



**MICHAEL C. O'MALLEY**  
CUYAHOGA COUNTY PROSECUTOR

## **Cuyahoga County Sexual Assault Kit Task Force Awarded \$3,000,000 Grant; Federal Funding Will Include Genealogical Testing**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office (CCPO) Sexual Assault Kit Task Force (SAKTF) was awarded two grants, totaling \$3,000,000, from the U.S. Department of Justice. Between October 2019 and September 2022, these awards will be primarily used to:

- Expand the SAKTF's Owed DNA Project
- Implement genealogy searches of "John Doe" indictments
- Continue partnership with Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) and Cleveland Rape Crisis Center
- Maintain personnel and training

"This new funding will be instrumental in helping us identify, track, and eventually apprehend criminals who have long eluded justice," said Prosecutor O'Malley. "We look forward to collaborating with our partners as we seek to remove dangerous predators from our communities."

These grants will be used to expand research and operations of the Owed DNA Project. They will help researchers review, improve, and optimize swabbing protocols as they relate to the collection of lawfully owed DNA from offenders. Prior funding led to the creation of a census that identified 15,370 offenders whose DNA was not inputted in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). Since then, over 1,500 offenders have been swabbed, 63 of which produced a CODIS "hit" to another crime (including murder, sexual assault, robbery, and others). Further research will focus on quantitative and qualitative analyses of County felony arrest data, DNA collection procedures at booking, and law enforcement personnel interviews, which will assist in the collection of the 13,000+ offenders that lawfully owe DNA in Cuyahoga County.

The grants will be used for a pilot project aimed at determining the identities of a sample of indicted "John Does" – DNA profiles charged that did not produce a CODIS hit. The SAKTF currently has indicted 146 "John Does," 13 of which have been identified due to subsequent arrests and/or convictions. Of the remaining 136 profiles, the SAKTF will contract with private labs to conduct genealogical searches on 5-10 serial John Does, with an option to conduct additional testing.

The grants will provide funding to continue the SAKTF's partnerships with the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at CWRU's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences and with the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center. Money will go towards additional researchers, advocates, equipment, and traveling expenses.

"Our current collaboration with the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office and Sexual Assault Kit Task Force has resulted in research that is already changing what we know about sexual assault, the offenders who commit it, and the efficacy of testing kits," said Rachel Lovell, PhD, the lead researcher on the project. "We are excited for the opportunity to continue to collaborate on this initiative to further improve how the system responds to sexual assault."

Funding will also help maintain current SAKTF staffing levels and provide continued training for all Task Force members.

In 2013, the CCPO assembled the SAKTF to address investigative leads that resulted from the testing of previously unsubmitted rape kits, primarily between 1993-2009. The SAKTF is led by the CCPO and includes the Cleveland Police Department, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Department, Case Western Reserve University, and the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center. Since its inception, the SAKTF's efforts have resulted in 754 defendants indicted, the highest number of any SAKTF in the country.

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