



Key Terms and Definitions for Victims/Survivors

NC SAKI: Victim Notification Toolkit

Advocate

An advocate is someone who provides free support to a victim/survivor. A **system-based advocate** (SBA) is the liaison between the victim/survivor and the criminal justice system. An example of a SBA is an advocate from a law enforcement agency. A **community-based advocate** (CBA), such as from a local rape crisis center, provides victims/survivors with confidential advocacy services that they often need to process their experience effectively. Examples include connecting them with a shelter, support groups, emergency accommodations, counseling, and even medical and court advocacy and accompaniment.

CODIS

The Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) is the national DNA computer database run by the FBI, that allows for federal, state, and local forensic labs to exchange and compare DNA profiles electronically, thereby linking serial violent crimes to each other and to known offenders.

CODIS hit

When a DNA profile from evidence in an unsolved case matches the DNA profile from a convicted offender or an arrestee. Note: a “hit” may or may not include the suspects name. A “hit” can provide an investigative lead to help solve an unsolved case.

CODIS upload, no hit (YET)

The DNA profile does not match a DNA profile in CODIS, but will stay in CODIS and be continuously compared to DNA profiles added later.

Cold Case

An unsolved criminal investigation which remains open pending the discovery of new evidence such as a new witness, or new DNA evidence.

Convicted

Having been declared guilty of a criminal offense by the verdict of a jury or the decision of a judge.

Defendant

The individual accused of a crime.

Defense Attorney

The lawyer for (representing) the person accused of a crime.

Detective

An investigator from a law enforcement agency whose occupation it is to investigate and solve crimes. They often do this by collecting information by talking to witnesses, collecting physical evidence, or searching records in databases.

DNA Profile

Unique like a fingerprint, but uses a person's DNA to identify an offender or link case evidence together; the DNA profile is generated after biological evidence is collected and analyzed, such as via a SAK.

Evidence

Any information, including the testimony of a victim/survivor or witness, documents, physical objects, or scientific evidence like DNA, that is admissible in court to support an accusation of a crime.

Forensic

Relating to gathering, testing, and analyzing evidence to solve a crime.

Forensic Hit (in CODIS)

A forensic hit occurs when a DNA profile from the sexual assault kit(SAK)/crime scene matches a DNA profile from another SAK/crime scene, this linking two crimes together. This type of hit is often referred to as "case to case."

Investigation

The act or process undertaken by law enforcement to carefully seek, collect, and examine evidence of a crime to discover the truth.

Medical Forensic Exam

A medical-forensic examination is the process whereby a SANE gathers a detailed medical history; history of the assault; conducts a thorough examination; assesses, documents and coordinates treatment for physical findings and injuries; preservation of biological evidence; education on gender-based violence; prevention of adverse health effects, pregnancy and STI testing and prevention; coordination of care; safety-planning; assessing for destructive coping mechanisms and suicidal ideations; and coordination of follow-up care for other physical or mental health care needs.

NCSCCL

The North Carolina State Crime Lab (NCSCCL) receives, processes, and analyzes SAK's.

Offender Kit (in CODIS)

An offender hit occurs when a know reference sample (offender or arrestee) matches a DNA profile entered from a SAK/crime scene, thus identifying a possible perpetrator.

Prosecutor

The lawyer who is responsible for starting legal proceedings and proving in court that the accused (defendant) has committed the crime(s) that s/he is charged with beyond a reasonable doubt. This is the lawyer the victim/survivor will work with in court.

Sexual Assault Kit (SAK)

Sometimes referred to as a "kit" or "rape kit", the SAK is a package of materials used to collect samples from a victim's body by a medical professional, following a sexual assault.

SAKI

The National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) provides funding to support the testing of SAKs that were never submitted for testing, as well as funding to create a coordinated community response that ensures just resolution to sexual assault cases through (1) a comprehensive and victim-centered approach, (2) jurisdictional capacity building to prevent high numbers of unsubmitted SAKs in the future, and (3) supporting the investigation and prosecution of cases for which SAKs were previously unsubmitted. In 2018, the North Carolina Department of Justice became a recipient of a SAKI award.

SANE

A **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)** is a registered nurse who has received specialized training in the assessment, treatment and coordination of care for people who have experienced acute sexual abuse/assault, as well as the collection and preservation of biological evidence. The goal of a SANE is to improve health outcomes for patients experiencing violence through education, prevention of adverse health consequences, connecting patients to resources, and through promoting patient empowerment throughout the exam process.

STIMS

Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit Technology Inventory Management System (STIMS) is a secure database that allows victims/survivors to track their sexual assault kits as they go through processing.

Testimony

A formal written or spoken statement under oath, especially one given in a court of law.

Unsubmitted Kits

Sexual Assault Kits that have not been submitted to a forensic laboratory for testing and analysis using CODIS-eligible DNA methodologies.

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