



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
International Association for Identification
International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists/ American Board of Forensic Toxicology*

July 26, 2024

The Honorable Karlhlon F. Moore
Bureau of Justice Assistance Director
US Department of Justice
810 7th Street NW
Washington, D.C., 20531

Dear Director Moore,

We are writing to address both our appreciation and concerns regarding the recently released grant solicitation for the BJA FY24 Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI). The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) representing the crime laboratory community and along with some 21,000 forensic science practitioners, medical examiners and coroners would like to thank DOJ for wording in the solicitation supportive of state and local entities employing in-house genealogists to work on forensic investigative genetic genealogy (FIGG) cases. Having employees that report directly to law enforcement agencies will allow for more accountability, data security and privacy protections, and implementation of appropriate investigative and reporting standards and best practices. As more state and local entities employ in-house genealogists and train their own professional staff to perform genealogical searching and tree building, potential problems related to transparency and lack of accountability to the courts will be mitigated.

However, we are also writing to express our concern with the provision in the FY24 solicitation that specifically prohibits the use of private genealogists using SAKI funding if the laboratory does not have its own in-house genealogist, and the requirement that those laboratories use the FBI for genealogy searching resources. Our first concern is whether the FBI has the current capability and capacity to be able to implement this provision quickly, efficiently and effectively. Without significant genealogy resources, the FBI could quickly become overwhelmed with requests, causing cases to take longer than necessary to reach a resolution for victims and families. Our second concern with requiring SAKI sites to use the FBI resources is that SAKI sites will lose oversight of the genealogical searching and tree building process and be unable to assure that the DOJ Interim Policy on FIGG and individual state laws are followed.

CFSO hopes that DOJ will reconsider the provision to require the use of the FBI Genealogy Unit. We recognize that there is a provision for consideration on a case-by-case basis, but CFSO believes rather than requiring the use of the FBI resources, certain pricing requirements and operational standards could be put in place for the use of private resources until the time that more SAKI sites have had the opportunity to bring this work in-house. The first several SAKI sites are implementing in-house genealogists this year, and many more will follow now that this is clearly an allowable expense under the SAKI program.

CFSO is also concerned about the mtDNA provision in the FY24 solicitation regarding unidentified remains. We believe that requiring mtDNA to be performed before FIGG can be attempted will unnecessarily delay identification of the remains. Currently, most state and local labs do not have the ability to run mtDNA, and delays at the FBI and private laboratories are long. In reality, FIGG technology is much faster, more likely to yield a successful result in most cases and is equally economical to run. While we agree that the solicitation should encourage the use of mtDNA on unidentified remains cases, we believe it could be run concurrently with FIGG to take advantage of each technology to obtain a successful result in the timeliest manner.

Thank you for considering the concerns of the forensic science community.

Matthew Gamette-CFSO Chair
On behalf of the CFSO Board of Directors
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