

When Survivors Self-identify Sexual Assault in Intimate Partner Violence

Implications for the Field from the Sexual Assault
Kit Initiative

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Understanding intimate partner sexual assaults: findings from sexual assault kits



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Connection to Restore our Roots Theme



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Objectives

- Recognize unique aspects when IPSEA reported to law enforcements and kit is collected
- Identify potential challenges in identifying IPSEA survivors by victim service providers or law enforcement
- Discuss strategies for improving IPSEA service provision



Poll

What is your current professional field?

- A. Advocate
- B. Criminal justice
- C. Victim services
- D. Other



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The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative



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SEXUAL ASSAULT KIT INITIATIVE

Ohio's Sexual Assault Kit (SAK) Backlog: Nearly 14,000 SAKs

2011 • Ohio Attorney General invites jurisdictions to submit untested kits for DNA testing at no cost

2013 • Cuyahoga County SAK Task Force formed, Prosecutor's Office lead

2015 →



← **CWRU Research Partners Join**

Leading Jurisdiction in Addressing Untested SAKs

Phase I: ~7,000
5,000 SAKs (1993–2011) + "Cleveland 1,867"

Phase II: ~3,500
Cleveland Police Department's pre-1993 SAKs

Results as of Jan 16, 2020

6,182 Completed Investigations (835 remaining)

728 Prosecutions

769 Defendants Indicted

441 (57%) Defendants Convicted
10.5 Years Average Sentence
93% Conviction Rate



Multi-pronged approach to improving responses to sexual assault



SAKI sample

- Occurred between 1992 and 2014 (majority between 1993-1999)
- All completed sexual assault investigations by the Task Force as of August 2015 (n = 429)
 - 80% Indicted
 - 20% Not indicted due to insufficient evidence



SAKI IPSA sample

- Disproportionally stranger and casual/recent acquaintances
 - 53.5% stranger (completely unknown) sexual assault
 - 26.1% casual/recent acquaintances
- 57% of SAKs were connected to serial sex offenders (**not representative of all untested SAKs**)
- Nearly 10% connected to former or current intimate partners
 - **Of those, 40% were serial sex offenders, connected to sexual assault of intimate partner + another person**



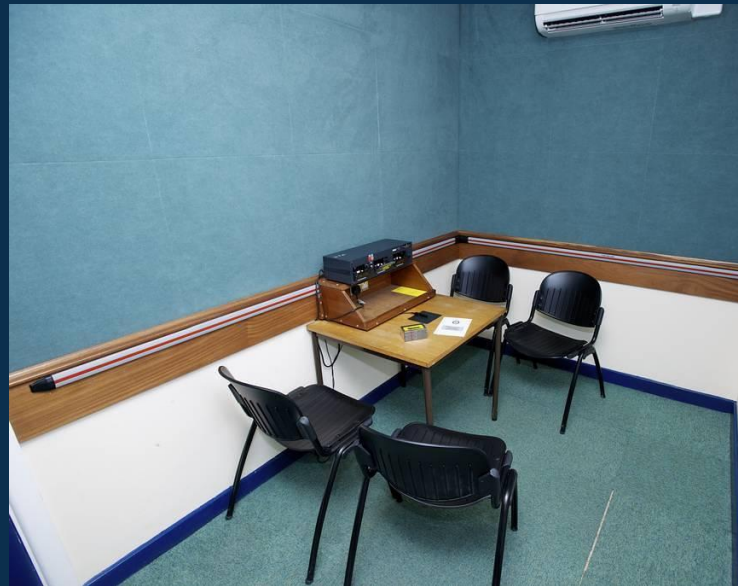
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Reporting IPSA



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Why look at IPSA reports?

- IPSA and IPV treated as separate issues
- Frequently involve threats of violence to victims and/or their loved ones
- Physical violence and serious injuries common
- Frequent gratuitous physical violence (intimate terrorism) has also been identified as a risk factor in intimate partner homicide



Previous research on IPSA

- Victims of sexual assault, in general, are more likely to report when:
 - Committed by strangers
 - Injured
 - Seeking medical attention
 - Fearing for their safety
 - They could remember the incidents clearly
- Most often report in hopes of preventing the offender from harming others
- Most often do not report out of fear of retaliation for reporting



Our IPSA sample

Victim/Survivors

- > 98%: female
- Average age: 25.4 at time of offense
- African American: 65.7%
- White: 27.7%
- Hispanic: 3.3%
- Asian: 0.2%

Suspected Offenders

- 100%: male
- Average age: 29.1 at time of offense
- African American: 85.0%
- White: 13.0%
- Hispanic: 0.9%



Who Reported?

- Current partner: 47%
- Former partner: 53%



IPSA vs. All Other Sexual Assaults

- IPSAs (vs. all other SAs):
 - Bodily force by suspected offender
 - Assault occurred within victim's or suspected offender's home
 - Accessed the victim via social situation (former partners) or via their relationship (current partners)
- Only 12% of IPSAs involved use of a weapon



Serial & “Crossover” Offending Patterns

- 40% were serial sex offenders (n=18)
- 77.8% of these serial sex offenders had previous criminal histories that include sexually-based arrest, but no convictions (n=14)
- 23.5% of the serial sex offenders were linked via DNA to other unsubmitted sexual assault kits within Cuyahoga County (n=4)



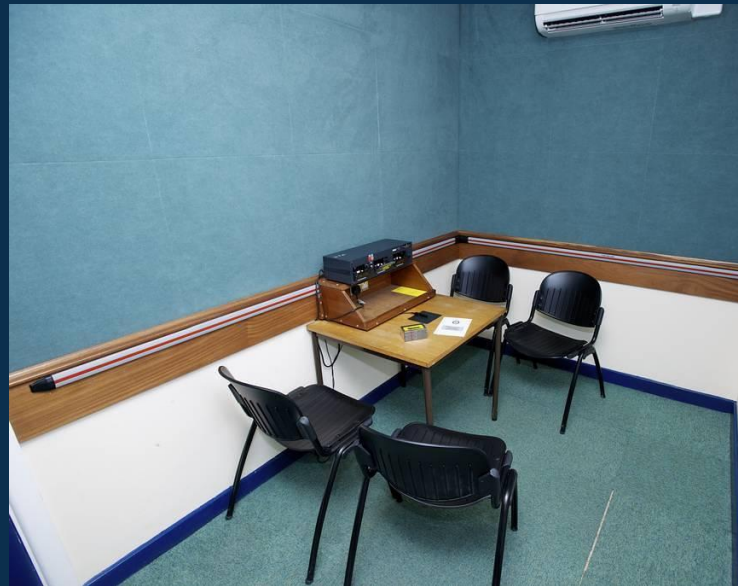
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Challenges



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Perception of victim cooperation

- IPSEA victims in our study *were just as likely to cooperate* with law enforcement as victims of acquaintance or stranger sexual assault cases.
- However, IPSEA investigations *were more frequently closed* because of victims stating they lied (according to the police report)/because the detectives indicated that they doubted the victims' account



Sequence of Violence

- Sexual assaults did **not** necessarily reflect **traditional models of violence escalation**
- Large **variation in sequence** of events
- Often in response to a **demand for sex** from the suspected offender



Poll

Have these findings aligned with your experience or knowledge of IPISA?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Mixed (in some ways yes, other ways not)
- D. N/A or I have never worked with survivors of IPISA



Questions?



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Strategies and Implications for Practice



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Better identifying IPSA

- “Canaries in the coal mine”
- Treat each IPV and IPSA report as one of a potential series for suspects (course of conduct vs. incident)
- Create and use victim-centered assessment tools that recognize IPSA often co-occurs with IPV



Understand role of kits

Test and utilize all sexual assault kits in investigations, even if the suspect is known to the victim.



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Increase Visibility

- Screen!!!
- Provide thorough training on identifying both physical and sexual violence within IPV situations to healthcare, service providers, law enforcement, and social service agencies



Mock Scenario

Survivor reports to law enforcement that they were sexual assaulted by their live-in partner. Police report states the suspect has history of domestic violence, but survivor states no physical violence occurred. Police report notes that there was no sign of force, just that victim felt they had to “comply.”

The survivor goes to the hospital and a kit is collected. After this point, the victim advocate meets with the survivor.



Mock Scenario

Survivor reports to hospital, they were sexually assaulted by a former partner. The incident occurred during the drop off their children. After sexual assault occurs, the survivor asked the suspect to leave and the suspect left willingly.

The sex crimes detectives were unable to follow up with survivor to pursue investigation (phone calls not returned).

6 months later, the suspect's DNA hits to another case of a sexual assault of stranger.

Objectives Summary

- Recognize unique aspects when IPSEA reported to law enforcements and kit is collected
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Final Questions



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Thank you

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