

**RCW 43.43.545 Statewide sexual assault kit tracking system. (1)**

The Washington state patrol shall create and operate a statewide sexual assault kit tracking system. The Washington state patrol may contract with state or nonstate entities including, but not limited to, private software and technology providers, for the creation, operation, and maintenance of the system.

(2) The statewide sexual assault kit tracking system must:

(a) Track the location and status of sexual assault kits throughout the criminal justice process, including the initial collection in examinations performed at medical facilities, receipt and storage at law enforcement agencies, receipt and analysis at forensic laboratories, and storage and any destruction after completion of analysis;

(b) Designate sexual assault kits as unreported or reported;

(c) Indicate whether a sexual assault kit contains biological materials collected for the purpose of forensic toxicological analysis;

(d) Allow medical facilities performing sexual assault forensic examinations, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, the Washington state patrol bureau of forensic laboratory services, and other entities having custody of sexual assault kits to update and track the status and location of sexual assault kits;

(e) Allow victims of sexual assault to anonymously track or receive updates regarding the status of their sexual assault kits; and

(f) Use electronic technology or technologies allowing continuous access.

(3) The Washington state patrol may use a phased implementation process in order to launch the system and facilitate entry and use of the system for required participants. The Washington state patrol may phase initial participation according to region, volume, or other appropriate classifications. All entities having custody of sexual assault kits shall fully participate in the system no later than June 1, 2018. The Washington state patrol shall submit a report on the current status and plan for launching the system, including the plan for phased implementation, to the joint legislative task force on sexual assault forensic examination best practices, the appropriate committees of the legislature, and the governor no later than January 1, 2017.

(4) The Washington state patrol shall submit a semiannual report on the statewide sexual assault kit tracking system to the joint legislative task force on sexual assault forensic examination best practices, the appropriate committees of the legislature, and the governor. The Washington state patrol may publish the current report on its website. The first report is due July 31, 2018, and subsequent reports are due January 31st and July 31st of each year. The report must include the following:

(a) The total number of sexual assault kits in the system statewide and by jurisdiction;

(b) The total and semiannual number of sexual assault kits where forensic analysis has been completed statewide and by jurisdiction;

(c) The number of sexual assault kits added to the system in the reporting period statewide and by jurisdiction;

(d) The total and semiannual number of sexual assault kits where forensic analysis has been requested but not completed statewide and by jurisdiction;

(e) The average and median length of time for sexual assault kits to be submitted for forensic analysis after being added to the system,

including separate sets of data for all sexual assault kits in the system statewide and by jurisdiction and for sexual assault kits added to the system in the reporting period statewide and by jurisdiction;

(f) The average and median length of time for forensic analysis to be completed on sexual assault kits after being submitted for analysis, including separate sets of data for all sexual assault kits in the system statewide and by jurisdiction and for sexual assault kits added to the system in the reporting period statewide and by jurisdiction;

(g) The total and semiannual number of sexual assault kits destroyed or removed from the system statewide and by jurisdiction;

(h) The total number of sexual assault kits, statewide and by jurisdiction, where forensic analysis has not been completed and six months or more have passed since those sexual assault kits were added to the system; and

(i) The total number of sexual assault kits, statewide and by jurisdiction, where forensic analysis has not been completed and one year or more has passed since those sexual assault kits were added to the system.

(5) For the purpose of reports under subsection (4) of this section, a sexual assault kit must be assigned to the jurisdiction associated with the law enforcement agency anticipated to receive the sexual assault kit or otherwise having custody of the sexual assault kit.

(6) Any public agency or entity, including its officials and employees, and any hospital and its employees providing services to victims of sexual assault may not be held civilly liable for damages arising from any release of information or the failure to release information related to the statewide sexual assault kit tracking system, so long as the release was without gross negligence.

(7) The Washington state patrol shall adopt rules as necessary to implement this section.

(8) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Reported sexual assault kit" means a sexual assault kit where a law enforcement agency has received a related report or complaint alleging a sexual assault or other crime has occurred;

(b) "Sexual assault kit" includes all evidence collected during a sexual assault medical forensic examination; and

(c) "Unreported sexual assault kit" means a sexual assault kit where a law enforcement agency has not received a related report or complaint alleging a sexual assault or other crime has occurred.

[2020 c 26 s 6; 2019 c 93 s 4; 2016 c 173 s 2.]

**Intent—2020 c 26:** See note following RCW 63.21.090.

**Finding—Intent—2016 c 173:** "The legislature recognizes the deep pain and suffering experienced by victims of sexual assault. Sexual assault is an extreme violation of a person's body and sense of self and safety. Sexual violence is a pervasive social problem. National studies indicate that approximately one in four women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes. Survivors often turn to hospitals and local law enforcement for help, and many volunteer to have professionals collect a sexual assault kit to preserve physical evidence from their bodies. The process of collecting a sexual assault kit is extremely invasive and difficult.

The legislature finds that, when forensic analysis is completed, the biological evidence contained inside sexual assault kits can be an incredibly powerful tool for law enforcement to solve and prevent crime. Forensic analysis of all sexual assault kits sends a message to survivors that they matter. It sends a message to perpetrators that they will be held accountable for their crimes. The legislature is committed to bringing healing and justice to survivors of sexual assault.

The legislature recognizes the laudable and successful efforts of law enforcement in the utilization of forensic analysis of sexual assault kits in the investigation and prosecution of crimes in Washington state. In 2015, the legislature enhanced utilization of this tool by requiring the preservation and forensic analysis of sexual assault kits. The legislature intends to continue building on its efforts through the establishment of the statewide sexual assault kit tracking system. The system will be designed to track all sexual assault kits in Washington state, regardless of when they were collected, in order to further empower survivors with information, assist law enforcement with investigations and crime prevention, and create transparency and foster public trust." [2016 c 173 s 1.]