

WisDOJ: New Testing Results of Previously Unsubmitted Sexual Assault Kit Leads to Arrest for a 2008 Assault

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FOX CROSSING, Wis. – Today, Attorney General Brad Schimel announced the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) filed its first prosecution, as the result of the Wisconsin Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (WiSAKI). WiSAKI is a statewide effort to address the decades-old accumulation of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits that were in the possession of local law enforcement agencies and hospitals. DOJ filed a criminal complaint in Winnebago County, charging Aaron J. Heiden with two felony counts in the sexual assault of a woman in 2008.

Mr. Heiden, age 29, of Eau Claire, was charged with one count of Second Degree Sexual Assault and one count of Third Degree Sexual Assault, and was arrested by the DOJ Division of Criminal Investigation and the Eau Claire County Sheriff's Office. Mr. Heiden will be transferred to Winnebago County Jail at a later time.

DNA evidence from the victim's sexual assault kit matched to Mr. Heiden. This is the first arrest and prosecution by DOJ associated with WiSAKI. This case was investigated by the DOJ Division of Criminal Investigation, the Fox Crossing Police Department, with assistance from Eau Claire County Sheriff's Office and the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office. Victim services are being provided by DOJ Office of Crime Victim Services and the Winnebago County Victim Witness Office.

A defendant in a criminal case is innocent until proven guilty.

WiSAKI is a statewide effort to address the accumulation of previously unsubmitted

sexual assault kits and reform the systems that caused the accumulation. In September 2015, DOJ was awarded several grants from the United States Bureau of Justice Assistance as part of a \$110-million-plus national SAKI effort supporting multiple jurisdictions addressing sexual assault reform—including testing unsubmitted SAKs, investigating and prosecuting these cases, and supporting victims.

In addition to testing these sexual assault kits and investigating the cases that may arise, DOJ has laid out the following plan:

- Create a team dedicated to WiSAKI to assist local jurisdictions with victim notification protocols, as well as with the investigation and prosecution of cases that may arise from the testing of unsubmitted sexual assault kits. The team is made up of one victim services specialist, two special agents, one assistant attorney general, and one research analyst.
- Complete an inventory of all unsubmitted sexual assault kits at all programs and hospitals conducting sexual assault forensic exams and at the state's 557 law enforcement agencies.
- Test unsubmitted sexual assault kits that have been designated for testing.
- Expand the sexual assault response training program to equip more law enforcement officers, prosecutors, sexual assault nurse examiners, and victim advocates with the specialized knowledge and resources needed to properly respond to sexual assault cases.
- Implement a sexual assault kit tracking system that will track a kit from the point of manufacture, to hospitals, to law enforcement, and through submission to the state crime lab. This system is intended to offer an option for survivors to access information about the location of their kit and will provide a mechanism for the ongoing auditing of sexual assault kit submissions.

Any survivor who had a sexual assault kit collected and does not know if their kit was tested for the presence of DNA evidence can call [1-800-446-6564](tel:1-800-446-6564) or go to ByYourSideWI.org for information and assistance. Survivors will also be referred to local advocacy and support services.

For more information about Attorney General Schimel's efforts to address the

accumulation of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits, go to <https://wisaki.doj.wi.gov/>.