed rape—many have been linked to other violent crimes as well; and

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2014 (2015).

**WHEREAS**, the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University found testing just 4,300 previously unsubmitted kits in Cleveland saved the community \$38.7 million dollars, or \$8,893 per tested sexual assault kit; and

**WHEREAS**, federal funding under the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative is available for jurisdictions to test kits, build rape kit tracking systems, investigate leads, prosecute cases, and provide survivors with ongoing support services; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2017 National Institute of Justice’s “National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach” report recommends that all work to end the backlog be multidisciplinary, survivor-centered, and trauma-informed; and

**WHEREAS**, testing every rape kit connected to a reported crime within a timely manner; conducting recurring inventories; developing tracking systems for rape kits; and creating victim notification protocols that ensure victims are informed about the status of their kits and cases are federal best practices; and

**WHEREAS**, every rape kit that goes untested is a missed opportunity for justice for survivors and to promote public safety for the greater community;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the National Sheriffs’ Association acknowledges the power of DNA and DNA technology to solve cases, to bring a path to healing and justice to sexual assault survivors, and to take repeat and violent perpetrators off the streets. Be it further resolved that the National Sheriffs’ Association supports the inventorying, testing, and tracking of all rape kits connected to a reported crime, and the right of survivors to know the status of their rape kit and their case.

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Approved by the Board of Directors of the National Sheriffs’ Association on June 18, 2018, at the Annual Conference of the National Sheriffs’ Association, New Orleans, Louisiana. This resolution to remain in effect until June 24, 2022, in accordance with Article XIII, Section 6 of the Constitution and Bylaws of the National Sheriffs’ Association.