



## Similar DNA used to find assault suspect

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Acadiana bureau

Technicians at the Acadiana Criminalistics Laboratory recently found a scientific side door leading Ville Platte police to the arrest of a man in a series of sexual-assault cases long gone cold.

Based on leads given them by the crime lab, police tracked down Normand Wilson of Bossier City in connection with a string of five sexual assaults in the Ville Platte area between 1987 and 2001.

A grand jury will review the case Monday.

Ray Wickenheiser, director of the crime lab, said Tuesday that the lab had DNA samples for all five assaults, but could not find a match in any DNA database over the years.

He said investigators knew the same person was involved in all five attacks, but not the person's identity.

The beginning of the break in the case came from a sixth, apparently unrelated, sexual assault in the area.

Earlier in 2005, the Evangeline Parish District Attorney's Office contacted the lab, asking that the five unsolved assaults be compared to the sixth.

Wickenheiser said the DNA in the sixth case was not a match for the other five, but technicians saw similarities and believed that whoever committed the sixth crime might have been a close relative of whoever committed the other five.

Ville Platte police investigators took that lead and worked it until they found Wilson, whose DNA profile allegedly matches that of the samples from the five unsolved cases, Wickenheiser said.

Wickenheiser said crime lab technicians have tried the theory of using apparent similarities in DNA samples to get leads on cases, but this was the first case where it had panned out.

He said that, in some cases, DNA samples that don't match show too many similarities to be random and indicate possible blood relatives.

Wickenheiser said the lab has worked to refine its ability to spot patterns that indicate possible relatives.

He said that such connections don't make cases, but do provide leads for investigators who have been unable to find a solid trail to a suspect.

"This is just a means of giving them leads," Wickenheiser said.