

STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED AT THE DENVER CRIME LABORATORY TO ADDRESS THE SEXUAL ASSAULT KIT PROCESSING BACKLOG

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Eliminating the sexual assault kit backlog remains a substantial challenge within the forensic DNA community. Financial resources are available to assist in eliminating the current backlog, but without adopting progressive workflow strategies and policies to change the processing of sexual assault kits within the laboratory, there may be a resurgence in a recently eliminated backlog or further growth of a current backlog. In 2014, the State of Colorado enacted House Bill 1020 (HB1020), requiring mandatory testing of all sexual assault kits within six-months after being submitted to the Laboratory. To meet this new turnaround time requirement, the Denver Crime Laboratory developed a strategy to maximize the effectiveness of current workflow strategies, including streamlining and actively managing the direct-to-DNA workflow that had already been in use since 2011, as well as developing additional strategies to maximize resources, enhance efficiency, grow capacity, and increase accountability within the Forensic Biology and DNA unit. Further, an analysis regarding the effectiveness of the male DNA screening approach, triage process and reporting framework for sexual assault kit processing will be presented. The evolution of this workflow to its current state has resulted in the Laboratory experiencing a substantial decrease in backlogged sexual assault cases (≥ 6 months), has improved turnaround times and customer satisfaction, and is now in full compliance with the Colorado State Law.