



Leading the National Effort to End Sexual Violence

A Record of Success: RAINN’s Efforts to Eliminate the Rape Kit Backlog

Every 98 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted—but more than two thirds of these crimes go unreported. The overwhelming backlog of DNA evidence is currently one of the biggest obstacles to prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence and giving victims a path to justice. For more than a decade, RAINN, the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization, has led the fight to end the rape kit backlog.

RAINN Works with Leaders at the National and State Levels

RAINN has successfully advocated in support of federal programs and resources to end the rape kit backlog and been on the front lines as states develop develop rape kit accountability policies and practices.

- **Debbie Smith Act.** RAINN championed this Act, alongside with bipartisan, bicameral leaders, to establish the nation’s first and largest DNA backlog reduction grant program, authorized at \$151 million a year through 2019. RAINN is spearheading advocacy and legislative efforts to continue, improve, and expand the impact of this law.
- **SAFER Act.** RAINN championed the 2013 Act with strong, bipartisan support that required, for the first time, federal funding to support state audits of backlogged rape kits, and called on the Department of Justice to ensure adequate funding went to support crime labs’ testing and capacity building activities.
- **Justice for All Act.** In 2016, RAINN led a coalition of more than 100 national, state, and local organizations to renew a law that increased funding for testing rape kits, supported states’ inventory efforts, and helped states to hire full-time Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs), particularly in rural and underserved areas.
- **Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI).** RAINN is part of a team of national experts providing technical assistance and support to cities and states around the country that receive SAKI funding to tackle existing and future backlogs. RAINN has traveled the country as part of this effort, offering expertise and assistance. At the individual state level, RAINN works hand-in-hand with state leaders to link victims and advocates to resources and help jurisdictions implement best practices and comprehensive reform.
- **Rape Kit Action Project (RKAP).** Since 2013, RAINN has been a member of the Steering Committee of RKAP. RKAP has supported state-level reforms, including inventory and testing mandates, victim notification requirements, and the development of long-term plans to address and prevent backlogs in more than 40 states.



Taking Sexual Assault Seriously:
The Rape Kit Backlog And Human Rights

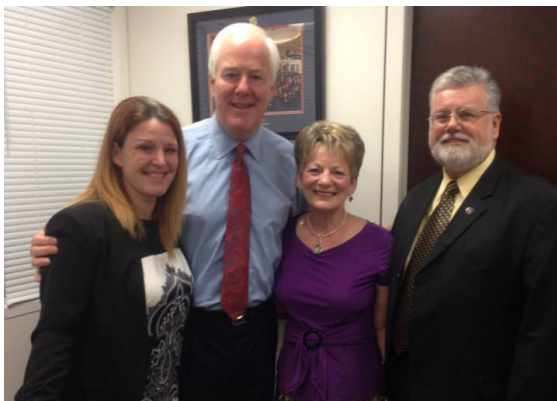
Behind Every Rape Kit Is a Survivor

Working alongside survivors to ensure policies are victim-centered and trauma informed is crucial. RAINN's efforts to address the rape kit backlog are rooted in the understanding that each rape kit represents at least one survivor of a life-altering crime.

"DNA is a powerful, necessary tool that will help our state's law enforcement officials prevent future crimes and resolve pending cases." – Natasha Alexenko, Natasha's Justice Project

"It's quite a shock to get a phone call after 20 years, clear out of the blue, and hear that my rape kit had found a match."

– Wendy Guidry, survivor



From left: RAINN VP of Public Policy Rebecca O'Connor, Senator Cornyn (R-TX), Debbie Smith, Rob Smith

"The years I spent waiting for justice can never be returned to me ... But other victims do not have to go through this."

– Debbie Smith, H-E-A-R-T, Inc. and namesake of the Debbie Smith Act.

Educating Stakeholders on the Backlog

RAINN is regularly invited to present to and educate lawmakers, field experts, and the public, on ways to eliminate the rape kit backlog. Here are just a few of the venues where RAINN's work has been highlighted.

- SAKI National Grantees Meeting
- National Sexual Assault Policy Symposium
- Test 400K National Rape Kit Testing Forum
- Capitol Hill Roundtable: Forensic DNA and the Fight Against Sexual Violence
- Congressional Briefing: Victim Notification (hosted by Joyful Heart Foundation)
- International Summit to End Sexual Violence
- American Society of Crime Lab Directors (ASCLD) Symposium
- Houston Forensic Science 2016 Symposium
- Bode East, West, and Mid-Atlantic Conferences

RAINN Experts in the Media

Journalists from respected news organizations across the country rely on RAINN experts to educate the public about sexual violence, and the rape kit backlog in particular.



"[This court decision] will help to validate the courageous decision of thousands of victims to submit to an hours-long sexual assault medical forensic examination."

– RAINN's Rebecca O'Connor

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

"It is not just a matter of justice ... for one survivor, but for multiple potential victims and public safety on the whole." – RAINN's Rebecca O'Connor



"As I talk to lawmakers across the country [regarding the backlog], people are starting to have these 'a-ha!' moments." – RAINN's Rebecca O'Connor



"[T]here are challenges, particularly in rural communities, when it comes to having [nurse] examiners available."

– RAINN's Rebecca O'Connor