

## **Governor's Sexual Assault Kit Working Group (SAKWG)**

### Meeting Minutes

July 15, 2016

Members Present: Laura Cordes, Anne Mahoney, Maureen Platt, Linda Cimino

Members Absent: Cathy Malloy, Guy Vallaro, Chief Keith Mello

Guests: Eleanor Michael (Gov. Malloy's office), Kevin MacMillan (SAKI program coordinator), Kristin Sasinouski (CT Forensics Lab)

- I. The meeting was called to order at 2:25 pm.
- II. Amending the Agenda; Approval of Minutes
  - a. Amending the agenda: A motion was made to amend the agenda to include adopt of the minutes; it was approved.
  - b. Approval of minutes: A motion was made to edit the agenda to amend the minutes to correct typographical errors. The motion carried. A motion was made to adopt the minutes, as amended, and it carried.

### III. Updates

- a. Washington, DC SAKI Grantees Meeting

Mr. MacMillan and Ms. Cordes discussed the first national grantee meeting for the BJA Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) sites. Team members from all 20 grantee sites (some states, some individual cities) attended. This was an opportunity for states to share what they are doing. One common takeaway was that the groups that have interdisciplinary teams (similar to SAKWG) are moving along faster than the other groups. CT is farther ahead with respect to its kits testing.

There was some discussion about the states that have pilot programs, or major cities (Houston) versus statewide initiatives like Connecticut's.

Attendees also talked about the upcoming 2017 application and the opportunity to receive additional funding.

Ms. Cordes noted that many topics were covered as introductory information throughout the two days, so there was not a lot of depth in content. Future meetings may have longer, in-depth workshops for participants. Both Ms. Cordes and Mr. MacMillan had the opportunity to hear from other states and contrasted the other sites with Connecticut's statewide effort. Unlike many other sites, CT has already done a survey, has a statewide approach vs a few select towns, and will soon begin to concentrate on victim notification (including tapping into resources such as Joyful Heart and its newly released resource "Navigating Notification") as untested kits have begun to be tested.

### *Specific States/Counties*

Some sites talked about backlogs in their labs, with some using private labs to help with the testing. These labs are also backlogged.

Cayahoga County, Ohio: made its 500<sup>th</sup> indictment and 209 convictions. The county had a backlog of 5,000 kits.

Mr. MacMillan noted a presentation by a nurse from Utah, who presented findings from an analysis done on the cases in her state that showed the factors most likely and least likely to determine whether a kit had been sent for testing. The biggest determinants were things like drugs in the victim's system and whether the victim was male. Those least likely to result in testing included if the victims abused drugs or were "impaired." More kits with male victims were tested than female.

Ms. Mahoney thought it would be helpful to have a research component to the initiative to look into things such as the factors described above.

#### b. SAKI TA Site Visit

The group discussed the CT site visit by the SAKI Technical Assistance (TA) team, which included Pattie Melton (from RTI); John Wilkerson (AEquitas), which specializes in supporting prosecutors; and Sam Capagrossi from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (law enforcement). There was discussion at that meeting about where Connecticut's kit initiative was relative to other states. The SAKWG members who were present thought the team was supportive and candid about how they could help and had many good suggestions.

Ms. Sasinouski, who is the administrative manager of the state lab, said that Connecticut is waiting on the inventory of untested kits that were identified in the survey and sent to the lab to be "certified" by the TA Team and BJA. Certification, which is required by the federal Bureau of Justice Assistance, requires a review of the survey results and information about the total number of kits including date of collection, age of victim, and number of anonymous kits.

The issue of whether we have a complete accounting of the untested kits was raised. For example, we did not ask military bases (e.g, Groton Sub Base, Coast Guard Academy, National Guard) or hospitals if they had untested kits. The working group members noted that this will need to be part of our plan moving forward.

#### c. Update on CT Kits

Mr. MacMillan reported the following:

764 kits of the 961 identified in the survey have been received by the lab;  
274 have been tested  
102 of these have been entered into CODIS  
27 of those entered into CODIS had hits  
300 kits have been outsourced, the results of which are expected in the fall

There was some discussion about *where* the kits are coming from. Ms. Platt asked specifically about Waterbury.

#### IV. Tracking Update

Mr. MacMillan shared that new tracking software is prohibitively expensive and that he is working with Ms. Cimino and the state's kit vendor to put barcodes on each kit at no cost to the state. All new kits will have barcodes, and barcodes will be added to the cohort of untested kits that arrive at the lab for tracking.

He added that the lab is still in discussions on the software needed for tracking. UPS will be coming to the lab next week to show its tracking product.

#### V. Discussion of Working Group Goals/Timeline

Ms. Cordes and Mr. MacMillan met earlier in the month to draft a timeline for the working group goals and grant activities. Ms. Cordes distributed a draft of the goals and action steps for review. She stressed the importance of ensuring that all of the untested kits be forwarded to the lab. There was consensus that the goals reflected the discussions that the group had to date. Additionally, members suggested adding a research component to ensure that cases could be examined in aggregate as the project moves forward. Ms. Cordes noted that funding and protocols would be needed and that she has reached out to a university professor to identify support.

Ms. Mahoney expressed concern about the status of cases that had a hit and how quickly the team could move to determine if the cases should be reopened and charges brought before the statute of limitations (SOL, 5 years) expires. The lab is prioritizing older kits to ensure prosecutions before the SOL passes. Mr. MacMillan said he will look at the 27 CODIS hits to determine date of incident.

#### VI. CODIS 101—Powerpoint

Mr. MacMillan shared a Powerpoint Presentation with the group. It included an explanation of the CT 100 and its contents, forensic biology (with semen being the most important element). He discussed how semen is identified and used for DNA testing.

The DNA from these tests is used to link serial crimes and unsolved cases through three databases:

1. NDIS-National
2. SDIS-State
3. LDIS-Local

Connecticut primarily relies on SDIS. (There is no LDIS in the state as there is no county system.) Also, eligibility for placement in the databases gets increasingly harder as you move up to the NDIS. In Connecticut, all **convicted offenders** go into the SDIS.

According to Mr. MacMillan, there are 14.6 million DNA samples in the U.S., 106,000 of these are in Connecticut (the state is adding about 300 per month). Of these, there are 708,416 unknown DNA profiles and 7,890 of these are from Connecticut.

There was a brief discussion about the two types of “hits”—forensic (case-to-case) and offender (case-to-person). Connecticut is an *offender state*, which means only those offenders convicted have their samples entered into CODIS, versus *arrestee states*, which requires samples to be entered upon arrest. *Familial* searching is also an option.

Mr. MacMillan reported that CODIS gets 60 hits per month, eight of which are for Sexual Assaults.

#### VII. Next Steps

Members reviewed next steps which include:

- Ms. Cordes will request a meeting with the Chief State’s Attorney, Kevin Kane about presenting at a State’s Attorney’s meeting and information and case management in the DNA Work Group
- Ms. Cordes/Mr. MacMillan and Linda Cimino will meet again in August to discuss timeline—all of SAKWG welcome to join them

- After analyzing which judicial districts and towns have the most kits with hits, Ms. Cordes will prioritize the scheduling of multidisciplinary meetings between police chiefs, state's attorney's and sexual assault victim advocates to discuss cases and the development of victim notification protocols.
- There is a conflict that one of the working group members has with the current meeting time. A doodle poll will be sent to find a new meeting time that works for all.
- Meetings will be scheduled monthly from September through December.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Cohen, Special Projects Coordinator, SAKWG Administrator