



ANDVSA

Alaska Network on Domestic Violence
& Sexual Assault

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January 26, 2017

Letter in Support of HB 31 (Sexual Assault Examination Kits)

Dear Legislators:

Greetings to you on this fine day. The Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA) offers its full support of HB 31 (Sexual Assault Examination Kits) – an act that directly impacts victims of sexual assault in several ways.

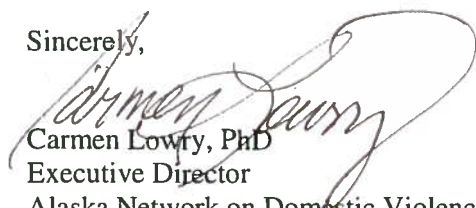
As service providers, our member agencies offer first-response sexual assault advocacy – many as a member of a Sexual Assault Response Team, to support victims of sexual assault. Sexual assault examination kit testing, as a part of this response process, creates opportunities for victims to immediately exert control over the response to her/his assault. When kits are collected but not tested efficiently, however, the process gives victims a false sense of evidence-gathering. This is grossly unfair to victims and their families.

Additionally, correctly administered sexual assault examination kits are critical in obtaining conviction. Legislative research has reported, though, that law enforcement – the first actor in the process of obtaining conviction – sometimes pursues testing only in cases with high likelihood of being solved, or when the perpetrator is unknown to the victim. Either way, we cannot continue with the prioritization of various sexual assault cases on any grounds. For victims and advocates, every sexual assault case is a priority.

The ANDVSA - the member programs, victims, and survivors who constitute our Network - fully supports Representative Tarr's proposal to streamline a system for more efficient testing of kits. We also support her proposal to identify the exact quantity of untested kits this year, so that victims' evidence does not continue to be buried, and so that relevant officials can understand and respond to the full scope of the backlog. We wholeheartedly agree with the governor's recent comments around sexual assault examination kit testing: "Justice delayed is justice denied."

We urge you to consider the effects that this legislation has on victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and support HB 31. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (907) 586-6560 or clowry@andvsa.org. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Carmen Lowry, PhD
Executive Director
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Cc: ANDVSA member programs

Member Programs

Anchorage AWAIC, STAR Bethel TWC Cordova CFRC Dillingham SAFE Fairbanks IAC Homer SPHH Juneau AWARE
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