



Workshops - 2017

W24 Navigating the Sea of Resources for Sexual Assault Programs

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand best practices for seeking resources, including federal funding to improve policy, efficiency, and operational sustainability in the processing of Sexual Assault Kits (SAKs) and forensic evidence in their agencies and forensic laboratories. Furthermore, this workshop will bring an understanding of the benefits, comparative differences, and requirements to enable funding consideration and use.

This workshop will impact the forensic science community by highlighting how federal resources in the United States can advance victim-centered support programs, investigations, and forensic services that aid sexual assault programs, especially the processing of untested SAKs and forensic evidence, which bolster the criminal justice process.

In the United States, many jurisdictions are addressing the need to resolve the existence of unanalyzed sexual assault evidence, including sexual assault kits (SAKs). Annually, tens of millions of dollars are provided to criminal justice agencies, forensic laboratories, and researchers to support various sexual assault programs. In addition to economic support, there are many federal resources and programs that provide evidence-based research and technological developments to advance policy and practices; support survivors of sexual assault; establish effective and sustainable practices for collecting and processing forensic evidence; investigate and prosecute sexual assault cases; and, uphold justice by convicting the guilty or exonerating the innocent.

An overview of sexual assault investigations and United States support programs, specifically programs to reduce and process untested sexual assault kits and other forensic evidence more expeditiously and effectively, will be presented. Various federal funding programs will be discussed including research and evaluation (National Institute of Justice, NIJ), DNA capacity enhancement and backlog reduction (CEBR), cold case investigations (NIJ), national sexual assault kit initiative (Bureau of Justice Assistance, BJA), and sexual assault kit partnerships such as the joint venture established by the NIJ and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). A comparison of program components and requirements, their differences, and potential practitioner use of multiple resources will be included. Examples of a particular program or need within the community will be shared and an explanation of how it corresponds within a funding resource will provide further guidance. Additional resources such as NIJ's Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Reporting (SAFER) Working Group and the Forensic Technology Center of Excellence will also be highlighted. Laboratory practitioners who have successfully utilized multiple federal programs to help reduce their SAKs, to introduce laboratory efficiencies, to inventory their forensic evidence, and to work with their jurisdictional sexual assault response teams will share their experiences.



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Federal agency representatives, laboratory practitioners, researchers, and technology advocates will provide varying perspectives for resources of sexual assault programs, sharing how the programs they represent, or have used, continue to transform the landscape of sexual assault investigations and forensic services using evidenced-based practices to advance the latest technology, to improve program policy, and to reduce the number of untested sexual assault kits and other forensic evidence nationwide.

Sexual Assault, Forensic Evidence, Research and Technology