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Ventura County Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Leads to 20-Year Arizona Prison Sentence in Cold Case Sexual Assaults

VENTURA, Calif. – A Ventura County sexual assault kit collected more than 30 years ago helped bring an Arizona serial sexual assault case to a close, resulting in a 20-year prison sentence for Abraham Ramirez (DOB 08/19/70). DNA testing conducted through the Ventura County Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (VCSAKI) connected Ramirez to four previously unsolved sexual assault cases in Phoenix, allowing Arizona prosecutors to hold him accountable for crimes dating back to 1998.

Ramirez pleaded guilty recently to two counts of sexual assault and two counts of attempted sexual assault in Maricopa County Superior Court. The crimes occurred in 1998, 1999 and 2013.

"Without the work being done through this testing initiative, these Arizona cases may have remained unsolved, and this defendant may never have been brought to justice," said District Attorney Erik Nasarenko. "This case demonstrates why testing every sexual assault kit matters, and how evidence collected decades ago can still make a difference by connecting cases across jurisdictions."

A Ventura County case from 1994 was the starting point. Sheriff's deputies responded to a report of a woman who had escaped Ramirez after being sexually assaulted. A sexual assault kit was collected, but the case was later dismissed due to insufficient evidence.

Decades later, as part of VCSAKI, the victim's sexual assault kit was tested and Ramirez' DNA profile was uploaded into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). It generated a match that connected him to four previously unsolved sexual assault cases in Phoenix. That DNA match gave Arizona authorities the evidence needed to pursue the cases and hold Ramirez accountable.

"This case is a powerful reminder that our commitment in the pursuit of justice does not have an end date. Preserving and testing sexual assault evidence is ensuring no case is forgotten simply

because time has passed," said Maricopa County Attorney Rachel Mitchell. "The 20-year sentence for this perpetrator is due in large part to the efforts of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office, the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) and our own SAKI team in Maricopa County. Our victims in Arizona have received the justice they deserved and can now rest assured this offender is where he needs to be: in prison."

VCSAKI is a countywide effort launched in 2022 to test every sexual assault kit for the presence of DNA and investigate unsolved cases. The initiative was initially funded through grants awarded by the United States Department of Justice, and is now funded by the County of Ventura.

More information about VCSAKI, including regularly updated data on sexual assault kit testing, is available at saki.venturacounty.gov. Victims of past sexual assaults can also use the website to access support services, or receive assistance determining the status of their sexual assault kit.