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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG Schimel Sends SAKI Sexual Assault Kits to Two Additional Labs for Testing; Testing Complete on 862 Previously Unsubmitted Sexual Assault Kits

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel announced today that Wisconsin’s Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (WiSAKI), 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, will complete testing by the end of 2018 and two additional labs have been contracted to test these kits.

“Testing sexual assault kit evidence is a top priority for me and my team at DOJ,” said Attorney General Schimel. “Some of these sexual assault kits have been sitting in hospitals and evidence rooms for almost twenty years, and further delay is not an option. At DOJ we’ve been monitoring the changing testing capacity of labs nationwide, and when space opened up, we jumped at the opportunity to get more kits in more labs for testing. In less than three years, DOJ and local law enforcement will have tested the kits that have built up for decades, and justice can be served to sexual assault survivors.”

In November 2016, grantors certified the first phase of Wisconsin’s previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits and DOJ was permitted to initiate testing, including sending 200 sexual assault kits per month to Bode Cellmark Forensics. DOJ has continually monitored the capacity of labs in the nation, and in 2017, DOJ was awarded supplemental grants from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), which allowed DOJ to contract with Sorenson Forensics, in Salt Lake City, Utah and Marshall University Forensics Science Center, in Huntington, West Virginia to test WiSAKI kits, which began in January 2018. Sorenson has contracted to test 1,000 kits, and Marshall University will test 300 kits by the end of 2018.

Out of the 6,350 kits inventoried, 3,922 kits are currently designated for testing. Of the kits designated for testing, testing is complete on 862 kits. Another 2,001 kits are in the process of being tested at the external labs.

In September 2015, DOJ was awarded two, \$2 million grants to implement WiSAKI and test previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits. In order to expedite this testing and ensure current work at the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory (WSCL) could continue without interruption, DOJ needed to outsource the testing of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits to outside laboratories. After receiving permission from WiSAKI grantors in early 2016, DOJ submitted a request for bid (RFB) for the testing of sexual assault kits in March 2016. However, DOJ received no responses to the RFB, due to the volume of untested sexual assault kits across the country being submitted to private labs and the stringent requirements placed on labs. The WSCL is the only nationally recognized accredited laboratory for DNA testing by ASCLD/LAB under ISO/IEC 17025:2005 testing standards in Wisconsin. Bode and Sorenson laboratories are the only two private labs in the country with the same accreditation and capability to test this volume of sexual assault kits in Wisconsin and from dozens of SAKI sites across the country. These labs have been inundated with requests for assistance due to there being 30 sexual assault kit initiatives currently underway throughout the country. DOJ published another RFB in July 2016, and Bode, as the sole responder, was awarded the contract in July 2016 to test 3,000 sexual assault kits, beginning in January 2017, after the grantors certified the inventory of previously unsubmitted kits.

WiSAKI is a statewide effort to address the accumulation of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits and the systems that resulted in the accumulation. In addition to testing of these sexual assault kits, 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.

In 2016, BJA also awarded DOJ \$780,000 for the distribution to sexual assault service providers in counties with the highest number of unsubmitted sexual assault kits. Those counties are Brown, Dane, Fond du Lac, Kenosha, Outagamie, Racine, Rock, Sauk, and Winnebago.

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 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 www.wisaki.wi.doj.gov.