



HFSC Moves Forward to Reach Rape Kit Testing Goals

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The Houston Forensic Science Center has made progress in both eliminating a backlog of about 375 untested rape kits and achieving a sustainable 30-day turnaround time for sexual assault kits by July 1. Already, HFSC has issued 329 sexual assault case reports and outsourced 99 cases, for a total of 428 completed, effectively eliminating the backlog of untested rape kits.

Now, HFSC is turning its attention to achieving the second goal: a sustainable 30-day turnaround time by July 1.

To achieve these goals, staff in the Forensic Biology Section have been working overtime. Instrumentation has been purchased and validated to help triple production in the DNA laboratory. Faced with the potential for greater contamination due to increased production, HFSC's Quality Division is closely monitoring the project. Six new staff members, including a manager, a scientific technical lead and four analysts, will all be onboard by mid-June, helping HFSC sustain a 30-day turnaround time once the goal is achieved.

On April 6, Mayor Sylvester Turner announced HFSC would eliminate its backlog and achieve a sustainable 30-day turnaround time by July 1.

"We believe we can achieve the 30-day turnaround goal by July 1; however, it is going to be difficult," said Daniel Garner, HFSC's CEO and president. "Rape kit requests have been higher than average since we started the project, and other events, such as the loss

of work hours as a consequence of the Tax Day flood, have made this project even more challenging."

To achieve a sustainable, 30-day turnaround time by July 1, about 370 more sexual assault cases need to be completed, including 225 cases that have been submitted to the lab since April 1. Normally, the average number of monthly sexual assault requests is about 70.

Finally, HFSC intended to have six DNA instruments online and in production by early May. However, one instrument arrived broken from the manufacturer and other instruments required unforeseen repairs, which set back production.

Despite these setbacks, HFSC's Forensic Biology Section is determined to fulfill its commitment and is further increasing production to make up for lost time.

HFSC is a local government corporation that provides forensic services to the City of Houston and other local agencies. HFSC is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. Its management structure is designed to be responsive to a 2009 recommendation by the National Academy of Sciences that called for crime laboratories to be independent of law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government.

HFSC currently operates in nine forensic disciplines.

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