

Just DNA Searches in CODIS

Introduction [00:00:01] RTI International's Justice Practice Area presents Justice Science.

Voiceover [00:00:09] Welcome to Just Science, a podcast for justice professionals and anyone interested in learning more about forensic science, innovative technology, current research, and actionable strategies to improve the criminal justice system. In episode three of our 2023 Sexual Assault Awareness Month mini season, Just Science sat down with Orlando Salinas, Lieutenant Trampas Gooding, and Jennifer Pollock from the Texas Department of Public Safety to discuss how statutes regarding lawfully owed DNA and familial DNA searches are utilized in sexual assault investigations. When an unknown DNA profile is found in samples collected within a sexual assault kit, the unknown profile is searched within national DNA databases such as the combined DNA index system, also known as CODIS. To ensure a comprehensive national database and enhance its use as an investigative tool, all states have legislation requiring the collection of DNA from known offenders of qualifying offenses and subsequent entry into CODIS. Some states also allow the use of familial DNA searching in CODIS. Listen along as Orlando, Lieutenant Gooding, and Jennifer describe how they collect lawfully owed DNA samples, conduct familial DNA searches, and talk about specific cases that were solved by these investigative tools. This episode is funded by the National Institute of Justice's Forensic Technology Center of Excellence. Some content in this podcast may be considered sensitive and may evoke emotional responses or may not be appropriate for younger audiences. Here's your host, Tyler Raible.

Tyler Raible [00:01:38] Hello and welcome to Just Science. I'm your host, Tyler Raible with the Forensic Technology Center of Excellence, a program of the National Institute of Justice. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and all month we'll be covering emerging topics in the arena of sexual assault response reform. Today, we'll be discussing the importance of DNA and familial DNA searching as it relates to sexual assault response. To help guide us in today's conversation I'm joined by our guests, Orlando Salinas and Ranger Lieutenant Trampas Gooding, who work for the Texas Ranger division at the Texas Department of Public Safety, as well as Jennifer Pollock, who is the section supervisor in the CODIS laboratory of the Texas DPS Crime Laboratory System. I'd also like to note that Orlando serves as the SAKI program DNA collection coordinator and Trampas acts as the SAKI site coordinator and investigation coordinator; two roles that are heavily involved in sexual assault response reform. So, Orlando, Jennifer, Trampas, welcome to the show. It is absolutely wonderful to have you all here today.

Trampas Gooding [00:02:32] Thank you.

Orlando Salinas [00:02:32] Glad to be here.

Jennifer Pollock [00:02:33] Glad to be here, thank you.

Tyler Raible [00:02:35] Can you each tell us a little bit about yourselves and how long you've been supporting victims of sexual assault by investigating these cases? Let's start with Trampas.

Trampas Gooding [00:02:42] So I've been a Ranger for about eighteen years. I've been working, investigating cold cases since about 2006. And then for the last three years, I've

been part of the SAKI, the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative, grants issued by DOJ and BJA, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Tyler Raible [00:03:01] Orlando, what about you?

Orlando Salinas [00:03:02] Name's Orlando Salinas. I've been with the Department of Public Safety for a little over eight years, and I've worked in the Texas Ranger Division for the last five. I've actually authored the grant applications for both our Cold Case grant and our expansion of the State DNA Database grant. And I've been heavily involved in both of the SAKI project. So it's been about four years working on the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative response in one form or another. It's been a real honor and I really want to give thanks to the Texas Department of Public Safety leadership, the Ranger Division leadership, and all those who have supported us along the way. Thank you.

Tyler Raible [00:03:37] Excellent. And Jennifer?

Jennifer Pollock [00:03:39] I started out my career at DPS in Houston over 15 years ago, working DNA cases and actually processing crime scenes. A lot of my work in my later years in Houston focused around working on any CODIS hits that we would receive on the cases that we actually work with in the lab. In 2019, I took on a new supervisory role within the database and laboratory here in Austin, Texas. It's actually been very interesting to be on both sides of working with the CODIS database.

Tyler Raible [00:04:08] Marvelous. Thank you all. Once again, it's great to have you all here and to have a group with such a varied expertise and perspective. So, working for the Texas Department of Public Safety, I'm sure that you all partner with tons of other organizations and other agencies. Could you tell us a little bit about how these partnerships work and maybe how they kind of enhance the case investigations or the work that you do on a day-to-day basis?

Trampas Gooding [00:04:32] The Texas Rangers in DPS, it's a state agency, so we provide assistance to local agencies across the state, helping them out with their major investigations. So that partnership is already there. And then this effort with the sexual assaults and sex related homicides, we're just working off that same connection, that same relationship that we've already dealt with a lot of these agencies already built up.

Tyler Raible [00:04:56] Excellent. Jennifer, from the laboratory perspective, is that a similar experience or is it a little different?

Trampas Gooding [00:05:02] Our entire crime laboratory system works with many law enforcement agencies across the entire state. We do have 16 locations that each cover a certain region of Texas to process evidence, but specifically the CODIS laboratory that I'm at, we process all lawfully owed DNA samples collected for entry into the database.

Tyler Raible [00:05:23] Perfect. Thank you. Orlando, anything you want to add?

Orlando Salinas [00:05:26] Yes. I'll briefly touch on the fact that as a state agency, we really appreciate the opportunity to partner with law enforcement agencies around the state of Texas. There are over 1900 law enforcement agencies in the state of Texas. One of the benefits of working for the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas Ranger division is that there is a Ranger presence in each of the 254 counties in the state of Texas. This has been extremely helpful because these Rangers work with the local law

enforcement agencies on a regular basis. And so we have been very fortunate to leverage those relationships so that we can share our work on the expansion of the state DNA database by working to collect DNA from individuals who have been arrested or convicted of qualifying offenses. And so we're really spreading that awareness via leveraging those relationships now.

Tyler Raible [00:06:13] That's marvelous. It sounds like those relationships in the way that, you know, everybody can kind of collaboratively work has a pretty significant impact. I'd like to dive in really into the topic of conversation today, which is DNA in regards to investigating sexual assault cases. So, Trampas, could you give us an idea of how important DNA is from an investigator standpoint?

Trampas Gooding [00:06:36] It's very important. That's how we're solving these cases is through DNA. Now, with me, my knowledge and experience working cold cases, the latest stats on that were about 20% of all cold cases that were solved with DNA. 8% were solved by investigative means, the old-fashioned way, just getting out interviewing. But when we're dealing with sexual assault cases, majority of them, especially the ones that are in our program doing this advanced DNA testing, they're all being solved by DNA.

Tyler Raible [00:07:05] That's marvelous. Jennifer, as a forensic scientist, what are your thoughts?

Jennifer Pollock [00:07:09] I believe that developing DNA profiles in a case does open up the possibility of creating a possible investigative lead for a case.

Tyler Raible [00:07:18] Trampas, so, you said that 20% of the cases are solved with DNA. Am I recalling that correctly?

Trampas Gooding [00:07:25] There were some old stats that on cold cases in general, that only about 20% of cold cases are solved by DNA. Because a lot of those old cases do not have DNA. A lot of them were, the offense occurred before DNA even came around. So if you're thinking about the eighties, you might not have the evidence to go back and retest. So that's the numbers. I don't know how accurate that is nowadays with what we're doing with the advances in science and the technologies that we're using. I don't know how that's affected those numbers.

Tyler Raible [00:07:56] Yeah, that's totally fair. I can imagine between maybe evidence collection practices and how they've evolved since the eighties to now there's - it's probably improved I would imagine. I know that you all are also actively involved in addressing the challenges associated with lawfully owed DNA. So I was hoping we could unpack that a little bit first. Orlando, can you tell us a little bit about lawfully owed DNA and what it is?

Orlando Salinas [00:08:23] Absolutely. I'd be very happy to. When I first heard the term lawfully owed DNA, I was very much in the dark as I was not very familiar with that term. In fact, I really did not know much about the convicted or arrestee laws in the state of Texas, let alone the nation. With our grant work, we have conducted a statewide census here at Texas using our Crime Records Division with the Texas Department of Public Safety, coordinating with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and other pertinent agencies to perform this census. And what we did is we retroactively looked from 1995 through August of 20 for individuals who had been convicted of or arrested for certain offenses. So I'd like to note that when the Federal Bureau of Investigation implemented their combined

DNA index system database, known as the CODIS database, states began to develop and implement statutes that outline the qualifying criteria for DNA sample collection for the entities responsible for entering the sample into the database. As I mentioned in Texas, our first DNA laws were introduced around 1995, and at that time we were considered a convicted offender state. This means that there were only a handful of qualifying convictions, very much related to violent crime offenses such as murder. So someone had to be convicted of that violent crime felony offense to be eligible for DNA collection. Here in the state of Texas, our legislature meets every odd year, so bi-annually. And over the years, we have seen these laws continue to evolve. And over time, we included here in Texas, the collection of DNA from individuals who were placed on the sex offender registry, for example. And we've also included individuals who have committed felony offenses who are on adult supervision for their felony offense. And finally, in 2019, Texas became an arrestee state. And so we transitioned from a convicted state to an arrest state for certain felony offenses. And this was a monumental movement in the direction to expand our state DNA database. One of the things that substantiates this collection of these DNA samples, and I really like to hit on this is the Supreme Court case of *Maryland V King*, which provided law enforcement agencies with case law that substantiates that collecting a buccal swab is no more invasive than collecting a fingerprint ten print card. And so that's been very beneficial. So when we talk about lawfully own DNA, we're really focusing on identifying individuals who were convicted of or arrested of a qualifying offense. But for whatever reason, the sample was missed, it was not collected, or it was rejected.

Tyler Raible [00:11:17] I can imagine that, you know, having a broader criteria through which you can collect has a positive impact. But on the flip side there, how does failure in collecting these samples impact sexual assault cases?

Orlando Salinas [00:11:30] That's an excellent question and I'm currently in the process of writing a paper to detail how we performed our census. And I bring this up because there's an analogy that I use as it pertains to the sexual assault kits where a forensic profile has been obtained and testing that kit and the lawfully owed DNA samples. And the analogy I like to use in my albeit caveman brain is that I view the sexual assault kits as essentially a lock on a door or a lock on a gate. And I view these lawfully owed DNA samples as keys to these locks. So if we have all these locks with no keys, it is slim to none chances that we're going to be able to unlock that gate or that door and reveal the information inside of there. And so the more keys that we collect via expanding the database through the collection of these lawfully owed DNA samples from convicted offenders or qualifying arrest offenses, as we expand these keys, there is a greater probability of having the key that unlocks the lock. And this is extremely important because without expanding the database, the results may be nil on resolving these sexual assault offenses that have occurred that we're addressing via the backlog. In my mind's eye, I really view the lawfully owed DNA as being the next step forward in addressing the sexual assault kit testing backlog that we as a nation experienced for so long. Now, when we talk about the failure of not collecting the DNA, I'll let Lieutenant Gooding discuss this in more detail, but here in the state of Texas, when he began working on his grant, we realized that Texas had over 27 serial offenders, serial sexual assault offenders, where these individuals had committed three or more sexually related offenses. And so we posit that if we have expanded the DNA database, it may lead to a more prompt resolution and the identification of these perpetrators, which would then enhance public safety at large, which is why it's so paramount that we collect these DNA samples as much as possible when possible.

Tyler Raible [00:13:40] Trampas, is there anything you'd like to add about the use of lawfully own DNA or maybe even how it would impact investigating these, we'll say, serial assaults?

Trampas Gooding [00:13:49] Like anything I mean, the CODIS database, it's only good as the data that's in it. And so as you get more known offenders in that database, the chances are of it working or helping you out on one of your investigations increases. And so this effort of getting these convicted felons, getting their DNA in that system and then with the use of, you know, we're going to get into about these familial searches using those, you might not have a CODIS hit, but doing a familial search, you know, it'll produce a lead for you. So the more people that are in that database that need to belong in that database helps our investigations out.

Tyler Raible [00:14:23] Thank you, and that's a great segue into the real bulk of our conversation. It's my understanding that you may not have a direct CODIS hit to assist with solving a case as you mentioned, and that sometimes you have to pursue another way of leveraging this DNA information, and like some other states, Texas investigators are permitted to do these familial DNA searches. For our audience just so we're all starting on the same page, Jennifer, could you explain the concept behind familial DNA search before we really dive into it?

Jennifer Pollock [00:14:52] Absolutely. So familial searching is a deliberate search for a biologically related individual of a contributor of a DNA profile from evidence conducted within the CODIS database itself. The evidence profile searched against the offender profiles we have in our database. So conceptually, there are two searches that are happening in tandem. One of these searches is looking for a parent-child relationship, and the other one is targeting a potential full sibling relationship. From that point, we generate two list of candidates that then undergo further testing and evaluation to see if they may look like a potential lead.

Tyler Raible [00:15:31] Just for clarification, a familial DNA search is not the same as a forensic genetic genealogy search, right?

Jennifer Pollock [00:15:38] That is correct. Familial searching is strictly limited to the CODIS database, and it does not involve any public commercial DNA kits for databases. There is another main difference. It's the number of locations on the DNA strand that we're analyzing in a familial search. Our profiles within our database typically have between 13 and 24 locations, which is why it's limited to that parent-child or full sibling relationship. With our familial searching program for the state of Texas did start in 2010, and this was long before FGG gained in popularity. FGG utilizes publicly available DNA kits, looks at possibly 500,000 locations on the DNA, and allows the consumers to search their DNA in publicly available databases for possible relatives. So the large amount of data allows them to build these large family trees and look at those more distant relationships that we can't do in our CODIS database.

Tyler Raible [00:16:35] Excellent. Yeah, I think that that distinction is very important. I've heard that in certain cases, agencies that are conducting familial DNA searches are doing it prior to advancing to the FFG, the forensic genetic genealogy searches. Why would that approach be helpful?

Trampas Gooding [00:16:56] Well, the familial search, both of them, the FGG and the familial search, all leads must be exhausted. And so there's policy, there's interim policy on

the FGG searches. But to me, since you're in that state and you're working that case in that state, a familial search probably should be done first before you go outside. The familial search also identifies closer relatives. So we have the most success on these when it hits to a father-son relationship or to two brothers. Every once in a while we have had some success with our unknown identifying a possible uncle or nephew. So but those are rare cases. Majority of times it's a father-son relationship or two brothers.

Tyler Raible [00:17:42] Are familial DNA searches affected by the FGG interim policy or are they completely separate?

Trampas Gooding [00:17:50] They're separate. Our state, or CODIS lab, has a policy and there's standard operating procedures. What cases, how it qualifies. You have to look at the evidence. The you know, you have to pretty much a full STR profile and a full Y-STR profile. All leads have to be exhausted. You also have to have your district attorney's office on board. So there's a procedure that you have to go through. You have to get memos and then you have to get all the testing, the lab reports and the electropherogram. the scientists, they have to send that in and make that request to the CODIS laboratory. And then the CODIS laboratory approves it or disapproves from what they receive from the lab. So there is procedure and it's totally different from the procedures for FGG.

Tyler Raible [00:18:37] Why are these in place with so many kind of rigorous barriers that you have to overcome before you can employ any of these practices? Do you have any insight on why we have such a long list of criteria before we can move through with different searching types?

Trampas Gooding [00:18:54] The policies that are in place is to make sure that everything's done correctly. In reality, they're there to protect us law enforcement. If we're all doing it the same way, then there's no chance of somebody doing it incorrectly, which could create bad case law, have a bad case where we may lose this technique. And with this advanced technology that we're using, I mean, it's the best thing for the investigations because they're not getting solved. There's not a CODIS hit, and so the case, there's no other direction to go on that. In the past, all you did was just wait around and hopefully somebody's DNA got uploaded into CODIS to where you got a direct hit. We're being proactive now, and now we're looking for possible leads to help us get a direct hit.

Tyler Raible [00:19:40] The realm of looking for additional leads, how does lawfully owed DNA come into play in this arena then?

Orlando Salinas [00:19:46] When we look at lawfully owed DNA, and this is something that Trampas and I have discussed on multiple occasions, and why it's so imperative to expand the state DNA database for these collections is, it is these lawfully owed DNA samples that are being referenced and used when we have our crime laboratory personnel such as Jennifer perform CODIS familial searches. So what they'll do is some sort of kinship analysis comparison. They have some sort of software that will rank the other profiles in terms of relatedness when they do one of these familial searches. So once they do that, they'll compare these DNA samples. So we may have a DNA sample, for instance, for someone who was in a TDCJ facility in 2005 for a particular offense, and we may have a sexual assault or sexually related homicide that ends up kind of matching to that lawfully owed DNA sample that had been collected. And although they may not be the exact fit, as Trampas alluded to in one of the cases he's seeing that that may tell us, hey, this one forensic profile from the sexually related homicide or sexual assault is matching to this person who was in a TDCJ prison. So it's most likely an uncle, a father, a son, a

grandfather, something in that terms of relatedness, which then helps the investigator do some more research into the family and where people were during the time period the crime that occurred. So as with anything else, this familial search, if it does generate a lead, it is just that, a lead. It still requires extensive investigative research. But as we expand the database and we continue to perform these familial searches here in the state of Texas, as Jennifer mentioned, we have over a million profiles that we're searching, which is very helpful. It's a powerful investigative tool given the size of the population here in Texas. So as we expand the state DNA database with collecting more samples, in theory, we should start having more hits to cold cases that haven't been solved yet.

Tyler Raible [00:21:47] Orlando, that's excellent. Thank you. Can you share like a case example of when this lawfully owed DNA was important? Do you have any anything that comes to mind?

Orlando Salinas [00:21:55] Absolutely. One of the early success stories that we had when we expanded here in the state of Texas to becoming an arrestee state happened when an individual by the name of Andy Castillo was arrested in McLennan County, Texas, back in January of 2020. McLennan County, for frame of reference, is in the Waco, Texas area for those who may not be as familiar with Texas. Now, Andy Castillo had originally been arrested, charged, convicted of a public lewdness offense back in 2004, which per the DNA statutes when we did our census, he was technically eligible for DNA collection because of that conviction. But for whatever reason a sample had not been collected from him. And in 2003 and again in 2004, there were two different women who had been sexually assaulted and murdered up in Lubbock County, Texas. Now, there had been no witnesses to these crimes. Both of these women were brutally beaten and were found on a countryside road up in Lubbock County. And so there really was nothing other than the forensic profile that was obtained from their deceased bodies. Now, over time, our CODIS laboratory was able to tell us that the perpetrator of these murders was related, meaning whoever had murdered Linda Carbajal, that same DNA was found on Cynthia Palacios. So we had a case to case it, but we still didn't know who the actor was. So flash forward to Andy Castillo's arrest in January 2020. Thankfully, McLennan County Sheriff's Office collected Andy's DNA upon his arrest there in McLennan County. And within just a few months, we realized a CODIS hit to the bodies of Cynthia Palacios and Linda Carbajal from Andy Castillo's DNA. And so that was provided to the investigators through interviews with Andy Castillo. He did admit to what he had done, to murdering those two women. He was awaiting trial when he died in custody in August of 2021 I believe. He's no longer with us, but it was just a prime example of how collecting this owed DNA may help resolve some of these cold cases, because, as I mentioned, Andy Castillo had been convicted of that offense in 2004, had kind of been stopped by law enforcement and in and out of the criminal justice system all the way up through 2020, but just samples continue to be missed from him. And so we don't know if there's any other offenses out there perpetrated by him, but the sooner we collect these samples and get them into the database, hopefully the quicker we can bring protection to the citizens of Texas and the United States of America by filing these violent offenders.

Tyler Raible [00:24:35] Lawfully owed DNA really comes to shine in this space. So I want to shift gears slightly here. Are there any special procedures maybe in the, let's say, in the crime lab? Jennifer, do you have any insight on that?

Jennifer Pollock [00:24:50] Yes, I do. So the request must be initiated from the investigator or the DA's office to the DNA casework laboratory that developed the evidence profile. From that point, the casework laboratory presents the formal search request to our

CODIS laboratory. Generally, the case must satisfy several requirements. The first one, the case needs to be a serious crime, and the profile developed is from evidence that is believed to be linked to the perpetrator. The DNA profile must be good quality. It must be searching at the national level of CODIS and originates from one individual. The next thing we need is to have a case summary and a joint statement from the law enforcement agency and District attorney's office that all investigative leads have been exhausted and the case will be prosecuted. Finally, we will need additional testing from the casework laboratory on the evidence. Y-STR testing must be performed on the male evidence profile. This testing is specific to the Y chromosome, and we use that male testing to confirm lineage if we develop an investigative lead.

Tyler Raible [00:25:59] Thank you. It sounds like there's a pretty robust procedure in place to conduct these searches. So, Jennifer, after all of these requirements have been fulfilled and it moves forward to a familial search, can you share with us maybe an example of a success you've had that included a familial DNA search?

Jennifer Pollock [00:26:20] So we actually did have an out-of-state familial search request from Colorado. Between 1978 and 1981, there were four sexually motivated homicides. Their crime laboratory was in the process of pursuing FGG, and they kept hitting several dead ends. They did have reasonable belief through their research efforts that there were several ties back to Texas. That's why we agreed to take an out-of-state search request. We were able to provide an investigative lead in the case, but unfortunately, the suspect was deceased after he committed suicide in jail after being arrested for shooting and killing a police officer at a traffic stop in 1981. His body was exhumed to explore this familial search lead. So for me personally, in my in my career, this was a great example of teamwork across agencies and states.

Tyler Raible [00:27:11] I do really appreciate, you know, that inter-state support and these multiple approaches and everybody working together on this collaborative effort. I think it's excellent. Trampas, what about from your perspective? Have you had any big successes that kind of operate in this familial DNA search arena?

Trampas Gooding [00:27:28] Since we've started this, doing these regularly, we've had five leads that developed and then right now we're working on one that was started last month and so it's still in the process. It looks like we identified a possible uncle who was a known offender. And so we're looking at for his nephew. So that's in the works. But the one previously was related to five sexual assaults that occurred back in the mid-nineties, late nineties. Four of them occurred in the Houston area and one of them occurred over in the Louisiana. And so these are all case to case hits and they didn't know who the suspect was or anything, so we performed a familial search probably around July last year. And that search identified two possible leads. So it provided two known offenders. And so we researched those known offenders. We couldn't see that they were related, but looking at the age, the older one was matched - the description of the actor from the 90s. The other one was, he was actually too young to have committed those offenses. So being investigators were kind of, you know, okay, we've got these two persons who might be related, but they're both related to our unknown. And we figured it out that the younger person was probably the son of our unknown offender. And then the older known offender was a brother to him. So researching the brothers, we identified a guy that was - I think he became deceased in 2020, but in 2019 he had a - he was arrested for DWI and it was his second offense, and the investigating agency, they collected a blood sample to be tested for toxicology for, you know, for alcohol. And so they collected that, submitted to the lab but the lab, never tested. And then a few months later, he got involved in a motorcycle

accident and became deceased from that accident. So as we were researching him, we identified, hey, this lab still has this specimen, see if we can get it and instead of doing toxicology, see if we can do DNA testing on it. And so the lead investigator was able to get that specimen, get it tested, and then came back to 100% match. So that cleared up five sexual assaults right there.

Tyler Raible [00:29:49] In these situations, you know, like when CODIS doesn't provide as much investigative information as we need, it sounds like, you know, the familial DNA search could be the next best step. Is that fair to say that maybe familial DNA might be the way to go in some situations?

Trampas Gooding [00:30:06] I mean, if it qualifies. So and that's the big thing is making sure that this specimen qualifies for a familial search. Some of them do not. And so if they don't, then we have to figure out another investigative way to try to get a possible lead. But if they qualify, then yes, you know, because our database, we have over a million offenders in there. So, you know, there is a good chance that you might identify a known family member to that specimen. You know, our working group here in Texas consist of lab personnel, CODIS personnel, our victims' advocates. We have our legal representation from our department, from DPS, and then we also have a prosecuting attorney who helps us out on legal issues. So with everybody together and all working toward the same goal, you'll have more success when there's more people involved in it. This is all a team effort. It's just not one entity working toward a case. And so most of our successes become because we've gotten together and tried to pursue this avenue. Especially the law enforcement agency, the DA's office, and the lab personnel, when they're all working together, you're going to have a lot of success with your cases.

Tyler Raible [00:31:22] Yeah, I love the shout out for this multidisciplinary approach. We are, however, running near the end of our time together today. So I wanted to give everybody an opportunity to share any final thoughts you might have with the listeners before we go ahead and wrap up today.

Orlando Salinas [00:31:38] Absolutely. Thank you, Tyler, and I appreciate the opportunity to be present on this podcast and for everyone who has supported us. Again, I want to recognize the Texas Department of Public Safety and the leadership there and the leadership of the Texas Ranger Division. My final thought would be just the importance of lawfully owed DNA and the research of that. As I mentioned and in my statement earlier, every state is a little bit different. Some may still be convicted states, some may be arrestee states. I encourage individuals in the criminal justice field to look into what the statutes are for your state. Be inquisitive and look for opportunities there. As I mentioned, I truly believe that lawfully owed DNA will be the next forefront of the resolution of the untested kit backlogs. As those are tested, we must continue to expand the DNA databases at the state level. So that would be my takeaway message. There is no wrong door and if anyone has questions, I'm happy to help guide them along the way. At least show them the mistakes to avoid that I made here in Texas.

Tyler Raible [00:32:40] Awesome. Thank you. Jennifer, how about you? Anything you'd like to share?

Jennifer Pollock [00:32:43] I would have to say resoundingly that every DNA collection is important for expanding the CODIS database. You just never know when that one sample or collection can make the world of difference in an active investigation or cold case.

Tyler Raible [00:32:56] Wonderful. And, of course, last but not least, Trampas.

Trampas Gooding [00:32:59] Just don't give up on the cases. You know, these victims, they need justice. You need to bring their perpetrator, their actor, to justice. And I know a lot of them, a lot of the victims that we deal with, they feel like we've forgotten about them, and we haven't. And so they are impressed, they're surprised that we're still pursuing their sexual assault cases when they haven't heard anything in such a long time. And so to other people that are wanting to do this, remember, why we're doing this, it's for the victims.

Tyler Raible [00:33:30] And that's a great way to wrap up today. So I want to thank you all once again for sitting down with me and for sitting down with Just Science to talk about your successes, to talk about lawfully your DNA and familial DNA searches. So thank you all for being here.

Trampas Gooding [00:33:43] Thank you, Tyler.

Orlando Salinas [00:33:44] Thank you, Tyler. I really appreciate the opportunity to visit with you all.

Jennifer Pollock [00:33:47] Thank you so much for having us. It was an honor.

Tyler Raible [00:33:49] And for those of you listening at home, on your drive, walking your dog, or wherever you enjoy your podcasts, if you enjoyed today's conversation, be sure to like and follow Just Science on your platform of choice. For more information on today's topic and resources in the forensic field, visit ForensicCOE.org. I'm Tyler Raible and this has been another episode of Just Science.

Voiceover [00:34:13] Next week, Just Science sits down with Mark Pooley to discuss resolving sexual assault cases in Native American populations. Opinions are points of views expressed in this podcast represent a consensus of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of its funding.