



DNA Backlog Clearance Project

Volume 1, Issue 5: July 2014

Focus of update:

This newsletter is designed to provide regular updates pertaining to the DNA Backlog Clearance Project. The project will continue until all testing is complete, reports issued by the external vendors, technical reviews finalized, and investigative follow up conducted. This edition will focus on updating stakeholders on progress made thus far on the investigation stage of this project.

CODIS Entries

CODIS entries to date	1,605**
-----------------------	----------------

** These cases represent those where a profile was developed meeting CODIS guidelines and a CODIS entry has been completed.

Information Line Educates Community

The Sexual Assault Information Line (SAIL) was an initiative launched Dec. 2013 followed by a press release in Jan. 2014. The objective of the SAIL was to provide an opportunity for all survivors of sexual assault, who reported to HPD, to learn about the status of their case: to empower. While the line has not been inundated with calls, the ones who have called have been connected to the answers they are seeking..

One woman called in and explained that she survived sexual assault almost a decade ago. She sought a forensic exam and reported to HPD, but she never spoke with an investigator after the initial report because she was admitted to a psychiatric hospital and never received the investigator's messages. After learning about SAIL, she called the line stating she had additional information on the suspect and was curious if the statute of limitations had expired. Within a week, she met with a newly-assigned investigator, provided a statement and the suspect information. The investigator located the suspect, received his statement, and collected oral swabs. The crime lab confirmed the suspect was a DNA match with the SAK. Charges have been accepted and the suspect has been arrested. The survivor, still struggling with her mental health, feels appreciative of the effort to bring the suspect to justice.

While that is just one story from the line, the SAIL remains staffed during normal business hours. Although the phone is not ringing off the hook, the calls that have come in have served to connect survivors and survivors' loved ones with case information and resources. As Caitlin Sulley, Research Project Director with The University of Texas at Austin, put it "[SAIL is] a true service to the community through support and education."

Investigative Follow-Up Case Assignment:

	Assigned	Completed
CODIS Matches ¹	443	358
CODIS Ineligibles / Negatives ²	1840	1795
CODIS Eligibles ³	20	15
Total to Date	2303	2168

Investigative Follow-Up Results:

	False Arrest	Arrest Confirmation	New Charges
Total to Date	0	46	15

Note: These figures refer exclusively to the City-funded portion of the DNA Backlog Clearance Project.

¹ DNA profile identified through DNA analysis, resulted from either a direct CODIS hit (individual) or linked to another case.

² Lab analysis provided no evidentiary leads. Testing complete.

³ Lab analysis has identified possible DNA evidence. Multiple outcomes possible, including entering unknown profile(s) into CODIS. Testing in-progress.

Collaborative Message Continues to Spread

Proud of the strategies utilized to address the untested kits and improve the response to sexual assault in this City, members of the Task Force have shared our story in different ways.

Earlier this year members from the project presented at the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault annual conference and the Crimes Against Women annual conference. In a slightly different medium, HPD personnel presented a webinar on the culture change within the Sex Crimes Units through [The National Center for Victims of Crime](#). Houston Forensic Science LGC personnel presented crime lab-specific information at Bode West Conference.

While we are not seeking accolades for the hard work that has encompassed the last 3 years, we want to be a resource to other jurisdictions in a multitude of disciplines. Addressing sexual assault is a community-wide issue, and it takes relationships between these partners for success to be made. We will continue to spread our message, as we continue to improve response to sexual assault in Houston.