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Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Tracking System Task Force

Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
One Ashburton Place, Room 2133
Boston, MA 02108
October 3, 2018

Meeting Minutes

Members Attending: Undersecretary Matt Moran (Chair), Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS); Maureen Gallagher, Jane Doe, Inc.; Liam Lowney, Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance; Susie Marshall, Middlesex County District Attorney's Office; Erica Neu, Boston Police Department Crime Laboratory; Katia Santiago-Taylor, Boston Area Rape Crisis Center; Jennifer Sprague, Plymouth County District Attorney's Office; Kristen Sullivan, Massachusetts State Police Crime Laboratory;

Others Attending: Jack Buckley, Medford Police Department; Doug Levine, EOPSS; Samantha Frongillo, EOPSS; Lisa Sampson, EOPSS; Stephanie McCarthy, Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance

The meeting was called to order at 10:05am

A motion to approve the minutes from the September 5, 2018 meeting of the Task Force passed unanimously.

A motion to approve remote participation by Task Force members passed unanimously.

The Task Force then engaged in a substantive discussion about members' recommendations for a statewide tracking system

Maureen Gallagher from Jane Doe raised a number of points including the following:

- How survivors can access the tracking system on their own terms
- Consideration of issues that arise involving minors
- Accessing information related to DNA results

--There should be follow up with victim witness advocates and prosecutors to discuss information pertaining to DNA test results
--Whichever entity hosts tracking system should be able to provide resources to help individuals understand the testing process information (trauma-informed system – appropriate communication)
--BARCC provides reports from non-toxicology kits from VAWA grant administered through EOPSS (survivor is connected to regional rape crisis center for services). Provide information to individuals statewide.

Access to Forensic Information Program

--Include local rape crisis centers to provide resources

--Should local rape crisis centers have access to this information?

- Mobile access
- Security and encryption
- Chain of custody issues are critical
- Language access
- Protocol for notifying victims (especially for kits that had been previously submitted but not yet tested)

Katia Santiago-Taylor from BARCC raised several similar issues including those involving minors. She also raised the following points for discussion by the Task Force:

- Trauma-informed piece (language utilized in website, resources and referrals, hotline)
- Multiple languages (including Spanish)
- Clear information about what happens with reported versus unreported kits)

Liam Lowney from the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance discussed several points, including the following:

- Utilizing victim advocacy teams similar to ones used by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services
- What roles will be played by the District Attorneys' Offices
--Have specific ADAs and advocates have access to the tracking system (note, there may be 11 different policies and practices at the various DAOs)
--Have the Massachusetts District Attorneys Association conduct trainings or webinars

Erica Neu from the Boston Police Department Crime Laboratory and Kristen Sullivan from the Massachusetts State Police Crime Laboratory raised several issues, including the following:

- Level of detail within the tracking system that indicates where a kit is in the testing process at a Crime Lab, and who has access to that information
- BPD would prefer the system send an mail notification to its sexual assault unit that a kit was just scanned in at hospital and is ready for pick up
- Defining what constitutes a kit? (e.g., would contents include clothing)
- Being able to utilize metrics reporting

There was a general discussion among the Task Force about the need to develop explanatory materials (e.g., FAQs and responses), which could be distributed at hospitals. It was explained that the tracking system itself is not designed to provide a lot of explanatory information.

Jennifer Sprague from the Plymouth County District Attorney's Office raised a handful of issues, including:

- District Attorneys' Offices will need access to kit numbers to be able to conduct searches
- How will juvenile access be managed?
- Child Advocacy Centers should have ability to mark kits

Susie Marshall, a victim witness advocate from the Middlesex County District Attorney's noted the following:

- Will the tracking system permit tiered access? (e.g., Certain access by ADAs versus victim advocates versus paralegals)
- Ability to access statistics and data
- Ability to interface with other states
- Criteria to rush testing of a particular kit

The next meeting will be held at EOPSS on Wednesday, November 7, 2018, at 10:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32am.