

Rep. Steffen: Sexual assault kits bill signed into law

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Madison, WI - For nearly 30 years, thousands of unidentified and unprocessed sexual assault kits have stood idle in Wisconsin hospitals, clinics, and police evidence lockers. Without statutory procedures and timelines for the processing of these kits, sexual assault survivors and criminal justice advocates have witnessed the shocking inactivity that has been allowed to exist within the system. As AB 67 is signed into law today, this system will no longer remain unaccountable.

This legislation was developed out of careful collaboration with DOJ, law enforcement, victim advocates, and the State Crime Laboratory among other advocates. The bill will ensure that these kits, and these delicate situations, are handled with the integrity and speed they deserve.

“This effort is long overdue. For the victims of sexual assault, the least we can do is ensure that evidence of the assault is properly processed and stored, and is taken care of promptly,” said Rep. Steffen. “For many individuals, this bill will be the next step in providing justice and accountability to a terrible situation.”

Under the bill, when a health care professional collects evidence of a sexual assault, the victim will have the choice to report to law enforcement or not. If the victim chooses to report to law enforcement, the health care professional will notify law enforcement within 24 hours after collecting the sexual assault kit. The law enforcement agency then has 72 hours to collect the kit from the health care professional, and then has 14 days to send the kit to the state crime laboratories for analysis. After the kit has been processed it will be sent to a law enforcement agency and stored for 50 years.