



**Office of
Victim Services**

**Hospital and Provider Guidance
for Storage and Transfer of
Unreported Sexual Offense Evidence Collection Kits**

November 2022

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Phase-In Plan

OVS has developed a plan to manage the transfer of kits from hospitals and providers to the state's storage facility. Agency staff considered the number of facilities and the estimated number of kits and related items when developing its plan, which has four phases that align with the state's Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) regions (see [Appendix A](#)).

- Phase 1: Capital, Mohawk Valley, and Western New York facilities
- Phase 2: Central New York, Long Island, and North Country facilities
- Phase 3: New York City facilities
- Phase 4: Finger Lakes, Mid-Hudson, and Southern Tier facilities

This plan allows OVS to determine the time it will take the storage facility to receive, process, and store kits and related items. It also gives the agency the flexibility to adjust its intake process as needed to allow for smooth operation of the facility, which will only be able to accept a certain number of kits per day.



No items may be sent to the OVS Storage Facility without OVS prior approval. Any items sent to OVS that are not on the pre-approved schedule may be sent back to the hospital or medical provider.

Deliveries of kits will be scheduled in advance to ensure there is sufficient time to process, track, and store the items properly. Hospitals and providers will receive more information about the start date and timing of each phase as it becomes available.

About the Kit Inventory and Tracking System (KITS)

KITS is a web-based system accessible through your preferred browser (Chrome, Edge, Safari). Hospitals and providers will access the KITS Hospital Portal and user manual through the OVS website.

KITS will generate QR codes that will be used to label and identify each item collected. These can be printed from a standard laser printer using Avery 5160 Easy Peel Address Labels (1" x 2 5/8", 30 per sheet). Labels may only be printed for one [case](#) at a time, however, the system will allow you to select a starting point for the labels so you can keep using the same label sheet until it is completely used.

The OVS website also will include a separate link to the Victim Portal and user manual. Hospitals and providers should share this information with the victim of crime to help them understand how to check their item status and update their personal information and notification preferences.

A “Hospital Notes” field is available for each case. Hospitals may use this field for their own notes but can also provide OVS with any additional, relevant information. This may include prior storage condition comments or other information about the victim’s preferences for notification (e.g., phone calls should only be between the hours of 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.) or language access needs (e.g., the victim’s preferred language is American Sign Language). Hospital Notes should not include any private, personal, or medical information or other comments that are not relevant to the long-term storage of the kit or other items.

Hospital and Provider Onboarding Process

Hospitals and health care providers must take the following steps to obtain access to KITS and prepare for the transfer of kits and non-kit items (hereafter referred to as items) to OVS:

1. [Email contact information](#) to OVS to obtain training materials, forms, and other relevant information.
2. Staff who will use KITS must [complete the self-paced training](#).
3. Completed KITS Training Attestation forms for each user must be sent to soeck@ovs.ny.gov.
4. Staff will be notified of [access to KITS](#) via email and will need to verify their accounts and set up their passwords.
5. Staff designated as “Hospital Admins” users must enter the following into KITS:
 - a. all storage locations in the hospital where items are currently and temporarily stored and,
 - b. the hospital staff usernames assigned to sexual assault examiners to the “Examiners” screen for your facility.
6. Once those steps are completed, Hospital Admins must notify OVS via email of the [hospital or provider's readiness](#) to begin entering information into KITS and shipping to OVS.



Hospitals and providers cannot send kits and items to the OVS storage facility until confirmation and scheduling details are provided by OVS.



Prior approval is critical to appropriate processing and maintaining the integrity of items.

Acknowledgment of readiness by OVS *is not* a scheduling confirmation.

Any items sent to OVS that are not included on a pre-approved schedule may be sent back to the hospital or provider.

Providing Contact Information to OVS

Hospitals and providers must provide OVS with current, accurate contact information for all KITS users and anyone who should receive communication from OVS about the unreported kit storage processes.

OVS will use Constant Contact to provide updates, guidance documents, training materials, and other relevant information. Staff may [subscribe to the OVS SOECK ListServ](#) or send an email to soeck@ovs.ny.gov with the following information:

- First & Last Name:
- Title:
- Email address:
- Phone Number:
- Hospital or Provider Name:
- Hospital or Provider Address:
- KITS User Role (Admin, User, or N/A):

All staff should add Constant Contact as a “safe sender” in their email to ensure delivery of these important communications.

KITS Training and Access

Prior to the start of each phase, OVS will provide hospitals and providers in that phase with timeline(s) and all applicable materials, including a KITS user manual and a series of short videos on how to use the system.

Once this self-paced training is complete, each user must complete the KITS Training Attestation form and submit it to soeck@ovs.ny.gov.

OVS will create user accounts and email temporary passwords to users, who will then be able to create a permanent password and gain access to KITS.

Hospitals and providers will determine the appropriate role for each user:

- Hospital User – Access to KITS to enter victim of crime information, log items, updates item status, and view reports.
- Hospital Admin – Hospital User access with the ability to add Examiners and Hospital Storage Locations to KITS, according to the training and system manual.
 - Examiners conduct forensic exams and should enter victim of crime information into kits while the individual is still in the hospital.

Please Note: Once a hospital or provider completes KITS onboarding, any new staff approved to access the system must complete the self-paced training and submit the

KITS Training Attestation form to OVS via email. If the new user is an Examiner, Hospital Admins will be notified to add the user to the Examiners screen.

Hospitals and providers also must notify OVS when a staff member's access to the system should be removed. This will help ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the information contained in KITS.

Notification of Readiness

Once Hospital Admins determine that they have completed all necessary steps, they should email soeck@ovs.ny.gov to notify OVS of their readiness to send kits to OVS.

OVS will provide the hospital or provider with an acknowledgment of readiness and then provide a schedule for sending kits to the storage facility.



Hospitals and providers cannot send kits and items to the OVS storage facility until confirmation and scheduling details are provided by OVS.



Prior approval is critical to appropriate processing and maintaining the integrity of items.

Acknowledgment of readiness by OVS *is not* a scheduling confirmation.

Any items sent to OVS that are not included on a pre-approved schedule may be sent back to the hospital or provider.

Using KITS and Providing Information to Victims

Once users have been granted access to KITS, they can enter the victim of crime information and the items collected into the system.

Please follow these steps to enter information about kits and items that have been in storage:

- Enter the available victim of crime information on the Kit Intake Page.
- Make diligent efforts to notify the victim of crime of the transfer of the items to OVS.
- Ask the individual if they would like to receive notifications. If consent to receive notifications is given, obtain the preferred contact information (e.g., mobile phone number for text message and/or email address).
 - Provide them with the Case # and PIN so they can access the KITS Victim Portal.

- Advise them they will be notified 90 days prior to the expiration of the 20-year storage period that items will be discarded in compliance with state and local health codes and any personal effects will be returned to them upon request.
- Save a copy of the Case # in the medical record.
- Print labels for each item collected and attach to the outside of the package.

If the victim cannot be contacted, hospitals and providers may still send items to OVS. Staff should:

- Include in the Hospital Notes in KITS an explanation of your efforts to contact the victim of crime.
- Save and secure a copy of the Case # and PIN in the event the victim contacts the hospital or provider subsequent to the kit's transfer to OVS.
 - Always confirm the identity of the individual before providing them with the Case # and PIN.

Please follow these steps to collect KITS-required information from victims of crime while they are at the hospital but before the hospital or provider has access to KITS:

Collect the victim of crime information to be entered into the system on the form provided by OVS.

- Ask the individual if they would like to receive notifications. If consent to receive notifications is given, obtain the preferred contact information (e.g., mobile phone number for text message and/or email address).
- Advise them they will be notified 90 days prior to the expiration of the 20-year storage period that items will be discarded in compliance with state and local health codes and any personal effects will be returned to them upon request.

As soon as hospital staff are onboarded to KITS:

- Enter the information into the system.
- Print labels for each item collected and attach to the outside of the package.
- Make diligent efforts to notify the victim of crime of the transfer of the items to OVS.
- Provide them with the Case # and PIN so they can access the KITS Victim Portal.
- Save a copy of the Case # in the medical record.

Please follow these steps after the KITS onboarding process is complete:

Enter victim of crime information directly into KITS while the victim of crime is still at the hospital or medical provider.

- Ask the individual if they would like to receive notifications. If consent to receive notifications is given, obtain the preferred contact information (e.g., mobile phone number for text message and/or email address).
- Advise them they will be notified 90 days prior to the expiration of the 20-year storage period that items will be discarded in compliance with state and local health codes and any personal effects will be returned to them upon request.
- Provide the victim of crime with the Case # and PIN.

As soon as hospital staff are able, they should:

- Print labels for each item collected and attach to the outside of the package.
- Save a copy of the KITS Case # in the medical record.



The victim of crime may give consent to more than one type of notification method. For example, they may prefer both text message and email address. Be sure to document these preferences.

Kit Shipping and Transport

Hospitals and providers have two options for sending kits to the storage facility once OVS provides approval:

- Deliver the items themselves (Direct Delivery), or
- Use UPS, FedEx, or USPS (Common Couriers)



Hospitals and providers are solely responsible for the cost of delivery and shipment of items to the OVS facility.

Please note: All deliveries must be received at the OVS Storage Facility Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Deliveries on weekends or on state holidays are not permitted.

State holidays: New Years' Day; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; Washington's Birthday (Observed); Memorial Day; Juneteenth (Observed); Independence Day; Labor Day; Columbus or Indigenous Peoples' Day; Veterans' Day; Thanksgiving Day; Christmas Day (Observed). When a holiday falls on a Sunday it is observed on the following Monday.

Direct Delivery

If a hospital or provider opts to deliver the kits and non-kit items directly, each item must be logged into KITS. Hospitals may place the items in larger containers, boxes, or bins to facilitate the transportation. To maintain the appropriate environmental conditions and ensure the integrity of the chain of custody, hospitals should:

- avoid using ice packs, cold packs, or dry ice,
- avoid leaving kits in direct sunlight, and
- avoid leaving the vehicle unlocked or unattended.

Upon arrival at the OVS storage facility, the driver must present a photo ID. This information must match the information entered into KITS.

Deliveries that are not in temperature-controlled packages must be received by the OVS facility within 24 hours of leaving the hospital to minimize the time outside of ideal environmental conditions.

Common Couriers

If a hospital opts to ship items to the OVS Storage Facility, they may utilize common couriers such as FedEx, UPS, or USPS.

It is the responsibility of the hospital or provider to adhere to the shipping provider's guidelines and requirements.

All boxes must be marked with the words "Exempt Human Specimen."

Items should be shipped to the OVS Storage Facility in as few boxes as possible. Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA) kits may be shipped separate from other items. Please review the recommended storage conditions section that follows for information about refrigerated or frozen items.

Shipments that are not in a temperature-controlled package must be received by the OVS facility within 24 hours of leaving the hospital to minimize the time outside of ideal storage conditions. **Avoid using** cold packs, ice packs, dry ice or any other material or substance that could cause moisture and potentially damage items inside the box and the shipping container.

FedEx offers temperature-controlled shipping options. You may utilize these services at your discretion and expense:

- For SOEC Kits and additional items: [Ambient/room temperature shipping](#)
- For DFSA Kits: [Refrigerated and cold shipping](#)

Other common couriers may have similar options for temperature-controlled shipping. USPS does not offer refrigerated or temperature-controlled options.

The following are the preferred shipping methods:

- FedEx: FedEx First Overnight
- UPS: Next Day Air Early
- DHL Next Business Day Services
- USPS Priority Mail Express

OVS does not recommend USPS for hospitals or providers that are a significant distance from the OVS Storage Facility as the fastest delivery guarantee is next-day to 2-days.



ALL shipments via common courier must include a tracking number and a signature at delivery is required.

The tracking number must be entered into the OVS SOECK Tracking System. Any package with an unknown tracking number may not be accepted by at the facility.

Recommended Storage Conditions

OVS follows the [National Institute of Justice \(NIJ\) National Best Practices](#) recommendations for environmental conditions at its storage facility.

The items must be stored in a secure location in the following types of environments:

- SOEC Kits – between 15.5° and 24° C (60° to 75° F) with less than 60% humidity
- DFSA Kits – between 2° and 8° C (36° and 46° F) with less than 25% humidity
- Additional items collected such as clothing – between 15.5° and 24° C (60° to 75° F) with less than 60% humidity

Regardless of item type, the item should **not** be outside of these conditions for more than 24 hours.

Items that were previously stored in a freezer **do not** need to stay frozen but should be kept at the temperature and humidity conditions appropriate to the type of item. If there is any moisture on the outside of the container due to condensation, allow the item to dry before placing in another container or touching another item.

Confirming the Identity of the Victim of Crime

OVS is requesting that hospitals and providers help confirm the identity of the victim of crime who is making requests related to their items. These requests include:

- releasing the kit to law enforcement,
- returning personal items, or
- disposing the kit or non-kit item prior to the end of the 20-year storage period.

Protecting the rights of the victim and their privacy is paramount to OVS.



OVS will not accept requests made by anyone other than the victim of crime, including individuals identified as a healthcare proxy or those with power of attorney.

To make a request, the victim of crime must complete an OVS SOECK Consent Form. A photo ID or an alternative form of identification is required. A hospital or medical provider employee will attest that the victim of crime's identity has been confirmed and submit the form to OVS via email to soeck@ovs.ny.gov.

Hospitals and medical providers may work with law enforcement agencies or victim assistance programs to verify a victim's identity.

Additional Information

To ensure hospital and provider staff receive the most up-to-date information about KITS and the storage facility, all staff must ensure OVS has current and accurate contact information.

Staff may [subscribe to the OVS SOECK ListServ](#) or email soeck@ovs.ny.gov to provide these updates and should subscribe to the ListServ to receive important updates.

As a reminder, OVS will use Constant Contact to send these updates. All staff should add Constant Contact as a "safe sender" in their email to ensure delivery of these important communications.

Please review the [NIJ Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach](#) for more information about SOECK collection and storage.

Appendix A:
Counties Comprising the State's 10 Regional Economic Development Councils



Phase 1 Regions

- Capital – Albany, Columbia, Greene, Saratoga, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Warren, Washington
- Mohawk Valley – Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, Schoharie
- Western New York – Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara

Phase 2 Regions

- Central New York – Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, Oswego
- Long Island – Nassau, Suffolk
- North Country – Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence

Phase 3 Regions

- New York City – Bronx, Kings, New York, Richmond, Queens

Phase 4 Regions

- Finger Lakes – Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates
- Mid-Hudson – Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester
- Southern Tier – Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins

Appendix B – Key Terms

Biological Sex: The sex assigned at birth by a doctor; based on physical anatomy and hormones. Designations in KITS include male and female. This is collected for use by the forensic labs.

Case: The record created for each victim of crime for each date of collection.

Examiner: The name of the person performing the forensic examination. This person should be granted the Hospital User role to allow for the direct entry of the information into KITS.

Gender Identity: One's internal, personal sense of their gender. Designations in KITS include male, female, and X.

Please note: This document uses the terms “victim(s)” and “victim(s) of crime” because they have specific meaning under state and federal law.