



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

EMBARGOED UNTIL
Wednesday, April 9, 2014

Contact: Starr Stepp
(202) 307-0703
www.ojp.gov

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS CALIF. PROGRAM FOR EXPEDITING DNA ANALYSIS FOR RAPE VICTIMS

RICHMOND, Calif.—The Department of Justice will recognize the Rapid DNA Service Team (RADS) for changing the traditional rape testing process in California by performing a DNA analysis for every rape victim within 15 business days. The team will receive the award during the National Crime Victims' Rights Service Awards ceremony Wed., April 9, in Washington, D.C.

“Through their courage and critical contributions to assist and empower victims, these individuals and organizations have given hope to countless Americans victimized by crime—even under the most difficult circumstances,” said Attorney General Eric Holder. “I am proud to recognize these extraordinary advocates by celebrating their achievements and assure them that the Department of Justice is more determined than ever to help ensure their continued success.”

The RADS Team, part of the California Department of Justice's Bureau of Forensic Services, will receive the Award for Professional Innovation in Victim Services for its aggressive pilot program to reduce the number of unanalyzed rape kits. The program, which began in May 2011 in four counties, differs greatly from the traditional approach where an investigating law enforcement agency first investigates new cases before evidence is submitted to the crime laboratory.

RADS helps address sexual assault victims and human rights groups' concerns that evidence takes too long to be analyzed or is not being analyzed at all. RADS notifies victims that their cases are active, evidence is being examined and law enforcement actively working to resolve their cases. In cases where DNA results are obtained, RADS assures victims and investigators that the DNA database will be searched, increasing the likelihood that the perpetrators will be identified and brought to justice.

“We are humbled and proud to recognize these extraordinary individuals, teams, and organizations for their outstanding service” said Deputy Attorney General James Cole. “These compassionate honorees have become beacons of hope for so many others who have endured shock and deep sadness in the face of too many incidents involving violence and loss.”

In addition to RADS, the Department will recognize nine other individuals and programs for their outstanding efforts on behalf of crime victims. Descriptions and videos of

the honorees are available at the Office for Victims of Crime's Gallery:
<https://ovcncvrw.ncjrs.gov/Awards/AwardGallery/gallerysearch.html>.

President Reagan proclaimed the first Victims' Rights Week in 1981, calling for renewed emphasis on, and sensitivity to, the rights of victims. National Crime Victims' Rights Week will be observed this year from April 6-12, and the theme is "30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice."

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at www.ojp.gov.