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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG Schimel Announces Testing Completed on Sexual Assault Kits

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel announced today that a major milestone has been reached as testing has been completed on all sexual assault kits initially inventoried and designated for testing in Wisconsin’s Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (WiSAKI). WiSAKI is a statewide effort, voluntarily initiated by Attorney General Schimel, to address the decades-long accumulation of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs) that were in the possession of local law enforcement agencies and hospitals across Wisconsin.

“When I took office in 2015, I worked with our team to identify and collect more than 6,000 sexual assault evidence kits that had never been submitted to the crime labs for testing, some of them dating back to the 1980s,” said Attorney General Brad Schimel. “Today, I am proud to announce that testing is complete on all 4,154 kits slated for testing. In less than three years, we will have tested the kits that built up over several decades, and justice can be served to sexual assault survivors.”

As of August 31, 2018, the private labs DOJ contracted with advised us that they had completed testing on all of the 4,154 previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits initially inventoried and designated for testing as part of the WiSAKI. Information on the history of the project, as well as status updates and data on key stages of the project can be found on the project’s website: <https://wisaki.doj.wi.gov>.

Now that testing is completed on the kits from the initial inventory, the next phases of the WiSAKI project are continuing. The testing results are undergoing technical review. Agencies are being notified of hits. Where appropriate, results are being uploaded the FBI’s Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). Survivors are being notified. And cases are being opened or re-opened for investigation and prosecution. This also includes testing any additional kits a survivor seeks to have tested or any kits that may be identified by local law enforcement agencies or hospitals.

The WiSAKI team is also currently working to expand the statewide sexual assault response training program sponsored by DOJ to equip more law enforcement officers, prosecutors, sexual assault nurse examiners, and victim advocates with the specialized knowledge and resources needed to properly respond to sexual assault cases.

In addition, the team is developing and implementing a sexual assault kit tracking system that will track a kit from the point of manufacture, to hospitals, to law enforcement, and through submission to the state crime lab. This system is intended to offer an option for survivors to access information about the location of their kit and will provide a mechanism for the ongoing auditing of sexual assault kit submissions.

WiSAKI grant funding also supports the *By Your Side* website and outreach efforts. Developed in collaboration with the WI Coalition Against Sexual Assault, By Your Side helps connect sexual assault survivors with advocacy and support services in their community. Survivors have the right to know what their options are and what resources are available so that they can decide what choices are best for them. These agencies provide emotional support, information, and referrals no matter how long ago the sexual assault happened. They can answer a hotline call, meet a survivor at a hospital for an exam, explain the legal system, and assist with basic needs like safe housing or maintaining employment.

All services provided by these agencies are free and confidential. Their services are also available to family members, partners, and friends of survivors who are dealing with their own reactions to a sexual assault. For additional assistance connecting with advocacy and support services, contact the WI Coalition Against Sexual Assault at 608-257-1516 or visit ByYourSideWI.org

For more information about Attorney General Schimel's efforts to address the accumulation of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits and to review testing results, go to www.wisaki.wi.doj.gov.