

# PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description

## Sexual Assault Kits: Assessing Washington State Patrol's tracking system and testing backlog

The DNA evidence obtained after a sexual assault occurs has the power to identify the assailant, exonerate the innocent, and link cases together. This evidence is typically collected from the survivor at a medical facility, and preserved in a sexual assault kit. It is important for law enforcement officials to process the kit in a timely manner to resolve the crime and ensure justice is served.

In 2018, the Washington State Patrol (the Patrol), the Attorney General's Office, and local law enforcement agencies determined that more than 9,000 sexual assault kits had not been submitted for testing at the time. The oldest untested kit reported by local law enforcement dates back to 1982.

State law required the Patrol to facilitate testing for these kits by December 1, 2021. To ensure the kits are processed more quickly going forward, state law also requires local law enforcement agencies to send them to the State Patrol Crime Laboratory within 30 days. The Patrol has been working to eliminate the backlog of untested sexual assault kits while also processing kits that were submitted after the initial inventory.

Also in 2018, Washington instituted a statewide system to track the status of sexual assault kits, with the goal of providing more transparency around the testing process. Key stakeholders are required to use the tracking system, which allows users to update and track the status and location of kits throughout the criminal justice process. The system also allows survivors to track the status of their kits anonymously.

### Preliminary scope and objectives

The Legislature has required the State Auditor's Office to conduct a performance audit in 2022, examining the statewide sexual assault kit tracking system and the State Patrol Crime Laboratory with respect to processing sexual assault kits. The audit seeks to answer the following questions:

- Does Washington's statewide sexual assault kit tracking system follow legal requirements and best practices?
- What progress has the Patrol made toward eliminating the backlog of untested sexual assault kits?



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