

What is the Tulsa Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (TulSAKI)?

The Tulsa Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (TulSAKI) is a city-wide effort to address the accumulation of unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs). Initiated by the Tulsa Police Department's Special Victims Unit, TulSAKI is a collaborative effort among law enforcement, victim advocacy organizations, the Tulsa County District Attorney's office, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program, and other community partners. TulSAKI utilizes funding from the national SAKI grant program through the Bureau of Justice Assistance to process and test unsubmitted sexual assault kits and to support a collaborative, community-wide response to sexual assault in Tulsa.

What is an unsubmitted sexual assault kit?

An unsubmitted sexual assault kit (SAK) is a sexual assault kit that has not been submitted to a forensic laboratory for testing and analysis using Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) eligible DNA methodologies.

Is there information on the number of sexual assault kits inventoried and how many will be tested?

In 2018, the Tulsa Police Department conducted a detailed inventory of unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs) in TPD's possession and found that 3,000 SAKs had not been tested. Utilizing funding from the SAKI grant, all of these SAKs will be tested unless a victim requests that their kit not be tested. Moving forward, Oklahoma Senate Bill 975, signed by Governor Stitt in July 2019, requires that all sexual assault kits be submitted for testing within 20 days of collection.

Are all of the kits being tested?

While most of the previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs) will be tested, the TulSAKI project's victim centered approach means there are certain circumstances in which the SAKs are not currently designated for testing.

When and where will the kits be tested?

The Tulsa Police Department has contracted with an outside laboratory to test the previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs). The kit testing process is complex and it can take anywhere from weeks to months to complete for each kit. With the passage of Oklahoma Senate Bill 975, all new sexual assault kits must be submitted to an accredited crime laboratory within 20 days of collection (with the exception of kits that victims have requested not be tested). All SAKs, both tested and untested, are required to be stored for 50 years, and a victim can decide to have their kit tested within the statute of limitations even if they initially decline the testing.

Will you only test a kit if the survivor consents?

For the majority of the cases, if the victim reported the assault to law enforcement, that is interpreted as consent to test their kit. A victim can request that their kit not be tested.

Can a survivor have a kit collected without reporting to law enforcement?

Yes. Victims can choose not to report and can also request their kit not be tested. Oklahoma Senate Bill 975 requires that untested kits are stored by law enforcement, and a victim who initially declined testing can decide to have their kit tested in the future if it falls within the statute of limitations.

How can victims find information about their sexual assault kit?

Victims can contact the Tulsa Police Department's Special Victims Unit by email at tulsaki@cityoftulsa.org and by phone at (918) 596-9168.

Will victims be notified of the results of the testing of their kit?

Victim notification is a crucial step in this process and will be performed with the utmost respect for the survivor's confidentiality and privacy. The following are recommended practices and protocols available to ensure that notification is accomplished in a timely, victim-centered and trauma-informed manner:

- minimize the impact of trauma upon the survivors;
- provide accurate information about the DNA analysis and status of any potential investigation or prosecution; and
- afford survivors the opportunity to receive counseling and services, regardless of their decision to participate in or assist with any further investigation or prosecution.

TulSAKI will notify victims of the results of the testing of their kit if testing results in new information regarding their case. Notification procedures are currently in development by the Tulsa Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) and will follow the recommended practices and protocols noted above.

Who is paying for the testing?

The Tulsa Police Department received grant money to pay for the processing and testing of unsubmitted sexual assault kits. In November 2018, the Tulsa Police Department was awarded a \$1.5 million grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)'s Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI). The SAKI grant funds the processing and testing of TPD's unsubmitted sexual assault kits, as well a TPD cold case investigator, an investigator for the DA's office, a Victim Advocate for TPD's Special Victims Unit, and other initiatives to develop a collaborative, community-wide response to sexual assault in Tulsa, including the Tulsa Sexual Assault Response Team (SART).

What is the Tulsa Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)?

Tulsa's Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) consists of the Tulsa Police Department and the TPD Forensic Laboratory, the City of Tulsa's Forensic Nurse Administrator of the SANE program, the Tulsa County District Attorney's office, Domestic Violence Intervention Services (DVIS), the Family Safety Center, and the University of Tulsa. The SART meets monthly to discuss, evaluate, and promote a collaborative, community-wide response to sexual assault.