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## **Multnomah County DA's Office recognized for its Sexual Assault Kit Backlog Elimination Project**

On March 12, 2019, Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance, Jr., announced the results from his office's \$38 million initiative to test Sexual Assault Evidence kits, known as "SAFE kits," in states across the country, including Oregon.

Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill attended the press conference and was selected to be a panel speaker to address sustainability and legislative reform on SAFE kit matters. To view the press conference and panel discussion, please click [here](#).

During his press conference, DA Vance remarked that DA Underhill "passionately supported comprehensive rape kit reform in Oregon."

In 2016, Oregon passed Melissa's Law that established an annual audit of untested SAFE kits. The law requires law enforcement to create guidelines for collecting and submitting kits for analysis. These policies ensure that law enforcement receive newly collected kits from medical facilities within seven days and ensure that law enforcement submit the kit to the Oregon State Police (OSP) within 14 days. The law also mandates law enforcement adopt policies to ensure that survivors receive information about the status of their SAFE kit. In 2018, Oregon enacted a law that requires the creation and implementation of an electronic, statewide tracking system of rape kits.

DA Vance said Oregon, along with other states, are in the vanguard when it comes to testing every kit and standing with survivors.

"We are very proud of how far we've come and where we are now," DA Underhill said. "We have eliminated our untested backlog of SAFE kits and we have passed legislation so we will never accumulate another untested kit in the future."

In 2018, Oregon became one of the first five states in the country to clear its backlog of Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE) kits. This remarkable achievement was made possible, in part, after the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office was awarded the Sexual Assault Kit Backlog Elimination Grant from the Manhattan District Attorney's Office (DANY) and through the collective efforts of the Portland Police Bureau's Sex Crimes Unit after the City of Portland received a grant from [U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance's \(BJA\) Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Grant Program](#).

As described in the ***"Testing Every Kit: Results and Lessons from the Manhattan DA's Rape Kit Backlog Elimination Program"*** [report](#) released March 12, 2019, "between September 2015 and September 2018, 32 jurisdictions in 20 states received funding from the Manhattan District Attorney's Office to test roughly 55,000 backlogged kits, generating DNA evidence that will help solve crimes for decades to come. By testing their backlogged kits, these jurisdictions have bolstered a national DNA databank, identified suspects, convicted perpetrators, prevented future offenses, and brought long-awaited justice to survivors."

Highlights include:

- 55,252 backlogged sexual assault kits sent to labs for testing

- 18,803 DNA profiles uploaded into the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Combined DNA Index System (CODIS)
- 9,228 "hits" in the CODIS databank
- 165 new prosecutions commenced, including 160 felony sexual assault prosecutions and 1 felony homicide prosecution
- 186 new arrests
- 64 new convictions, including 47 felony sexual assault convictions

The DANY report identified four key legislative recommendations to help clear the existing backlog and prevent future backlogs from occurring:

- Enact state legislation mandating the timely testing of all new rape kits, with ongoing funding guaranteed by the state.
- Enact state legislation requiring the testing of all backlogged kits
- Require annual statewide inventories of untested sexual assault kits and develop systems to track kits throughout the testing process.
- Eliminate the statute of limitations for felony sexual assault charges

The Multnomah County Untested Sexual Assault Kit (USAK) team is comprised of a Deputy District Attorney (DDA), a forensic consultant and a victim advocate. Under the DANY grant, Multnomah County coordinated the testing nearly 3,000 sexual assault kits from around the State of Oregon. The USAK team reviews every case arising from a previously untested SAFE kit, evaluates whether the case can be reopened for further investigation, and handles any resulting prosecution. Currently, Multnomah County DDA Tara Gardner is assigned as the USAK DDA. Kendra Bonetti is the assigned victim advocate and Susan Hormann is the assigned Forensic Consultant.

"The Manhattan District Attorney's Office's Grant played a crucial role in the elimination of the sexual assault kit backlog in the state of Oregon. The grant funding helped establish and guide a collaboration of system partners united in a goal of ensuring every kit was tested. Through the testing process, stakeholders have seen firsthand the significance a tested sexual assault kit has for survivors, the community, and law enforcement," DDA Gardner said.

Attendees of the DANY summit included survivors, local and national legislators, district attorneys and other law enforcement partners, victim advocates, lobbyists, representatives from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, academics, victim services organizations, and representatives from the 32 jurisdictions funded through the Manhattan District Attorney's Sexual Assault Kit Backlog Elimination Grant Program.

**By the Numbers:**

Number of backlogged kits sent for DNA testing: 2,913

Number of DNA profiles entered into CODIS: 882

Number of CODIS hits: 448

Number of arrest: 6

Number of prosecutions commenced: 7 (6 cases in Multnomah County, 1 case in Lane County)

Number of convictions: 6 (All in Multnomah County)

**Current Multnomah County SAFE kit criminal cases (as of December 14, 2018)**

State of Oregon vs Jihad Eldeen Moore - 18CR13996 – Convicted Oct. 31, 2018

State of Oregon vs Chanh Van Tran - 18CR25167 - Convicted in November 2018

State of Oregon vs Curtis Clint Williams - 17CR37474 - Convicted in June 2018

State of Oregon vs Steven Guy Tubbs - 17CR08640 - Convicted in August 2018

State of Oregon vs Jose Oscar Rosales - 17CR29317 - Convicted in February 2018

State of Oregon vs Ricky Alexander Harrison - 18CR59141 - Pending arraignment

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