



# END THE BACKLOG

## Testing Rape Kits Saves Communities Millions of Dollars

Testing every rape kit connected to a reported crime makes communities safer. And, as research proves, **testing every kit also saves communities money.**

In 2016, the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University analyzed the cost of testing backlogged rape kits in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. Factoring in the cost of testing kits and other related expenses, the study calculated the overall cost effectiveness of testing 4,347 unsubmitted kits, engaging survivors, investigating every lead, and prosecuting cases. The study found that:

- Each kit tested produced an estimated net savings of **\$5,127** to the community.
- Cuyahoga County **saved \$26.48 million** by testing 4,437 backlogged kits, investigating every case, prosecuting offenders, and preventing them from committing future crimes.

In 2019, Dr Paul J. Speaker of West Virginia University conducted a study that demonstrates enormous economic returns for communities that invest state dollars to test kits swiftly.

- The study shows that processing every rape kit could be one of the most effective uses of state funds.
- Testing backlogged rape kits can produce an astounding **65,000% return on investment (ROI)**.

Other analyses show that testing rape kits produces positive returns on investment. Researchers have estimated that testing every rape kit could save states more than **\$400,000 per averted assault**. Additional research has found that adding the DNA of just one offender to DNA databases provides **savings to society that may be as high as \$20,000 per submission**.

Research is now confirming what cities and states around the country have already discovered: testing every rape kit and thoroughly investigating every reported rape is financially beneficial for communities. As more sexual assault cases are pursued, more offenders are apprehended and future crimes are averted. **Investing in testing backlogged kits and pursuing justice today will lead to safer communities and significant savings tomorrow.**

*Learn more at [endthebacklog.org](http://endthebacklog.org) or contact us at [policy@joyfulheartfoundation.org](mailto:policy@joyfulheartfoundation.org).*



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## Testing Rape Kits Stops Serial Rapists

As of November 2023, testing backlogged rape kits and following up on leads in only two cities—Cleveland and Detroit—has resulted in the identification of more than **1,320 potential serial rapists**. These serial offenders have committed crimes across at least 40 states and Washington, D.C. They have not just committed rape—many have been linked to other violent crimes, as well.

The following case studies illuminate the fact that **rapists are often serial offenders** and that DNA is one of the best tools we have to keep communities safe.

### Case Study: Seattle, Washington

In 2015, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) surveyed law enforcement agencies and announced a backlog of 5,881 untested kits across the state. The Attorney General's Office reported 6,460 untested kits in 2018. Washington legislatures enacted laws to test the backlogged and the new kits, establish a sexual assault survivors' bill of rights, and create a tracking system. As of September 2018, there were 658 registered users through the pilot tracking program.

#### Cold Case Conviction

Darin Lamont Bolar had two child rape convictions from 1993. He is linked to a string of violent and sexually aggressive crimes involving both child and adult victims, domestic violence, second degree robbery, third degree theft, and fourth degree assault and obstructing a police officer. A rape kit taken in 2007 from a 14-year-old survivor was tested in 2017, matching his DNA from earlier sexual assault crimes.

Bolar was not convicted in 2006-2008 groping attacks, as the rape kit was not tested until 2017. He was convicted in 2014 for domestic violence assault and now is charged with sexual assault for the 2007 rape case.

### Case Study: Virginia Beach, Virginia

In 2014, the State of Virginia enacted a law that required law enforcement agencies to report the number of untested rape kits in their possession to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science (DFS). The report found that there were at least 2,269 untested rape kits in the state. Through an award from the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the state began testing its backlogged kits, leading to over **80 matches to DNA profiles** that were already collected.

## **Cold Case Conviction**

In 1984, Ruben Carroll Slade raped two women over the span of three weeks. Both women submitted to rape kits, but their kits went untested for 30 years. In 2014, when the kits were finally tested, DNA found in the rape kits matched Slade's profile that was already in the database for another crime. On February 5<sup>th</sup> 2018, Slade pleaded guilty to the crimes, and later that year was sentenced to serve two concurrent life terms for two counts of rape. Like many serial rapists, He also has prior convictions for robbery, five counts of burglary, three counts of grand larceny, shoplifting and probation violation.

## **Cleveland, Ohio**

In 2011, the Ohio Attorney General launched the Sexual Assault Kit Testing Initiative, which incentivized law enforcement agencies across the state to submit all untested kits in storage to the state crime lab. The lab has tested 7,025 kits from Cuyahoga County alone, resulting in the identification of **850 serial sex offenders**. One rapist has been linked to **17 victims**.

### **Cold Case Convictions: Cleveland**

Former Lake County probation officer Nathan Ford has been linked to at least 15 rapes since the early 1990s. Ford was first convicted of raping seven women and one child in 2006. In 2015, newly analyzed DNA evidence from untested rape kits connected Ford to an additional 7 rapes.

Ford is serving 138 years in prison for his 2006 convictions. Since the launch of the Ohio Sexual Assault Kit Testing Initiative, Ford has been linked to 14 additional assaults.

## **Detroit, Michigan**

In 2009, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office discovered **11,341 untested rape kits** in a Detroit Police Department storage facility. In June 2021, Detroit ended its known backlog and tested all the 11,341 kits, resulting in at least 3,121 DNA matches and the identification of **842 suspected serial sex offenders**. The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office has obtained 250 convictions, and DNA from the testing of these kits has been linked to crimes committed in 40 states and Washington, D.C.

### **Cold Case Convictions: Detroit**

In 2003, DeShawn Starks sexually assaulted two women in Detroit. Both women submitted to rape kits, but their kits were not tested and their cases were not investigated until a decade later. In 2013, Starks sexually assaulted two more women in Detroit. Both women submitted to rape kits, and their kits were tested, and the DNA hit linked the case to another crime. Ten years after Sparks' 2003 crimes, Detroit tested all of these kits as part of its backlog elimination initiative, and DNA linked Starks to both crimes. Had the kits been tested following collection, at least two sexual assaults could have been prevented. Sparks is currently serving a sentence of 45-90 years in prison.