EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
SEXUAL ASSAULT EXAMINATION PROCESS
July 1, 2017 to August 31, 2018

We determined there was no backlog for the processing of Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE) Kits at the state forensic labs. We also found that, for various reasons, many kits at the state, county, and local law enforcement agencies (LEAs) were not submitted to the state forensic labs for processing. In making these determinations, we found deficiencies concerning the tracking of the SAFE Kits, as well as inconsistent policies and procedures used by the various law enforcement agencies.

AUDIT HIGHLIGHTS

- Upon our request, each County Prosecutor's Office and the New Jersey State Police reported that, from July 10, 2014 to August 31, 2018, there were 5,931 SAFE kits collected, of which 1,122 Five-Year Hold Kits and an additional 1,712 kits were not submitted to the state forensic labs for processing. These labs reported that a total of 2,955 kits were processed. Based on the information reported, a reconciliation could not be achieved because of timing issues and data reported from several different sources. A statewide sexual assault kit tracking system could ensure the accountability of all SAFE Kits, improve statewide data collection and reporting, and enable information to be readily available.

- Policies and procedures for the handling of SAFE Kits are inconsistent throughout the state. A survey distributed to the New Jersey State Police and all County Prosecutors' Offices, who then distributed the survey to all applicable local LEAs, found that a significant number of LEAs operate without written policies and procedures for either some or all aspects of our survey. The lack of policies and procedures, or the reliance on informal policies and procedures, can lead to inconsistent sexual assault investigations among various LEAs.

AUDITEE RESPONSE

The department concurs with our findings and recommendations.

For the complete audit report or to print this Executive Summary, click here.