

Evaluation of Sexual Assault Investigations

April 2021 Update

Council Resolution 20190131-077

Public Safety Commission

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Background

- Council Resolution 20190131-077 and Original Scope
 - Comprehensive evaluation of how reported sexual assaults are investigated and processed
 - At a minimum either **200 sexual assault cases or fifty percent** of sexual assault cases from each year, whichever number is greater, for each of the prior seven years of sexual assault case reports

Challenges

- Challenges to project budget and timeline:
 - COVID-19 and Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Clearance
 - Legal review
 - Complex case review
 - Turnover in Sex Crimes Unit (SCU)

Proposed Changes to Scope of Work

Stakeholder Meetings

- March 2021 – Council Member Sponsors
- April 2021 – Meeting with Stakeholders
 - Survivor Justice Project, SAFE Alliance of Austin, and the Austin/Travis County Sexual Assault Response and Resource Team (SARRT)
- Stakeholder preference, modify the original project scope to:
 - Add 2019 and 2020 case files
 - Review 30 percent of case files per each year

Updated Scope of Work

Original Project Scope	
Calendar Year	Cases
2012	240
2013	206
2014	305
2015	260
2016	294
2017	303
2018	321
Total Sample	1,929

New Project Scope	
Calendar Year	Cases
2012	144
2013	124
2014	183
2015	156
2016	176
2017	182
2018	192
2019	153
2020	120
Total Sample	1,430



Major Milestones and Timeline

Kick-Off Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• COMPLETE
Policy/Procedure Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ONGOING• Initial phase complete November 2020
Case Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ONGOING• Delayed to November 2021 from May 2021
Interviews/Site Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ONGOING• Originally May 2021/TBD depending on availability
Final Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RESCHEDULED• Originally February 2022/May 2022
Presentation on Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RESCHEDULED• Originally February 2022/May 2022

Preliminary Observations

- Training that SCU detectives receive upon joining the unit should be formalized. New detectives should be required to complete training before being assigned cases.
- Training should include a thorough explanation of how to properly clear and classify cases, including an explanation of when to suspend vs. exceptionally clear a case.
- Detectives should be required to respond to all scenes where a sexual assault recently occurred.
- Detectives should allow victims flexibility in the time and location for interviews.
- Detectives should be required to make multiple attempts to contact a victim before suspending a case due to victim noncooperation or “pending victim readiness”.
- APD should ensure that Victim Services personnel are involved in training and policy discussions for the SCU.

Preliminary Observations Cont.

- SCU detectives and patrol officers should receive training on proper report writing and documentation.
- SCU supervisors should be responsible for reviewing the content of each case file and following up with detectives on any additional investigative steps that need to be taken.
- Lieutenants should be reviewing a sample of cases on a quarterly basis for quality assurance to ensure cases are being properly investigated, documented, and cleared.
- Detectives should ensure they have completed all possible investigative steps before presenting a case to the District Attorney (DA) to ensure they are supplying the DA with all available investigative information.
- When cases are presented to the DA office, the ADA's questions, recommendations, and decision regarding the case should be documented in writing and included in the case file.
- SCU detectives should be provided with laptops so they can have access to computers while not in the office

Questions?