

Wisconsin allows police to track rape suspects through relatives' DNA

Wisconsin has joined a handful of states in allowing familial DNA testing — a powerful but debatable procedure — to identify suspects in murders and sexual assaults, Post-Crescent Media has learned.

“We’re getting to the point where we will start offering this,” said Brian O’Keefe, administrator for the Division of Law Enforcement Services at the Wisconsin Department of Justice. “This gives us another way of generating leads for local law enforcement agencies.”

Familial DNA testing, which has generated controversy, is an option for police when a search for a match to a DNA sample comes up empty. The test searches DNA databases for partial matches and allows authorities to expand a search to include relatives of those who are in the databases.

For example, DNA from a crime scene might not match any DNA in state or federal databases, but if the person’s son had been recently incarcerated and his information was entered into a state DNA database, a familial DNA search could lead police to the son, and ultimately to the suspect.

Read the full, original story: Familial DNA is debatable procedure