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News Release

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Durham Police Department Receives \$1 Million SAKI Grant

A The Durham Police Department has been awarded a three-year \$1 million 2019 National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) project grant to provide additional resources for investigating cold case sexual assaults.

The grant, which is awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice Programs (OJP) through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), will provide resources to address sexual assault kits in the department's inventory that have not been submitted to the state laboratory for DNA testing and will ensure a complete victim-centered approach is taken during the investigation, prosecution and healing process for survivors of cold case sexual assaults.

“We want our entire community to know that bringing closure to unresolved sexual assault cases is a high priority for the Durham Police Department, which is the primary reason we pursued this grant opportunity. These awarded funds will greatly assist us in providing dedicated resources for investigating and potentially solving cold case sexual assaults. Our investigators are committed and passionate about pursuing justice in each case. We want each survivor to know they have not been forgotten and we are here for them,” said Durham Police Chief C.J. Davis.

The grant will fund positions for two full-time cold case sexual assault investigators, one full-time victim/witness assistant and one full-time assistant district attorney for three years. The two cold case investigators will be selected from current DPD investigators and the victim/witness assistant will be hired by the DPD. The assistant district attorney will be hired and staffed by the Durham County District Attorney’s Office. The Durham County DA’s Office will have a memorandum of understanding with the DPD as part of the grant.

“Often the DNA result from a sexual assault evidence kit is just one piece of the puzzle in securing justice for these survivors. The additional attorney funded by this grant will help to pull together the other components needed to prove an assault occurred and bring closure to cases that have already lingered for too long. The Durham County District Attorney’s Office is committed to doing this important work alongside the Durham Police Department and the Durham Crisis Response Center,” said Durham County District Attorney Satana Deberry.

In addition, the grant provides funds for training, travel and equipment as well as assistance for the Durham Crisis Response Center (DCRC).

The victim/witness assistant will work closely with survivors in an effort to reduce their trauma and to assist them through the legal process. The assistant district attorney will assist investigators in building cases. Representatives from the Durham Police Department, the Durham Crisis Response Center and the

Durham County District Attorney's Office currently meet twice per month to review cases as kits are tested.

The Durham Police Department began addressing its backlog of untested sexual assault evidence kits in 2017 when the NC State Crime Lab asked each department to conduct an inventory of their untested kits. The DPD examined its inventory and determined it had 1,711 untested sexual assault evidence kits in its possession. The DPD began submitting the untested kits to the N.C. State Crime Lab in 2018.

In 2019, the department assigned a dedicated cold case sexual assault investigator to start investigating cases. The department designated a lieutenant to serve as project coordinator to oversee the sexual assault kit project and also utilized light duty personnel to assist with the numerous administrative duties to ensure that the proper **tracking and documentation is done with the kits.**

In March 2019, the department heard about the SAKI grant and pursued it to strengthen our ability to deal with the untested kits and continued criminal investigations.