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NEWS RELEASE

May 7, 2025

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Ramsey County Leaders join forces to enhance sexual assault response in Ramsey County through new public investments

New funding prioritizes culturally specific training needs as well as investigations

Saint Paul, MN – Today, leaders from across Ramsey County, including every police chief, prosecutors, sexual assault victim advocates, as well as County Board and Public Health officials, recommitted to appropriate, dedicated response to reports of sexual assault by committing resources and a countywide commitment to continuous improvement. Specifically, they recognized the improvements made since the establishment of the [Sexual Assault Response Collaboration](#) in 2019, and pledged to continue to better serve all victim/survivors.

The core feature of this new effort will focus on community engagement & culturally specific trainings for Law Enforcement, Ramsey County SOS advocates, prosecutors and community advocates to help them respond better to communities of color who expressed a hesitancy to report their assault to the justice system. Ramsey County Attorney John Choi committed \$40,000 from civil asset forfeiture funds over the next two years for community-based trainings that include nationally recognized speakers and local support to highlight the key findings from 2024 report completed by the Minnesota Justice Resource Center.

Additionally, Ramsey County leaders advocated for additional, community-specific Ramsey County SOS Sexual Violence Services Advocates to better serve victims from underrepresented communities. Finally, the the Ramsey County Attorney's Office (RCAO) will renew their contract for another two years, prioritizing Ramsey County's sexual assault and firearm cases that are submitted to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension for forensic testing.

“In 2016, we recognized our shortcomings in responding to sexual assaults and partnered with the community to chart a better path forward for victims and survivors. We became a ‘[Start by Believing](#)’ community and undertook a comprehensive two-year review of sexual assault cases in Ramsey County. That effort led to a public report in April 2018 and a countywide implementation plan in 2019 supported by every law enforcement agency and my office,” said Ramsey County Attorney John Choi. “Since then, despite challenges like the pandemic, we’ve strengthened nearly every part of our response to ensure it is timely, coordinated, and victim-centered. Thanks to this strong and committed collaboration, Ramsey County has led—and will continue to lead—the way in delivering survivor-centered support and ensuring accountability for perpetrators of sexual assault,” said Ramsey County Attorney John Choi. “Today’s announcement reaffirms and strengthens our commitment to this critical work—through our

words, our actions, and our continued investment.”

Ramsey County Sexual Assault Response Collaboration Commitments

- Provide and support culturally responsive and trauma-informed training to better serve victims/survivors of all backgrounds, especially those identified in the Minnesota Justice Research Center’s Report entitled “[I Want to Be Heard](#),” dated August 19, 2024.
- Invest in retention of designated investigators trained in sexual assault investigations.
- Enhance commitment to community advocacy and victim/survivors by involving an advocate early and consistently throughout the investigation process.
- Support additional resources for community advocates to assist law enforcement and better serve all victim/survivors of sexual assault.

“Sexual assault cases are some of the most vulnerable times in a person’s life. Our dedicated police officers and investigators are continuing to do everything they can to support victims of sexual assault. The collaboration approach with police, prosecutors, and advocates has only helped us get justice in these cases.” Saint Paul Police Chief Axel Henry

“We value our partnership with Ramsey County to fund timely forensic analysis in these complex cases,” said Drew Evans, superintendent at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety’s Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. “Making these complex cases a priority for Ramsey County makes for an improved response for victims.”

Since 2019, the Sexual Assault Collaboration has met regularly on case details, systems collaboration and community engagement.

Some of the accomplishments include:

- Monthly meetings, with continuous training, for sex assault investigators.
- Improved and expedited forensic exams for suspects and improved focus on victim’s/survivor’s sex assault exams.
- Increased advocacy partnership through a digital referral process and advocate attendance at the CSC workgroup meetings.
- A specialized prosecutor for CSC cases leading to a 68% charging rate of CSCs.
- Designated CSC trial prosecutors to handle the most difficult, high risk sex crimes cases.

“Ramsey County’s SOS Sexual Violence Services has served victims of sexual assault for over four decades, providing free, confidential, timely support,” said Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health Director Amy Caron. “We remain steadfast in our commitment to this ongoing partnership to provide consistent, culturally specific support in our collective work around sexual assault prevention, response and healing.”

“We know that sexual violence is not only a deeply personal trauma—it is also a public safety issue and a racial justice issue, said Ramsey County Board Chair Rafael Ortega. “People of color have historically faced significant barriers in being heard and believed. Our work must continue to center their experiences and remove those barriers.”