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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin DOJ Receives \$2 million for Sexual Assault Kit Initiative and to Improve System Response to Sexual Assault

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Brad 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 received \$2 million from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to continue Wisconsin’s Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (WiSAKI) and ensure previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits that have accumulated in law enforcement agencies and hospitals over previous decades are processed. To date, DOJ has received [the most grant funding](#), in the nation from BJA for a sexual assault kit initiative.

“In less than three years, DOJ and local law enforcement will process all previously unsubmitted kits and bring justice to sexual assault survivors,” said Attorney General Schimel. “Testing the kits is only the beginning of this important process and with the funding the granting authority has entrusted us with for a third time, survivors, the entire Wisconsin criminal justice system, and the public will be able to see justice is served.”

DOJ will utilize the new resources to improve system response to sexual assault. For instance, DOJ will institute a 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. These trainings will encompass a variety of topics including the neurobiology of trauma, common trauma reactions among sexual assault survivors, forensic science and its role in investigations and prosecutions, collaboration among responding professionals, and victim notification procedures.

The grant also provides funding for DOJ to implement a sexual assault kit tracking system that will track a kit from the point of manufacture, to hospitals, law enforcement, and through submission to the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory (WSCL). This system will offer an option for survivors to access information about their kit and will provide a mechanism for the ongoing auditing of sexual assault kit submissions.

DOJ has received the most grant funding in the nation from BJA for a sexual assault kit initiative, and is one of only two recipients that have received this grant three years in a row. In total, DOJ has received more than \$5.1 million from BJA since 2015, in addition to a \$2 million grant by the New York County District Attorney in September 2015. This year, DOJ's \$2 million grant allocation from BJA was one-third less than requested due to across-the-board cuts in available grant funding. During this grant cycle, BJA reduced requests to nearly all recipients due to these funding cuts.

With the grant funding allocated to DOJ since 2015, the department has utilized the funds to do the following:

- Create a team dedicated to WiSAKI to assist local jurisdictions with victim notification protocols, as well as with investigating and prosecuting cases that may arise from the testing of unsubmitted sexual assault kits: 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 the state's 557 law enforcement agencies and all programs conducting sexual assault forensic exams.
- Test unsubmitted sexual assault kits that have been designated for testing.
 - Out of the **6,394** kits inventoried, **4,069** kits are currently designated for testing. Of the kits designated for testing, testing is complete on **436** kits. Another **1,626** kits are currently being tested at the external lab or are waiting to be tested at the external lab.
 - Testing on all sexual assault kits currently designated for testing is expected to be completed by the end of 2018.
- Allocate \$920,000 for sexual assault victim support services and outreach to ensure that local victim advocates have additional resources to provide direct services to survivors as well as to engage with their colleagues to implement evidence based, victim-centered protocols for responding to sexual assault cases.
- Establish the [By Your Side](#) campaign to provide information and resources to survivors regarding the unsubmitted kits.

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 Attorney General's Sexual Assault Response team (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.

All aggregate testing results are published at wisaki.doj.wi.gov as they become available. Also available at wisaki.doj.wi.gov are WiSAKI frequently asked questions, data and results, resources, step by step summary of the testing process, and other news about WiSAKI and the AG SART can go.

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 to initiate the process of locating their kits and exploring options for DNA testing. Survivors will also be connected with support services.