



The University of Texas at Austin  
**Institute on Domestic Violence  
& Sexual Assault**  
*Steve Hicks School of Social Work*

*Notification for Victims of Assault (NoVA):  
A Guide for Communities with Untested Sexual Assault Kits*  
**FAQs**

**What is NoVA?**

*Notification for Victims of Assault (NoVA): A Guide for Communities with Untested Sexual Assault Kits* is the first practical resource guide for communities and practitioners tasked with developing a coordinated and multidisciplinary community response to re-engage victims after testing unrequested or untested SAKs. NoVA distills best practices and current science into an empirically based five-step process called the *NoVA Change Process* which includes thirteen tools to support the execution of each step. NoVA is trauma-informed and victim-centered.

**Who or what entity developed NoVA?**

The Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (IDVSA) at UT Austin's Steve Hicks School of Social Work developed NoVA with support from the Office on Violence Against Women.

**How was NoVA developed?**

IDVSA researchers were members of the Houston SAK Action Research Project working group in 2011 and were instrumental in developing Houston's Victim Notification Protocol. The authors of NoVA used research and best practices from the Houston Project to inform the evidence-based NoVA guide. In addition, IDVSA researchers conducted webinar trainings on Victim Notification and provided technical assistance from 2014-2016 through a subsequent OVW TTA grant. Simultaneously, IDVSA developed the theoretical foundation for NoVA and created a comprehensive written guide comprised of the content from the webinars and additional research.

**Who should utilize NoVA?**

The NoVA guide is helpful for all professionals and organizations that participate in victim notification, including criminal justice and community-based organizations. We recognize that criminal justice professionals and their partners have notified and supported victims in many ways for many years; our guide draws upon this wealth of experience to provide a framework for confronting unique challenges and opportunities that have emerged in a manner tailored to local realities and needs.



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### **In what ways does NoVA provide practical information for communities?**

In order to engage a wide array of community members with varying sexual assault knowledge levels, IDVSA included: educational information on topics such as interviewing techniques and an overview of neurobiology of trauma; a multitude of resources; and, strategies for real-world concerns such as budgetary issues and staffing constraints.

### **Does NoVA apply to communities who do not have untested sexual assault kits?**

Although the guide's focus is on untested and unrequested SAKs, practitioners can also apply the fundamental principles and many of the practices described in this guide to current cases and broader system-level sexual assault response, regardless of the age of the case, or whether a SAK was collected.

### **What is the cost of using NoVA?**

NoVA is a free resource accessible in the public domain and researchers were granted permission to publicly share the tools provided in the guide. Additional training and personnel costs may emerge if a community chooses to implement the NoVA Change Process.

### **What will I get out of using NoVA?**

The NoVA guide will help practitioners understand critical components for victim-centered, trauma-informed victim notification and how to apply them in your community and will provide evidence from research and practice that can inform the notification protocol development process. Ultimately, upon completion of NoVA, a community will achieve increased understanding, knowledge, and skills to establishing notification protocols aimed at achieving justice without re-traumatizing survivors.

### **How can I give acknowledgement if I use the NoVA guide?**

Please use the following citation in any written documentation of your use of NoVA:  
Busch-Armendariz, N., Sulley, C., Hoefler, S., Backes, B., Dempster, M., & Thompson, J. (2019). Notification for victims of sexual assault (NoVA): A guide for communities with untested sexual assault kits. Austin, TX: Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin.