

**Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit
Tracking and Inventory Management System**
N.C. Gen. Stat. § 114-65

Overview and FAQs for Victims of Sexual Assault

Overview of Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit Tracking and Inventory Management System (“STIMS”)

The fundamental purpose of STIMS is to provide victims of sexual assault the ability to track the progress of their sexual assault evidence collection kit from its creation at a medical examination through completion of forensic testing at a laboratory. By using the STIMS web portal, victims can enter their assigned tracking number and see where their kit is and whether forensic testing has been completed. STIMS was created in response to a state law, effective October 1, 2018, which mandates that law enforcement agencies, medical service providers conducting sexual assault victim examinations, sexual assault evidence collection kit vendors, and forensic laboratories in North Carolina, are required to track transfers and laboratory testing progress for sexual assault evidence collection kits (called simply “kits” throughout this document).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Where do I get the tracking number for my kit?

A: For medical examinations on or after October 1, 2018, the medical service provider should provide the kit tracking number upon completion of your exam. If you did not receive a tracking number, and your medical examination happened on or after October 1, 2018, contact the investigating law enforcement agency to obtain the tracking number.

If the medical examination took place prior to October 1, 2018, contact the investigating law enforcement agency to see if a tracking number has been assigned to your kit at this time.

If you are unsure as to whether your kit has been previously tested, contact the investigating law enforcement agency.

Q: Do I need a passcode?

A: No, just the kit number given to you after your exam will allow you to see your kit’s status

Q: What can I see on the web portal?

A: Location and status of your kit, including whether a forensic laboratory has tested your kit.

Q: Is my personal information in the system?

A: No Personal Identifying Information is in the system, just the kit number. The kit number is not linked to your name or birthdate or anything else in the STIMS. There is no risk of your Personal Identifying Information being compromised by the system.

Q: Who do I contact if I have additional questions about the kit tracking?

A: Contact the law enforcement agency to which you reported your assault.

Q: What if I did not report the assault to law enforcement?

A: If you did not report your assault to law enforcement, STIMS will show your kit as being stored. Your kit will not move from storage unless or until you choose to report your assault.

Q: What happens to my kit when it gets to the State Crime Lab?

A: The State Crime Lab's Evidence Control section will receive the kit from the submitting law enforcement agency and review the submission request to ensure it meets case acceptance guidelines. Once this has been done, the kit will be transferred to the Forensic Biology Section for analysis. Both the main lab in Raleigh and the Western Regional Lab in Edneyville have Forensic Biology capability, so the State Crime Lab saves time by not sending kits across the state. A forensic scientist will begin to analyze the kit using Direct-to-DNA, a process recommended by the National Institute of Justice and a national DNA technical working group, which also saves time by cutting out a lengthy step. As an additional note of assurance, the State Crime Lab is accredited to international standards for forensic laboratories and complies with the FBI Quality Assurance Standards for DNA testing laboratories.

Q: How long does it take?

A: On average, kits take five weeks to process; however, due to the current inventory in the laboratory, total wait time and processing is about six months. The State Crime Lab and the NC Department of Justice will continue to work with the General Assembly to request additional resources to decrease the wait time.

Q: What is CODIS?

A: The Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), is a nation-wide system of databases that allows for the storage and exchange of DNA records submitted by federal, state, and local DNA forensic laboratories.

Q: Will my kit be searched in CODIS?

A: Yes, if your kit yields what is called a "foreign DNA profile." A foreign DNA profile is one that does not belong to the victim or to any elimination standard(s) submitted during the kit collection process, such as a known recent sexual partner. If a foreign DNA profile is developed during the analysis of the kit, the profile will be uploaded and searched against the CODIS database in accordance with state and national regulations.

Q: When a profile is uploaded into CODIS, how long does the search and "hit" process take?

A: CODIS searches automatically occur on a daily basis that include DNA records stored at the local, state, and federal levels; however, the confirmation and reporting process of hits can take several days to a couple of weeks.

Q: What happens if a hit to the CODIS database occurs?

A: The Forensic Biology Section notifies the submitting law enforcement agency and the District Attorney's Office of all confirmed CODIS hits. The Law Enforcement Agency in conjunction with the District Attorney's Office must complete additional investigative work, to include **contacting the survivor** and locating the subject of the CODIS hit. Next, Law Enforcement should submit a DNA sample from the subject of the CODIS hit to the Forensic Biology Section for comparison purposes. All questions pertaining to the status of an investigation, to include the results of any CODIS searches, should be directed to the Law Enforcement Agency or the District Attorney's Office.

Q: What happens if a hit in CODIS is not detected?

A: New DNA records are continuously added to CODIS. A DNA record may not have detected a hit upon entry, but may occur at any point in the future as CODIS searches are ongoing.

Q: Will the DNA profile developed from the kit remain in CODIS?

A: Typically, DNA profiles developed from crime scene evidence remains in CODIS, even after a hit is detected. This assists law enforcement in detecting repeat offenders. If circumstances of a case change (e.g. a CODIS hit to a consensual partner), then the DNA profile from the kit may be removed from CODIS. In these instances, the Law Enforcement Agency and the District Attorney's Office will be notified and those parties are responsible for communicating with the survivor and/or victim.