



**Rick Staly, Sheriff**

## **FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

*"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."*

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# **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Flagler County Detention Facility Awarded \$250,000 Grant to Implement Rapid DNA Program**

BUNNELL, FL – The Flagler County Sheriff's Office's Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility has been selected as one of eleven jails in the State of Florida to receive a grant for a Rapid DNA program.

The Florida Sheriffs Association secured a \$2.75 million grant from the state legislature for a pilot program to purchase Rapid DNA machines, testing supplies, and other associated expenses for 11 pilot jails in Florida. Each sheriff's office received \$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 DNA tests for the first year.

The eleven sheriff's offices selected were:

- 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

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Every day, DNA technology is used by law enforcement agencies to identify suspects, investigate crimes, and bring justice to victims and their families. Unfortunately, resources and an administrative backlog of evidence often prevent samples from being processed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) in a timely manner. This is especially an issue when DNA identification is needed while an arrestee is in custody. In recent years the advancement of rapid DNA analysis allowed law enforcement agencies to rapidly solve cases and identify suspects.

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 these arrestees can take weeks or months to process due to the nature of the testing and the backlog of submissions to the FDLE laboratory.

The FBI recently authorized FDLE to submit Rapid DNA from a jail setting (i.e., booking stations). Rapid DNA is DNA that is taken by buccal swab (inner cheek), tested by a machine, and automatically uploaded to the FBI's CODIS (Combined DNA Index System) database. 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 analysis takes approximately 90 minutes and is all automated. With rapid DNA there is no need for a DNA laboratory or any human intervention and review in the analysis.

The use of Rapid DNA technology in county jails will allow law enforcement to immediately 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 where 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, which until now could take weeks if not months for processing.

"Rapid DNA will be a significant game-changer, ensuring that serious offenders are not released back onto the street where they can commit additional crimes and harm innocent people," said Sheriff Rick Staly. "With the use of Rapid DNA technology, we will be able to determine if an offender has been involved in previously unsolved crimes in under two hours while they are still in jail. I would like to thank Governor DeSantis, Florida House Speaker Paul Renner, Senate President Kathleen Passidomo, and FSA Immediate Past President Nienhuis for making this grant possible."

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