

NASCIO 2019 State IT Recognition Awards

Title



Washington State Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System

Category

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Contact

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Project Initiation Date

June 2016

Project Completion Date

December 2018



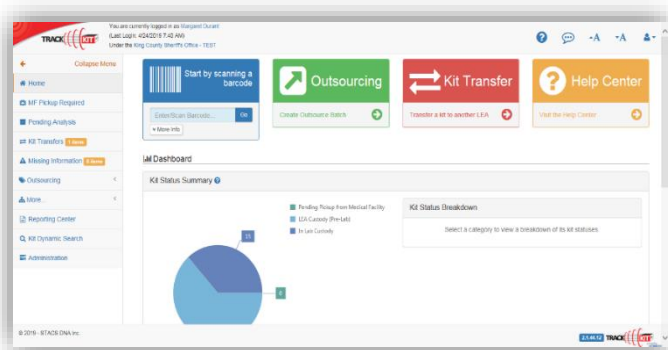
Executive Summary

After a person has survived a sexual assault, they may undergo a forensic examination for collecting any evidence left behind during the assault. The doctor or nurse conducting the examination collects and preserves the evidence using a sexual assault examination kit (SAK), also referred to as a rape kit.



When the examination is complete, the evidence is packaged and a law enforcement agency (LEA) may take custody of the SAK for use during an investigation and subsequent criminal prosecution. The kit could contain deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) evidence that may be sent to the Washington State Patrol (WSP) Crime Laboratory for testing. The DNA test results may help potentially identify the perpetrator. After the Crime Lab conducts their analysis, they provide a report to the Law Enforcement Agency who subsequently forwards this information to the prosecutor along with their findings.

Prior to the Statewide Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System project, the survivor had no way of tracking their sexual assault kit through the criminal justice process. The SAK Tracking System is designed to track the location of the SAK in the process and provide visibility and metrics regarding the overall status of processing SAKs. The system is accessible from the public internet and hosted in the Microsoft Azure Government Cloud.



This project was initiated in response to Second Substitute House Bill 2530 (2016 Legislative Session), which created Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.43.545 – Statewide sexual assault kit tracking system. Washington was one of the first states to provide a statewide system that gives sexual assault survivors the ability to anonymously track the location and

status of their sexual assault kit from the point of collection through forensic analysis, to final storage location or possible destruction. Per the enacted legislation, *“The system will be designed to track all sexual assault kits in Washington state, regardless of when they were collected, to further empower survivors with information, assist law enforcement with investigations and crime prevention, and create transparency and foster public trust.”*

The process of undergoing a sexual assault examination can be emotionally painful and exhausting for survivors, often taking hours and in some cases, the sexual assault kit may be the only piece of evidence. To not know where that kit is throughout the process sends a disheartening message to sexual assault survivors. Providing a system to anonymously track their kit and hold others accountable gives survivors hope and transparency.

Concept

The Legislature passed the SAK Tracking bill with many expectations. The legislation was more than a project, requiring a long-term business program for SAK tracking. Multiple budget notes, provisos, and legislative opinions regarding the project and the desired outcome required thorough review and consultation with both WSP staff and external Legislators to ensure a mutual understanding of the intent and realistic objectives within the expected delivery schedule and budget. For example, this included a cloud solution, an architecture WSP needed to evaluate for this project (e.g., new contract form, security, technology, etc.). Further, WSP's technology team was not fully prepared to use the Cloud and did not have a model contract for a cloud vendor solution. This resulted in a slight delay to negotiate a model cloud based contract.

Business Ownership and Advisory Committee

Sponsorship is the most important factor associated with project success or failure. Recognizing this critical factor, WSP named the WSP Crime Laboratory Division Commander as business owner and executive sponsor in May 2017. One of his first, and most important decisions, was to assemble a representative group of stakeholders as the Advisory Committee, and facilitate their project input and buy-in. This Advisory Committee, with the Business Sponsor as the Chair, represented key stakeholders involved in the community of interest, and provided critical insight and resulting buy-in on the design and implementation tasks for the SAK Tracking System.

ASSEMBLING THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROVIDED INSTRUMENTAL INSIGHT ON DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

The Business Sponsor also provided an ongoing business policy and process perspective as well as opening and maintaining communication channels with reluctant stakeholders. He reinforced the project objectives throughout the duration of the project engaging WSP, the primary stakeholder groups, and other third party organizations critical to the project's success.

Stakeholder participation and buy-in

Stakeholder participation and buy-in was a critical success factor in establishing a system and associated processes. The Advisory Committee provided essential input from our customers and stakeholders in design, implementing, and using the SAK Tracking System. Each of the members provided invaluable insight as to what their represented population would need and expect from the Tracking System, making it possible for the team to connect all the pieces in respect to the project.

The project had to navigate extremely sensitive survivor social norms, particularly related to access security, safety, and anonymity. This made development of policies, procedures, and software access difficult. With the help of diverse input and resulting buy-in, including survivors and other Advisory Committee members, the Project Manager, System Administrator, Business Sponsor and the Independent Quality Assurance contractor, a system was defined using a private survivor log-in without requiring personal identifying information (PII).

High-level approach

As soon as a SAK is collected, a nurse logs it into the Tracking System Portal and enters the tracking number into the system. This entry starts a workflow that notifies law enforcement a kit is ready to be picked up. Once the kit is picked up, law enforcement personnel enter the kit tracking number using the agency portal site. When the kit goes to the WSP Crime Lab, the Property and Evidence staff enter the kit into their lab portal site, now marking the kit as 'in process' at the lab. All users can access inventories and view at any moment where kits are in the process and prepare for incoming kits. Time bound workflows are built into the system throughout the process, which can notify staff when critical deadlines are nearing or have passed. Survivors, with their own secure login, can view the location and status of their kit at any time to make sure their evidence is being handled in a timely manner.



Phased implementation

WSP utilized a phased implementation approach defined by region and population, beginning with a pilot program. The pilot program began on February 2018 and statewide implementation was completed on October 2018.

- Phase 1 - Project Planning
 - Create Project Management Plan
 - Define Business Requirements
 - Initiate Procurement
- Phase 2 - SAK Tracking System Development
 - Define Concept of Operation
 - Begin Construction and Configuration
 - Perform Testing and Acceptance
- Phase 3 - Implementation
 - Phase 3.1 – Pilot SAK Tracking System Implementation
 - Pilot Implementation
 - Phase 3.2 - Statewide SAK Tracking System Implementation
 - Tacoma Crime Laboratory Region
 - Marysville Crime Laboratory Region
 - Vancouver Crime Laboratory Region
 - Spokane Crime Laboratory Region
 - Seattle Crime Laboratory Region
- Phase 4 – SAK Tracking System First Year of Operation
- Ongoing Operations
 - Support and Maintenance

Operations

The project team had to address how to ensure that all SAKs throughout the state would be compatible with the Tracking System. This meant that all medical facilities would need to order a standard SAK box that met the standards and guidelines set forth by the WSP for forensic testing, as well as the medical facilities requirements. It was decided a standard SAK was necessary with a unique barcode to track the location of each kit. Because WSP does not keep personal identifying information about survivors, maintaining and accessing a unique identifier was critical. The team created Washington Administrative Code ([Chapter 446-95 WAC](#)) to standardize kit submission, address kit standardization, and maintain a unique barcode for newly created kits.

Statewide implementation

The project team created a Statewide Implementation and Training Plan for the Medical Facilities and Law Enforcement Agencies, organized by counties and regions associated with Crime Lab service areas. Each region had specific milestone dates associated with the project management plan, e.g., initial contact, training, user registration, and go-live. The team also included scheduled dates for anticipated feedback and refresher training sessions after each area's respective go-live. The Sponsoring legislator, Representative Orwall, attended a Steering Committee briefing in October 2017 and supported the implementation schedule extension past the legislatively mandated date of June 1, 2018.

The project staff sent an initial email, then followed by offering a preliminary Q&A phone conversation with the Chiefs, Sheriffs, and Medical Facility staff to notify them about forthcoming rollout in their area, as well as who in their command would be the best candidate(s) to enroll in the Statewide SAK Tracking System.

Statewide training

The project team effectively used live web-based training whenever possible. This reduced the number of trainers needed and allowed the project to provide statewide training in a timely manner, without stretching the budget of the project. STACS DNA, the vendor of the tracking system, hosted training sessions while the Project Manager and System Administrator sat in on each one to introduce themselves to the attendees and provide logistical information regarding the system.

WSP has extensive law enforcement experience, but historically limited interaction with healthcare providers. The project team created online training after understanding their needs, particularly from the initial requirements definition and subsequent Advisory Committee input. This innovative training approach worked very well, particularly with contract Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE). The project team used Pierce County Hospitals and Police Departments as the pilot training sites, who provided valuable feedback to refine the training. The team also provided live training for the WSP labs' Property and Evidence Custodians at a previously scheduled meeting.

STACS DNA provided supplemental online training resources and assistance, and provided curriculum for deployment training. The team continuously created updates to the training program, using lessons learned from the sequential deployment, which earned positive approval of the Advisory Committee. The sessions included a scribe to record questions and answers, used to tailor and supplement the training, and create the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guide. This also included the project team compiling a list of questions and addressing each of them in subsequent training curriculum updates. All necessary training is now found within the System itself and includes FAQ's, self-paced videos, and full user documentation on the different tasks users can perform.

Significance

By technology, significant planning, organizing, and strategic implementation, the Washington State Patrol has fully implemented the statewide SAK Tracking System, Track-Kit, as of October 2018. The internet accessible application provides the ability to track SAKs throughout their lifecycle, assist law enforcement with investigations and crime prevention, and create transparency, which fosters public trust. As required by the Legislation, the Tracking System utilizes barcoding technology to track SAKs in the State of Washington from the point of collection through the analysis process and final storage. Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, law enforcement, crime lab personnel, and others access the system. Survivors may also anonymously login to access the system and identify the status and location of their SAK.

The Washington State Patrol has become a national pioneer in regards to its SAK Tracking System Program as many states have used Washington's model for their own SAK tracking programs. Not only nationally, but the WSP SAK Tracking System Program has received worldwide recognition having recently provided a presentation to the World Affairs Council and the Latin American delegation.

Impact

"The (WA state) legislature recognizes the deep pain and suffering experienced by victims of sexual assault. Sexual assault is an extreme violation of a person's body and sense of self and safety. Sexual violence is a pervasive social problem. National studies indicate that approximately one in four women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes. Survivors often turn to hospitals and local law enforcement for help, and many volunteer to have professionals collect a sexual assault kit to preserve physical evidence from their bodies. The process of collecting a sexual assault kit is extremely invasive and difficult.

The legislature finds that, when forensic analysis is completed, the biological evidence contained inside sexual assault kits can be an incredibly powerful tool for law enforcement to solve and prevent crime. Forensic analysis of all sexual assault kits sends a message to survivors that they matter. It sends a message to perpetrators that they will be held accountable for their crimes. The legislature is committed to bringing healing and justice to survivors of sexual assault.

The legislature recognizes the laudable and successful efforts of law enforcement in the utilization of forensic analysis of sexual assault kits in the investigation and prosecution of

crimes in Washington State. In 2015, the legislature enhanced utilization of this tool by requiring the preservation and forensic analysis of sexual assault kits. The legislature intends to continue building on its efforts through the establishment of the statewide sexual assault kit tracking system. The system will be designed to track all sexual assault kits in Washington state, regardless of when they were collected, in order to further empower survivors with information, assist law enforcement with investigations and crime prevention, and create transparency and foster public trust." [2016 c 173 § 1.]

The system improves the tracking and availability of sexual assault information to survivors. The new system gives survivors the ability to anonymously access and track the location and status of their sexual assault kit online, from the time of collection through analysis at the crime lab, to final storage location and possible destruction. The Tracking System also offers survivors resources and contact information to the hospital and law enforcement agency that handled the kit.

In early 2019, the SAK Tracking Team was contacted via email from a survivor who was sexually assaulted and wanted to know the status of her kit. At the time of her assault, the SAK Tracking System did not exist and therefore her SAK did not have a barcode on it. The SAK Tracking Team was passionate about helping the survivor and acquired the necessary information from the survivor to assist her. We gathered certain information from the survivor, e.g. the law enforcement agency (LEA) that took the report, date, case number. We then contacted the LEA with the information we obtained from the survivor. The LEA was able to locate the SAK from the information we obtained. Again, the SAK did not have a barcode on it. The SAK Tracking Team was able to take a barcode to the LEA and asked the LEA to place it on the kit. We then asked the LEA to contact the survivor to give her the barcode number and explain to her how she can now track her kit by using the SAK Tracking System.

Prior to this legislation, survivors had no way of knowing the location or status of their kit. The Tracking System provides start-to-finish SAK inventory tracking to deliver accountability, transparency and information sharing among all stakeholders, and most importantly provide the survivor with peace of mind. Through the extended use of this system, it will create more efficiency and accountability in SAK evidence workflows, thereby preventing the accumulation of un-submitted kits.

