



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

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Press Release

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**CONTRA COSTA DISTRICT ATTORNEY MARK PETERSON
ANNOUNCES PROGRAM TO TEST BACKLOGGED RAPE KITS**

More Than 2,000 Rape Kits to be Tested Using Funding Received through the Manhattan District Attorney's Initiative

In June 2015, District Attorney Mark Peterson directed the Contra Costa County District Attorney's Office to begin a program to test backlogged rape kits in this county. Sexual assault evidence kits, commonly known as "rape kits," are collections of evidence taken during lengthy examinations conducted at a hospital or rape crisis center, following a sexual assault. The DNA evidence contained in rape kits is a powerful tool for identifying suspects, convicting perpetrators, preventing future offenses, and even exonerating the innocent. In Contra Costa County, there are approximately 2,400 rape kits collected by police agencies in suspected sexual assault cases, that haven't been tested.

Due to this backlog, the Contra Costa District Attorney's Office applied for funding to test these kits via the Manhattan District Attorney's Office Sexual Assault Kit Backlog Elimination Program. The DA's Office in Manhattan was the agency selected to review the grant applications from law enforcement agencies and prosecutor's offices throughout the United States. The selection process was extremely competitive for the nearly 38 million dollars which was available for this pilot program.

This week, District Attorney Mark Peterson was informed by New York County District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. that \$1,841,535 was awarded to the Contra Costa District Attorney's Office's to test the estimated 2,400 untested sexual assault evidence kits, or "rape kits," in this county. The two year award will be used to generate DNA evidence from the kits to help solve sexual assault cases. The initial analysis will be done by a private lab, and then qualifying DNA profiles will be submitted to the Office of the Sheriff's Crime Lab for submission to the FBI's Combined DNA Index System (CODIS).

CODIS is a nation-wide database that contains DNA profiles of individuals whose DNA is collected when they are arrested on felony offenses. CODIS then compares the arrestee's profile with DNA profiles collected at crime scenes throughout the United States. Such comparisons often identify the perpetrators of some of the nation's most horrific crimes. It is not uncommon for CODIS hits to link a suspect to several different crimes in several different geographic areas.

Ultimately Contra Costa County was not only awarded a grant, but, the county received one of the larger awards in the entire nation. District Attorney Mark A. Peterson praised the collective efforts of the county's law enforcement agencies to address this problem. District Attorney Peterson said "Solving and prosecuting sexual assault crimes is a priority for this office and all of law enforcement in Contra Costa County. This grant will undoubtedly result in the identification and ultimate conviction of some of the county's most vicious sexual predators."

Questions concerning the program should be addressed to District Attorney Chief of Forensics Paul Holes at (925) 957-8751.