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For Immediate Release

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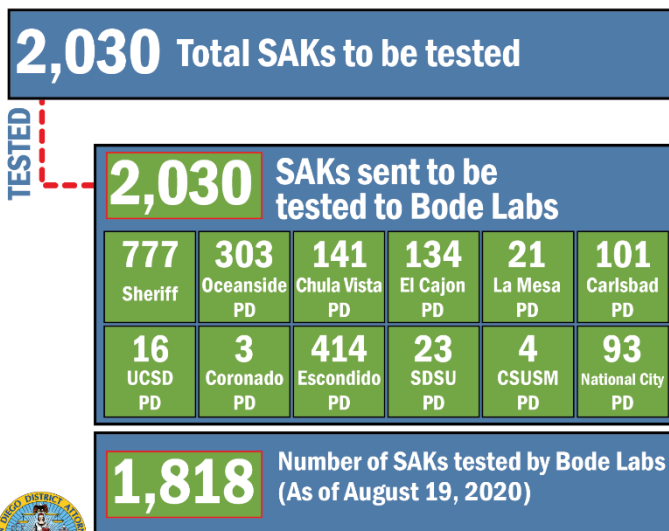
DA Announces Rape Kit Testing Milestone; All 2,030 Kits Have Been Sent for Testing

DA Funded \$1.6 Million to Test Backlog of Sexual Assault Kits

San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan announced today that all 2,030 untested sexual assault evidence kits from 12 police agencies across the county have been sent to an independent lab for testing, wrapping up a three-year project. Results have come back from 1,818 of the kits. The DNA results of eligible kits are in the process of being uploaded into the FBI's national [CODIS](#) (Combined DNA Index System) database to determine if there is a potential offender match.

Reducing the countywide backlog of untested sexual assault kits (SAKs) has been a priority for DA Summer Stephan's since taking office and to fulfill that priority, she identified funding and retained Bode Cellmark Forensics of Lorton, Virginia, which has a track record of for excellence in DNA testing. To date, \$1.6 million has been spent on testing. Sheriff Bill Gore and the San Diego County Sheriff's Department are key partners in the project. The Sheriff's Department has been instrumental in identifying, preparing and delivering the kits for testing.

"As a special victims prosecutor, I saw the devastation and long term physical and emotional trauma that victims of sexual assault and exploitation suffer," District Attorney Summer Stephan said. "I vowed we would test every sexual assault kit and we did. As a part of bringing dignity to victims and accountability to perpetrators, rape kits must be tested. Even if just a few sexual assault cases are solved, it is worth it. We should not



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put a price on justice. Information in these sexual assault kits may contain powerful evidence that can speak on behalf of victims and prevent a future assault. In the meantime, I hope sexual predators out there get the message that we will use every available tool to stop them. I'm grateful to the Sheriff for his partnership and dedicating many of his resources to this project, along with the collaboration by the police chiefs that made this critical milestone possible."

Statistics related to the testing can be found on the [DA's public website](#).

The DA's Office is reviewing the results from the CODIS uploads which could lead to new investigations. About 36% of the SART kits tested produced a DNA profile or partial DNA profile that belongs to a person who is not the victim. Any eligible DNA profiles are uploaded into the DNA database. The DA's Office reviews the results of matches between the DNA evidence from SART kits and DNA profiles in the DNA database. Investigators use matches from the DNA database to re-examine the case to determine if it can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt with the new evidence. This large scale county-wide public safety initiative clears the historic rape kits from the Sheriff's Department, eight Police Departments and three University Police Departments. This initiative does not include rape kits from the San Diego Police Department, which is conducting its own testing.

The Center for Community Solutions, which has a mission to end relationship and sexual violence, supported the DA's initiative when it was first announced.

"It's important to all of us to have the backlog of rape kits tested in cases where survivors have provided consent for the testing," said Verna Griffin-Tabor, CEO and Executive Director of the Center for Community Solutions.

The [Joyful Heart Foundation](#), which is working to have all rape kits tested in the U.S., has also strongly supported San Diego's testing initiative and the County's focus on delivering justice for victims.

"Behind every untested rape kit is a person—a sexual assault survivor—waiting for justice," said Ilse Knecht, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Joyful Heart Foundation. "We commend San Diego County for moving forward with testing of the last remaining backlogged rape kits. DNA evidence is a powerful law enforcement tool. When tested, rape kit evidence can identify unknown assailants, link crime scenes together, reveal serial offenders, and exonerate the wrongfully convicted. When those kits are left untested, survivors are deprived of a vital path to healing and justice, communities are left vulnerable, and violent perpetrators are allowed to roam the streets."

Every 98 seconds, someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. It takes a tremendous amount of courage for survivors of sexual assaults to come forward. Victims in San Diego County can be assured that prosecutors and law enforcement are committed to helping them achieve justice while treating them with dignity and holding perpetrators accountable.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

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