



Brad D. Schimel
Wisconsin Attorney General

P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857

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AG Schimel Announces New Partnership with Five Pilot Counties on Sexual Assault Response Training

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. Under his leadership Wisconsin is getting unsubmitted sexual assault kits out of the possession of hospitals and local law enforcement agencies and into the hands of forensic analysts for testing so justice can be delivered to sexual assault survivors. Attorney General Schimel’s work on behalf of sexual assault survivors continues as today he announced the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) has selected five counties to serve as pilot sites to strengthen multidisciplinary responses to sexual assault through sexual assault response teams (SART).

“I am incredibly proud of the team at DOJ for being leaders in sexual assault response. From our Office of Crime Victim Services which provides direct support to sexual assault victims, to our sexual assault nurse examiner training program and our victim-centered unsubmitted sexual assault kit initiative, Wisconsin is a leader in sexual assault response,” said Attorney General Schimel. “Over time, more research and information has come to light about trauma-informed care, affecting how law enforcement, sexual assault nurse examiners, prosecutors, and advocates respond to sexual assault. I am excited to work with our pilot program partners who are stepping forward, and thrilled to provide the sexual assault response training necessary for sexual assault survivors to receive the best care and a helping hand through the criminal justice system.”

Following a competitive application process, the following counties were selected: Bayfield, Dane, La Crosse (campus community), Sheboygan, and St. Croix.

These pilot sites will receive:

- extensive cross training focused on numerous topics including law enforcement response to sexual assaults, advocacy response, role of the sexual assault nurse examiner, responsibility of the prosecutor, etc;
- assistance in developing, reviewing, revising, and implementing memorandums of understanding, as well as the policies, procedures, and protocols of the SART;
- guidance through creation of a continual sexual assault case review process that results in actionable recommendations focusing on training and policy development;
- guidance through an innovative, evidence-based public health approach to sexual assault.

At the end of this process, pilot sites will be asked to assist in developing best practice tools and training modules for the rest of the state. This will include updating the statewide Sexual Assault Response Team Protocol as well as the Wisconsin Sexual Assault Prosecutor's Manual.

"I'm grateful for this opportunity and look forward to this SART project. This will help strengthen our response as a team for the benefit of sexual assault victims and the community. I'm very proud of our law enforcement, victim advocates, and other community partners that share the commitment to strengthening our response to sexual assault," said Bayfield County District Attorney Kimberly Lawton.

In addition to subject matter experts from DOJ, professionals from the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the Medical College of Wisconsin will be working with the pilot sites to strengthen the multidisciplinary response to sexual assault in Wisconsin. "We welcome the opportunity this pilot program provides to strengthen the critical work being done by SART teams in the state. Strong SART teams mean better support for survivors, and more accountability for sex offenders," said Pennie Meyers, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault.