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Recommendations made to improve justice for sexual assault victims

LANSING, Mich. – The Sexual Assault Evidence Tracking and Reporting Commission today submitted its recommendations to the legislature that outline guidelines and plans to improve the processing and review of sexual assault evidence kits. Their recommendations would allow criminal justice workers and victims access to a tracking system to determine location and lab-submission status of those kits.

Several years ago, Michigan law-enforcement officials learned that the Detroit Police Department had approximately 11,000 untested sexual assault evidence kits in storage. Subsequent testing of those kits is resulting in successful identification and prosecution of perpetrators. But the delay in testing sent too many of these victims the message that their cases were not important. The Commission recommendations are a vital step toward improving the evidence process to ensure better outcomes for the victims who have suffered these horrific crimes.

“Improving the way these kits are processed and reviewed is critically important in holding offenders accountable for their actions,” said First Lady Sue Snyder. “These recommendations are an important step towards progress in helping survivors of sexual assault find the justice and healing they deserve.”

The commission report details plans and guidelines for: (1) a uniform statewide system to track the submission and status of kits with secure electronic access for victims, (2) a uniform system to audit untested kits that were collected on or before March 1, 2015, and were released by the victims to law enforcement, and (3) auditing the ongoing submission of kits. The report also focuses on recommendations for legislation and funding needed to implement its plans.

“The work of the commission is consistent with the mission of our board and the work that we do in partnership with local victims service agencies” said Debi Cain, Executive Director of the Michigan Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention and Treatment Board, and co-chair of the Commission. “We are proud of the collaboration and thoughtful process.”

Col. Kriste Kibbey Etue, Director of Michigan State Police, and co-chair of the Commission, added, “Our team is proud to present these recommendations that will ensure sexual assault evidence kits are processed in a timely manner and justice is achieved for survivors.”

Thanks to parallel work by the Attorney General, Michigan State Police and the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan, the auditing process for untested kits is already underway. These groups have been meeting in jurisdictions that have untested kits to complete the auditing process. Efforts will continue

until the last of the untested kits are accounted for and submitted for forensic testing. The commission report recommends that the ongoing submission of kits be audited annually by the Michigan Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention and Treatment Board, using the data collected in the statewide tracking system, to ensure that large stockpiles of untested kits do not happen again.

[View the Report of the Michigan Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Tracking and Reporting Commission.](#)

The Commission was created on January 1, 2015, as a result of the [Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Tracking and Reporting Act](#) and the [Sexual Assault Kit Evidence Submission Act](#), and is administratively housed within the Michigan Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention and Treatment Board.

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