



Prioritizing Notifications

NC SAKI: Victim Notification Toolkit

Notification Timeframe

All notifications **MUST** be done **within 3 months** of receiving the SAK lab results. While very rare, there may be a situation in which there is a legitimate reason, supported by the MDT, to make a notification after 3 months. In these cases, the reason must be well documented. No notifications should be made longer than 4 months following the receipt of SAK lab results.

Notification Prioritization Guide

The NC SAKI Working Group recommends that all V/S's be notified of their lab results.* As such, the prioritization need will likely differ based on the individual LEA and community-based rape crisis center's capacity, as well as the number of V/S's they need to notify. For communities with low capacity, and/or a high number of backlogged cases, the prioritization recommendations below may be helpful:

- 1) DNA present, CODIS upload, CODIS hit**
- 2) DNA present, CODIS upload, no hit yet
- 3) No DNA present, not enough DNA, or kit destroyed

*While this is the recommendation, in rare instances, your MDT may determine that a notification is not appropriate. In these situations, the reason should be well documented.

**Remember, it can take up to 3 weeks for the lab to fully confirm if there is a CODIS hit. It is recommended that as such, LEA's wait 3 weeks after receiving the original lab results before making the final determination.

Other Issues to Consider When Prioritizing Notifications

In addition to the above guidance, there are additional factors to consider when prioritizing your notifications:

- 1) **Survivor Safety:** It is important that the way you complete notification takes into account survivor safety. This is particularly important if the *suspect is the V/S's current intimate partner/spouse or parent*. Before you complete the call, decide the following:
 - a. If you will **not** be moving forward with an investigation, the potential danger to the V/S caused by the notification may not be worth the benefit of the notification. While other factors may be involved in this determination, these questions should be your guide: Does the V/S live with the suspect? Has the V/S filed a police report against the suspect within the past year? Have previous police reports against the suspect included high levels of physical injury to the V/S? If the answer to these questions is yes, it is recommended that you do not notify the V/S as this could be placing them in danger.
 - b. If you are moving forward, ensure that you can make the notification without putting the V/S at risk of an assault from the suspect. Perhaps a notification is necessary, but given the safety concerns, it would be better to notify the V/S when they are in the safest situation, i.e. the suspect is out of town. Doing this may delay notification, however it is the right thing to do if it keeps the V/S safer.
- 2) **Investigative Leads:** Perhaps the lab results did not provide compelling evidence for the case, but the review of the case did provide additional leads, bumping it up to a higher notification.

- 3) **Timing:** It is very important that your notification syncs up with the amount of case information you have. Specifically, regardless of where the case falls in the above guidance, you should **not** notify a V/S until you have done the following:
- a. Determined the investigator and community-based advocate for the case.
 - b. Know the general whereabouts of the suspect. If you know the suspect's exact location, that is helpful,
 - c. Have a clear ask for the V/S: i.e. to participate in an investigation, or to testify in another case.
 - d. If applicable, determined a clear reason you are not moving forward with the case.

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