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## Update: Testing Backlogged Rape Kits in Illinois

By [Dawn Reiss](#) — Posted on June 29, 2012

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*Are sexual assault survivors finding justice in the system?*

Imagine you're a 10-year-old girl. Besides being worried about things other 4th graders worry about, you're constantly terrified of your stepfather. For over a year, he's raped you repeatedly. You turn 11 and decide you've had enough. You go to the hospital with your mother, mustering up courage to have a rape kit processed, which includes your first, painful gynecological examination. It's such a horrific experience that, years later, you don't even remember going through the process.



Except this isn't imaginary. It's a real case from Harvey, Illinois. In 1997, the Harvey Police Department interviewed the girl and questioned her stepfather, Robert Buchanan, a former Cook County corrections officer. Her statement was deemed "a credible account," especially with the semen found on her body, says Chicago Attorney Yao Dinizulu, who represents the now 25-year-old "Jane Doe" in a 30-count suit that names both Mr. Buchanan and the city of Harvey.

Despite the evidence, Mr. Buchanan was released; the rape kit was shelved and unprocessed for 10 years, according to Mr. Dinizulu. Time passed, and Mr. Buchanan was allowed back in the home. After a brief hiatus, he began to molest his stepdaughter again.

"At this point in time," Mr. Dinizulu says, "this young lady had spoken to all the people who should have protected her, so she never reported it again. She felt there was no one there to protect her."

"It wasn't shocking, but gut-wrenching," he adds. "It only takes a minimal amount of competence to process a rape kit, especially in this situation, with a minor. But there's a deliberate policy of not moving forward with these claims."

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### About Dawn Reiss

Dawn Reiss is a Chicago-based, award-winning journalist who covered both trials of former Illinois Rod Blagojevich as well as other major events in the Midwest for *Time magazine* and *Time.com*. Her work has appeared in *Travel + Leisure*, *Time Out Chicago*, *Chicago magazine*, *Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today*, *American Way*, and more than 30 other national and regional outlets. For stories, she done everything from eating crickets in Cambodia to investigating the death of two sailors during the Race to Mackinaw last summer to interviewing the likes of Maya Angelou and Justin Bieber.

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