



Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

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Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention & Treatment Board releases findings of sexual assault kit analysis

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Michigan State University has submitted its findings from the audit of 10,559 sexual assault kits discovered in a Detroit Police Department property storage facility on August 17, 2009, following the 2008 closing of the Detroit Crime Lab. The Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention & Treatment Board (MDVPTB) became involved in January of 2010, and together with the Michigan State Police (MSP) worked with the MSU Center for Statistical Training and Consulting to conduct the analysis.

MSU researcher Dr. Steven J. Pierce, the associate director of CSTAT, randomly chose 400 of the sexual assault kits for analysis. Based on his analysis of the data about those kits, Dr. Pierce estimates that for the full collection of 10,559:

- Forensic laboratory staff will need to screen about 5,700 viable sexual assault kits for biological specimens that could contain an offender's DNA.
- Approximately 3,700 suspect DNA profiles could be searched in the national Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), which was introduced in Michigan in 2000, and houses local, state and national databases of DNA profiles from convicted offenders, unsolved crime scene evidence and missing persons.
- Sex offenders could be identified in approximately 1,100 cases using CODIS technology.

Since April 2010, MDVPTB and the MSP have worked closely with the Detroit Police Department, Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan and the City of Detroit. Work is currently underway to develop a plan for ensuring that this accumulation of unresolved sexual assault kits will not happen again.

"This is truly a collaborative effort to ensure that this never happens again in Michigan," said Debi Cain, executive director of MDVPTB, which secured the federal funding to conduct the research and will be a partner in the initiative going forward. "This issue is all too prevalent in larger cities nationwide.

"Other cities have worked to address this issue, but the City of Detroit stands alone in not only inviting – but welcoming – sexual assault victim advocates to take a lead role."

The statistical analysis, as well as the processing, investigation and preparation of 400 audit cases was supported by a grant from the United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

“The evaluation and forensic testing of the 400 kits was not just a study, but really the first phase in the response to these unresolved and untested sexual assault kits,” said John Collins, director of the Michigan State Police Forensic Science Division. “It was a scientific approach to begin fixing a public safety problem.”

“The catastrophic failure of the past cannot be undone, but this collaborative partnership will ultimately roadmap how to right these wrongs and to ensure that they are not repeated,” Cain said. “We must provide victims of sexual assault with both advocacy and access to the justice system – MDVPTB will continue to be a partner in ensuring that this happens.”

About the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board

The Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board (MDVPTB) was established within the Department of Human Services in 1978 by state legislation that created a governor-appointed board responsible for focusing state activity on domestic violence. The board administers state and federal funding for domestic violence and sexual violence programs and agencies, develops and recommends policy and law, and develops and provides technical assistance and training. The seven-member board represents a cross-section of professions concerned with the crimes of domestic and sexual violence. Members are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Staff provided by DHS assists the board in carrying out their legislative charge.

For more information on the MDVPTB, please visit www.michigan.gov/domesticviolence. Follow DHS on Twitter @MichiganDHS or become a fan at www.facebook.com/MichiganDHS.

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