

“Victims of sexual assault should have confidence that their voices are heard and that all resources are brought to bear in the pursuit, prosecution, and conviction of those criminals responsible for these unconscionable acts. Any backlog of untested sexual assault kits in the City of Memphis undermines this confidence, especially for those whose cases remain unsolved.”

A C Wharton, Jr. Mayor

**SEXUAL ASSAULT KIT CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM:
CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

14 April 2014

1. Introduction. On 1 October 2013, the City of Memphis reported it had up to 12,164 sexual assault kits in its police storage facilities in need of additional forensic analysis. We refer to this collection of kits as the sexual assault kit backlog. This issue is one that we must meet head on and that is precisely what we are doing. We did not get here overnight, and we will not eliminate the problem overnight, but through a deliberate plan of action we will:
 - a. Eliminate the backlog. The City of Memphis has committed to testing every kit in the backlog. Today, MPD is engaged in a methodical approach to working through the backlog of kits with dedicated manpower and additional funds allocated from the police budget, grant funds from the state, and monies from the City's general fund. That work will continue until every kit in our backlog is tested. We must find additional resources to maintain our steady pace of testing. This is an issue that cuts across all boundaries, and appropriately we will reach out to partners at the local, state and federal level to identify the resources we need for success. We will also explore every option to be as efficient and effective as possible in that process – from expanding throughput to driving down the cost of testing.
 - b. Follow investigative leads. The City of Memphis has committed to following every investigative lead generated from testing the rape kit backlog. This too will require the allocation of additional manpower and resources by all of the partners involved in the justice system: police, prosecutors, victim advocacy and state and federal agencies. It will also mean additional resources to support survivors. Other cities have already covered this ground and we can learn from their work to quickly organize and prioritize the work.
 - c. Prevent future backlogs. The City of Memphis has committed to testing every sexual assault kit currently booked into police evidence, and reforming any policies which caused the current backlog. Based on work being done in other cities and states, there are existing models for not only eliminating the backlog but also for developing policies, procedures, and systems to prevent it from occurring in the future. We will explore those strategies and engage with those jurisdictions and our partners to be sure that policies, procedures, and systems in Memphis and in Tennessee reflect best practices.
2. Organization. On 31 January 2014 a Sexual Assault Kit (SAK) Cross-functional team (CFT) was established by Mayor A C Wharton, Jr. to ensure the work and many aspects of reform are coordinated and continue to move forward. The CFT will meet bi-weekly until directed otherwise by the Mayor, and will consist of representatives from the following organizations: the Mayor's Office, the District Attorney's Office, Memphis City Council, Victim Advocacy Agencies, the CAO Office, Division of Police Services, Finance Division, Legal Division, Joyful Heart Foundation.
3. Mission. The cross functional team is charged with leading City efforts to eliminate the backlog of sexual assault kits by identifying resources and actions necessary to do so; reforming policies and procedures to ensure that backlogs are not created in the future, identifying resources and procedures required to support victims during the entire process; and identifying the resources and procedures necessary to investigate leads and build cases for prosecution.

4. Operations. The SAK CFT is responsible for advancing the following elements of a comprehensive plan for eliminating the backlog, and shall review and note progress during each CFT meeting:
 - a. Compliance with executive order dated 21 Oct 2013
 - b. Shipping and Testing of backlogged kits
 - c. Policy and Procedure (including legislative review)
 - d. Notification Team / Victim Information
 - e. Investigation and Prosecution
 - f. Public Information Sharing
 - g. Grant/program application – testing and investigation resources
5. Reporting. The CFT shall issue a monthly progress report. This report will fulfill the reporting requirement mandated in the executive order and shall include the following information at a minimum:
 - a. Status of compliance with Executive order
 - b. Status of DNA Storage Facility project
 - c. Status of funding for testing
 - d. Status of Shipping and Analysis of kits
 - e. Status of Results from Testing
 - f. Status of resources/funding required for investigation and prosecution

Acknowledging our victim centered approach, the CFT will also ensure that keeping an accurate account of victim notifications is a part of the victim notification process. Additional reporting elements may be added as the work unfolds or at the request of the Mayor, or upon the recommendation of the CFT. The CFT is also responsible for updating monthly reports on the City webpage and ensuring that all FAQ are accurate and up to date. Reporting will be made public only after legal reviews by the City and MPD.

6. Timeline. The CFT is established immediately and shall continue through December 2014. At that time, the CFT will make a recommendation to the Mayor for sustaining the work going forward, to include any recommendations about the need for the continued existence of the CFT. Should changes emerge during the work that would require substantial change to the CFT; the CFT Chair will immediately notify the Mayor and request additional resources as necessary.
7. CFT membership and confidentiality. All participants in the CFT process shall sign a confidentiality agreement as a condition of serving on the CFT, agreeing to not divulge to any person outside the CFT any data or information obtained as a result of participation as a member of the CFT, except such information as the CFT specifically identifies as for public release at the end of each meeting.