



HFSC Eliminates Rape Kit Backlog, Hits 30-Day Turnaround

June 30, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Houston Forensic Science Center has successfully eliminated a backlog of sexual assault requests and achieved a 30-day turnaround time on testing. To meet the two goals, the Center's Forensic Biology Section has issued reports on nearly 700 sexual assault requests since April, including about 375 untested kits.

These goals were set on April 6 when Mayor Sylvester Turner announced HFSC would eliminate its backlog and achieve a sustainable 30-day turnaround time by July 1.

"This has been a challenging project, however, the entire team was determined to meet the goal not only because of the commitment made to the mayor, but also because we understand the importance of sexual assault testing to an investigation," Dr. Daniel Garner, HFSC's CEO and president, said.

"Sustaining a 30-day turnaround time will ensure that crucial scientific evidence is made available early in an investigation when it has the most impact on justice being served," Garner added.

During the course of the three-month project, analysts have worked overtime and weekends, four new DNA instruments have been purchased and installed, four new analysts have been hired and a new section manager and scientific technical leader have come on board.

Throughout the project, HFSC continued to receive new requests for sexual assault kit testing. During April and May, the Center received more than 170 new kits to be tested.

The additional resources that have been put in place during this project will allow HFSC to sustain a 30-day turnaround on sexual assault testing.

HFSC is a local government corporation that provides forensic services to the City of Houston and other local agencies. HFSC is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. Its management structure is designed to be responsive to a 2009 recommendation by the National Academy of Sciences that called for crime laboratories to be independent of law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government.

HFSC currently has eight forensic sections.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Ramit Plushnick-Masti

Public Information Officer/Director of Communications

media@houstonforensicscience.org

<http://www.houstonforensicscience.org/>

713-929-6768

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