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SFPD Clears Sexual Assault Kit Backlog

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In 2013, the SFPD conducted a 10-year review of sexual assault kits collected at SF General Hospital as possible evidence and stored by the Department. Our review of the past decade's sexual assault kits revealed a backlog of 753 cases where the kits had not been submitted to the Crime Lab for analysis.

The SFPD committed to clear this backlog by going back and reviewing the previous sexual assault evidence to determine if today's evolving DNA technology and Federal CODIS database could help to identify sexual predators. Additionally, Chief Suhr directed the mandatory testing of all sexual assault kits going forward. This directive was implemented in January 2014 and is ongoing. The SFPD's ASAP (Additional Sexual Assault evidence Program) protocol for all sexual assault kits requires that the ASAP kit be collected by the Department within 72 hours and immediately transferred to the Crime Lab where it is assigned for analysis within 14 days.

The SFPD ASAP protocol creates a superior standard to the suggested guidelines in the recently passed California State Assembly Bill 1517.

At the end of 2010, the ASAP protocol was only used in unknown suspect cases due to limited personnel in the Crime Lab DNA section. In early 2011, the DNA section had one supervisor and three criminalists responsible for DNA screening and analysis of sexual assault kit evidence. In mid-2011, the SFPD secured the resources to hire additional highly-educated, highly-trained personnel to bolster the staff of the DNA section of the Crime Lab. As a result, the current staffing level of the DNA Section has increased over 400 percent to our current staffing of four supervisors and 11 analysts.

The Department also secured a new outsourcing contract for DNA services with two private laboratories that more than tripled the Department's capacity to eliminate the backlog while keeping pace with current analysis demands. SFPD Crime Lab personnel worked closely with the private labs to direct DNA testing of sexual assault kits to Department standards so that results are eligible for entry into the FBI CODIS database. Our goal was to have all backlog cases submitted for analysis to these vendor labs by mid-2015.

We are pleased to report that we have cleared our sexual assault kit backlog. As of December 3, 2014, all of the 753 identified cases needing to be tested have been sent to the vendor for testing thus clearing the backlog of sexual assault kits at the SFPD. The SFPD Crime Lab is reviewing the test result reports and working with the Special Victims Unit to adjudicate those cases. Cases that qualify for the CODIS eligibility are being uploaded for comparison.

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