



## FSA - Keeping You Safe

### What You Need to Know About Rapid DNA

Every day, DNA technology is used by law enforcement agencies to identify suspects, investigate crimes and bring justice for victims and their families. Unfortunately, resources and an administrative backlog of evidence often prevent samples from being processed in a timely matter.

This is especially an issue when DNA identification is needed while an arrestee is in custody. In recent years, however, the advancement of rapid DNA analysis has opened a world of possibilities for law enforcement and other agencies. Here's what you need to know about rapid DNA and why the FSA made it a legislative priority in 2023.

#### What is Rapid DNA?

Currently, Florida law requires that certain offenders, including offenders who are arrested for a felony, or an attempted felony, submit DNA samples when they are booked into a jail, correctional facility or juvenile facility. However, DNA testing on arrestees can take weeks or months to process due to the nature of the testing and the backlog of submissions to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE).

The FBI recently provided the FDLE with permission to submit Rapid DNA from a jail setting (i.e., booking stations). Rapid DNA is DNA that is taken via buccal swab (inner cheek), tested by a machine, and automatically uploaded to the FBI's CODIS (Combined DNA Index System) database. Currently, this is only for booking samples, not investigative samples. According to the FBI, ***"Rapid DNA, or Rapid DNA analysis, is a fully automated process of developing a DNA profile from a mouth swab."*** This happens in approximately 90 minutes and without the need for a DNA laboratory or any human intervention and review.

#### Benefits of Rapid DNA

The use of Rapid DNA technology in jails will allow law enforcement to test a qualifying offender's DNA and determine whether the person's DNA is a match to any unsolved crimes while the person is still in custody. This will assist law enforcement in preventing repeat offenders from being released back into the community where they can commit additional crimes. There have been numerous instances in Florida and across the country wherein a repeat serious offender was arrested, a DNA sample was taken, and that person was released before a DNA match could be processed and returned. **Rapid DNA will be a significant game-changer**, ensuring that

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serious offenders are not released back onto the street where they can commit additional crimes and harm innocent individuals.

Rapid DNA technology will also reduce subsequent costs to law enforcement agencies that would otherwise have to locate and re-arrest an offender who was found to be a match to an unsolved crime after being released. This will directly benefit our taxpayers.

In addition, the use of Rapid DNA machines in jails will assist in reducing the FDLE's backlog of DNA submissions. This will allow the FDLE to utilize their existing resources to test other DNA samples in crimes in which the suspect is unknown and to focus on more difficult samples.

### **FSA's Funding Request**

The Florida Sheriffs Association secured \$2.75 million from the state Legislature for an initial pilot program to purchase Rapid DNA machines, testing supplies and other associated expenses for use in 11 jails in Florida. Each sheriff's office would receive \$250,000 to cover the cost of one Rapid DNA machine and a portion of the expenses related to the machine as well as some or all of the consumables for the first year.

These offices were selected to include almost all medium-sized sheriffs' offices. Hardee, while a smaller sheriff's office, was included to also allow one small-sized sheriff's office to participate in this important pilot program.

- Hernando County Sheriff's Office
- Baker County Sheriff's Office
- Sarasota County Sheriff's Office
- Martin County Sheriff's Office
- Manatee County Sheriff's Office
- Flagler County Sheriff's Office
- Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
- Clay County Sheriff's Office
- Nassau County Sheriff's Office
- Hardee County Sheriff's Office
- Leon County Sheriff's Office

This nonrecurring funding will be an important step in ensuring that serious offenders are not released back onto our streets. With the use of Rapid DNA technology, our booking stations will be able to accomplish in under two hours what normally takes at least 30 days and allow law enforcement to search the national DNA database for matches to unsolved crimes while the offender is still in custody. **Rapid DNA technology will be crucial to ensure law enforcement has access to the best tools available to identify dangerous criminals before they can reoffend.**

### **Grant Program**

In addition to this funding, HB 1105 by Rep. John Paul Temple and Sen. Blaise Ingoglia passed the Legislature and establishes a state Rapid DNA grant program within the FDLE to annually award grants to county jails or

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sheriffs' offices to procure Rapid DNA machines and other supplies required to rapidly process DNA samples in support of the statewide DNA database.

### **Stay Informed with FSA**

One of the Florida Sheriffs Association's primary roles and responsibilities is to support and monitor legislation that ensures public safety in Florida, including the important subject of rapid DNA technology. You can support and stay up to date with FSA's legislative initiatives [here](#) or by [subscribing to our podcast](#), the FSACAST.