



Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: ID 26-384 **Version:** 1 **Name:**

Type: Action Item **Status:** Passed

File created: 3/19/2026 **In control:** City Council

On agenda: 4/9/2026 **Final action:** 4/9/2026

Title: Actions pertaining to the 2024 National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) grant program:
 1. Authorize the Chief of Police or her designee to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Fresno County Probation Department James Rowland Crime Victim Assistance Center (CVAC) to fund a full-time Victim Witness Advocate for two years of the three-year grant performance period totaling \$217,569 (\$107,177 Year 1 of the MOU and \$110,392 Year 2 of the MOU)

Sponsors: Police Department

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. 26-384 Memorandum of Understanding with Fresno County Probation Department

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
4/9/2026	1	City Council	APPROVED ON CONSENT CALENDAR	Pass

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MINDY CASTO, Chief of Police
Police Department

BY: MARK SALAZAR, Deputy Police Chief
Investigative Division

SUBJECT

Actions pertaining to the 2024 National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) grant program:
 1. Authorize the Chief of Police or her designee to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Fresno County Probation Department James Rowland Crime Victim Assistance Center (CVAC) to fund a full-time Victim Witness Advocate for two years of the three-year grant performance period totaling \$217,569 (\$107,177 Year 1 of the MOU and \$110,392 Year 2 of the MOU)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council allow the Chief of Police or her designee to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Fresno County Probation Department James Rowland Crime Victim Assistance Center (CVAC) to fund a full-time Victim/Witness Advocate for years two- and three of the three-year term grant performance period, totaling \$217,569. The remaining funds will be utilized in FY 28. Funds have been awarded for the 2024 National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative to the Fresno Police Department’s Family Justice Bureau within the Investigations Division.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Fresno has been awarded grant funds of \$1,996,559 from the U.S. Department of Justice, through the Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Assistance to assist with the follow up investigation of cold case sexual assault cases. The grant performance period is from October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2027. This MOU will be made retroactive to October 1, 2025, and expire September 30, 2027. All SAKI grants last 3 years (36 months).

BACKGROUND

In 2018, the Fresno Police Department Sexual Assault Cold Case Unit (CCU) was formed with grant funding provided by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), 2018 National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) grant. These funds were used to investigate 694 selected cases from 2000-2015 that had been previously laboratory tested; however, there were no investigators available to follow up on those forensic testing results. Two Detectives and a Victim Advocate were assigned to the newly created CCU.

In September 2019, the Police Department was awarded the 2019 SAKI grant. This grant funding provided one additional full-time Detective and one full-time Deputy District Attorney to the CCU. Their duties were to pursue all DNA hits and leads related to the cases being returned from lab testing for cold cases from 2016-2018, which totaled 486 cases. Both grants provided essential funding to provide personnel to investigate and prosecute the backlog of cases and lab results.

In September 2020, the Police Department was awarded the 2020 SAKI grant. This funding involved identifying and testing Sexual Assault Kits (SAKs) in police evidence that BJA would classify as being "partially tested." BJA (SAKI) defines a "partially tested" SAK as one that was submitted to a forensic lab for analysis; however, it was subjected to serology-only screening or tested with older, non CODIS eligible DNA technologies. CODIS (Combined DNA Index System) is the FBI administered database where offender DNA profiles are uploaded and searched, which is used to identify suspects. Of the approximate 2,500 SAKs in police evidence at the time, it was estimated that nearly 50% contained suspect DNA profiles. A retired Department of Justice Forensic Laboratory Director (Criminalist) was hired and reviewed every case where a victim SAK was collected, and a suspect was not already identified to determine if further testing was needed to meet the requirements of BJA. Through the 2020 SAKI grant initiative, the forensic testing results were as follows: 150 CODIS Profiles Uploaded; 77 CODIS Hits; 10 CODIS Ineligible Profiles; 14 Consent Partner Profiles. Some of these cases remain under investigation by CCU Detectives. The Criminalist had a 37% success rate in detecting DNA profiles that would have gone unidentified without SAKI funding.

With funding from the SAKI 2021 grant, two new full-time Crime Specialist positions were approved for this project. The Crime Specialists were responsible for the census portion of the grant as it was very tedious, time-consuming and a heavy lift. The sworn personnel, assigned to the CCU under the SAKI 2020 grant, were utilized to handle the actual collection of Lawfully Owed DNA samples and other high-risk investigations. The Crime Specialists reviewed cases during the census portion and pointed out any similarities, etc., with the anticipation of solving other cases. Through this initiative, Detectives collected over 190 lawfully owed DNA samples from previous convicted offenders, to include sex and arson registrants.

The Police Department is continuing with its partnership and support from BJA with funding from the SAKI 2024 grant. The Police Department currently has 68 sexual assault kits awaiting further forensic testing, as identified by the Criminalist. In addition, there are post-FY 2020 SAKI cases that also

require Criminalist reviews. The total number of additional victim cases from the years 2020-2024 that the Criminalist will review is approximately 690. CCU Detectives will continue working cold cases and be in place to investigate forensic testing results and future leads. Through the continued partnership with the James Rowland Crime Victim Assistance Center (CVAC), CCU Detectives and a Victim Advocate remain committed providing support to victims of sexual assaults. Sexual assault victim advocacy is essential in providing trauma-informed support, legal accompaniment, and resources that empower survivors, reducing the risk of revictimization, and ensuring their rights are prioritized throughout the healing and justice process.

With the augmentation of grant funding, the Police Department (CCU Detectives and Criminalist), along with the CVAC (Victim Advocate), will collectively ensure all SAKs are tested to completion, provide advocacy support and services to victims, and hold offenders accountable for their criminal actions. This grant funding will provide proper sexual assault kit investigative and evidence sustainability.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

This is not a “project” for the purposes of CEQA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Local preference was not considered.

FISCAL IMPACT

The grant provides full cost recovery for all positions, operations, training, and supplies for this program during the performance period of the grant. Expenses will be claimed and reimbursed on a quarterly basis. This funding will enable the Fresno Police Department to continue to enhance its current capabilities and response to sexual assault cold cases identified within the City of Fresno.

Attachment: Memorandum of Understanding with Fresno County Probation Department, James Rowland Crime Victim Assistance Center (CVAC)