



Pennsylvania Department of the

# AUDITOR GENERAL

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## News for Immediate Release

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### **Auditor General DePasquale: New State Data Show 97 Percent Drop in Backlogged Rape Kits; Lowest Total in At Least Four Years**

*Questions why 41 law-enforcement agencies still have 94 backlogged kits*

**HARRISBURG** – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today said newly released state data show that only 94 backlogged rape kits remain in the hands of law enforcement agencies – the lowest number since Pennsylvania began tracking untested rape kits.

“While important progress is being made, I’m concerned that nearly 100 victims of sexual assault are still waiting for their evidence kits to even be sent to a lab,” DePasquale said. “These brave victims underwent grueling physical exams not only for the sake of their own cases, but also to potentially help protect others from being assaulted.”

Victims who have sexual assault kits performed undergo an hours-long forensic examination to collect any evidence left behind by their attackers. The evidence collected is commonly referred to as a rape kit. The kit may be tested in Pennsylvania only after the victim has consented.

The [Department of Health's annual report](#) shows a total of 94 backlogged kits as of Dec. 31, 2019 – a 97 percent decrease from four years ago, when more than 3,000 kits were awaiting testing. A backlogged kit is one that has received victim consent to be tested but has been waiting 12 months or longer for testing.

DePasquale questioned why 94 backlogged kits remain in the hands of 41 law-enforcement agencies.

“The law clearly states that, once consent for testing is received, law enforcement must submit a kit to an approved forensic lab within 15 days,” DePasquale continued. “I’m urging police departments and prosecutors to make sure they’re complying with the law and sending these kits to the appropriate public forensic crime labs so they can be processed and have any usable DNA uploaded into the FBI’s national DNA database, known as CODIS.”

Of Pennsylvania’s roughly 1,100 local law enforcement agencies, 1,060 reported their kit numbers for 2019 – a 112 percent increase over the 499 agencies that reported in 2016, the first year the statewide report was released.

DePasquale first discussed this issue in 2016 when he released a [special report on the state’s untested rape kits](#). It found that communication failures, bureaucratic breakdowns and resource shortages led to an incorrect original count of the state’s backlog of untested kits, some of which dated to the 1990s. In the years since, the number of kits awaiting testing has trended steadily downward.

DePasquale also said his office has been in discussions with legislative staff about establishing a comprehensive tracking system to let victims keep tabs on where their kit is in the testing process. Such a system was created by Idaho State Police and is being offered at no cost to other public agencies.

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**Editor's Note:** The following is a list of where backlogged kits were reported as of Dec. 31, 2019:

| <b>County</b>  | <b>Department</b>   | <b>Backlogged Kits</b> |
|----------------|---|------------------------|
| Adams          | Conewago Township Police Department                       | 1                      |
| Allegheny      | City of McKeesport Police                                 | 2                      |
| Allegheny      | Homestead Police Department                               | 1                      |
| Allegheny      | West Mifflin Police Department                            | 1                      |
| Beaver         | Aliquippa Police Department                               | 3                      |
| Beaver         | Beaver County District Attorney's Office/County Detective | 2                      |
| Beaver         | City of Beaver Falls                                      | 1                      |
| Beaver         | Patterson Township Police Department                      | 2                      |
| Bucks          | Morrisville Borough Police Department                     | 1                      |
| Cambria        | Ferndale Borough Police Department                        | 1                      |
| Cambria        | West Hills Regional                                       | 1                      |
| Centre         | Penn State University Police and Public Safety            | 2                      |
| Chester        | Kennett Square Police Department                          | 1                      |
| Chester        | West Whiteland Township Police Department                 | 1                      |
| Clarion        | Knox Borough Police Department                            | 1                      |
| Clarion        | New Bethlehem Borough                                     | 7                      |
| Cumberland     | North Middleton Township Police Department                | 5                      |
| Dauphin        | Pennsylvania State Police (statewide)                     | 17                     |
| Delaware       | Clifton Heights Police Department                         | 1                      |
| Jefferson      | Brookville Police Department                              | 4                      |
| Lackawanna     | Clarks Summit Police                                      | 1                      |
| Lancaster      | Manor Township Police Department                          | 2                      |
| Lancaster      | Millersville Borough Police Department                    | 1                      |
| Lawrence       | New Castle City Police Department                         | 1                      |
| Luzerne        | Lehman Township Police Department                         | 1                      |
| Luzerne        | Wilkes-Barre City Police Department                       | 12                     |
| McKean         | City of Bradford Police Department                        | 3                      |
| McKean         | Otto-Eldred Regional Police                               | 1                      |
| McKean         | Smethport Borough Police                                  | 1                      |
| Mercer         | Thiel Police  | 1                      |
| Montgomery     | Ambler Borough Police Department                          | 1                      |
| Montgomery     | Bridgeport Borough Police Department                      | 1                      |
| Montgomery     | Horsham Township Police Department                        | 1                      |
| Northumberland | Northumberland Police Department                          | 1                      |
| Northumberland | Watsonstown Police Department                             | 1                      |
| Schuylkill     | Pottsville Borough of Police                              | 1                      |
| Washington     | Canonsburg Police Department                              | 2                      |
| Washington     | North Strabane Police                                     | 3                      |
| Washington     | West Brownsville Police Department                        | 1                      |
| Westmoreland   | Rostraver Township Police Department                      | 2                      |
| Wyoming        | Tunkhannock Township Police                               | 1                      |