

Wisconsin Attorney General Schimel: Launches website to keep public informed of sexual assault kit testing

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MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel, previous recipient of the Wisconsin Victim Witness Professionals’ “Professional of the Year” Award, has been fighting on behalf of crime victims for 28 years as a prosecutor. As attorney general, Schimel has made supporting victims of sexual assault one of his top priorities. Attorney General Schimel’s work continues as today he announced the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) has launched a website dedicated to keeping the public updated on Wisconsin’s Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (WiSAKI).

“Unsubmitted sexual assault kits accumulated over twenty years and was largely unaddressed by previous attorneys general,” said Attorney General Schimel. “Now, in less than three years, DOJ and local law enforcement will process all previously unsubmitted kits and bring justice to sexual assault survivors after years of delay under previous administrations. Testing the kits is only the beginning of this important process and with this website, survivors, the entire Wisconsin criminal justice system, and the public will be able to see this progress in action from testing of kits to prosecuting criminals.”

The website, wisaki.doj.wi.gov, includes an overview of the project, frequently asked questions, data and results, resources, regular updates on how many kits have been tested, and other news about WiSAKI and the Attorney General’s Sexual Assault Response Team (AG SART).

The website also details the extensive inventory that was conducted by law enforcement agencies and sexual assault nurse examiner programs. This resource intensive project was voluntarily completed by 100% of Wisconsin’s 557 law

enforcement jurisdictions as well as all of the agencies providing sexual assault exams. A step by step summary of the testing process, beginning with submission of the kits to the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory (WSCL) for the initial intake, is also illustrated on the website.

The data and results section of the website provides interactive, customizable dashboards to display the information collected from the inventories. The user can view this information on a statewide basis, or review it county by county. Aggregate testing results will also be published on the site as they become available.

WiSAKI is a statewide effort to address the issues surrounding unsubmitted sexual assault kits in the possession of local law enforcement agencies and hospitals in Wisconsin. Initiated by the AG SART and led by DOJ, WiSAKI is a collaborative effort among law enforcement, victim advocates, sexual assault nurse examiners, prosecutors, health care systems, and the WSCL. WiSAKI supports survivors of sexual assault, protects the community, and holds offenders accountable using a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach.

Any survivor who had a sexual assault kit collected and do not know if their kit was tested for the presence of DNA evidence can call 1-800-446-6564 or go to ByYourSideWI.org to initiate the process of locating their kits and exploring options for DNA testing. Survivors will also be connected with support services.