

A Case Study of Police and Prosecution “Real Time” Adaptation to a Legislative Mandate to Test All Sexual Assault Kits

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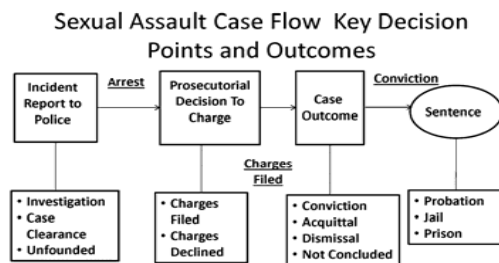
ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Decision-Making in Sexual Assault Cases: Multi-site Replication Research on Sexual Assault Case Attrition in the U.S, DNA Supplement.

This project is a supplement to a replication study, funded by the National Institute of Justice, designed to examine sexual assault case attrition as reported in Spohn and Tellis (2012). Attrition was examined beginning from first report to police through prosecution to understand where incidents fall out of the system and the case factors that influence attrition rates. Data were gathered for incidents reported from 2008 through 2010 in six police jurisdictions across the U.S.

The specific focus of the supplement is to examine in greater detail the impact of sexual assault forensic testing (rape kits) on key decision points and outcomes as outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1



METHODOLOGY

In one jurisdiction included in the replication study, a new state law was recently implemented mandating the testing of forensic evidence in all old (previously untested) and all new sexual assault case kits (“rape kits”) for which the victim consented to testing. Viable DNA samples extracted from forensic evidence will be compared to samples included in CODIS for suspect identification.

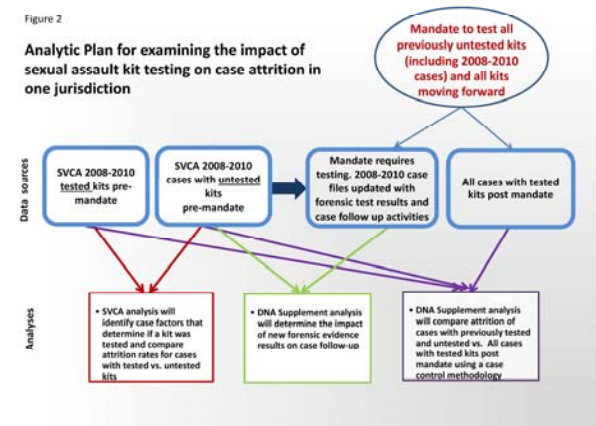
Prior to the mandate, data for the SVCA study were being gathered on more than 900 sexual assault incidents reported to police from 2008 thru 2010. These data include details on the incident, victim and alleged offender characteristics and information on the collection of sexual assault forensic evidence. During this time period, the police were testing selected cases where forensic results would be of probative value. For the supplement study, any new outcomes resulting from mandated testing of the 2008-2010 previously untested cases are recorded and data from a new sample of 350 sexual assault incidents reported after the mandated sexual assault kit testing took effect are studied.

Key study objectives:

- 1) Document one police jurisdiction’s real time organizational and procedural adaptation to an unfunded mandate to test all kits;

- 2) Compare case attrition before mandated testing and after mandated testing was implemented;
- 3) Determine the extent to which forensic testing identifies persons with DNA profiles in CODIS; and
- 4) Describe the victim notification process.

Figure 2. presents the analytic plan and includes relevant data sources and methodology



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