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NEWS RELEASE

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AWARDED GRANT FUNDING TO ELIMINATE UNTESTED SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC EVIDENCE KITS

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MADISON — Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel is proud to announce the Wisconsin Department of Justice was awarded \$4 million in grant funding today to eliminate untested sexual assault forensic evidence kits.

“This money will go a long way to bring justice to survivors of sexual assault,” said Schimel. “We owe it to those who had the courage to report a sexual assault and underwent a sexual assault forensic exam, to now test their kits, investigate their cases, and hold their perpetrators accountable. With these grants we will save others from becoming victims and we will make our communities safer.”

Sexual assault forensic evidence kits, also known as “sexual assault kits” or “rape kits”, are collections of evidence taken during a lengthy and invasive examination process by a trained professional. DNA evidence collected as part of the examination is often a way for law enforcement to identify perpetrators.

Attorney General Schimel and his statewide Sexual Assault Response Team, a multidisciplinary group of advocates, law enforcement, prosecutors, sexual assault nurse examiners, policy makers, Wisconsin State Crime Lab representatives, hospital administrators, and other criminal justice professionals, have developed a protocol to address the issue of untested kits in Wisconsin. The team has prioritized the testing of kits in a manner that holds perpetrators accountable, while also being sensitive to the needs of victims, including those victims who are uncertain about whether they want to participate in the criminal justice system.

The \$4 million in grant funding comes from two different grants. The first grant, facilitated through the District Attorney of New York, will pay for the testing of kits that have not yet been tested. The second grant, from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, will be directed towards the creation of a multidisciplinary team that will inventory and track kits; improve the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault case; and enhance services and notification to victims of sexual assault.

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