**National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach**

Recommendations for a victim-centered approach in responding to sexual assault cases.

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Behind every sexual assault case is a person whose life has been irrevocably altered. The first responders, law enforcement investigators, forensic nurse examiners, laboratory analysts, victim advocates, and attorneys who support and interact with victims in different ways, have the opportunity to work together to positively impact a victim’s post assault experience and improve healing and recovery.

The Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Reporting (SAFER) Act, is focused on the accurate, timely, and effective collection and processing of DNA evidence in sexual assault investigations. In support of these efforts, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has released a set of best practices in response to the community’s needs.

Through the report, “National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach,” NIJ’s expert working group created 35 recommendations providing a guide to victim-centered approaches for responding to sexual assault cases and better supporting victims throughout the criminal justice process. A coordinated and collaborative approach to sexual assault investigations helps provide reassurance and support to the victims of sexual violence, improve victim engagement to facilitate healing, and increase the potential for just resolutions to these cases.

Jurisdictions vary in their individual needs and resources; these recommendations can help provide a roadmap for agencies to develop or advance their policies and protocols for untested sexual assault kits. The recommendations emphasize the use of collaborative, victim-centered, and multidisciplinary approaches to improve evidence collection and preservation, increase consistency and provide uniformity for the prioritization and transferal of evidence, enhance laboratory process efficiencies for DNA testing, and advance investigative practices and agency protocols for: evidence inventory, tracking and audits, and communication systems.

For more information on the 35 recommendations, download the full report “National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach” (pdf, 141 pages).

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