

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



City of Duluth - Police Department

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DATE: 12/9/2019

SUBJECT: SAKI Program Receives 5th Grant Award

BY: Ingrid Hornibrook

NATURE OF INCIDENT: Grant Award

CASE NO.:

INCIDENT DATE:

INCIDENT TIME:

INCIDENT LOCATION:

[DULUTH, MN] The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) program recently received its fifth award from the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) at a sum of \$727,651 for the 2019 fiscal year. This award allows the continuation of our community centered approach of sexual assault victim advocacy. The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative is a joint collaboration program between the Duluth Police Department, Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault (PAVSA), and the St. Louis County Attorney's Office to ensure victim advocacy through submission and investigation of previously untested sexual assault kits.

"The award of this grant allows us to continue our work of sexual assault victim advocacy along with PAVSA and the St. Louis County Attorney's Office to bring justice to victims," said Duluth Police Chief Mike Tusken. "Now that all our unsubmitted kits have been tested, we'll be starting the work of building cases for the Attorney's Office to prosecute. Together we'll work to bring justice to victims. We are grateful for this opportunity."

"We are grateful for the ongoing federal assistance to address the backlog of previously unsubmitted kits," said Sara Niemi, Executive Director of PAVSA. "It allows PAVSA to have staff dedicated to this issue and create lasting reforms for survivors. SAKI funds also strengthen our collaboration with Duluth PD and St. Louis County Attorney's Office, and these partnerships are invaluable. We are proud of the progress made so far but are also aware that there is much more work to be done to support survivors and hold offenders accountable."

"Continued funding is more important than ever as the SAKI caseload moves from investigation to the prosecution stage," commented St. Louis County Attorney, Mark Rubin. "Recent jury convictions in SAKI cases prosecuted by our Criminal Division Head Nathaniel Stumme have demonstrated that overdue justice is possible even under difficult circumstances after waiting so long. We will also continue to work to assure that sentencing judges have the opportunity to hear victims explain their journey from hopelessness to empowerment –a direct result of the remarkable supportive collaboration with our partner agencies and the resources made available through SAKI funding."

In addition, Duluth Police Department will hire an additional investigator who will work specifically to build cases to bring to the St. Louis County Attorney's Office.

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