

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description



Office of the
Washington
State Auditor
Pat McCarthy

Sexual Assault Kits: Following up on Washington State Patrol's testing backlog

After a sexual assault occurs, forensic evidence is collected from the assaulted person at a medical facility by a nurse or other medical professional and packaged into a sexual assault kit. Testing these kits in a timely manner can help resolve crimes and ensure justice is served. When kits remain untested, investigators cannot connect DNA results to other cases, and offenders may commit more crimes after the sexual assault evidence is collected.

The Washington State Patrol is responsible for testing all sexual assault kits statewide, whether at one of its crime labs or by contracting with a private lab. The agency also manages the statewide sexual assault kit tracking system, which was established in 2018 to provide more transparency around the testing process, particularly for survivors.

Our [2022 performance audit](#) examined both the State Patrol Crime Laboratory's processing of sexual assault kits and the statewide sexual assault kit tracking system. The audit found that while State Patrol had taken important steps to eliminate the kit-testing backlogs, only 74 percent of all kits received since 2015 had been tested as required by state law. Among the reasons for this were disruptions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and delays in receiving kits from other police agencies around the state. The audit did not make any formal recommendations, but strongly encouraged the State Patrol to continue its efforts to test all sexual assault kits in a timely manner.

Preliminary scope and objectives

This audit will follow-up on the previous audit's findings and determine whether the Washington State Patrol has eliminated the sexual assault kit backlog. This audit seeks to answer the following question:

- Has the State Patrol eliminated the backlog of untested sexual assault kits since the time of the 2022 performance audit?

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