SUSPENDED INCIDENT REPORTS

AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF HPD'S USE OF THE SL CODE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The goals of this review and of this final report are to provide a detailed account of the management and operational issues that contributed to the "SL scandal" as it has come to be known.[1] Additionally, the Committee aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of the current divisional case management operations to formulate recommendations to improve the department.

Key Objectives

1. Examine comprehensive data from HPD on suspended incident reports.
2. Verify the accuracy and completeness of HPD's corrective response to the SL coding.
3. Formulate actionable recommendations to improve transparency and efficiency.

Methodology

- **Data Collection:** Comprehensive data from HPD regarding 268,920 suspended incident reports from 2016 to present.
- **Data Analysis:** Identified trends, patterns, and discrepancies in handling and resolving suspended incident reports.
- **Sampling Strategy:** Systematic sampling of suspended incident reports by year and offense type.
- **Review and Assessment:** Detailed examination of documentation, actions, and outcomes for each sampled report.
- **Verification:** Accuracy of information cross-referenced with independent sources.

Key Findings

1. Inconsistency in Case Management: Significant variation in how divisions handle and suspend cases.
2. Understaffing: Major impact on Special Victims Division and Major Assault/Family Violence Division, compromising the ability to respond to crimes effectively.

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[1] SL refers to the suspending of incident reports under the code lack of manpower.

3. Outdated RMS System: The current Records Management System is inadequate for effective case management.
4. Civilian Staff Shortages: Difficulty in recruiting and retaining civilian staff to support investigative operations.
5. Communication Breakdown: Insufficient communication between divisions and executive-level staff.

Key Recommendations
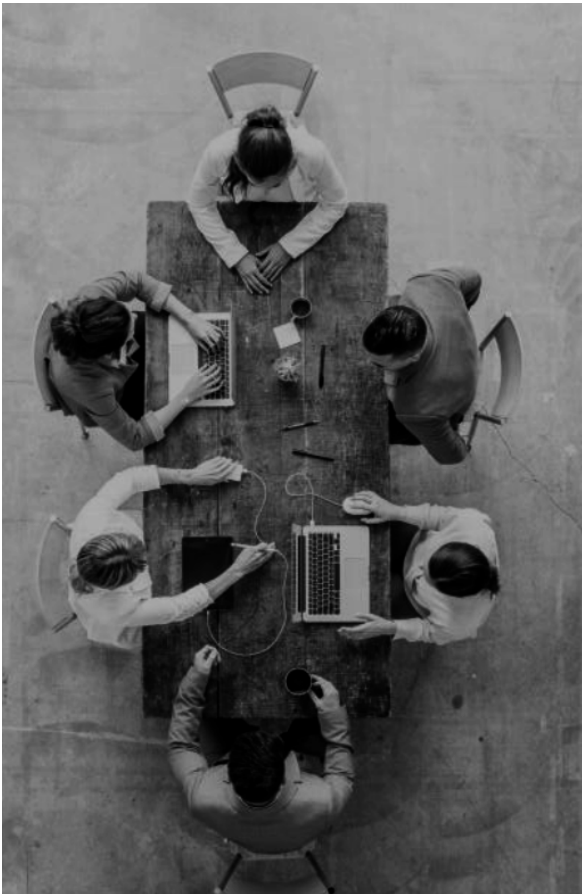
1. Standardize Case Management SOPs: Create and maintain comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures for all divisions.

2. Enhance RMS Capabilities: Ensure the new RMS supports advanced case management and data analysis.

3. Increase Civilian Staff: Streamline the hiring process and increase civilian staff to support administrative tasks.

4. Implement Career Path Structure: Develop career progression plans for both classified and civilian personnel.

5. Provide Leadership Training: Offer consistent supervisory and leadership training at all ranks.

6. Foster Multiagency Collaboration: Increase collaborative training with outside agencies including but not limited to the Houston Forensic Science Center, Houston Area Women's Center, and Harris County District Attorney's Office.

7. Improve Crime Analysis: Ensure each division has a dedicated crime analyst and standardize crime analysis practices.

8. Conduct Staffing Analysis: Perform a third-party performance-based staffing analysis.

9. Present Resource Needs to City Council: Regularly present to City Council and the Mayor on how resource constraints impact public safety.

Conclusion

o **Commitment to Improvement:** The Committee's recommendations aim to enhance the transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of HPD's case management practices.
o **Call to Action:** Addressing these recommendations requires significant investment in resources, technology, personnel, and infrastructure.

This summary highlights the crucial aspects of the final report and serves as a guide for the City Council, the Mayor, and the public to discuss the necessary steps to improve the HPD's operational effectiveness.

In conclusion, the findings reveal several critical issues within the case management and operational infrastructure of the divisions, notably marked by inconsistencies, understaffing, and outdated systems. These issues are compounded by challenges in recruiting civilian staff and insufficient communication between divisions and executive leadership. Addressing these problems is crucial to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of crime response and management.

To remedy these deficiencies, a multi-faceted approach is recommended. Standardizing case management through comprehensive SOPs will ensure consistency across divisions. Upgrading the RMS to support advanced case management and data analysis will modernize operations and improve case tracking. Increasing and retaining civilian staff, implementing career progression structures, and providing consistent leadership training will bolster both administrative and managerial capabilities. HPD has acknowledged the magnitude of the situation and taken proactive measures to identify the actions that need to be taken to "keep the Department from finding itself in the same position in the future."

Further recommendations include fostering greater multiagency collaboration, enhancing crime analysis with dedicated personnel, and conducting a thorough staffing analysis to better align resources with needs. Finally, regularly presenting resource needs to the City Council and Mayor will ensure ongoing support and highlight the impact of resource constraints on public safety.

By implementing these recommendations, divisions can achieve greater operational cohesion, improve response capabilities, and ultimately enhance public safety through more effective case management and resource utilization.

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REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This is the Final Report of the Houston Police Department ("HPD") Independent Review Committee (the "Committee"). This report includes the final findings and recommendations of the independent review and assessment that began in March 2024. Accordingly, this report incorporates information presented in the Committee's interim report and a substantial amount of new information.

In early March 2024, Mayor John Whitmire ("Whitmire") created the Committee and appointed five members to this committee to assess the handling and resolution of suspended incident reports dating back to 2016. The review and assessment aimed to ensure transparency, accountability, and adherence to established protocols in managing incident reports suspended within the specified timeframe and identified suggested areas for improvement in the relevant processes. Mayor Whitmire directed the Committee to:

> (1) Examine comprehensive data from HPD regarding suspended incident reports and analyze the collected data to identify trends, patterns, and discrepancies in the handling and closing of suspended incident reports.
>
> (2) Verify the accuracy and completeness of the information obtained from HPD by comparing it to independent sources where available and appropriate; and
>
> (3) Formulate precise, feasible and actionable recommendations that will impact potential points of weakness in the system as a whole; aiming to improve transparency.

The Committee's review and report will explore the divisional, management-contributed and organizational factors that explain how the department's case management protocol's came to be. To fully understand the potential structural and organizational limitations of the department, our review relies on a massive quantity of data, documents received from HPD and extensive interviews of HPD personnel. From the outset the Committee received full cooperation and assistance from HPD. The Committee chose to cast our investigative net more broadly than just the department and sought input from the Houston Forensic Science Center ("HFSC"), Houston Area Women's Center ("HAWC") and the Harris County District Attorney's Office ("HCDAO"). It is important to note, the Special Operations Command immediately began revising existing policies and practices as they related to case management in addition to launching an internal review and investigation.

Methodology

This review and assessment encompassed the examination of a statistically significant sampling of the 268,920 suspended incident reports within HPD from 2016 to the present. These incident reports encompassed a broad range of criminal offenses focusing on victim-centered crimes, e.g., reports titled sexual assault and crimes with a nexus to family violence. This representative sample of incident reports was selected from the dataset provided by HPD, categorized by year and type of offense, and underwent a detailed review. The review was performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards, which require that the Committee plan and execute the review to obtain sufficient appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions using the following methodology:[2]

1. **Data Collection:** The Committee requested comprehensive data from HPD regarding all suspended incident reports from 2016 to the current date. This data included incident report numbers, suspension dates, reasons for suspension, offense types, closure statuses, and accompanying supplements.

2. **Data Analysis:** The Committee analyzed the collected data to identify trends, patterns, and discrepancies in the handling and final disposition of suspended incident reports. This analysis involved categorizing incident reports by year and offense type to understand the distribution and resolution of suspended instances over time with a lens leaning towards developing a consistent uniform handling regardless of the concerned division.

3. **Sampling Strategy:** The Committee employed a systematic sampling technique to select a representative sample of suspended incident reports under each category (e.g., year, offense type). The sample size was determined based on statistical considerations to ensure its reliability and validity.

4. **Review and Assessment Procedure:** For each selected incident report in the sample, the Committee conducted a detailed review and assessment, examining the documentation, actions taken, and outcomes recorded by HPD. This review and assessment involve cross-referencing the information provided by HPD with the established protocols, policies, and legal standards governing case management and resolution.

5. **Verification Process:** The Committee verified the accuracy and completeness of the information obtained from HPD by comparing it with independent sources, where available.

6. **Reporting:** The Committee prepared this comprehensive report outlining its findings, observations, and recommendations. This report highlights areas of improvement, potential policy changes, and corrective actions needed to enhance the transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of HPD's handling of suspended incident reports.

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[2] *See* Government Auditing Standards, 2018 Revision, United States Government Accountability Office.

By adhering to this methodology, the Committee executed a comprehensive and impartial review and assessment of HPD's suspended incident reports, with the hopes of significantly enhancing accountability and rebuilding public trust in HPD.

BACKGROUND AND TIMELINE

In determining the historical context of incident reports suspended for lack of manpower, the Committee began to immediately fact-gather and analyze available data in an effort to explain the timeline of events. This review centered around three main areas:

> (1) Creation of the SL code.
> (2) Use and review of SL code; and
> (3) Discovery and continued use of SL code.

The Suspended – Lack of Personnel ("SL") Code refers to a Records Management System ("RMS") activity code defined as "all preliminary and secondary cases that have workable leads but cannot be assigned due to manpower limitations." It is important to note that none of the discovered documents, including specific RMS training, contained parameters for the acceptable use of suspension activity codes. The following is the relevant timeline created by the review of HPD internal public-facing documents:

> ➢ October of 2014 – Chief Charles McClelland ("McClelland")[3] released and presented the "Proposed Operational Enhancements for the Houston Police Department" to Houston City Council. Most relevant here is the author's conclusion that, "*This report serves to put readers on notice that left unaddressed, staffing deficiencies will, in time adversely affect the HPD's ability to provide expected quality services designed to keep our citizens and Houston safe.*"
> ➢ July 29, 2015 – Executive leadership created a RMS workgroup with approximately thirty individuals to evaluate the RMS case management system and case clearance rates.
> ➢ November 20, 2015 – Under the instruction of Executive Assistant Chief ("EAC") Timothy Oettmeier ("Oettmeier")[4], this RMS workgroup produced a summary of its findings and recommendations and presented the findings to Assistant Chief ("AC") Donald McKinney ("McKinney").[5] The RMS Workgroup proposed a review of all activities and creation of additional codes to accurately reflect said activities.

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[3] Chief McClelland retired from HPD on February 26, 2016.
[4] Chief Oettmeier retired from HPD on February 16, 2016.
[5] AC McKinney retired from HPD on 12/31/2016.

➢ December 15, 2015 – AC McKinney took over as lead for the project once EAC Oettmeier retired.
➢ February 27, 2016 – EAC Martha Montalvo ("Montalvo") was appointed Acting Chief of Police upon Chief McClelland's retirement.
➢ March 7, 2016 – New RMS Codes, including SL – Suspended Lack of Manpower, were approved, and implemented upon approval by AC McKinney and Acting Chief Montalvo.
➢ June 23, 2016 – After the new RMS code implementation, HPD began hosting eight one-hour training classes for all investigative personnel regarding RMS terminology and case clearances. The class was approved by Acting Chief Montalvo, AC McKinney, and the Training Division.[6]
➢ September 2016 – The Special Victims Division ("SVD") completed a "Suspended Case Audit - Project #2016-3792" labeled with Acting Chief Montalvo's name on the cover. This audit revealed SVD suspended 34.7% (550 cases out of 1,584) of total cases involving sex offenses received during the audit time period.
➢ December 14, 2016 – Art Acevedo ("Acevedo") was appointed Chief of Police.[7]
➢ January 14, 2017 – Chief Acevedo promoted AC Matt Slinkard ("Slinkard") and AC Troy Finner ("Finner") to Executive Assistant Chiefs.
➢ March 27, 2017 – Commander David Angelo ("Angelo") was assigned as the Commander of the SVD.
➢ October 9, 2017 – Diana Poor ("Poor") was appointed as the Deputy Director of the Office of Planning and Data Governance ("OPDG").
➢ July 2018 – Commander Angelo was approved by EAC Slinkard to receive 17 additional investigators to address a backlog of suspended incident reports in the Crimes Against Children Unit ("CACU"). Upon addressing the backlog, CACU no longer used the SL code for incident reports received in their unit.[8]
➢ July 20, 2018 – Chief Acevedo's Chief of Staff sent an email including EAC Finner and other department employees, describing an incident report in the Vehicular Crimes Division that was "Suspended – Lack of Personnel," despite having workable leads. EAC Finner responded to this email, describing the action as "*unacceptable.*"
➢ April 30, 2019 – A SVD sergeant sent an email to the SVD lieutenant over the Adult Sex Crimes Unit ("ASCU"), attaching a staffing proposal. [9] This proposal noted the following: "*The Houston Police Department's Special Victims Division, Adult Sex Crimes Unit is critically understaffed. Currently, the unit is comprised of merely 15 officers, covering a geographic area of two and a half million citizens. There are three squad sergeants, each of whom supervises a squad of 5 officers.*"
➢ January 28, 2020 – Commander Angelo forwarded to members of the ASCU a notice from the State Auditor's Office of Texas that they would be conducting an audit of reported sexual assault incidents dated January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2018.[10] The audit findings note, "*the most common recommendations for improving investigations of sexual assault crimes were providing more training, adding staff (including detectives), and increasing wages and benefits for Agency personnel.*"
➢ May 2, 2020 – Commander Hong-Le Conn ("Conn") replaced Commander Angelo as the Commander of SVD.

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[6] These sessions of the "RMS Terms and Definitions/Case Clearance" training course were taught throughout the month of July at various locations.
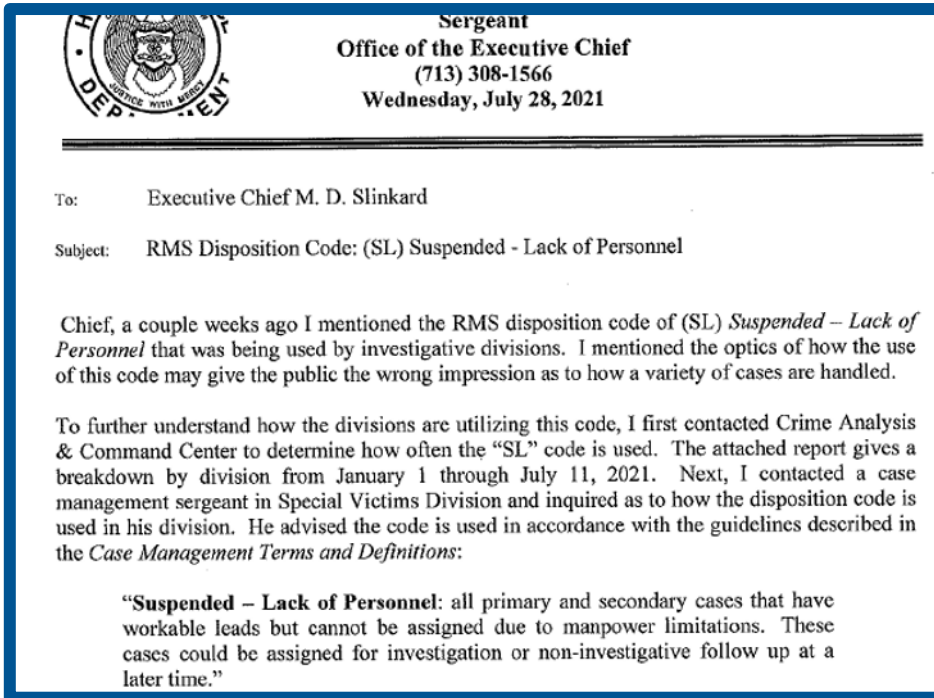[7] Chief Acevedo retired from HPD on April 4, 2021.
[8] This is referenced in the SVD 2018 Year
[9] There is no indication that this proposal was brought to the attention of Executive Staff.
[10] The final audit report was released in October 2020 and can be found here.

- November 5, 2020 – The Case Management Terms and Definitions Document was updated but the definition and use of SL code remained unchanged.
- April 5, 2021 – EAC Finner was appointed Chief of Police upon Acevedo's retirement.
- April 17, 2021 – EAC Slinkard was appointed as the Executive Chief ("EC"). AC James Jones ("Jones") and AC Larry Satterwhite ("Satterwhite") were promoted to EACs.
- April 22, 2021 – ASCU conducted an internal audit of suspended incident reports from November 1, 2020, through March 12, 2021, which identified 180 reports suspended, including 164 reports suspended for lack of manpower. Of the 180, thirty-two were reassigned for investigation.
- July 28, 2021 – A sergeant in EC Slinkard's office drafted a blue note memo, which is an informal method of office correspondence written on blue paper, to EC Slinkard regarding the SL code.

Blue Note Memo

> **Sergeant**
> **Office of the Executive Chief**
> (713) 308-1566
> Wednesday, July 28, 2021
>
> To: Executive Chief M. D. Slinkard
>
> Subject: RMS Disposition Code: (SL) Suspended - Lack of Personnel
>
> Chief, a couple weeks ago I mentioned the RMS disposition code of (SL) *Suspended – Lack of Personnel* that was being used by investigative divisions. I mentioned the optics of how the use of this code may give the public the wrong impression as to how a variety of cases are handled.
>
> To further understand how the divisions are utilizing this code, I first contacted Crime Analysis & Command Center to determine how often the "SL" code is used. The attached report gives a breakdown by division from January 1 through July 11, 2021. Next, I contacted a case management sergeant in Special Victims Division and inquired as to how the disposition code is used in his division. He advised the code is used in accordance with the guidelines described in the *Case Management Terms and Definitions*:
>
>> "**Suspended – Lack of Personnel**: all primary and secondary cases that have workable leads but cannot be assigned due to manpower limitations. These cases could be assigned for investigation or non-investigative follow up at a later time."

- October 29, 2021 – An ODPG sergeant sent an email notifying EAC Jones and DD Poor that the SL code was renamed from "Suspended – Lack of Manpower" to "Suspended" in the RMS drop-down menu option. There were no additional changes or modifications made with respect to training and implementation of the modified code.

➤ October 29, 2021 – Members of ODPG drafted a circular encompassing the change in SL code name.[11]

➤ November 1, 2021 – The draft circular was time stamped arrived in EC Slinkard's office.

➤ November 2, 2021 – EC Slinkard signed the draft circular and wrote the note, *"Route to EAC Jones prior to COP for Chief Jones review then to COP."*

➤ November 4, 2021 – The draft circular was sent from EC Slinkard to EAC Jones for review.

➤ November 4, 2021 – Commander Conn presented a PowerPoint presentation on SVD data in the Executive Staff Meeting where Chief Finner was alleged to have given the directive to stop using the SL code.[12]

➤ November 5, 2021 – The AstroWorld Festival tragedy occurred.

➤ November 16, 2021 – DD Poor received an email from EAC Jones' office requesting her opinion on whether the circular needed to be distributed department wide.

➤ November 17, 2021 – DD Poor replied the circular was necessary "*as patrol works some cases.*"

➤ November 29, 2021 – EAC Jones wrote on the draft circular, *"Dr. Poor, is a circular necessary since this only applies to investigations?"* and the document was sent back to EC Slinkard's Office. EC Slinkard wrote a note on the draft circular that said, *"Concur with EAC Jones – No circular needed but should be in all investigative SOPs."*

➤ November 30, 2021 – The draft circular containing the notes was time-stamped arrived in OPDG, and was never time-stamped as being routed to the Office of the Chief of Police or anywhere else in the department.[13]

➤ September 9, 2023 – Patrol officers responded to a robbery call at a Fiesta Mart on Airline Drive. As officers arrived on the scene, the suspect fled to a nearby residence, where he subsequently committed a home invasion and sexual assault. The suspect fled the scene in a stolen vehicle. The suspect left DNA evidence at the scene of the sexual assault.

➤ October 17, 2023 – HPD was notified of a Combined DNA Index System ("CODIS") hit linking the September 9, 2023, incident to a sexual assault case from 2022.[14] The hit linked DNA evidence gathered from a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner ("SANE") examination following the report of a sexual assault on September 21, 2022. The 2022 case had been suspended using the SL activity code.[15]

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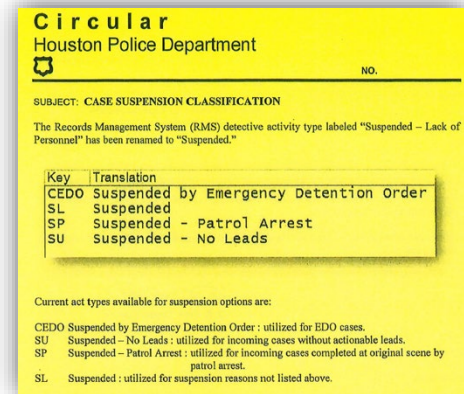
[11] Circulars are informational documents issued by the Chief of Police to announce legal matters, specific events, personnel openings, and other information that must be communicated department-wide. Circulars may also be used to announce policy or procedural changes pending the addition, update or revision of the appropriate general order or standard operating procedure.

[12] Any subsequent action taken or not taken by a member of HPD after the alleged directive by Chief Finner is the subject of the ongoing Internal Affairs Department ("IAD") investigation and not part of the review and assessment of the Committee.

[13] No documentation was found indicating these documents were ever routed to the Chief of Police for review. Additionally, no documentation was found conveying instructions to investigative divisions to include the information in the SOPs.

[14] CODIS is a computer software program that operates local, state, and national databases of DNA profiles from convicted offenders, unsolved crime scene evidence, and missing persons.

[15] Following the discovery of this suspended sexual assault case, several inquiries, audits, and investigations were set in motion via HPD Internal Affairs, Risk Management and OPDG.

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HPD DIVISIONAL ANALYSIS

The Committee initially spoke to HPD's Risk Management Division ("RMD") to gain an understanding of the overview of the flow of an incident report from civilians through division. The RMD conducts in-depth examinations and audits of functions, programs, and components of the department as directed by the Chief of Police. RMD explained that there are four main avenues where a civilian can file a police report in HPD:

> (1) A civilian calls 911, and Patrol responds to the scene and files a police report.
>
> (2) A civilian utilizes the online reporting platform, LexisNexis CopLogic System, to file a report online;[16, 17]
>
> (3) A civilian can call Teleserve at (713) 884-3131 to request a non-emergency police service which generates a police incident report; and
>
> (4) A civilian can walk into any HPD station and speak with the desk officer who will assist the

Despite how HPD receives the incident report, every report is entered into their RMS computer system, which is essentially a case management database. This is a manual entry. Based on the title [of the crime] the user chooses, the system prompts the user to ask crime-specific questions based on the National Incident-Based Reporting System ("NIBRS") when interviewing the victim and completing the report.[18] Based on the title input by the user, the system designates the "concerned" division to which the report will ultimately be routed. Once titled, there are limited ways to reclassify the incident, including supplemental reports and changes made by the HPD Records Management Division. HPD Records Management Division is a 24/7 operation consisting of civilian personnel responsible for reviewing, coding, and submitting HPD's official NIBRS crime statistics to the Department of Public Safety ("DPS") each month. Division personnel also complete many legally required processes, like providing timely responses to NCIC/TCIC inquiries,[19] vehicle tow information, and criminal history validations. These processes ensure HPD has access to the most timely and accurate crime information

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[19] LexisNexis CopLogic System

[17] This avenue for reporting is limited to certain types of crimes.

[18] NIBRS is an incident-based reporting system managed by the FBI UCR Program which collects data on each single crime occurrence. The FBI designed NIBRS to generate data as a byproduct of local, state, and federal automated records systems. The goals of NIBRS are to enhance the quantity, quality, and timeliness of crime data collected by law enforcement and to improve the methodology used for compiling, analyzing, auditing and publishing the collected crime data.

[19] NCIC stands for National Crime Information Center and it is the national database for stolen items and missing persons. TCIC is the Texas version that feeds NCIC.

needed to complete daily tasks. In the period at issue here, from 2016 to present, HPD received over 2 million police incident reports.[20]

An HPD Executive Assistant Chief manages Investigative and Special Operations, which is divided into

three separate commands: Criminal Investigations Command ("CIC"); Special Investigations Command ("SIC"); and Homeland Security Command. There are 16 divisions falling under these three commands with 11 of them primarily dedicated to conducting investigations. Patrol and some other divisions also conduct investigations to a lesser extent (i.e., Crime Suppression Teams, Differential Response Teams, Patrol Investigative Units, Airports, etc.), but this review and assessment focused on the actions taken, protocols established, and policies of the CIC and SIC specifically.

Although most investigative divisions have some form of a case management system or team to intake incident reports routed to their unit, there is no consistency between divisions. Most investigative divisions use both the RMS Case Management System and custom-built Access databases.[21] The divisional case management team typically conducts the first level of review of the incoming incident reports. This is described as a triage process. The report is either deemed worthy of possible assignment and routed to a squad sergeant or lieutenant for a second level of review, or it is suspended or inactivated. Some incident reports remain with the case management team until the facts and circumstances change, i.e., the solvability improves. HPD currently has a defined case-closing procedure. A report can either be cleared or closed. Cleared has specific outcomes that are predetermined by NIBRS, closed outcomes are created and defined by the department.[22]

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[20] This is an estimated number, mainly based on the total number of generated incident report numbers with the caveat that not every incident report number is a discrete report (e.g., traffic stops often result in an incident report number without corresponding report).

[21] Microsoft Access is a database management system produced by Microsoft and is part of the Microsoft 365 office suite.

[22] HPD has ten NIBRS clearance codes: Cleared—Arrest/Arrest other case/Death of Defendant/DA refused/Lack of prosecution/Unfounded. The clearance codes make distinctions between juveniles and adults.

In most divisions, the case management process involves both screening and investigative processes. The screening process often varies from division to division but usually involves: (1) determining whether the reports received belong to their respective division and, if not, rerouting to the correct division; (2) determining if the report is titled correctly; and (3) determining whether the elements of a crime exist as defined in the Texas Penal Code. Typically, after this screening, the case is routed for investigation and assigned to an investigator. This is done by squad supervisors who receive the reports, review them and assign them to an investigator in their squad. Caseload is always a factor for supervisors assigning cases. This is where prioritization by severity of the crime and solvability plays a role in case management. Solvability refers to the probability of solving a case with a reasonable amount of effort. Part of managing a caseload is screening out cases that cannot be solved and cases that have a very low solvability. It is important to highlight that not every crime reported is capable of being solved regardless of the number of resources committed to the investigation and not all reports of crimes can receive investigative attention. The Committee found this to be a direct result of staffing issues and technological deficiencies.

In addition to speaking with the RMD, the Committee spoke to several executive staff members to understand the expectations developed for the divisions and to determine the flow of communication throughout the department. HPD leadership created the Divisional Data Report ("DDS") to standardize and capture divisional case management information for review at the command staff level. We can determine based on DDS reports the Committee obtained, how many cases were received, assigned and cleared with the caveat that not all assigned cases are cleared as a final disposition. Some cases are inactivated, suspended or dealt with in some other manner, depending on the division.[23] Here is a snapshot of the data obtained from divisional DDS reports for 2022 and 2023:

	Division	FY2022 Total SCREENERS Assigned	FY2023 Total SCREENERS Assigned	FY2022 Total Investigators Assigned	FY2023 Total Investigators Assigned	FY2022 Total Cases Received	FY2023 Total Cases Received	FY2022 Total Cases Assigned	FY2023 Total Cases Assigned	FY2022 Total Cases Cleared	FY2023 Total Cases Cleared
1	Auto Theft	4	4	26	27	71,753	70,388	4,753	5,401	4,372	5,100
2	Homicide	2	2	100	112	15,892	15,629	3,924	1,055	7,024	9,901
3	MAFV	5	5	60	60	68,946	68,286	3,903	3,722	4,338	4,168
4	Property & Financial Crimes	5	5	66	64	94,191	96,203	2,783	2,591	1,577	1,172
5	Robbery	4	4	64	64	7,600	8,652	5,464	6,922	758	1,002
6	Special Victims	12	12	76	76	9,674	8,306	6,957	6,359	3,012	2,763
7	Vehicle Crimes	12	12	13	13	30,144	29,939	7,635	7,635	598	294
	Total	**44**	**44**	**405**	**416**	**298,200**	**297,403**	**35,419**	**33,685**	**21,679**	**24,400**

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[23] The Committee learned after speaking with the various division commanders that the data contained in the DDS reports is often unreliable and inaccurate. This is highlighted and supported by the RMS Workgroup Findings and Recommendations from 2015 (page 2) as well, but the problem persisted despite the recommendations made in that document.

After speaking with current and former assistant chiefs over the investigative divisions, it became clear that upon promotion the department provided little to no guidance on the use of DDS reports, with most chiefs acknowledging there is little substantive review of the monthly reports. Moreover, the department provides almost no training on the responsibilities of an assistant chief or the expectations in terms of managing the divisions under them. In fact, it appears safe to say that the assistant chiefs have complete autonomy to run their divisions as they see fit. This lends to inconsistency among the commands.

HPD holds weekly and monthly meetings. The Chief's office holds weekly Violent Call Recap ("VCR") meetings on Mondays, which is attended in person by the executive staff and via Teams for the commanders. This meeting focuses on the department's efforts to reduce violent crime, hearing from most patrol and investigative division commanders. Information sharing emphasizes violent crime trends, allowing the department to effectively direct its efforts. The VCR is the most structured of the meetings, with the EAC providing clear guidance on the content of the meeting and it includes a PowerPoint presentation. The Situation Report ("SitRep") follows the VCR and is limited to executive staff. This is an open-ended meeting where attendees can share information that affects departmental efforts.[24] The Senior Executive Staff meeting is held on Thursday mornings, where the Chief of Police meets with executive assistant chiefs to discuss any issues to be presented at the Executive Staff meeting or other topics that require their attention. The Executive Staff meeting includes the:

- Chief of Police,
- Executive Assistant Chiefs,
- Assistant Chiefs,
- Deputy Directors,
- Police Administrators,
- HPD Council Liaison.

This meeting has an agenda, where different topics are presented by subject matter experts or those initiating the presentation, some for purely informational purposes, but most require a decision to be made on specific projects, policy, or equipment. There is also an opportunity to open the floor to the attendees and discuss issues not on the agenda. It is common practice at executive staff and sitrep

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[24] The SitRep is a quick method for briefing, updating, and directing executive staff to a police issue. It identifies problems, prioritizes intended solutions and typically gives a basic plan for implementing a course of action.

meetings to go around the table and allow each attendee to discuss matters from their specific operations that may have department-wide implications.

CompStat takes place on the second Tuesday of every month. This is a Command Staff level meeting, meaning commanders and equivalent civilians, and above, all the way up to the Chief of Police, are typically in attendance. The format allows for specific divisions to present on various topics, allowing patrol stations and investigative divisions to discuss problems and solutions that can be shared across the board.[25] The agenda generally consists of each division providing statistical data and sharing divisional news and changes. There is no attendance or meeting minutes for any supervisor to reference later for any of these meetings. Overall, the department seems to generally be reactive in its governing structure, with several chiefs describing their expectations as "tell me what I need to know when I need to know it." However, most feedback from the attendees is that these meetings can "miss the mark" in terms of value, often because there are too many people in the room which prevents substantive discussion and involvement. Little of the substance of these meetings is shared with divisional members or the rank and file.

In order to evaluate the internal case management processes, the Committee needed to gain a full and complete understanding of HPD's case management process. To accomplish this, the Committee met with each investigative division to understand the division-specific historical process of case management. [26] This process focuses on evaluating the practices for case screening and assignment, which includes reviewing division-specific standard operating procedures ("SOPs") and actual case management practices with the goal of providing recommendations for standardization and consistency across the divisions.

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[25] CompStat is adopted from the NYPD, who started their version of this meeting decades ago, and it is often stated that the title is derived from the words "computer statistics" or "compare stats." The traditional CompStat process is to collect, analyze, and map crime data and other essential police performance measures on a regular basis, and hold police leadership accountable for their performance as measured by this data.
[26] The Committee's review focused on the following divisions: Homicide, Major Assaults/Family Violence, Property & Financial Crimes, Robbery, Special Victims, Vehicular Crimes, and Auto Theft. Gang, Narcotics, Major Offenders and Vice are proactive divisions that by default do not receive incident reports in the same manner and number as the other divisions.

Office of Planning and Data Governance ("OPDG")

ODPG plays a central role in the department and was key in understanding the database system behind the SL code use. It is clear that ODPG is understaffed and does not have access to the training necessary to best serve the department. The director of the office appeared to be the only one who could answer key questions surrounding the data and was often pulled in various ways to support the work of multiple projects in the department. The director was an asset to our review and possessed skill set to effectively analyze the data but described that there is a lack of training opportunities to build up the skill set of other personnel. ODPG noted almost immediately that there was no departmental standard when it came to case management, describing how each division independently determines how they will handle case management flow with no consistent methods to prioritize or determine solvability. ODPG was instrumental in providing the Committee with a basis of knowledge regarding the current RMS system and the various ways to dispose of a case: cleared, closed, suspended, or inactivated. ODPG noted that under prior leadership and during transitional periods in the department, the traditional mechanisms of communication and documentation changed, which disrupted everyone's understanding of policy versus practice.

The Committee learned that mistitling is a key problem that ODPG noticed immediately and "hopes" that the new RMS will provide a seamless integration with the Computer Aided Dispatch ("CAD") system, which can better address this issue.[27] The current system allows officers to enter anything without deconfliction. There appears to be a gap in training at the patrol level and this directly affects the routing of incident reports. According to ODPG, the goal of the new RMS system is to route cases more specifically, this way if it is wrong, the mistake can be found and corrected sooner. A strength of ODPG is case analytics, but the department does not use it innovatively often siloing data at the division level. There is no standard when it comes to crime analysis in the department, and there is not much collaboration with the analysts assigned to the specific divisions, if they even have one.

ODPG explained that HPD is frequently asked to provide statistics on case management statuses for various reasons. The public uses it as a productivity and accountability metric, and victims want to know

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[27] Computer-aided dispatch systems are utilized by dispatchers, call-takers, and 911 operators to prioritize and record incident calls, identify the status and location of responders in the field, and effectively dispatch responder personnel.

the status of their cases. Internally, the data is used to assess investigative performance, manpower allocations, and general management decisions. Because of the siloed nature of the divisional case management systems and differences in how the terminology is applied within the case management process, department-wide reports are difficult (if not impossible) to create. By necessity, divisions will then generate their own case management databases, terms and definitions, and reporting methodologies to the extent they are capable. This process greatly reduces the pool of individuals who understand how the reports are generated, and thereby limits ODPG's ability to provide consistent and reliable assistance. Once a consistent set of terms and definitions are applied and the case management information is recorded within a single system, ODPG is confident the division can produce case management analytics in support of the investigative divisions and have confidence in its accuracy. ODPG warned that all too often, divisions will argue that their operations are special, and they should be measured differently because of it. However, this does not serve the department's best interest to become so specialized that it cannot speak to how the department is operating as a whole.

ODPG described that as a result of staffing turnover, analytic skill, and varying levels of understanding and appreciation of what analysts can do to support divisional operations, some divisions operate without analysts for extended periods of time. A criminal intelligence analyst or staff analyst can provide analytic support and oversight to the case management process. "I think the department can only improve its analytic capabilities through hiring career professionals in the field - not just selecting someone who is interested in it and then rotating through the job for a year or two." ODPG stressed that part of growing HPD's analytic capabilities requires the department to hire to a standard skill and then provide and encourage continuing education and training for the analysts. In recent years, HPD has increased the base pay for Criminal Intelligence Analysts (CIAs) and created a Senior Criminal Intelligence Analyst classification to create room for growth. OPDG can and should be responsible for providing training for all department analysts, but there needs to be a more common understanding of the minimum skills required to be a crime analyst during the hiring phase.

Special Victims Division ("SVD")

The SVD remained a critical point of review throughout the process due to the nature of the crimes falling under this division. For those reasons, the Committee focused early on in our review on understanding the process of workflow in the division. Historically, SVD consisted of several subdivisions:

(1) Administrative Support, which housed the division's case management unit.

(2) Crimes against Children Unit ("CACU"), which housed the following subsections: Sexual Exploitation —Internet Crimes against Children ("ICAC"), Administration Unit, Intake — Case management specific to CACU, CPS Referrals, and six Investigative Squads.

(3) Adult Sex Crimes Unit ("ASCU"), which housed three (3) investigative squads.

(4) Sex Offender Registration and Compliance Unit

The department has allocated 136 positions to SVD but currently the division only has 120 actual positions, with the majority of the 16 vacancies at the officer investigator level. SVD received 8,306 incident reports in 2023. After discussions with prior SVD leadership, it became clear that some restructuring is necessary in the division. With the current staffing levels, very few, if any, misdemeanor sexually related crimes are being addressed.

The Committee met SVD Case Management team members to understand the division's historical case management process. Upon receipt of incident reports, a screener assigned to the case management unit under Administrative Support reviews the narrative content. The case management unit contained two officers and a crime analyst. One officer primarily conducted the initial screening while the other officer dealt mainly with special projects and u-visas.[28] This initial assessment served to identify the nature and severity of each report, as priority reports are brought to the designated sergeant's attention for assignment. Subsequently, the screener routes all incident reports to the designated sergeant's RMS box for further review and action. The intake sergeant for CACU and the squad sergeants for ASCU conduct a more thorough second level of review and prioritize assignments based on factors such as the severity of the offense, workable leads, available resources, and investigative urgency. This prioritization

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[28] The U nonimmigrant status ("U visa") is set aside for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity.

process ensures that incident reports are allocated to detectives within their respective regions in a manner that optimizes efficiency and responsiveness to critical incidents.

In instances where incident reports exhibited workable leads and should have been prioritized but faced constraints due to limited resources, sergeants suspended investigations using the code SL – Lack of Personnel. SVD suspended 9,106 incident reports using this suspension code. The Committee focused on the ASCU as the suspended incident reports were under this section's umbrella.[29] Part of the focus consisted of reviewing SOPs" specific to the division. The ASCU had a case assignment SOP that provided guidelines to investigative sergeants regarding prioritization, case assignment, and case management. ASCU did not have a case management squad at the time. Historically, ASCU had the capability to investigate all Priority 1 and 2 cases. Priority 1 assignments include sexual assault cases with CODIS hits, those involving a city employee, family violence related reports, elderly or mentally disabled complainants, cases with serious bodily injury, an identified suspect, or high-profile cases. Priority 2 assignments include sexual assaults with workable leads, have sexual assault kits, cases where the complainant requests follow-up, any injury, or serious misdemeanors. The prioritization outlined in the historical SOPs tended to be more general, leaving decision making on case assignment and management to the discretion of the supervisor. Part of this assessment included reviewing SOPs for lab reports and CODIS hits. Although HFSC does the majority, if not all, of the testing on SVD cases, SVD did not collaborate with them in establishing a protocol for lab testing. There appeared to be inconsistency with protocols established by HFSC compared to those, if any, by HPD.

One of the explanations presented to the Committee on why the division began to use this suspension code had to do with investigator wellness. It is no secret that these types of cases can take a toll on the assigned investigator. SVD supervisors must remain cognizant of burnout as well as other negative effects that these types of crimes have on officers. Within the law enforcement profession, those who are constantly exposed to details, images and videos of sexual abuse cope with an even greater strain on their mental health. A way to address this issue is to ensure that the investigators have a manageable caseload. However, current staffing levels will strain investigative abilities unless the caseload is shifted to a more manageable level.

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[29] As noted in the historical timeline, CACU at one point was suspending cases using the SL code but in 2018 requested additional resources to address these cases and prevent any child sex cases from being coded this way moving forward.

To SVD's credit, the division has made huge leaps in an effort to address issues in case management and case assignment including creating a new case management workflow and creating a detailed outline of the case management process. Additionally, the new commander restructured the division, adding two case management squads to ASCU each with the ability to employee one sergeant and six officers. Currently only one squad is fully staffed. A fourth investigative squad has been added to ASCU which brings additional classified staff up to 33 from 22. This brings the total number of allocated positions to 194 from 136, with actual personnel totaling 172 from 120. The division still has 22 vacancies, but the added positions have greatly improved working conditions.

Case Flow
(See SVD-ASC Case flow diagram for Visual Reference)

- Case Management Sergeant receives all ASC cases from SVD Admin Screeners in their RMS box.
- CM Sergeant adds all new cases numbers in RMS Box to Excel Case Management Workbook sorted by Date
- CM Sergeant reviews each case and color codes the cases by priority or disposes of cases needing no further action based on details of report. (RMS could potentially be used for coding/sorting cases by priority into different RMS boxes. However, the spreadsheet based system is currently in use at SVD-CACU and will be mirrored for immediate functionality in the unit)
- CM Sergeant assigns 8- cases per week to 8 intake officers, except the officer covering the FI calendar (scheduled FIs) for that week using printed Case Sheets
- Forensic Interview calendar is rotated amongst the Intake officers on a weekly basis. The officer assigned for the week will not receive any new cases from the CM sergeant but will be required to review all forensic interviews completed that week and summarize the interview for the case, making note of disclosure or non-disclosure by the complainant. If no disclosure is made or the complainant doesn't attend the FI, the intake officer will attempt to reschedule the complainant and notify the assigned officer if the case should be inactivated pending complainant cooperation.
- Intake Officer re-attempts contact to complainant, schedules FI, drops the first contact attempt supplement and creates case files for any cases moving forward.
  - responsibilities include securing all physical evidence before it is gone (videos, bank statements, photos etc.), sending preservation requests for social media, schedule FIs, and Inactivates any cases without further leads. (Inactivated cases pass to CM Lieutenant for 2nd Level Review)
  - Cases in which the complainant doesn't want to move forward or can't be contacted are Inactivated or closed lack of prosecution by the complainant and the case assignment sheet is returned to the CM sergeant for tracking/approval. If the case is INAC the tracking case number will pass to the CM Lieutenant for 2nd level approval.
  - Once and FI is completed and preliminary evidence is gathered. The case file is turned into CM sergeant along with case assignment sheet for tracking.
- CM Sergeant assigns triaged and prepared cases to Investigative Sergeants for distribution to investigative officers.
- CM sergeant additionally closes any cases lacking criminal elements for charges.
- CM officers requiring physical evidence from scenes, video retrieval, receipts, hotel registrar information etc. will share those request with the second CM Sergeant who will assign field work to the VE (video and evidence) intake officers for collection and tagging.
- Secondary Evidence Management Sergeant will manage four CM officers. Their responsibilities will include the following: Management of two officers assigned to case management intake and two officers for video and evidence collection, reviewing CODIS hits for assignment and assigning the collection/video retrieval by the two VE intake squad officers dedicated to field work. Additionally, manage two of the case management intake officers to reduce the span of supervisory control for the intake case management sergeant.
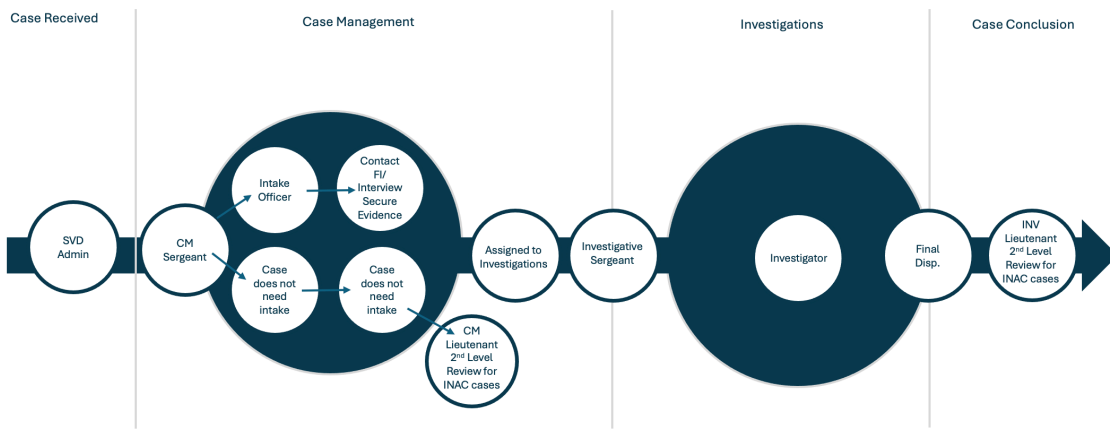
SVD Adult Sex Crime Case Flow

Proposed case flow adds case management to the downstream of case progression

Despite an increase in staffing, a systemic problem still exists in that HPD has been unable to recruit or retain sufficiently experienced investigators. Over the past eight years, SVD has experienced an exodus of highly trained and experienced investigators. HPD's lack of an available pool of experienced investigators to hire from, coupled with the department and the city's inability to increase staffing levels, have exacerbated the problem. As a result, HPD replacements for adult sex crimes have been far less experienced, with many having never previously served in a specialized investigative role, which is required for SVD. The unit would greatly benefit from a crime analyst as well. In the competitive workforce environment, HPD has struggled to keep crime analysts for lack of competitive pay and benefits. SVD would benefit from a contact squad comprised of either classified, civilian, or a combination of both. Much of the investigative work in these cases requires constant communication with victims and witnesses in a trauma-informed way. A unit of individuals that focuses on this aspect of the investigation and provides this specific type of investigative support would increase the movement of cases and potential solvability and/or acceptance from the district attorney's office.

The Committee took the opportunity to directly discuss potential limitations in each division beyond case management. SVD noted that the ICAC unit needs additional resources to address the large uptick in incoming reports. HPD receives cases related to the online exploitation of children via the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children ("NCMEC") as part of the department's conditions for receiving a federal grant to oversee the Houston-Metro Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force ("HM-ICAC"). This grant program is coordinated through the Department of Justice - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and establishes a nationwide network of ICAC Task Forces to investigate and combat these types of crimes. In the past 5 years the HM-ICAC went from receiving just over 5,000 cases in 2019 to just almost 23,000 cases last year. These reports come from NCMEC and are not always indicative of a crime in our area per say, just that there was some component of the crime being related to the Houston area. These cases from NCMEC are routed through a 3rd party database through the ICAC network and are not reports that are done directly to HPD. The overwhelming vast majority of these crimes are automated reports detected through various means by online technology companies. The HPD ICAC Unit, in its role as lead agency of the HM-ICAC, is responsible for the triage of any cases related to the online exploitation of children that occur in Harris County or any of the seven physically surrounding counties (Montgomery, Waller, Fort Bend, Brazoria, Galveston, Chambers, Liberty).

These cases come in with limited location information and require a non-insignificant amount of investigative effort just to determine where they occur before they can be assigned out. Once the jurisdiction is determined, ICAC then assigns it out to one of a few dozen investigators around the Houston area. These crimes include things like online solicitation, sharing of child sex abuse material ("CSAM"), signs of grooming, or even children online threatening self-harm. The vast majority of the cases are related to individuals uploading CSAM to the various online platforms. When these cases are detected, the clock starts on how long law enforcement must submit legal request to the online companies. For many internet service providers (Comcast, Verizon, T-Mobile, etc.), law enforcement has a 90-day window to submit a subpoena for records to determine who and where the crime occurred. After the 90-day window, the companies no longer have account and location information on an IP address, and ICAC is no longer able to determine jurisdiction or verify the identity of the suspect in these cases. If ICAC cannot determine that the event occurred in one of the counties, they lose legal jurisdiction to file warrants in these cases. HPD estimates that approximately 19,000 cyber tips were inactivated in this unit despite 80% of the cases having workable leads because of staffing limitations linked to the strict time restraint.[30]

Divisional leadership was candid about their frustrations. Leadership described the lengthy process of creating the monthly DDS report and explained that the goal was to show resources needed and areas that were suffering. However, there have been no substantive conversations about the monthly reports, and it is unclear whether or not and to what extent, if any, these DDS reports are discussed with the assistant chiefs and higher. Additionally, some SVD leadership emphasized the struggle they experience when presenting cases for prosecutorial review. It was reported that often times cases are declined or sent back for investigative follow up. HPD expressed frustration with the pressure of having to present a trial ready case prior to arrest authorization with their limited staffing. They often struggled with explaining the process to victims who were unfamiliar with the local criminal justice system.

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[30] The 19,000 figure are individual reports from electronic companies and do not reflect individual events or incidents. For example, if someone uploads 100 illicit images to Microsoft Reverse Image search, Microsoft will send ICAC those 100 "reports" from that single IP address, even if they all occur within seconds of one another.

Major Assault/Family Violence Division ("MAFV")

MAFV division suspended the most incident reports using the SL – lack of manpower suspension code, 110,832 since 2016. This resulted from a variety of factors going beyond a large staffing shortage. This investigative division became the catch-all division after its creation and split from homicide. Currently, the division investigates 106 different types of designated crimes from aggravated assault to violation of a protective order. Based on the May 2024 division organizational chart, the MAFV has an authorized 111 classified employee allocation but of this, there are ten classified vacancies. In addition to this, five classified officers are not reporting to duty for approved reasons. This brings the classified strength to 96. The division is allocated 16 civilian positions but five are currently vacant. MAFV is comprised of various squads and units with specialized functions for administration, case support, crime scene, and follow-up investigations. There are two main units, family violence and major assaults, which are further broken down into geographical squads for family violence and shifts (day, evening, and night) for major assaults. There are also admin/support and case management teams. Almost every squad or team currently has a vacancy. MAFV division received 68,286 incident reports in 2023, which is approximately 5690 reports each month. In addition to case management, the case management team is responsible for fielding telephone calls, dealing with walk-ins, and property dispositions. The case management unit is comprised of one sergeant and four police officers. Each of the four officers is tasked with reviewing a specific set of incident reports based on the type of crime. Case management officers forward incident reports based on title only to either family violence or major assault (felony reports only). If the report title does not fit into these two categories, the case management officer keeps the report in their own queue for disposition—Suspended no leads, suspended patrol arrest, or *historically* suspended lack of manpower. [31] The cases that remain in the case management queue, remain for investigation and/or everything that might entail. Most misdemeanors in this division remain here until disposed of. When a case is transferred to a family violence or major assault supervisor, this sergeant or lieutenant then reads the narrative of the report and assesses whether it should be assigned or otherwise disposed of.

Divisional leadership stressed the need for more staff, including both classified and civilians. Increased staffing in the case management unit would allow the team to actually review each incoming incident

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[31] Suspended no leads (SU) includes all primary and secondary cases that do not have workable leads and do not include enough information to conduct a criminal investigation. Suspended patrol arrest (SP) includes all primary and secondary cases routed to a concerned division in which patrol has made an arrest and the concerned division will not take any additional action.

report substantively and then assign out only those deemed for investigation based on priority and solvability. MAFV does not currently have a contact squad and the case management team absorbed all these duties, including maintaining complainant contact, drafting complainant correspondence which includes emails and letters, etc. MAFV has a property disposition unit with two classified employees responsible for handling and disposing of over 100,000 items of property which includes handling court orders to release property. The division noted that by necessity, the incoming felony reports have no first level of review by case management and instead are forwarded to the squads for review due to the backlog in simply reading the reports. They noted that the same thing happens for all family violence cases as well. The case management unit receives hundreds of new cases daily to review. The volume of cases received by the division requires a much larger case management unit than other investigative divisions. An increased staffing level would better support the workload, allow for more timely review of cases, and increase the quality of case review and assignment. MAFV does not currently have a video unit nor the staffing to create one. The division has an extremely large number of offenses where video is key to solving the crime. Additionally, investigators spend large amounts of time retrieving case-related video which takes time away from actually investigating the case.

Narrowing the division's focus seemed to be a critical need of the division. Leadership noted that the night shift, which is made up of 17 classified members, does not carry a caseload because doing so would drive up overtime costs and opined that a restructuring might be best for the division. Most critical investigative steps must be done during business hours. Leadership suggested that the division move to an on-call system or let homicide respond to calls during the night shift. The division also described the sometimes strained relationships with HCDAO and hopes that additional collaboration will help develop more efficient protocol. MAFV leadership described that during COVID, the division was allowed to seek warrants by email, which helped the division more efficiently handle some of their cases, but unfortunately, that practice has been discontinued.

Property & Financial Crimes Division ("P&FC")

The P&FC division is organized into three groups: (1) Admin/Support, (2) Property Crimes, and (3) Cyber/Financial Crimes. The Admin/Support Group is made up of an administrative unit, a clerical unit, a training/IAD/quality control unit, property/alarm/pawn detail and a case management unit. The

Property Crimes group is further subdivided into geographical squads as well as an organized crime unit and a metal theft unit. The Cyber/Financial Crimes group is divided into three financial crime squads, a cyber fraud task force (housed at the Federal building on Allen Parkway), a white-collar crimes task force and a cyber fraud unit. The P&FC division received 96,203 incident reports in 2023. They currently have 24 vacant positions at the investigator level, including four vacant civilian positions. All incoming cases are screened initially by the case management squad, which has five officers, one EPRO position, and one sergeant. [32] This breaks down to approximately 8000 incident reports per month or 2000 incident reports per week for this team to review. Approximately 83% of the reports received are property crimes and the remaining 17% are cybercrimes.

At the first level of review, the case management team suspends approximately 75-80% of cases, either suspended no leads or suspended based on a patrol arrest. When asked why the team does not close out the case as opposed to suspending it, they explained that in order to close or clear a case, RMS requires the case to first be assigned to an investigator. So, despite knowing at the outset that no one in the division will "touch" the case again, it is suspended because the case management unit does not have the administrative bandwidth to close it out, which requires a supplement for every step. The team then applies the solvability factors specific to the division, and based on that analysis, approximately 20-25% of the remaining cases are referred to a squad for assignment. This referral triggers a second level of review by the squad supervisor before being assigned to an investigator. Approximately 10-15% of these cases are then suspended based on priority, solvability factors, felonies vs. misdemeanors, dollar amounts, serial nature, potential for violence/sex crimes, media interest, etc. P&FC division indicated that to provide for a more thorough screening and additional supplementing; the division would need additional staffing including civilians in a new contact squad to make initial contact with complainants and follow-up after case disposition. Based on calculations done by the division and RMD, P&FC would need approximately 80-160 additional investigators to assign all cases with at least one workable lead or solvability factor. The average investigator carries a caseload of 14 open cases and is assigned 2-5 new workable cases per week.

When asked about additional challenges beyond staffing, the Division noted they often lose good detectives to promotions, and based on department policy, officers who are promoted cannot return to

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[32] Employment Program for Retired Officers or EPRO is a temporary personnel services that employs retired police officers.

the division for at least one year according to HPD General Order ("GO") 300-02 Transfers of Classified Personnel.[33] They went on to express that they need the new RMS and OPDG to provide accurate, centralized, standardized, and accessible metrics on HPD operations (i.e., management reports and real-time dashboards) instead of manually running multiple reports inside and outside RMS and entering data for the monthly DDS in excel. They believe this report should be developed and managed by OPDG. P&FC leadership expressed frustration with the usefulness of DDS reports in its current form and noted that leadership outside the division has "never" asked a question about the data in the monthly report. The division also shared challenges they encounter when attempting to obtain prosecutorial approval for charges but at times prosecutors decline charges or only accept serious or violent felonies due to extenuating circumstances. P&FC Commander went on to discuss some frustrations with the inability to use available technology to improve the handling of cases. According to the Commander, one program specifically, LeadsOnline Real Time Crime System, would greatly help the case management team by utilizing the RMS records and leads nationally to help solve cases and comes with a relatively low annual license cost.[34] He was advised that the product has "been approved," but no funding is available. Division leadership ended by stating, "without significant increases in investigative staffing, the division will need guidance from command and a disposition code for cases that might have leads but are not able to be prioritized to be worked."

Vehicular Crimes Division ("VCD")

The subdivisions of VCD are organized based on shift: day, evening, and night. There are three Crash Investigation subdivisions, one for each shift. There are four crash investigation squads on the day shift, five squads on the evening shift, and six squads on the night shift. There are two crash reconstruction squads. There is a Hit and Run subdivision that has two hit-and-run squads. There is also a Crash Admin subdivision that deals with divisional case management. The case management unit has one sergeant and seven officers. The assigned sergeant handles both administrative and case management responsibilities.[35] Two officers (of the 7) are tasked with case screening. These officers spend most of

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[33] This GO explicitly notes that at the rank of Commander, transfers are at the discretion of the Chief of Police based on the needs of the department and implicitly excludes the needs or wants of the member.

[34] LeadsOnline's Real-Time System leverages national pawn ticket information and third-party sources to provide intelligence information for detectives. It also aids in identifying stolen property. It is a computer program running in the background that can help improve solvability.

[35] The unit gained an additional officer who joined the case screening team in April of 2024.

their time reviewing the incoming reports and then routing them to the appropriate division for follow-up. In addition to case screening, this team creates case files for police-involved and fatality crashes to aid the assigned investigator. The case screening team also creates supplements as necessary in their review, as well as reviews all body-worn cameras, which helps verify the extent of injuries or damages. This analysis ultimately helps with the proper classification and routing of the reports. Two different officers are designated as the contact team and are tasked with contacting complainants and handling all incoming calls from civilians and victims. These officers also create supplements as necessary. The three remaining members of the unit handle records retention, expunction requests, timekeeping, budget and finance, fleet, mail, technology needs, divisional statistics and crime analysis.

Cases are sorted and prioritized by type (Fatal, Fatal FSRA, Fleet, FSGI, Investigation VSD) and then by the severity of the injury, if there was confirmed damage, vehicle evidence (plate or video), if the suspect is able to be identified, and if the complainant is willing to pursue charges. Case management directly assigns fleet and fatal crashes to the primary VCD officer from the scene. Case management also monitors the hit-and-run email for incoming vehicle damage estimates. Upon receiving the estimates, inactive Failure to Stop and Give Information ("FGSI") reports are assigned to a hit-and-Run sergeant who will review for possible assignment. Case management will send reports to the contact squad to obtain additional information not included in the report. The contact squad will also attempt to confirm injuries for Failure to Stop and Render Aid ("FSRA") reports. They also send postcards through the mail for FSGI reports to obtain vehicle damage estimates. Cases will be inactivated pending the complainant submitting this estimate. The contact squad also fields calls for the Hit and Run unit.

The VCD was the third highest division to use the SL code, suspending 40,661 reports since 2016. The Committee observed from a review of the data, that FSGI related offenses made up the bulk of the reports totaling 38,817 or approximately 95%.

RMS Offense	Count of Incident
Failure To Stop and Give Information (FSGI)	5
FSGI-Damage under$1000 or Private Property	7,498
FSGI-Full Plate and Able to ID Suspect	11,506
FSGI-No Full Plate or Unable to ID Suspect	19,808
Grand Total	38,817

FGSI (and FSRA) reports are prioritized by the type of harm caused during the collision, whether its property damage or injury to a person. Criminal punishments range from a C misdemeanor up to a second-degree felony depending on whether the collision resulted in death, serious bodily injury, or just property damage. The bulk of these incident reports are created for insurance purposes. More often than not, once the complainant makes the report, there was little expectation for HPD to take additional investigative action. However, this does not change the number of resources necessary to review and come to this conclusion.

The VCD received 29,939 incident reports in 2023, and approximately 7900 were assigned for investigation. VCD currently has 13 investigators who receive between 20-30 cases per month. Division leadership and RMD opined that with only 13 investigators, it would take nineteen years to fully clear out a year's worth of cases. This is where prioritization becomes vital to the function of the division. The VCD Commander noted that his division would benefit from civilian hires, but the process to do so is too lengthy and frustrating. Civilians could greatly contribute to the various administrative tasks necessary to support the investigation. When asked about the DDS reports required monthly, VCD described a time-consuming process that often had no benefit.

Auto Theft Division ("ATD")

The ATD is organized into five units: (1) Support Services, (2) Houston Auto Crimes Task Force 1, (3) Houston Auto Crimes Task Force 2, (4) Incoming Case Investigations, and (5) Auto Dealers Detail. The Support Services Unit is further divided into two subunits: Investigative Services and Case Management. Investigative Services is a six-member squad made up of a lieutenant, a sergeant, two police officers, a crime analyst and a civilian data entry operator. The lieutenant oversees the confidential informant files and funds. The officers handle the budget, fleet and technology responsibilities as well as screen and triage evidentiary videos. The sergeant handles all administrative duties, including divisional in-service training, policy and procedure updates, manpower allocation, budget, inventory control, property conversion, fleet coordination, and special projects. The civilian operator assists with administrative paperwork related to property hearings. Additionally, the unit has one EPRO who assists with screening and triaging evidentiary videos.

The Case Management squad handles case review and screening of all incoming cases, all incoming telephone calls from officers and civilians, crime tips, walk-in customers and reception duties. They are also responsible for investigating and disposing of evidentiary property as well as researching and completing divisional No Probable Cause reports. The Case Management Squad currently has one Sergeant, a Senior Police Officer, two Police Officers, and three Senior Public Service Officers (civilians). There is a vacancy for a Senior Public Service Officer (civilian) position in case management. This four-member case management team was tasked to review over 70,000 incident reports in 2023. This process consists of reviewing and triaging all cases for solvability factors. The team then reassigns cases with solvability factors to the appropriate unit or sergeant for follow-up and/or assignment. They must also correct improperly titled reports and reroute them to the appropriate division if necessary. In addition to this, they must:

- Assign cases to themselves and clear when appropriate
- Make contact with businesses or complainants when necessary to solicit additional information to determine case solvability
- Review and handle all divisional emails
- Ensure completeness and submission of all demand letter documents before the case is assigned[36]

The ATD Commander noted that manpower allocation to the division had been reduced but the number of incoming cases continues to rise. As a result of inadequate staffing, there is a significant number of investigations that cannot be addressed. Currently, the department has allocated 71 positions to ATD, with 67 actually staffed.

Crime analysis is crucial in a division with a large volume of cases and the division would greatly benefit from an additional crime analyst position. The Commander described how all investigative divisions would benefit from a HFSC dashboard to track divisional requests. She also requested more collaborative training with HFSC to ensure evidence collection, submissions, and interpretations are being handled according to the latest standards. The division also struggles from a lack of video analytics, especially since the division receives approximately 1300-1400 items of video annually, and only one member is tasked to review the video. Video analytic software would vastly improve efficiency and reduce video backlog, but the division was told there is no budget for it. The ATD Commander

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[36] The District Attorney requires that prior to accepting an auto theft case, the owner of the vehicle write a letter to the person in possession of their vehicle and demand for its return.

highlighted several duties that could be accomplished via an increased civilian staff, including property dispositions, administrative tasks and evidence retrieval. "Civilians are an invaluable asset to the Auto Theft Division," but noted the process to hire civilians is long and time consuming. That, coupled with the low pay offered by HPD to civilians, is a "roadblock to hiring quality applicants." She went onto suggest an increase in EPROs as a valuable resource in terms of their law enforcement experience. In a division like ATD, when there is a high volume of cases coming in, case management is such a vital role. Currently, there are 15 investigators in the incoming cases squad and each has approximately 15 cases at all times. Overall, the division would benefit from additional officers in the case management unit which would support a more thorough review of cases in the daily queue and provide the necessary quality control measures to ensure due diligence. The division would also benefit from a contact squad with civilian hires. This does not include the necessary additional staffing needed for the investigative units to address the 70k incoming incident reports yearly.

Homicide Division

The Homicide division appears to be the most staffed of all investigative divisions, with 184 allocated positions and 165 actual positions. Homicide is subdivided into Admin/Cold Case/Case Management, Special Investigations, five-day shift squads with one housing missing persons, two evening shift squads, and one night shift squad. The division received 15,629 incident reports in 2023. There are two officers assigned to case management tasked with reviewing incoming cases daily and routing them to the proper squad. In addition to reviewing incident reports, the case management team handles walk-ins, answers phone calls, disposes of property, deals with expunction orders, OLO case importation, and translations services, amongst other investigative support services.[37] The Homicide division suspended 6,570 cases using the suspension code lack of manpower but none of the reports involved homicide and all stemmed directly from the creation of the MAFV division in 2018, which had previously been housed within Homicide. The Homicide division also expressed a need for a contact squad comprised of both classified and civilian personnel and noted that additional civilians would greatly increase a case's solvability. The division also needs increased staffing for video retrieval. The division

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[37] For approximately 30 years prior to the launch of the current Tiburon Records Management System in 2014, HPD used the OnLine Offenses ("OLO") records management system referred to by the acronym "OLO". The software was built in house by HPD and was mainframe-based.

currently has only one video retrieval employee who assists detectives with retrieving and editing surveillance footage, and. An increase to the case management team would allow the officers to review and clear the primary homicide queue daily, including filling out necessary supplements.

Homicide described frustrations with the current RMS system, which forced them to suspend certain types of cases like natural deaths instead of outright closing them, explaining that the administrative work required to close out a case as opposed to suspend it required too much manpower. Before a case is "closed," the system requires it to be assigned to an actual investigator, which in turn requires it to be first assigned to an investigative supervisor. Each of these steps requires a supplement to be completed. So, although, a natural death typically requires no investigative action, the division simply suspends it no leads because that is the most efficient method to deal with the report. The division also noted that they use a companion database called Sequel, which houses the official UCR murder stats.[38] The current RMS system is unable to capture this data in a reliable way.

Robbery Division

The Robbery division did not use the SL code. However, the Committee found it important to speak with the division to get a better understanding of how and why they were able to manage their workload without suspending cases due to a lack of manpower. The Robbery division is divided into several subdivisions: Admin, Case Management, Investigative Support Unit, twelve squads based on geographical location, two Violent Offender squads, an FBI Task Force, and a Bank squad. The division received 8,652 incident reports in 2023 and assigned 6,922 of them to an investigator. To assist in case management, the Robbery division classifies cases in the following ways:

(1) Work case—cases with a workable lead, or a high-profile case.

(2) Pending case—cases involving stolen vehicles that have not been recovered or recovered but the Complainant has not been notified yet and no other leads, and cases with possible video leads.

(3) Office case—cases involving some type of relationship with the complainant and suspect, or property ownership is in question, or something else that makes prosecution more difficult.

(4) Contact case—cases with no current leads.

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[38] The Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR) generates reliable statistics for use in law enforcement and is operated by the FBI.

(5) Monitor case—cases where an officer from another division wants to work the case with guidance from a robbery sergeant.

The division has four case managers who review every case in their assigned district and classify the cases using the above monikers. If the case warrants assignment, they are then routed to the appropriate squad. The Robbery division commander highlighted the importance of the contact squad or investigative support squad and noted that the contact cases used to be assigned to the civilians in that squad until budget cuts cost the division those positions. As a result, many of those cases are suspended-no leads now. Division leadership described the department as having zero training on how to be a supervisor at higher levels. At one point, there was a "sergeant's school," but even that training had mainly HR-related training and nothing specific to managing a team of investigators with high caseloads.

Other Divisions

Major Offenders

The Major Offenders division is responsible for the investigation of highly specialized and often unique types of criminal activity that fall outside the scope of other investigative divisions. The division's cases are predominantly related to felony offenses and involve habitual or career offenders. When speaking with division leadership, case management was not identified as a weakness. Instead, budget limitations were highlighted noting that the general budget for the division does not include sufficient funds to cover divisional overtime needs. There are several squads that must cover after-hour callouts and the current contract requires classified personnel to be paid at the double time overtime rate. The budget does not allow the division to conduct reactive investigations after hours, nor does it allow for the pursuit of more proactive initiatives after hours. Additionally, the division does not have access to updated technology that would help with their investigations.

Major Offenders closed out 4954 reports using the suspended lack of manpower code with the majority of them being cases handled by BARC, the City of Houston department tasked with handling animal abuse and dangerous animal enforcement.[39]

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[39] *See* **HPD GO 600-43 Animal Bites**

Narcotics

Narcotics is a reactive division where most incident reports are generally self-generated and rarely come from patrol. The few SL related incident reports had more to do with reports where the division was "tagged" either because of a property issue or as a secondary offense. Leadership explained that those reports should have been closed out after review, but there was no applicable code for a process like that. They are unable to close out the report due to the constraints of RMS, so they suspend instead. The department has a policy that whenever drugs are vouchered as part of an incident report or an arrest, then the narcotics division must be tagged, and the incident report comes into their case management for review. The division's case management team consists of a two-person team of EPRO employees. Narcotics staff their own property room as well, which helps them in terms of chain of custody. Divisional leadership noted that since the Harding Street incident, the division has created multiple levels of oversight requiring consistent supervisory review of most investigative actions taken by members of the unit.

Vice

The mission of the Vice Division is to suppress human trafficking, human smuggling, prostitution, illegal gambling, and the enforcement of alcohol and tobacco and sexually oriented businesses. The suppression of illegal vice-related activity is accomplished through proactive and reactive investigations, utilizing intelligence gathering capabilities, surveillance, confidential informants, interviews, criminal analysis, and undercover operations. The department has allocated 72 positions to the division, but currently only 65 positions are filled, including four civilians. The Vice division is broken into an Administrative unit, a General Vice unit with six squads, and a Human Trafficking unit with three squads. The Administrative unit is comprised of mainly classified members and their duties consist of timekeeping, training, maintenance of CI funds and files; staffing, processing of division purchases, fleet and equipment; and regular budget reporting. The division has a one-person case management team, and this person essentially acts as a router. The squad lieutenant is tasked with actually screening the reports substantively and makes the ultimate decision on assignment. Division leadership expressed interest in having a civilian contact squad saying, "[the unit] would support investigations by helping with all the administrative functions related to investigations including subpoenas, video, drafting of warrants, obtaining 911 calls..." He also stressed the importance of maintaining a rapport with the victim, which could be a function of this civilian contact squad. The commander emphasized that continuity of operations is very important, and leadership is often hesitant to employ civilians because

they are usually the first to go during budget cuts. Leadership agreed that many classified members of the division are primarily doing administrative functions.

Vice has identified some areas of weakness in the division, including limited staffing, limited training opportunities, insufficient funding and equipment, and insufficient intelligence analysis capabilities. The staffing issue forces the squads to regularly combine resources, resulting in forced prioritization that does not always serve the needs of the public. Prior to 2022, patrol tactical units were authorized to conduct limited street prostitution in their areas, which significantly helped the division, but that was eliminated, and Vice became completely responsible without an additional allocation of manpower. The division lacks the tools and training to develop its cyber/digital intelligence capabilities which adversely impacts the advancement of human trafficking investigations as HCDAO is reluctant to prosecute cases without sufficient corroboration of cyber/digital evidence. Generally, technology is under resourced in the division. They lack the training, equipment, and dedicated staffing to efficiently use the Cell Bright programs or data mining technology that would support their investigations.[40] The commander also noted that there is little interfacing with the division's crime analysis and ODPG. The division spoke of a prior strained relationship with the district attorney but acknowledged that with recent leadership changes both divisions are working towards a more collaborative relationship. Human trafficking is quickly becoming one of the most profitable criminal activities in the world. Division leadership supports a reorganization that supports the increased focus on human trafficking.

HPD Support Operations

Training

HPD Support Operations houses the Training unit of HPD. All personnel in HPD have yearly training mandates. Classified employees are required to take a minimum of 33 hours yearly, and civilian personnel are required to take a minimum of 14 hours yearly. In addition, classified and civilian supervisors are required to take the yearly Supervisory Mandatory training. The Supervisory Mandatory is a 16-hour training that changes each year, and the topics are decided by the Chief with input from the

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[40] Cellebrite is a cell phone forensic software that assists law enforcement agencies in extracting various types of data from cell phones, including call logs, text messages, emails, images, videos, and app data. This data can be crucial in establishing suspects' activities and communication patterns.

training department. The yearly training typically includes some leadership and mindfulness training in addition to legal updates and various tactical skills training. The training unit confirmed that HPD does not currently have any case management specific training. HPD does not offer any non-mandatory supervisory training options but noted that there may be specialized training outside the department that employees may request. There is also training conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum ("PERF") called Senior Management Institute for Police ("SMIP") training held each summer for members of the executive staff, commanders, and civilian equivalents chosen by the Training department. SMIP is a program that provides senior police executives with intensive training in the latest management concepts and practices. The training department described "Sergeant's school" as a program that trains personnel on supervisory-related tasks. It noted that they used to have a "lieutenant's school," but the department has been unable to find suitable trainers.

Divisional leaders create DDS reports and additional reports referred to as 30/60/90-day reports. Policy dictates that any case assigned to an investigator requires a supplement at least every 30 days. This policy was created shortly after HPD launched an internal investigation in 2014 involving the homicide division. However, as case levels increased, expectations for completing these supplements slipped in some divisions. A review of the incident reports reveals that this expectation is no longer consistent among the divisions or as heavily mandated as it was initially. The Committee was unable to find any department-facilitated training for supervisors on the creation of DDS reports or 30/60/90-day reports utilized by the investigative divisions. The Committee reviewed an SVD PowerPoint training presentation, which referenced these reports and recommended each investigative unit supervisor "should have or develop" a monthly report that compiles cases that have not been supplemented in over 30 days. This is a management tool that will highlight cases that need a supplement from investigators. The Committee presumed that this type of oversight is left for each separate division to create protocols around.

Employee Services Division ("ESD")
HPD Support Operations houses the Employee Services Division of HPD. The ESD is human resources for the police department. The ESD acknowledged the complaints of the various division commanders and agreed that the process for hiring civilians is cumbersome. ESD explained that because of the sensitive nature of working in law enforcement, even as a civilian, the department has taken a position that the hiring process cannot be automated in the same kinds of ways as other city departments. This

means, "We still use snail mail." Additionally, the former administration required that every employee change, whether it was for a hire, a promotion or a transfer, had to go through the Mayor's office for ultimate approval personally. This is on top of the multiple layers of divisional approvals that are required throughout the hiring process. Members of ESD were aware of many instances where the applicant discontinued the process because of the length of time it took.

The ESD noted that the department did not follow a career path structure, which is a disservice to the employees both classified and civilian. ESD emphasized that having defined job families would benefit the personnel and the department, but specified there has been no substantive change in the hiring structure because all the necessary stakeholders are not brought to the table during discussions; therefore, little is accomplished. For civilians specifically, ESD explained that there is no path to promotion. If a civilian employee wanted a raise, they would have to apply for a different position in the department. "Civilians have not received raises in 20 years. I'm not counting the HOPE increase—when you are making $15/hour, 3% doesn't mean that much to you."[41] According to ESD, This is where the department feels the impact of staleness, and divisional leaders noted it is hard to attract civilian employees with uncompetitive pay and benefits and no path for growth. "Our civilians are still choosing to stay, despite all of this. Their value is being overlooked."

Victim Services Division ("VCD")

HPD Support Operations houses the Victim Services Division of HPD. The VSD is an investigative support unit that helps all victims of crime get the trauma-informed care they need, resources for coping with being the victim of a crime and help navigating the criminal justice system. The department allocated 57 personnel to the division but currently there are seven vacancies.

VSD becomes involved as advocates in four different ways:

    (1) The Domestic Abuse Response Team ("DART") gets called to the scene of a violent crime, either domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide, or another aggravated crime. The request is typically made at the assistant chief level. The advocate engages with the victim and follows up as needed. This follow-up is typically captured in an RMS supplement.

    (2) VSD runs a daily Serious Bodily Injury ("SBI") report to look for victims. The current RMS is antiquated and does not allow patrol to "check a box" for victim services so incident reports are

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[41] HOPE is a union that represents City of Houston municipal employees.

not automatically routed for follow-up. To combat this, the division's case management team runs daily reports to identify victims of crimes for follow-up.

(3) MAFV's family violence units assign reports to VSD for follow-up. VSD is acting as the division's contact squad. If contact is made, the advocate writes a supplement and returns it to the family violence unit for assignment.

(4) Walk-ins.

VSD explained that the limitations of the current RMS have a real impact on the functioning of the division, and they have not been included in many of the discussions regarding the impending new RMS. RMS does not allow VSD to work a case simultaneously as an investigative division, which interferes with VSD's case management in terms of tracking cases that need work to be done or are completed. The impact of this limitation means that many times some of the neediest victims do not get the services they need because there is no efficient way to refer them to victim services with the current technology of the department. Divisional leadership stressed the need to reorganize the division outside of the Training and Support Command which would ensure that VSD had a seat at the table regarding Command staff and Executive Staff meetings and discussions. Additionally, leadership stressed the importance of formulating a process that would better serve the needs of crime victims. Currently, the department inconsistently uses victim services, and many officers do not understand that VSD is an integral part of the department, "They are collectively not capitalizing on the division's capabilities." Leadership further emphasized that acceptance by HCDAO requires trauma-informed policing, and VSD is vital to this across the department.

Outside Agencies

Houston Forensic Science Center ("HFSC")

The Committee's initial meeting with HFSC centered on sexual assault incident reports that had a CODIS hit but were in suspended status. HFSC emphasized that a CODIS hit is exclusively investigatory, not evidentiary, and thus requires additional law enforcement action. Historically, CODIS hit notifications were emailed to two general email boxes in the SVD. A review of the historical SOPs confirmed that the division had an outlined process for handling CODIS hits; however, this process was not strictly followed or enforced. HFSC noted that although the SOP specifically refers to their agency, they did not

participate in the creation of the protocol or drafting of the SOP and believes that this could be a contributing factor to the gaps that were discovered during the SL investigation. HFSC recommended increased HPD engagement not just with SVD but with other investigative divisions, explaining, "Investigators may not know what they need to do next." For example, when there is a CODIS hit on a case, the investigator must obtain a buccal swab for comparison and confirmation, but this was not happening. HFSC further explained that CODIS hits have not been tracked efficiently on both sides and HFSC is working on ways to streamline the process.

Later conversations with HFSC focused on property dispositions and property management when a case goes to trial or undergoes any type of adjudication. This went hand in hand with many of the frustrations that divisional leadership discussed with classified personnel being tasked with administrative duties surrounding the disposition of property and the cumbersome nature of it. HFSC is set to take full control of HPD's property division which should free up work at the divisional level and make property dispositions more efficient but in order for this to work most effectively, additional collaboration is necessary to create a protocol around property dispositions. HFSC leadership noted that they are not being included in the conversations regarding the new RMS and their voice is necessary as a stakeholder, particularly around property and evidence. HFSC also stressed the importance of collaborative training with both patrol and investigative divisions when it comes to evidence collection.

Harris County District Attorney's Office ("HCDAO")

The HCDAO is responsible for the prosecution of all crimes occurring in Harris County and thus within the confines of the City of Houston. HCDAO played a critical role in the internal HPD SL investigation, reviewing the investigations, drafting warrants, presenting cases to grand juries, and ultimately prosecuting cases to conclusion. The Committee met with members of HCDAO, including District Attorney Kim Ogg ("Ogg") and discussed the pattern of suspending cases in HPD. This discussion focused on sexual assault-related crimes although general expectations of HPD were discussed as well. When presented with frustrations from HPD regarding having to "present a trial- ready case," HCDAO leadership empathized with the frustrations but cited SB 111 regarding discovery procedures and backlogs faced internally as well.[42] Leadership explained that expecting all significant pieces of evidence initially ultimately serves the victim best because witnesses and evidence weaken as cases age, but also emphasized that exceptions could be made. HCDAO seemed open and supported creating a more

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[42] *See* **SB0011**

collaborative relationship with HPD, which included trainings that would help officers understand the basis for HCDAO's expectations when it comes to case presentations and the authorization of arrests. Leadership also opined whether the frequent rotating of commanders contributed to a gap in information and continuity but hoped that all leadership, including command staff and executive leadership, would participate in cofacilitated trainings. HCDAO made the following recommendations (non-exhaustive):

- A team of on-call detectives should physically go out to the scene and any related scenes for all acute sexual assault cases.

- These detectives should thoroughly document the scene, any secondary scenes, and collect all relevant evidence. Patrol officers often do not possess the requisite skill set to make these determinations.

- All victims should participate in a forensic interview and/or an in-person video-recorded trauma-informed interview with an advocate.

- The suspect should be contacted, and every effort should be made to conduct a suspect interview and obtain a buccal swab if necessary whether by consent or search warrant.

- Detectives should conduct background checks on the suspects and seek out information about social media accounts, previous calls for service, sex offender registration, etc.

HCDAO understood and empathized with the need for additional resources and staffing and shared real-life repercussions of not heeding the department's call for resources, describing recent lower court case law that held that "pre-indictment delay violates due process."

The Houston Area Women's Center ("HAWC")

HAWC is a community-based nonprofit organization in the city of Houston and provides comprehensive services to survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and sex trafficking 24/7/365. Services to survivors range from crisis intervention to long-term healing and empowerment. Crisis intervention includes safety planning, hospital accompaniment, emergency housing, and access to resources and services that meet the safety needs of survivors on demand. Center leadership described some gaps in the process when dealing with HPD and HCDAO and emphasized, "There is value in having a consistent advocate versus just the HPD advocate via victim services and the DA advocate which are both system-based." HAWC acknowledged the strides HPD has made and confirmed a good working relationship with the department but stressed the need for HAWC to be looped in earlier on in the process, identifying

a break in the continuity of care, especially when cases move to the district attorney's office. HAWC also expressed hope that additional collaboration between HPD and HCDAO could create and explore other options for forensic interviews to help avoid significant delays for the victims.

HAWC noted that they had no buy-in when it came to establishing policies and protocols surrounding victims. Specifically, HAWC recommended SOPs specific to the Domestic Abuse Response Team ("DART") and additional training at the patrol level centered on domestic violence issues.[43] The overall recommendation from HAWC was the need for a more victim-centered approach across the department, "a robbery victim is still a victim." HAWC was concerned that many of the investigative actions were premised on the victim initiating contact with HPD instead of vice versa. "When the onus for case advancement is put on the victim, this can be retraumatizing."

HPD
DOCs

HPD's SL Project Workflow and Data

HPD met with the Committee and provided an overview of their SL review project, which included a timeline for completion and a general workflow process.

Strategic Timeline to Address the SL Project

Phase I Priorities (0 – 3/6 months)

A. Special Victims Division (SVD)
   1. Reviewing and/or coding with the proper disposition of the initial 4,017 SVD's Sexual Assault Related Incident Reports (Group 1) with the SL code
   2. Reviewing and/or coding with the proper disposition of the 390 SVD's Sexual Assault Related Incident Reports (Group 2) with the SL code
   3. Investigating and/or coding with the proper disposition of the 94 SVD's SL cases with a CODIS Hit
   4. Contact victims/survivors of the SL cases to include location checks when prior contact attempts unsuccessful
   5. Schedule victims/survivors for Forensic Interviews
   6. Victims Services incorporated to inform, support and assist victims/survivors
   7. Implement quality assurance/quality control measures for the reviewing process of the SL Incident Reports
   8. Reviewing the remaining SVD's Incident Reports (Group 3) with the SL code

B. Major Assaults & Family Violence Division (MAFV)
   1. Reviewing and/or coding with the proper disposition of the initial 807 MAFV's Family Violence/Strangulation Related Incident Reports (Group 1) with the SL code

   2. Reviewing and/or coding with the proper disposition of the 1,011 MAFV's Incident Reports (Group 2) with the SL code
   3. Reviewing and/or coding with the proper disposition of the 7,080 MAFV's Incident Reports (Group 3) with the SL code
   4. Investigating and/or coding with the proper disposition of the Family Violence Cases and Cases that involved Serious Bodily Injuries
   5. Contact victims of the SL cases to include location checks when prior contact attempts unsuccessful
   6. Victims Services incorporated to inform, support and assist victims/survivors
   7. Implement quality assurance/quality control measures for the reviewing process of the SL Incident Reports
   8. Reviewing the remaining MAFV's Incident Reports with the SL code

C. Homicide Division
   1. Homicide Division reviewing and/or coding with the proper disposition of Major Assaults Incident Reports with the SL code for incident reports prior to the 2018 separation of MAFV from Homicide Division
   2. Investigate Cases prior to the 2018 separation of MAFV from Homicide Division that involved Serious Bodily Injuries
   3. Contact victims of the SL cases to include location checks when prior contact attempts unsuccessful
   4. Victims Services incorporated to inform, support and assist victims/survivors

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[43] HAWC recommended the following co-facilitated trainings: Building Trust from Trauma and Healing in the Wake of Harm.

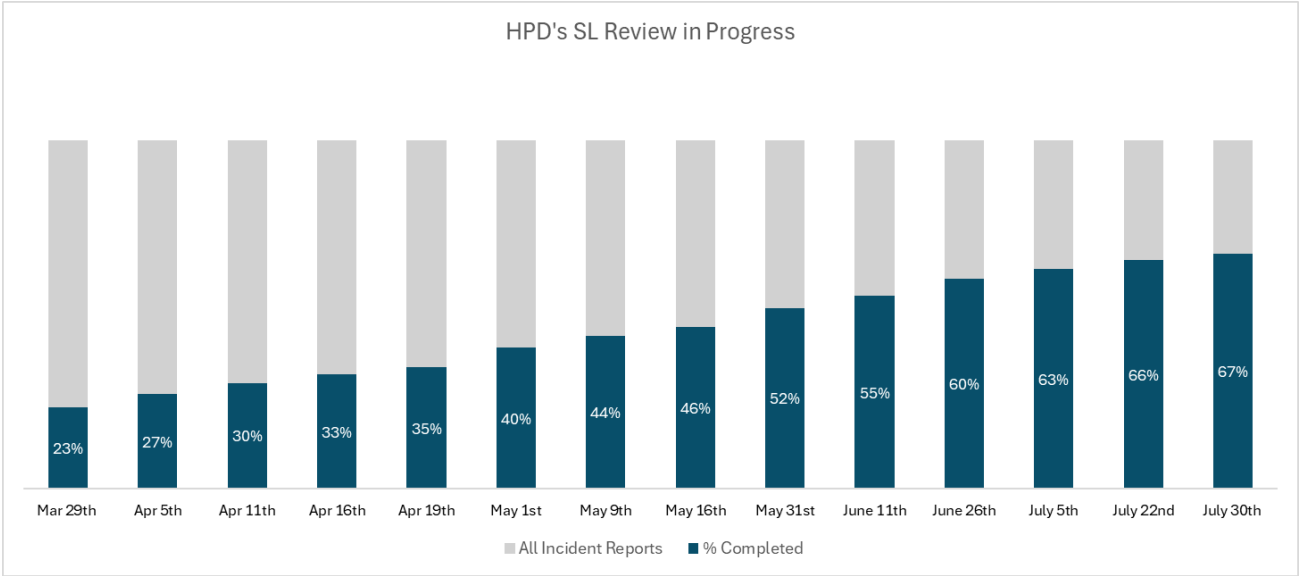## Case Management Workflow: Overview
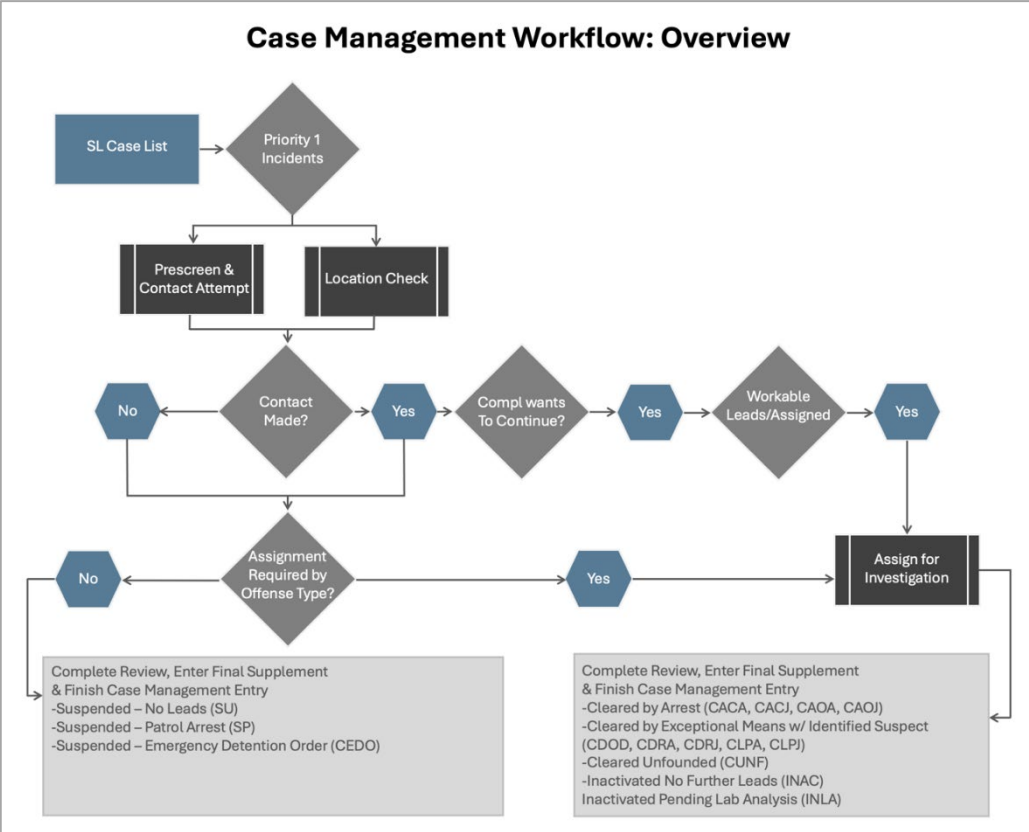
Divisional Incident Reports and SOPs

HPD provided the following divisional breakdown of incident reports. They also provided a weekly update on the work in progress.

Count of Incident								
Division	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
Airport IAH Division					82	113	52	247
Auto Theft Division	205	154	288	508	1,154	606	20	2,935
Case Mgmt Non-Active Inbound Cases (N-ACT)					106	1		107
Central Patrol Division	4				6			10
CID - Criminal Intelligence Division		1			2	17	6	26
Clear Lake Division					1			1
Downtown Division					1			1
Gang Division					1			1
HFD/Arson Bureau					2			2
Homicide Division	6,552	14			2	2		6,570
Internal Affairs/CIO Division	1				1			2
Juvenile Division			1		9			10
Major Assaults/Family Violence Division	10,460	21,796	20,802	20,286	11,964	22,768	2,756	110,832
Major Offenders Division	208	230	1	73	1,778	2,343	321	4,954
Mental Health Division		50		3	24			77
Narcotics Division				1	220	16		237
Property and Financial Crimes	10,372	12,079	10,224	16,571	20,393	18,230	4,287	92,156
South Central Patrol Division					1			1
South Gessner Patrol Division					1			1
Southeast Patrol Division					3			3
Special Victims Division	1,148	1,439	1,507	1,677	1,620	1,612	164	9,167
Traffic Enforcement Division		4						4
Vehicular Crimes Division	4,106	3,573	2,762	2,672	4,579	20,807	2,162	40,661
Vice Division	160	68	203	165	130	170	19	915
Victim Services Division					1			1
Westside Patrol Division					1			1
Grand Total	33,216	39,408	35,788	41,956	42,082	66,685	9,787	268,922

HPD's SL Review in Progress

	Mar 29th	Apr 5th	Apr 11th	Apr 16th	Apr 19th	May 1st	May 9th	May 16th	May 31st	June 11th	June 26th	July 5th	July 22nd	July 30th
% Completed	23%	27%	30%	33%	35%	40%	44%	46%	52%	55%	60%	63%	66%	67%

■ All Incident Reports ■ % Completed

Standard Operating Procedure & Policy Updates

In addition to sharing data, HPD provided departmental policy changes they completed and were in the process of completing. This included the framework for case management SOPs as well as the following circulars and/or General Orders:

- Revision of General Order 600-33, Social Services Assistance and Referrals
  No. 24-0213-021, February 13, 2024
- Standard Operating Procedures Revisions
  No. 24-0301-030, March 1, 2024
- Case Status / Disposition Codes
  No. 24-0301-031, March 1, 2024
- Houston Forensic Science Center – Updated Latent Print Acceptance Policy
  No. 24-0326-043, March 26, 2024
- Restrictions on "Investigation" Incident Report Titles
  No. 24-0404-048, April 4, 2024
- Reminder – Timely Notifications to The Command Center
  No. 24-0405-049, April 5, 2024
- Reminder Regarding Human Trafficking Awareness and Properly Coding Incident Reports
  No. 24-0419-056, April 19, 2024
- Revised 2023-2024 Training Mandates For All Personnel
  No. 24-0618-077, June 18, 2024
- Update: Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART)
- No. 24-0624-082, June 24, 2024

OVERVIEW

ANALYSIS

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee's Review and Findings

The Committee aimed to ensure that crimes against victims were addressed with the utmost diligence and efficacy. Our approach to this review adhered to established auditing standards, guaranteeing a thorough and impartial examination. We collected comprehensive data from HPD that included case numbers, suspension dates, reasons for suspension, offense types, closure statuses, and accompanying supplements.

We selected a statistically significant sample of suspended incident reports using a systematic sampling method, categorized by year and offense type. This approach allowed us to identify trends, patterns, and discrepancies in the management and resolution of these cases, thereby ensuring

Review Sample

Division	Count of Incident
Special Victims Grp_1	400
Special Victims Grp_2	40
MAFV Grp_1	80
MAFV Grp_2	100
Airport IAH Division	10
Auto Theft Division	50
Central Patrol Division	5
CID - Criminal Intelligence Division	10
Homicide Division	50
Juvenile Division	5
Major Offenders Division	50
Mental Health Division	20
Narcotics Division	20
Property and Financial Crimes	80
Vehicular Crimes Division	50
Vice Division	30
Total Count	**1000**

*Utilizing a statistically significant sample size

the reliability and validity of our conclusions. For the most critical incident reports, particularly those involving sexual assault and family violence, we examined a larger sample—10% of the reports— exceeding the size of a typical statistically significant sample.

Data Collation and Templates

Data collation and analysis is the process of gathering, organizing, merging, and interpreting data from various sources to create a comprehensive and coherent dataset. This process is crucial for ensuring that the data is accurate, consistent, and ready for analysis or reporting. While the main focus is on data analysis, collating the data for our review required the creation of a review template or "checklist" to maintain consistency among reviewers. For the initial review of SVD incident reports, the Committee developed the template shown in Figure (3.1). As the review extended to other divisions, it became

necessary to create an expanded template to account for the differences in offense types and factual scenarios, as illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Fig. 3.1

Fig. 3.2

Department-Wide Findings

    The Committee identified significant inconsistencies in case management across the department, with notable variations in how different divisions handle and suspend cases. The department is experiencing widespread understaffing, affecting both classified and civilian personnel.

Understaffing has had the greatest impact on SVD and MAFV. This has impacted public safety and the department's ability to appropriately respond to victims of sexual assault and family violence. Although victim advocates, service providers, and prosecutors have consistently praised the current

SVD leadership for its momentum to change and continued focus on victim-centered investigations, there is broad consensus among stakeholders that understaffing, triaging of cases, and underprepared and unsupported investigators are interrelated and aggravated by each other.

Furthermore, the department faces difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff to support current operations and inefficiently uses current classified personnel in administrative positions.

Committee findings:

o Investigative divisions have near complete autonomy to create protocols for case management and as a result policies and practices among divisions are inconsistent and outdated.

o The current Records Management System (RMS) is inadequate for effective case management, and personnel are not sufficiently trained on its use.

o Misidentification of crimes by patrol when creating an incident report impacted the investigative process—Out of the original dataset provided by HPD, 8,818 were mischaracterized as noncriminal or potentially noncriminal when the facts actually met the elements of a crime under the law.

o Once an incident report is coded as suspended, there is minimal to no follow-up investigation, including failing to update the victim on the status of their report or reassessing the case based on solvability factors or prioritization.

o HPD divisional data is often stored across multiple systems and is difficult to export or link; contains incomplete or inaccurate information; and is difficult to compare because of a lack of standardization.

o HPD's process and protocol for data sharing up the chain of command is unreliable and has little impact on executive decision-making.

o There is a communication breakdown between divisions and executive level staff including assistant chiefs.

o Upon promotion and/or transfer, supervisors at every rank are not sufficiently trained to effectively manage their team.

o HPD is understaffed in both classified and civilian personnel and the department is facing challenges in optimizing its human resources.

o The department does not identify and use technology to support investigative divisions.

Processing timeframe: The analysis of the processing time between the initial and final status dates, when the SL code was used as the final disposition in the sampled population revealed that 18% of cases were suspended within one day or less, 16% between two and three days, and 17% in under a week. This data suggests that little to no preliminary investigation was done prior to suspending the report, and such determinations were made before the incident reports were assigned to an investigator.

SL Code Original Status
(days taken to disposition)

One Day or Less	2 to 3 days	4 to 7 days	8 to 14 Days	15 to 30 days	Greater than 30 days
18%	16%	17%	12%	10%	28%
18%	34%	50%	62%	73%	100%

◼ actual ——●—— cml.
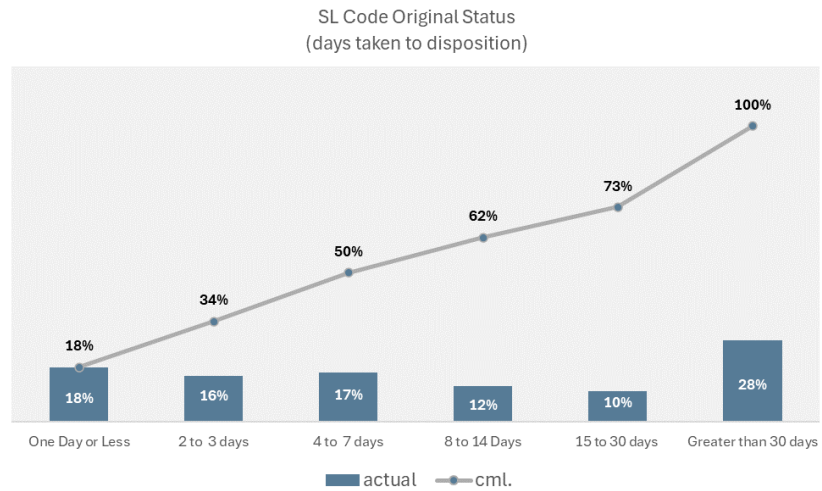
Statute of Limitations:

The analysis of the sampled incident reports revealed that 33% were classified as misdemeanors. Among those, 65% were within the statute of limitations, while 35% fell outside. Offenses within the statutes of limitations include various FSGI incidents involving property damage under $1000 or private property, where identification of the suspect was either impossible or partially possible. Additional offenses include theft of miscellaneous items, shoplifting, thefts involving construction or farm equipment, and criminal mischief involving damage to habitation, vehicles, or other property, with values below $1500. Other actionable offenses within this category are tampering with a government document, harassment, terroristic threats, animal mistreatment or neglect, and making a false report specific to auto theft-related incidents.

Misdemeanor

Within Statute of Limitations	Outside Statute of Limitations
65%	35%
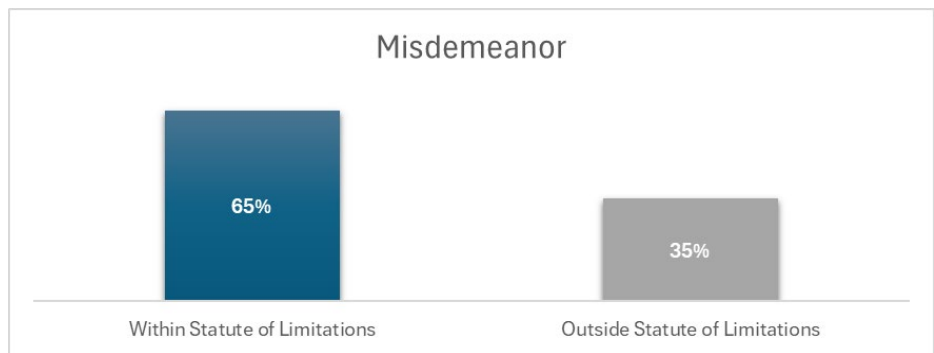
The statute of limitations expired on 35% of the misdemeanors and are no longer legally actionable. These offenses include cyber and financial crimes such as computer security breaches, theft under false pretexts with losses below $1500, and swindle-related thefts. Other expired offenses include

multiple incidents of terroristic threats, harassment by other means, retaliation by threats, stalking, and specific cases linked to family violence. Additionally, several instances of prostitution classified as misdemeanors, and miscellaneous offenses such as bigamy, animal mistreatment, neglect, and gambling promotion are no longer prosecutable.

Division Specific Review and Findings
Special Victims Division

The review of the SVD entailed a comprehensive examination of incident reports, specifically focusing on a 10% sample from Special Victims Priority Groups 1 and 2. The incident reports included in the sample were coded "SL" and applied on dates ranging from 2018 to 2024.

RMS Offense Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
Agg Assault-Impede Breath/Strangu 15yo&Up				1				1
Aggr Sex Assault (Other Penetration-Child)			2		2			4
Aggr Sex Assault (With An Object-Adult)				2	2	1		5
Aggravated Sex Assault (Force Intercourse)	3	3	3	6	3	2		20
Aggravated Sexual Assault (Other Penetrat)		2	1	1	1			5
Burglary Resid to Commit SexAssault NOT FV				1				1
Fam Viol - S.B.Injury-Agg Assault 15yo&Up					1			1
Human Trafficking - Commercial Sex Acts				1				1
Investigation - Sexual Assault - Rape	22	22	31	42	40	44	4	205
Investigation - Special Crimes	1	2	1	2	1			7
Sexual Assault (Child) - Felony	1							1
Sexual Assault (Fondling) - Felony	9	16	17	12	1			55
Sexual Assault (Force Intercourse Attempt)		1						1
Sexual Assault (Force Intercourse)	15	14	10	14	9	14	1	77
Sexual Assault (Other Penetration)(Adult)	5	8	7	8	11	10	1	50
Sexual Assault (Other Penetration)(Child)		1			1	1	1	4
Sexual Assault (Statutory Rape) - Felony		1					1	2
Grand Total	**56**	**70**	**73**	**90**	**71**	**72**	**8**	**440**

By including cases from this time span, the review provided a longitudinal perspective on the handling of incidents, capturing trends and changes in practices over several years. Additionally, the selection process ensured representation across a wide range of offense categories, providing a comprehensive view of the division's response to various types of cases. This broad and methodical approach allowed
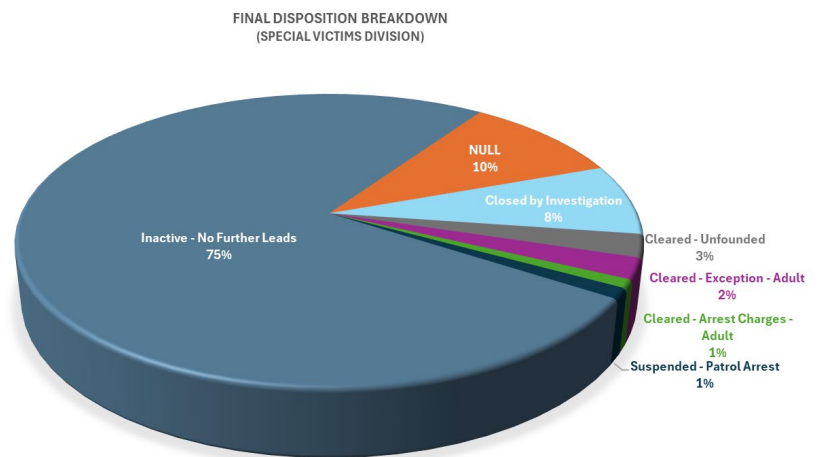
for an in-depth and impartial assessment of the SVD's operations, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness and areas for improvement within the division's handling of sensitive and serious cases.

Final Disposition Codes

Ninety percent (90%) of the sampled incident reports had final disposition codes, indicating progress in resolving cases and documenting outcomes:[44]

- 75% of the sampled reports were categorized as inactive – no further leads (INAC)
- 1% of the sampled reports were suspended- patrol arrest and suspended - no leads (SU & SP)
- 6% of the sampled reports were successfully cleared, indicating that these cases reached a resolution, either through arrests, prosecution, or other means, thereby closing the investigation process.
- 8% of the sampled reports were closed by investigation, signifying that these cases had been fully reviewed and resolved to the extent possible under the circumstances.[45]
- The remaining 10% of the reports had NULL dispositions, indicating that their final status had not been determined.

FINAL DISPOSITION BREAKDOWN
(SPECIAL VICTIMS DIVISION)

NULL
10%

Closed by Investigation
8%

Inactive - No Further Leads
75%

Cleared - Unfounded
3%

Cleared - Exception - Adult
2%

Cleared - Arrest Charges - Adult
1%

Suspended - Patrol Arrest
1%

The Committee requested updates from HPD on these NULL incidents.[46] The response revealed that 71% of these cases involved complainants who had scheduled forensic interviews or completed interviews and were ready to be assigned to an investigator. Supplementary reports have been filed for these cases. The remaining 29% of the cases required a transfer to an outside agency or another department, had complainants who did not attend their forensic interviews, or involved complainants

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[44] The analysis is based on updated data received June 22, 2024.
[45] Closed by investigation refers to all assigned cases in which an "investigative" offense title was used and follow up was conducted.
[46] ODPG defined NULL as cases that have been reviewed and are open and under investigation but pending assignment.

who could not be located. Additionally, one case was identified as a misdemeanor with an expired statute of limitations.

Utilization Suspended-No Leads (SU) and Inactive – No Further Leads (INAC)

The difference between SU (Suspended – No Leads) and INAC (Inactive – No Further Leads) lies in their usage within case management:

> o <u>Suspended – No Leads (SU):</u> SU status is assigned when a report is initially reviewed for assignment. It is used when recognizing that a crime has occurred but there are no immediate leads to assign to an investigator.
> o <u>Inactive – No Further Leads (INAC):</u> INAC status is assigned after an investigator has exhausted all potential leads. It signifies that the investigator cannot use any other code to clear or close the incident report. INAC is used when all leads have been thoroughly investigated and no further avenues for resolution are currently available.

In essence, SU is used when there are no initial workable leads upon review for assignment, while INAC is applied after an exhaustive investigation by an assigned investigator when no further leads are forthcoming.

CODIS

In the original dataset, 94 incident reports were identified as having a CODIS hit and being suspended SL status.[47] All were immediately assigned to a detective for further investigation. So far, buccal swabs have been obtained in 12 cases and are awaiting lab results.[48] SVD investigators are working to identify and locate suspects on cases in order to obtain and execute search warrants for their DNA. Investigators have created 23 search warrants. Contact with complainants was successful in 35% of the cases with 16 being cooperative and 17 not wanting to pursue prosecution. Of the 92 complainants, ten did not show up for forensic interviews and subsequently did not maintain contact with TXFNE or the assigned detective. For the remaining unsuccessful contact attempts, letters have been mailed out. Approximately 4% of the sampled incident reports had CODIS hits and are under active investigation.
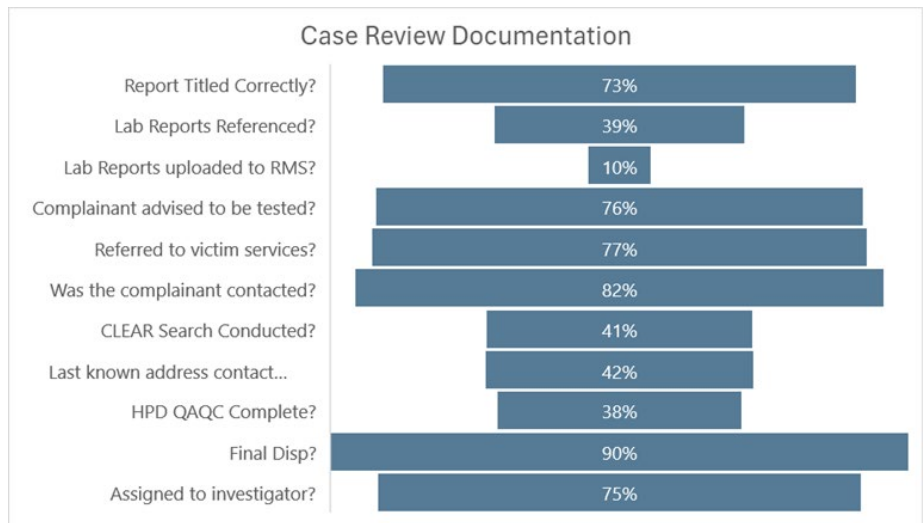
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[47] Out of the 94, two incidents were verified by HFSC to not have a CODIS hit.
[48] A buccal swab is a way to collect DNA from the cells on the inside of a person's cheek.

Report review specific to Case Management

The review of incident reports with a concentration on case management revealed key areas for focus and improvement. Out of the reviewed sample, 73% were titled correctly, while (27%) were not, indicating a need for improved accuracy in report titling. The reasons for the incorrect titling of these reports varied. In some instances, reports were miscategorized as non-investigations despite containing elements of a crime or pertinent information that warranted at least a preliminary investigation. There were cases where the title was incorrectly changed, such as labeling incidents as "Non-felony" without proper justification, often due to misinterpretation of the complainant's statements. Additionally, errors were identified in cases involving complainants who refused

Case Review Documentation

Report Titled Correctly?	73%
Lab Reports Referenced?	39%
Lab Reports uploaded to RMS?	10%
Complainant advised to be tested?	76%
Referred to victim services?	77%
Was the complainant contacted?	82%
CLEAR Search Conducted?	41%
Last known address contact...	42%
HPD QAQC Complete?	38%
Final Disp?	90%
Assigned to investigator?	75%

to cooperate or did not want to pursue charges. These cases were sometimes incorrectly titled as INAC instead of CBEX (Closed by Exception- Statute of Limitations), or vice versa, due to procedural misunderstandings or incomplete follow-ups. Reports lacked references to sexual assault or were mistakenly categorized under less severe offenses, leading to incorrect titling. Further inconsistencies arose from missing fields and inaccuracies related to mental health issues or homeless complainants.

These findings highlight significant areas for improvement in report titling accuracy, emphasizing the need for enhanced training, stringent review processes, and comprehensive documentation practices to ensure all incident reports are appropriately categorized and titled.

Although 39% of cases included referenced lab reports, only 10% of these reports were successfully uploaded to the Record Management System (RMS). It reveals a significant gap in digital record keeping and highlights the need for better integration of lab reports into RMS.

Seventy-six percent (76%) of complainants were advised to undergo testing, demonstrating strong procedural compliance in ensuring thorough investigations. However, in 24% of the cases, testing was not addressed for various reasons. Common issues included the complainant's uncooperativeness or

the presence of mental health issues, leading to unresponsiveness, which often hindered the dialogue and presented an area for increased training. Furthermore, 77% of complainants were referred to victim services, reflecting a commendable level of support provided to those involved.

Efforts to contact complainants were made in 82% of cases, demonstrating strong follow-up practices. However, in 18% of the cases, attempts were unsuccessful due to incomplete contact information or lack of response. A pointed number of cases involved uncooperative complainants and those with mental health issues. Some complainants, already at the hospital and given a blue form, refused further testing or follow-up. Additionally, complainants in jail or with suspected mental health issues impeded follow-up efforts. Instances of incorrect or unavailable contact information contained in the original report also delayed or prevented contact attempts. Efforts to contact the last known address were made in 42% of cases, but in several instances, outdated or incorrect address information prevented successful contact. Despite using phone calls, text messages, and letters, many complainants remained unreachable, leading to case closures or inactive status. CLEAR searches, a useful tool to obtain identification and location information, were performed in 41% of cases, indicating missed opportunities for additional investigative information.

The completion rate of the HPD QAQC process is relatively low at 38%. A significant reason is the high volume of cases HPD is currently handling, which has led to delays in the review process. HPD is actively working to complete the QAQC process for all outstanding cases. The department has acknowledged the need for improved follow-up and has implemented measures to enhance the accuracy and completeness of their reports. The ongoing review process aims to address these gaps and ensure that all cases receive the necessary scrutiny and follow-up.

The Committee found that 90% of the cases had a final disposition code assigned, demonstrating strong follow-through in case closure procedures. Lastly, 75% of cases were assigned to an investigator, suggesting that the original incident report may have contained leads or solvability factors increased over time.

SVD has already instituted new case management procedures. The new Case Management Unit has streamlined the initial handling of cases, including preliminary investigations and scheduling forensic interviews. Cases transition to the reactive side of the ASCU for further investigation, including suspect interviews and case presentation to the HCDAO. If necessary, detectives obtain buccal swabs through consent or coordinate with the HCDAO to obtain search warrants for lab testing. When complainants

cannot be contacted despite multiple attempts, cases will be inactivated. Additionally, cases meeting the statute of limitations criteria are closed following consultation with the DA's office, and the complainants are notified. Detectives are required to submit supplemental reports within five days of case assignment and every 30 days thereafter to demonstrate case progression. Each submission is reviewed by a sergeant to ensure completeness and appropriate case handling. This structured approach ensures thorough investigation and effective resource allocation, highlighting the department's commitment to resolving cases and maintaining procedural compliance.

Overall, while the report underscores several strengths in current practices, particularly in complainant support and case assignment, it also uncovers critical gaps in documenting critical information, uploading lab reports and other items of evidentiary value, and documenting solvability and prioritization factors. These areas require focused improvements to enhance the accuracy and completeness of investigative processes.

Major Assaults and Family Violence Division

After focusing on SVD, the Committee turned its attention to MAFV Priority Groups 1 and 2. The Committee reviewed a 10% sample size.  The panel's review covered multiple aspects of case management, including the accuracy and classification of initial reports, follow-up actions, and quality control measures. This in-depth analysis ensures a well-rounded understanding of current practices and outcomes in addressing these critical issues and included the following offenses:

The data from the review of major assaults and family violence cases revealed key insights into case handling and outcomes:

Status Date (Original SL applied)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
Offense Category								
Agg Assault-Impede Breath/Strangu 15yo&Up		4	2	5	5	4		20
Agg Assault-Inj to Elderly/Disab (Family)		1						1
Agg Assault-Inj to Elderly/Disab (Non-Fam)	3	3	2		1	3		12
Agg Assault-Serious Bodily Injury 15yo&Up		7	5	4	3	27		46
Aggravated Assault (Candidate)				1		1		2
Aggravated Assault (Deadly Weapon)	1					3		4
Aggravated Assault (Govt Agent/Employee)		1		1			1	3
Aggravated Assault (HPD Officer)					1	1		2
Aggravated Assault (Injure Disabled Persn)		1	1					2
Aggravated Assault (Other Peace Officer)					1			1
Aggravated Kidnapping	1	2	2	1		6		12
Aggravated Robbery (Deadly Weapon)	2	5	2	3	1	4		17
Aggravated Robbery (Home Invasion)					2			2
Aggravated Robbery (No Loss or Attempt)	1							1
Assault - (A/C) Bodily Force 15yo&Up		3	2	4	1	4		14
Criminal Mischief (Auto) < $1500 Loss				1				1
Fam Viol - Assault - Pregnant Person						1		1
Fam Viol - Harassment - By Other Means (T)						1		1
Fam Viol - Reckless/Deadly Conduct			1					1
Fam Viol - S.B. Injury-Agg Assault 15yo&Up				1				1
Fam Viol- Assault(A/C)Bodily Force 15yo&Up	5	2	2					9
Fam Viol-Agg Assault(Impede Breath)15yo&Up				1				1
Fam Viol-Terroristic Threat Other Means(T)	1			1		1		3
Family Violence-Agg Assault(Deadly Weapon)			1	3				4
FSGI-Full Plate and Able to ID Suspect						1		1
Harassment - By Other Means (T)				1		1		2
Investigation - Assault		1	3		1	1		6
Investigation - Auto Theft						1		1
Investigation - Major Assaults/FamViolence					1			1
Stalking - By Other Means (T)				1				1
Terroristic Threat by Other Means (T)	2		1	1		3		7
Grand Total	**17**	**32**	**21**	**30**	**17**	**62**	**1**	**180**

- o **Report Accuracy**: A significant portion of reports (83%) were titled correctly, indicating consistency in the department's report titling. However, 17% of the reports contained inaccuracies, primarily due to incorrect titles, when more specific categories were applicable. These inaccuracies often resulted in misclassification, such as incorrectly titling cases under "Assault-Injury to Elderly" when the facts did not support this designation. The need for corrections in supplemental documents suggests that initial judgments could have been more accurate, leading to potential misdirection in case handling.

- o **Complainant Cooperation**: Although complainants were cooperative at the scene in 77% of cases, follow-up contact was lacking in a substantial 81% of cases. Challenges in this area included limited attempts to reach out, where contact efforts were restricted to a single text message or letter, with no persistent follow-up. Furthermore, several complainants explicitly refused to prosecute, leading to case closures without exhaustive investigative efforts. This gap in post-incident communication likely contributed to the overall lower rate of post-incident cooperation (48%).

- o **Victim Services**: The audit revealed a critical oversight in victim support, with 57% of complainants not being referred to victim services. This lack of referral may result in victims not receiving the necessary assistance. Even when referrals were made, the absence of documented follow-up to confirm that services were accessed
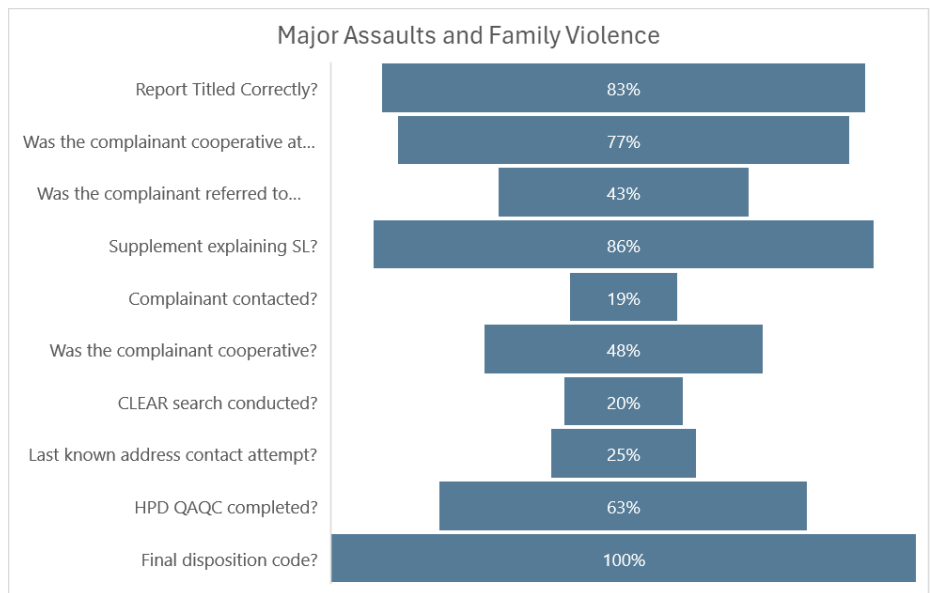

indicates a need for more robust tracking and support mechanisms.

- o **Documentation and Follow-Up**: Supplements explaining the SL code were included in 86% of the cases, indicating good documentation. CLEAR searches were conducted only in 20% of the instances. The underutilization of CLEAR searches represents a missed opportunity for

comprehensive victim involvement which might have resulted in overlooked leads that could have been crucial for case development.

o **HPD QAQC Completion:** HPD has successfully completed QAQC on 63% of the reports, demonstrating a solid commitment to maintaining departmental standards. While the remaining 37% of reports are still pending QAQC review, addressing these will further enhance the thoroughness and accuracy of case documentation. By following up on QAQC recommendations, the division can ensure that all reports are fully reviewed and meet the highest quality assurance standards.

o **Final Disposition:** The assignment of final disposition codes in 100% of reports demonstrates a strong commitment to procedural closure. However, many closures occurred due to a lack of prosecution or DA refusal, often without fully
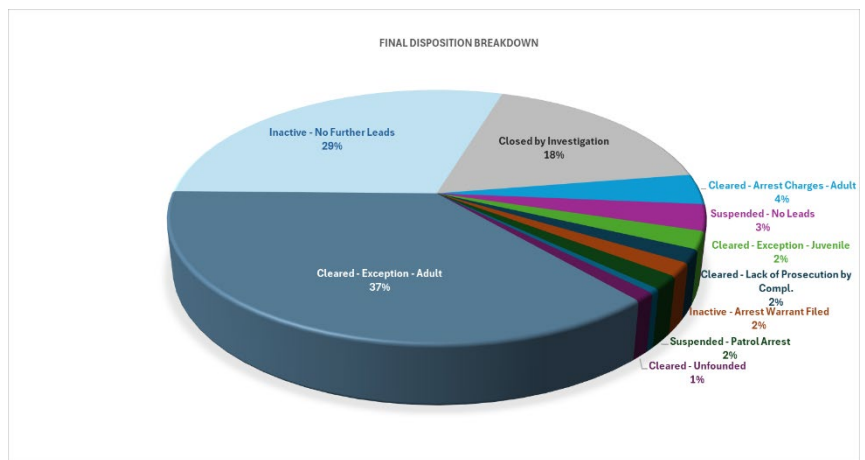
exploring all investigative avenues. This includes persistent complainant engagement or exhaustive evidence gathering, suggesting that while the cases were formally closed, they may not have been thoroughly resolved.

Property and Financial Crimes

The analysis of the property and financial crimes reports revealed significant insights into the current investigative and procedural practices. While there are strengths in report title accuracy and complainant cooperation, the findings underscore the need for better follow-up with complainants and improved documentation of case dispositions well before the statute of limitations expire. Addressing these areas could enhance the overall effectiveness and efficiency of handling incidents. The sampled population included the following offenses:

Status Date (Original SL applied)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
Offense Category							
Burglary Building			5	4	6	1	16
Burglary Habitation	1		1	1	3		6
Criminal Mischief (Auto) < $1500 Loss			2	2			4
Criminal Mischief (Auto) < $2500 Loss					3		3
Criminal Mischief (Habitation) < $1500						1	1
Criminal Mischief (Habitation) > $1500						1	1
Criminal Mischief (Reckless Damage) <$1500				1			1
Criminal Mischief (Reckless Damage) >$1500					1		1
Criminal Mischief (Unclassified) < $1500					1		1
Criminal Mischief (Unclassified) > $1500					2		2
Fam Viol - Burg of Resid to Commit Assault					1		1
Forgery (By Check)					1		1
Fraudulent Use or Possession of ID Info						2	2
Investigation - Burglary and Theft (B&T)						1	1
Investigation - Forgery/Fraud/Counterfeit					1	1	2
Lost - All Other Items						1	1
Theft - All Other Items (Miscellaneous)			4	4	2	3	13
Theft - Firearm				1			1
Theft - From Building				1			1
Theft - Service (Food/Drink) < $1500 Loss		1					1
Theft - Service (Services/Repairs) < $1500					1		1
Theft - Service (Services/Repairs) > $1500						1	1
Theft - Shoplifting			5	2	2	9	18
Grand Total	**1**	**1**	**17**	**16**	**24**	**21**	**80**

Out of the 80 reports reviewed, 95% were correctly titled, demonstrating a high level of accuracy in initial report classification. Complainant cooperation was notably high, with 90% of individuals at the scene showing strong engagement, reflecting a solid connection between the community and law enforcement.

Supplements to explain specific circumstances were included in 83% of the reports, indicating thorough initial documentation. However, significant gaps in follow-up were identified. Only 3% of complainants were contacted after the initial report, while 58% received no follow-up, with the

Property and Financial Crimes

|	
Report Titled Correctly?	95%
Was the complainant cooperative at the scene?	90%
Supplement explaining SL?	83%
Complainant contacted?	3%
HPD QAQC completed?	77%
Final disposition code?	35%
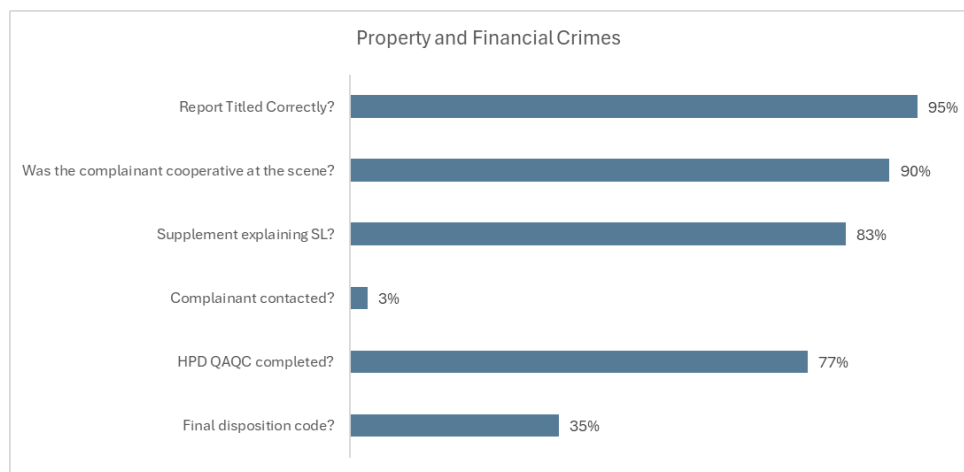
caveat that in 40% of cases, further contact was deemed unnecessary. This lack of follow-up is

supported by committee member comments noting that in some cases, "no investigation was done at all" or that critical evidence, such as video footage, "was not obtained."

The HPD QAQC process was completed in 77% of cases, indicating a robust internal review system. However, only 35% of cases had a final disposition code, with 65% remaining unresolved, emphasizing the need for more robust investigative procedures and thorough case closure.

FINAL DISPOSITION

NULL	65%
Suspended- No Leads	35%
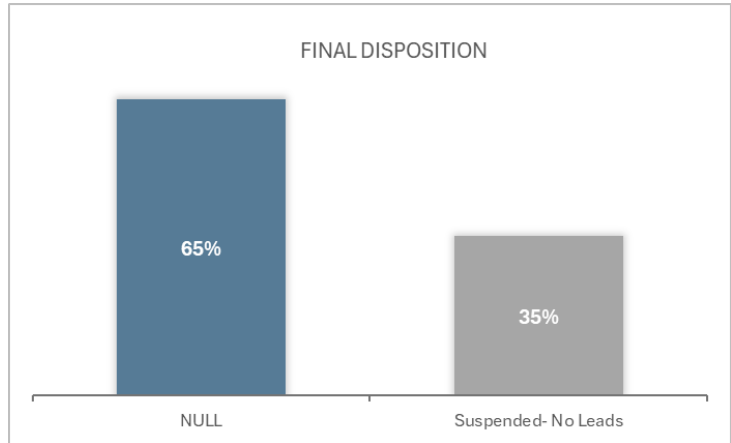
In summary, while there was initial solid report accuracy and complainant cooperation, there is a pressing need for improved follow-up, more rigorous investigative procedures, and consistent documentation to ensure comprehensive and effective case management.

Vehicular Crimes Division

The analysis of the Vehicular Crimes Division report revealed several key insights into the division's operational effectiveness and areas requiring improvement. A statistically significant sample size of

Vehicular Crimes

Report Titled Correctly?	88%
Complainant cooperative at the scene?	72%
Supplement explaining SL?	74%
Complainant contacted?	4%
CLEAR Search conducted?	4%
HPD QAQC completed?	36%
Final disposition code?	98%
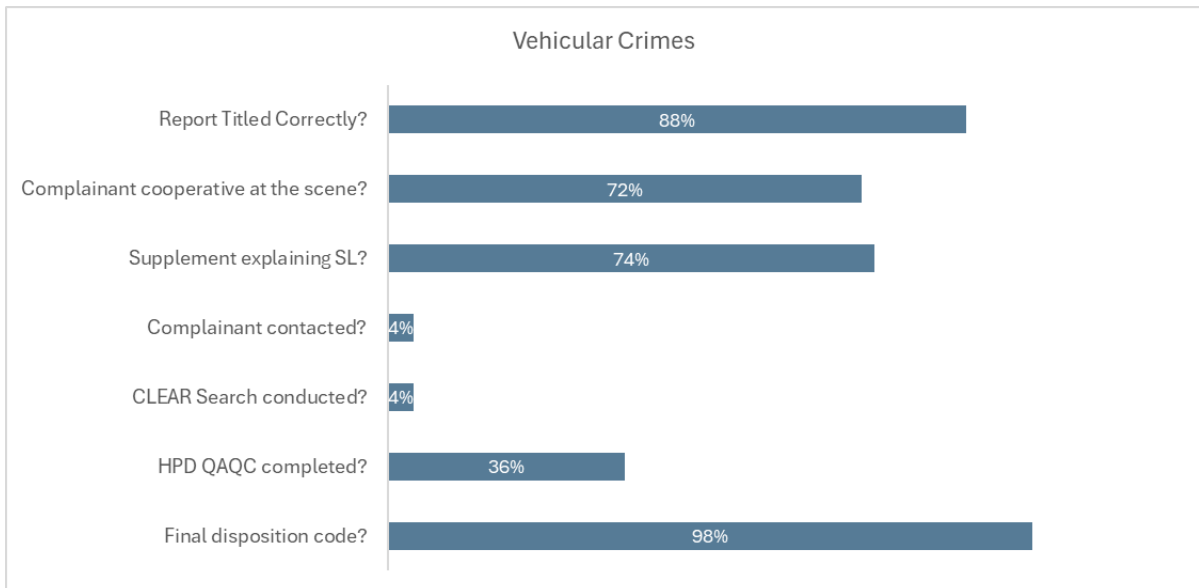
vehicular crime incidents was selected for this review, providing a comprehensive overview of report accuracy, procedural adherence, and investigative follow-ups.

- o **Report Accuracy and Title**: The analysis shows a high level of compliance with report titling accuracy, with 88% of reports titled correctly. This indicates strong adherence to initial documentation protocols.

- o **Supplemental Documentation**: 74% of the reports included a supplement explaining the SL-Code, indicating good practice in providing comprehensive case details.

- o **Complainant Contact Post-Incident**: Post-incident follow-up with complainants was notably low, with only 4% of complainants being contacted. In several cases, comments indicated that complainants "did not want to press charges" or "only wanted a police report for insurance purposes," which explains some of the lack of follow-up.

- o **Follow-up Conducted**: Only 4% of cases had a CLEAR search conducted, and in some instances, critical information such as vehicle registration or license plate numbers was not pursued, despite being available. For example, in one instance, a "complainant provided video and possible vehicle identification," but no follow-up was conducted.

- o **HPD QAQC Completion**: The QAQC process was completed in 36% of cases. This indicates that a significant portion of the cases, over half, are still undergoing review.

- o **Final Disposition Code**: 98% of the cases had a final disposition code assigned. Please see the breakdown below.

The Vehicular Crimes Division data analysis reveals several strengths but also areas for improvement. High compliance with report titling and the timely processing of cases within the statute of limitations show strong adherence to initial protocols and legal requirements. However, the low rates of post-incident complainant contact suggest that further efforts are needed to enhance communication and utilize investigative tools.

Final Disposition

4% 2%
94%

■ Inactive - No Further Leads   ■ NULL   ■ Suspended - No Leads
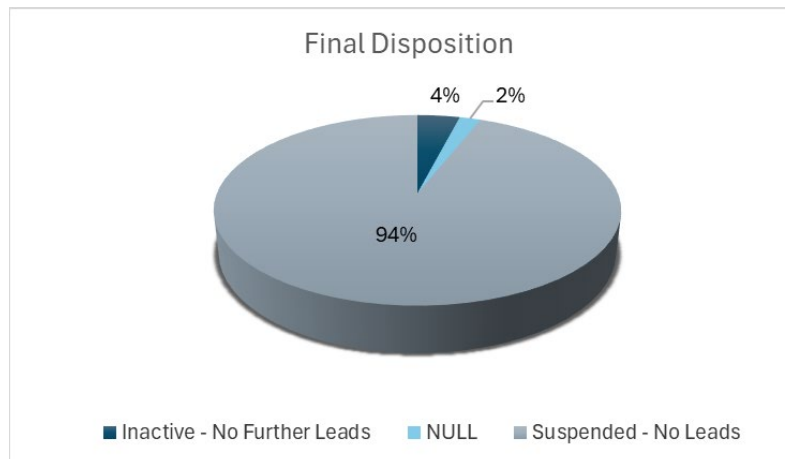
Overall, the assignment of final disposition codes in 98% of cases demonstrates a robust process for case closure. These findings provide valuable insights into the division's current state of report handling, guiding future enhancements in procedural and investigative practices.
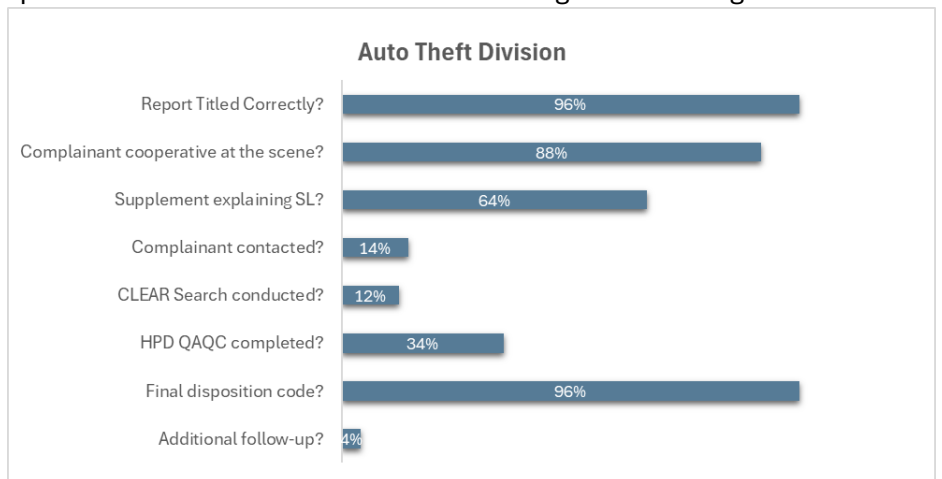
Auto Theft Division

The review of 50 incidents within the Auto Theft Division provided a comprehensive analysis of report accuracy, procedural adherence, and investigative follow-ups and included the following offenses:

Status Date (Original SL applied)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
Auto Theft Division	**8**	**3**	**4**	**8**	**22**	**5**		**50**
Auto Theft (Auto/Car not Truck)	1			1	3			5
Auto Theft (Truck/Van)			1	1	3	4		9
Burglary Motor Vehicle (Contents/Not-Part)	5	2	2	1	4			14
Burglary Motor Vehicle (Jugging)				2	2			4
Burglary Motor Vehicle (Part of Vehicle)	1				1			2
Burglary Motor Vehicle (Slider)	1		1					2
Investigation - Auto Theft		1		1	5			7
Investigation - Forgery/Fraud/Counterfeit				2				2
Making a False Report - Auto Theft Related					1			1
Tampering With a Government Document						1		1
Theft - All Other Items (Miscellaneous)					1			1
Theft - From Motor Vehic (Accessory/Parts)					1			1
Theft - From Motor Vehicle (License Plate)					1			1

o **Report Titled Correctly:** 96% of the reports were titled correctly, indicating a high level of compliance with documentation protocols.

o **Complainant Cooperation:** Complainant cooperation at the scene was notably high, with 88% of complainants being cooperative. This is crucial for the initial stages of investigation and gathering accurate information.

o **Supplemental Documentation:** 64% of the reports included a supplement explaining the SL code, indicating that this could be further improved.

Auto Theft Division

Report Titled Correctly?	96%
Complainant cooperative at the scene?	88%
Supplement explaining SL?	64%
Complainant contacted?	14%
CLEAR Search conducted?	12%
HPD QAQC completed?	34%
Final disposition code?	96%
Additional follow-up?	4%

65

- o **Complainant Contact Post-Incident:** Post-incident follow-up with complainants was notably low, with only 14% of complainants being contacted. This highlights a significant area for improvement in maintaining communication with complainants.

- o **CLEAR Search Conducted:** Only 12% of cases had a CLEAR search conducted.

- o **HPD QAQC Completion:** QAQC process was completed in 34% of cases. This decreased completion percentage indicates that most cases may lack a final quality check because the officers have not yet been able to review them.

- o **Final Disposition Code:** 96% of the cases had a final disposition code assigned, demonstrating a solid follow-through in case closure procedures. The analysis of final disposition codes reveals that nearly half of the cases fall into the "Suspended - No Leads" category, underscoring the difficulty in finding initial leads for investigation. On the other hand, 32% of cases were effectively resolved through arrests, exceptional clearances, or thorough investigations, demonstrating successful case handling. The "Inactive - No
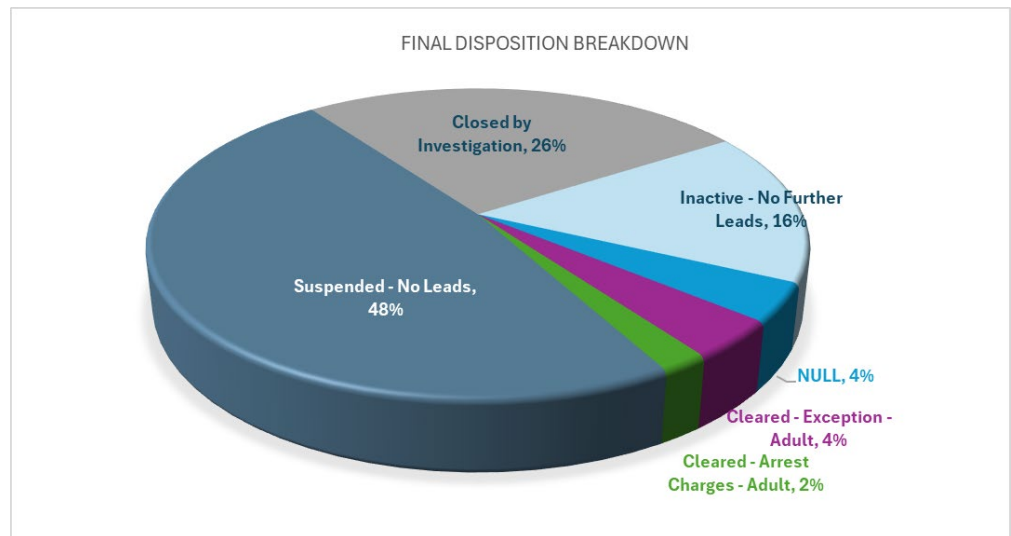
Further Leads" category at 16% shows diligent efforts by investigators, although these did not result in case resolution. This distribution of final dispositions provides a clear view of the effectiveness and challenges within the case resolution process, guiding future strategies for improvement.

- o **Additional Follow-Up:** The review panel required additional follow-up by HPD in only 4% of the cases. This is a positive outcome, indicating that the majority of cases were deemed thorough enough not to necessitate further investigation.

The data analysis of the Auto Theft Division reports revealed several strengths while also highlighting areas needing improvement. Addressing these gaps can lead to improved case management and more effective resolution of auto theft incidents.

Other Divisions

Fifteen percent (15%) of the sample consisted of a review of incidents across various divisions within the department, revealing critical insights into the accuracy of reporting, classification of misdemeanors, statute of limitations, supplemental explanations, quality assurance, and final case dispositions. The sample included the following offense categories, as summarized in the chart below.

OTHER DIVISIONS REVIEW SUMMARY
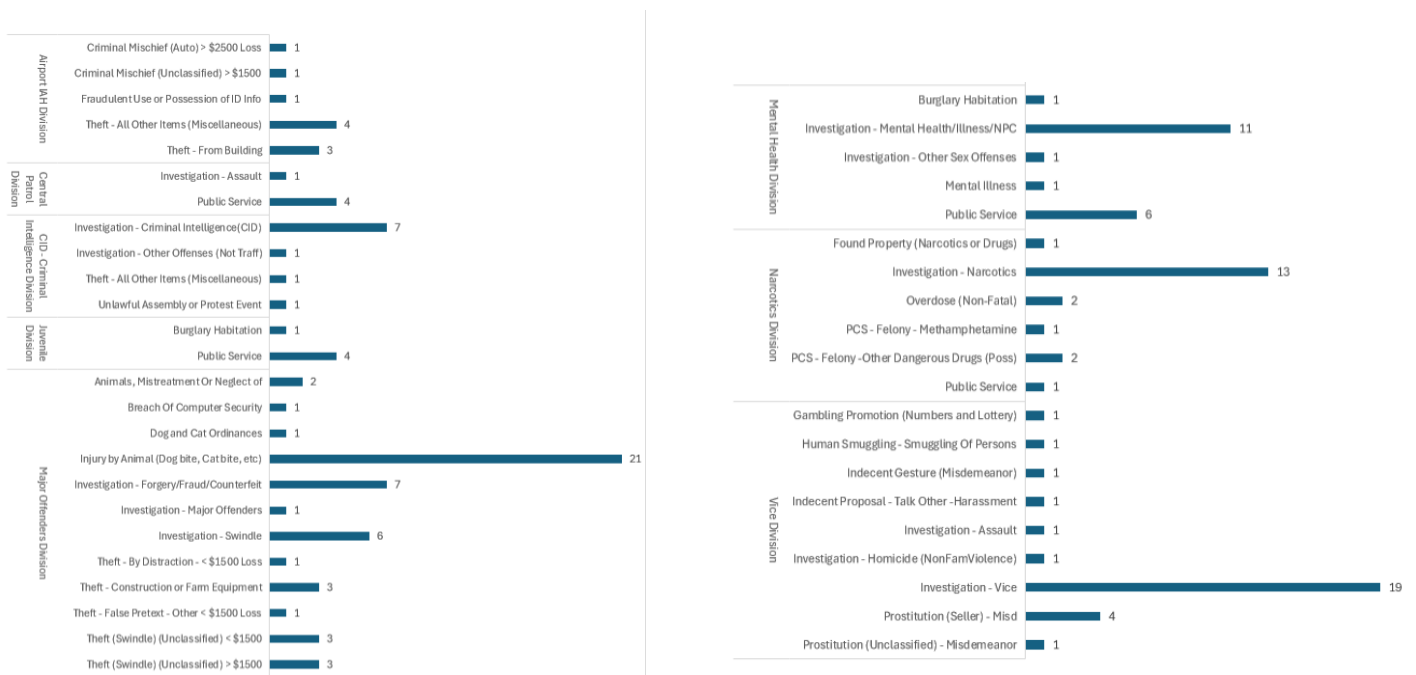
Division	Correct Titling	Completed QAQC	Supplemental Explanation	Final Disposition
Airport IAH	90%	40%	90%	100%
Central Patrol	100%	100%	100%	100%
Criminal Intelligence	90%	100%	60%	100%
Juvenile	100%	100%	100%	100%
Major Offenders	92%	34%	64%	100%
Mental Health	90%	100%	100%	100%

Narcotics	95%	55%	30%	95%
Vice	90%	77%	97%	97%

Airport IAH Division

The Airport IAH Division demonstrates strong performance with a 90% completion rate in Correct Titling and Supplemental Explanation. However, the division shows some room for improvement in Completed QAQC, where it achieved 40%. Despite this, the division successfully completed 100% of its final dispositions, indicating strong overall case resolution.

Central Patrol Division

The Central Patrol Division sets a high standard by achieving a perfect 100% completion rate across all categories: Correct Titling, Completed QAQC, Supplemental Explanation, and Final Disposition. This indicates a highly efficient and effective process throughout all stages of case management.

Criminal Intelligence Division

The Criminal Intelligence Division shows robust performance with 90% in Correct Titling and a perfect 100% in both Completed QAQC and Final Disposition. The division's performance in Supplemental Explanation is slightly lower at 60%, suggesting some room for further enhancement in this area.

Juvenile Division

The Juvenile Division mirrors the strong performance of the Central Patrol Division, achieving 100% across all categories. This consistency highlights the division's thoroughness and effectiveness in case handling and resolution.

Major Offenders Division

The Major Offenders Division presents a mixed performance. While it achieves 92% in Correct Titling and 100% in Final Disposition, its Completed QAQC rate is relatively low at 34%, and its Supplemental Explanation rate stands at 64%. This indicates potential areas for improvement in ensuring quality assurance and comprehensive explanations.

Mental Health Division

The Mental Health Division shows consistent and strong results, with 90% in Correct Titling and a perfect 100% in both Completed QAQC and Final Disposition. Its performance in Supplemental Explanation is also commendable, achieving 100%.

Narcotics Division

The Narcotics Division demonstrates solid performance, with 95% in correct titling and 95% in final disposition, indicating a strong end-to-end case management process. However, there is some variability in Completed QAQC (55%) and Supplemental Explanation (30%), which suggests areas where the division could focus on enhancing process completion and detailed explanations.

Summary

Across the divisions, there is a clear emphasis on achieving high completion rates in Final Disposition, with most divisions reaching 100% in this area. The divisions also generally perform well in Correct Titling. However, there is variability in Completed QAQC and Supplemental Explanation, with some divisions performing exceptionally well while others show room for improvement. The overall trend suggests that while final outcomes are robust, the processes leading up to them could benefit from further attention to ensure consistent quality and thoroughness across the department.
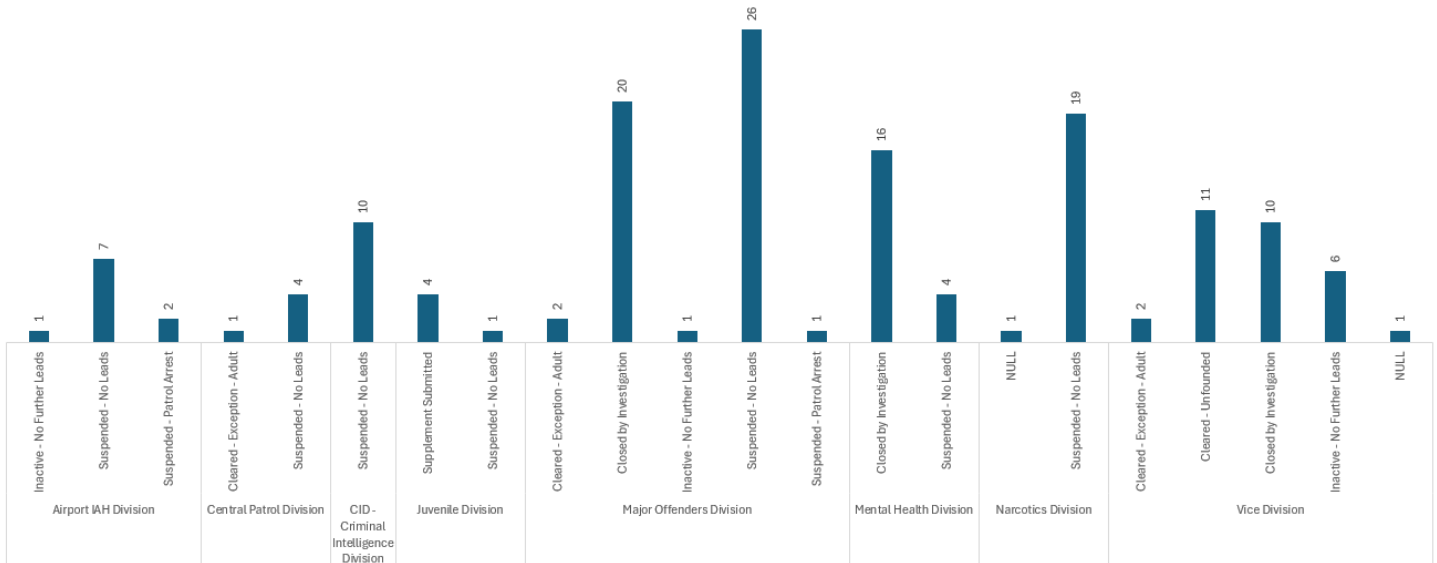
RECOMMENDATIONS

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS
INTERIM REPORT

The Committee proposed the following preliminary recommendations prior to the release of this report:

Department-wide Recommendations

1. Adopt written directives to ensure clear communication and consistent implementation of department-wide policy changes. These directives will comprehensively outline new policies, undergo rigorous review and approval, and be promptly distributed to all personnel.
2. Attendance protocols for all Executive Staff meetings and Command Staff meetings to ensure effective communication, collaboration, and decision-making.
3. Meeting Minutes recorded to document key decision points.
4. General Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for RMS and Case Management.
5. Case assignment process must have reasonable/workable timelines which consider factors such as case complexity, priority level, available resources, and departmental workload.
6. Supervisory review or chain of command approval before an investigation is suspended or made inactive.
7. Simplify RMS offense titles ensuring they are consistent with the Texas Penal Code.

Special Victims Division Recommendations:

8. Process to consistently review "bucketed" incident reports for CODIS notifications and necessary follow up investigation required.[49]
9. Collaborate with the HFSC to develop SOPs specific to lab results.
10. Create a process to ensure all lab results are uploaded to RMS in a timely manner.
11. Ensure 24-hr availability of SVD investigators for incident referral or questions.
12. Improved coordination with victim services outside of HPD.
13. Updated victim notification protocols that include input from the HAWC.
14. Mandatory HAWC administered 55-hr training for all members of SVD.

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[49] HPD uses the term "bucket" to refer to the divisional and unit level inboxes where incident reports are routed for handling. For example, the Homicide Division Commander has a "bucket" named HD; all homicide incident reports are initially routed to the "HD Bucket."

15. Co-facilitated victim and trauma-centered training at the patrol level in the Academy plus a yearly refresher for all officers.

16. Regarding incident reports with a final disposition of INAC – No leads, where the victim-survivor could not be located there should be enhanced collaboration with victim service organizations and human trafficking agencies.

17. When scheduling Forensic Interview with victims, allow victim-survivor to schedule an interview at the convenience of their individual schedule. The timing of the interview shall not be solely dependent on the availability of the investigator.[50]

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

> 1. The Committee recommends, in addition to the creation of case management SOPs, HPD review divisional SOPs on a consistent basis or as needed to account for legal updates and departmental policy changes.

The Committee recommended the department develop comprehensive division-wide case management SOPs that provide clear and comprehensive policy. Comprehensive documentation of the procedures and protocols governing the use of RMS and handling of cases within the department and specifically at the divisional level. This documentation should cover critical aspects such as data entry, retrieval, storage, security protocols, case assignment, tracking, and closure procedures.

Each investigative division should have SOPs outlining investigative protocol expectations for investigators to reference. In addition to updating and creating SOPs outlining case management and investigative protocols, the Committee recommends that RMD conduct a consistent review of the SOPs with the divisional investigators. The investigators use these SOPs daily, so their buy-in not only creates uniformity but also ensures that the SOPs are practical at the investigative level.

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[50] During the course of our review, we learned that many victim survivors were provided a small scheduling window for their forensic interview dependent on the availability of the investigator. For example, victim survivors were expected to schedule an interview during their work week and during business hours only, specifically being told that due to overtime constraints, interviews could not be scheduled on the weekends or after 2pm on the weekdays. This investigative process should be victim-centered and primarily take into account the availability of the victim's schedule.

In addition to the interim recommendations specific to SVD's SOPs, the Committee recommends that current SVD SOPs are updated to comply with legislative mandates, including HB 4628 and HB 3957 and are updated in conjunction with new legislative mandates in a timely manner.[51, 52] Moreover, SOPs are recommended to include guidance on how to interact with victims in a trauma-informed way; highlighting how the importance of maintaining a good relationship with the victim is often linked to the success of the case. Likewise, the department should create policy and protocol surrounding how DART units and VSD generally can and should interact with various divisions in the department including patrol. Moreover, all divisional SOPs need to have guidelines and protocols on timely property disposition and destruction if necessary.

> 2. The Committee recommends HPD create a defined case management unit into the organizational chart of every investigative division.

The Committee's review revealed an overwhelming majority of incident reports remained in suspended status coded as either SU—suspended no leads or INAC—suspended no further leads. For incident reports categorized as SU during the case management process, the case management team should establish a protocol which requires them to conduct a consistent review of cases suspended during the case management phase. What the Committee found is that far too often, once reports were suspended there was little to no review of them for improvement of solvability factors after their initial classification by personnel within the case management team. Additionally, the Committee recommends a consistent audit conducted by RMD of those reports deemed low priority or low solvability.

> 3. The Committee recommends HPD ensure the new RMS has the necessary capabilities to provide case management and investigative support to the department.

The Committee recommends HPD simplify case coding where appropriate, so that case dispositions match the activity code. The Committee further recommends that the new RMS has an activity log, so divisional leadership can monitor investigative action taken on a case in a more efficient way. In addition to staffing issues, the Committee identified issues that plagued the department, which included case

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[51] *See* HB4628 which requires crime labs and law enforcement to share information with each other in a timely manner after a rape kit is teste and DNA matches in the CODIS database occur.
[52] *See* HB 3957.

management software that is inefficient, outdated, and inadequate to support investigative operations. The new RMS should have advanced caseload management and data analysis capabilities.

4. The Committee recommends that upon implementation of the new RMS, HPD increase the training at the patrol level and create a yearly refresher for all personnel. Additionally, upon transfer to a new division or unit, division specific RMS training should be created so stakeholders are able to provide feedback for processes and protocols.

5. The Committee recommends HPD improve the department's case management analytics.

The fact is that while most RMS systems do offer some case management capabilities, they typically do not offer "out of the box" the robust case management tools that are required to run modern investigative units charged with complex investigations. This leaves many investigative units to fend for themselves and utilize piecemeal solutions that can often compromise investigations. HPD should seek all avenues to ensure that the new RMS system is equipped with the necessary case management add-ons to provide investigative support. Updated police investigation software should focus on removing silos and bringing divisions together. While recognizing that security of sensitive data is of utmost importance, technology has matured so much that cloud-based solutions have now become an easy choice compared to conventional on-premises hosted solutions. Despite common misconceptions, a properly managed cloud-based solution, "government cloud," can actually prove to be more secure, reliable, and accessible for the department.

6. The Committee recommends HPD standardize system changes involving any system platform that requires involvement of OPDG.

Some areas of the department have been resistant and continue to operate in a silo. It usually happens when there is an operational need that seemingly "can't wait" for normal process and review - but what it does, is create systems that have either bad data - or data that cannot be explained and maintained appropriately. The main function of OPDG over the next five years should be standardizing and informing data collection systems in the department.

To address the data accuracy issues and improve future data collection and reporting processes, the Department should: (1) Implement standardized data collection and reporting procedures across all

divisions; (2) Conduct regular audits of the data via HPD Risk Management Division to ensure accuracy and consistency; (3) Provide training to staff on the importance of accurate data entry and reporting.

7. The Committee recommends HPD standardize crime analysis among divisions and ensure that each investigative division has at least one (1) crime or staff analyst.

Data analytics works by bringing together large amounts of data in a variety of ways in an attempt to uncover previously unseen patterns. Criminal justice data is making a difference in a number of areas, including response planning, crime prevention, criminal identification, and risk assessment. Crime analysts provide valuable insights to law enforcement agencies that optimize their efforts to reduce crime.[53] They also help law enforcement executives with resource allocation, personnel deployment, and strategic decision making. The value of integrating crime analysis in a department is to increase the effectiveness of the department's crime reduction strategies and direct limited resources in controlling, reducing, and preventing crime. Crime analysts can play multiple roles in the department, including tactical, operational and strategic. Tactical analysis can add value to police operations by increasing situational awareness. Crime analysts also have a significant operational role which can guide leaders in setting near term policing priorities. Identifying "hot spots" of criminal activity to guide officer deployment is a prime example of operational analysis. There is also a strategic role, providing analysis geared toward long-term planning and problem solving.

The department in addition to boosting personnel, should ensure that analysts have the tools necessary to do their job. For crime analysts to be used optimally, the department should be attentive to analysts' training and equipment needs. Without the expertise or the tools of the trade, analysts cannot perform most efficiently and effectively. It is also important that HPD leadership and management across the department understand and appreciate how crime analysts assist the department and the work classified members do. This will help foster an institutional culture in which everyone from the rank-and-file to the top brass values high-quality data and objective analysis.

8. The Committee recommends the OPDG create and maintain a central dashboard.

If the investigative divisions are required to streamline their operations, use a single case management system, and adhere to a common set of terms and definitions, ODPG should build a central dashboard

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[53] *See* Putting Value on Crime Analysts: Considerations for Law Enforcement Executives, March 2014, Vera Institute of Justice; https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/Publications/Vera-CrimeAnalysts.pdf

to minimize the lift of running case management analytics. What became very clear throughout speaking with the investigative divisions is that not one division found the DDS report useful, and all described it as time-consuming. Not one commander had ever been called to discuss the data in the monthly report by the Assistant Chief or anyone at the executive level. Most assistant chiefs admitted they did not "do much" with the report upon receipt. More importantly, the division stressed that they were not trained how to complete the report and had no confidence in the data contained within in it.

A data dashboard is an information management tool that presents real-time data and pulls together key metrics into a visual format. Data dashboards are a tool for turning raw data into actionable information that agencies can use to identify problems, develop strategies, and evaluate outcomes. Data dashboards can organize and present data to serve a wide variety of purposes: (1) Monitoring real-time operations; (2) Supporting long-term strategic purposes; (3) Exploring data patterns or trends; and (4) Locating individual records. Effective data dashboards do more than present users with information about law enforcement topics of interest. Rather, these dashboards streamline the otherwise cumbersome process of extracting information from raw data and prime the user to focus on answers to the right questions.

9. The Committee recommends HPD have a third-party administered performance-based staffing analysis that is tied to productivity.

The purpose of this analysis would be to address significant staffing challenges HPD is currently facing, which includes insufficient hiring and increased employee separations. While agencies give much attention to recruitment and retention, they often overlook a more important question: *How many police officers do you need?* Put another way, what number of officers would help the department most cost-effectively meet the demands placed on it? This is fundamentally different than asking how many officers a community wants. Increased staffing works hand in hand with other recommendations particularly those associated with improved case management strategies. In a perfect world, every division should be staffed such that all cases with leads receive at least some attention. Understaffing has been a consistent theme throughout this review, but HPD leadership cannot expect to ask for more staff without first being able to defend how they are using the current personnel. A reorganization may benefit the department.

When divisions like SVD are consistently under resourced, it presents institutional barriers to the reporting of sex crimes, the investigation of sex crimes, and victim participation in the investigative

process. The committee's review of the SVD incident reports revealed some common trends including an inability to maintain complainant contact throughout the course of an investigation. Chronic understaffing is detrimental to the quality of investigations which in turn jeopardizes prosecutions, re-traumatizes victims, and negatively impacts the reporting of sex crimes. In addition to staffing issues, a review of SVD incident reports revealed a trend where the complainant showed possible links to human trafficking, but these signs went unnoticed at the patrol level and neither the Human Trafficking unit nor victim services were looped in. The same can be said for those victims displaying mental health issues. The Committee did not review a single report that looped in HPD's mental health unit or at the very least documented doing so.

A prime example is the Vice Division. After lengthy discussions with the Vice division, the Committee believes the department would benefit from human trafficking being a stand-alone division outside of Vice so the division could more effectively deal with the human trafficking occurring in our city. Houston has consistently been ranked as number one for the cities with the most human trafficking. Because the human trafficking unit is embedded in Vice, this often necessitates a prostitution-style approach to trafficking. Studies have suggested that this is the least successful way to target the crime as it routinely leads to victim arrest and is focused on the behavior of the victim. Victims of human trafficking play a key role in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers; however, their involvement in the interview process and the information they disclose largely depend on the quality of their interactions with law enforcement. Victims of human trafficking represent a challenging and complex subset of victims. Their characteristics, needs, and relationship with the police and law enforcement's ability to earn their trust and cooperation is unlike other types of victims. The Committee's review of incident reports revealed many reports suggested the victim may display a nexus to human trafficking, however Vice was not notified and thus the ability to investigate the potential crime from the human trafficking perspective was often lost. A refocus of the division would help the department as a whole more effectively deal with this subset of crime. Additionally, the Human Trafficking Unit should continue to collaborate and partner with local organizations and the HCDAO to help the victims obtain the resources they need and seek the justice they deserve.

Another restructuring recommendation centers on victim services. In May 2023, the International Association of Chiefs of Police ("IACP") released a guide to law enforcement agencies to improve victim

services.[54] "When incorporating victim services, agencies should place victim services personnel in the organizational chart in a position that conveys importance and value to the entire department." Response to the needs of crime victims should be a priority for all personnel within the agency and not division specific.

The department is currently facing challenges in optimizing its human resources. Despite having a skilled and capable team, there appears to be a significant gap between the staff's potential and their actual output. The current utilization of employees does not align with their expertise and strengths, leading to underperformance and missed opportunities for leveraging their full capabilities. Additionally, processes and workflows may not be streamlined, causing inefficiencies and redundant efforts. To address these issues, a thorough evaluation of task assignments, workload distribution, and overall team management practices is necessary. This will help ensure that staff members are deployed in roles that best match their skills and that resources are managed in a way that maximizes productivity and effectiveness. Under a restructured division, leveraging data and technology would help execute outcome-based strategies based on best practices. This will begin the process of recreating a culture of trust between the community and HPD.

The Committee proposes that in addition to a third-party staffing analyst, HPD should create a strategic process whereby the Risk Management division consistently audits the department with a focus on staffing efficiency.

> 10. The Committee recommends HPD increase civilian staff to support patrol and investigative operations.

The policing profession is facing a workforce crisis. Even as police departments are struggling to get enough applicants in the door, they need to be raising the bar and looking for applicants with a wider array of talents. This includes civilians. Every division stressed the need for civilian staff to help with administrative duties. At one point, HPD had a much larger civilian staff; however, budget cuts slashed that number by more than half. What resulted was a huge disruption in department operations. To combat that moving forward, divisions began assigning classified employees administrative jobs, thereby taking them away from primarily law enforcement duties. The department needs to conduct a comprehensive evaluation to identify and implement technology solutions that can streamline and

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[54] *See* https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/LEV/Publications/KeyConsiderations.pdf.

optimize administrative tasks. This process involves analyzing current workflows to pinpoint inefficiencies and bottlenecks, researching various technological tools and platforms that could enhance productivity, and assessing how these solutions can be integrated into existing systems. By leveraging technology effectively, the department could aim to reduce manual effort, minimize errors, and improve overall operational efficiency, ultimately freeing up valuable time and resources for more strategic initiatives.

Additionally, each division stressed the prolonged and often convoluted hiring process that is required for civilians working in HPD. Part of this is due to the higher threshold of background clearance than regular municipal employees due to the accessibility to sensitive law enforcement information but mainly the archaic approval process that requires multiple layers of approval often through "snail mail." With an already tight budget, it is easy to understand why civilian hires have not been prioritized. But despite the budget outlook, one cannot let the need for increased staffing go unnoticed. In 2014, Chief McClelland outlined how HPD is struggling listing the following:

1. Field two-officer responses to dangerous calls for service;

2. Meet response time goals for Priority Response Code #3, #4, and #5 calls;

3. Maintain adequate visibility as a deterrent to crime in neighborhoods;

4. Sufficiently lower the crime rate through the use of consistent and comprehensive neighborhood interdiction tactics;

5. Adequately enforce traffic laws, which in turn affect mobility;

6. Investigate criminal cases in a timely manner;

7. Successfully clear workable crime cases; and

8. Investigate crashes in a timely manner.

HPD struggles with many, if not all, the same responsibilities today. Every division described a list of administrative responsibilities required of their classified personnel that were a necessary part of the investigation. These tasks could easily be routed to a trained civilian. However, many job applicants cannot wait many months to find employment, MAFV noted the division had been trying to fill civilian positions for over a year. HPD needs to make its application and hiring process as efficient as possible, while still being thorough. This will involve consolidating steps in the application process and using technology to process information more quickly and efficiently. The City must also prioritize job stability for civilian positions within the department. Typically, when the police department must cut its budget,

civilians are the first to go; however, when civilians are cut from essential positions their spots will once again be backfilled with classified members, thus resulting in fewer officers on the streets.

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11. The Committee recommends HPD create a career path structure in the department for both classified and civilian personnel.

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HPD needs to assess what their officers want in a career and explore ways to broaden officers' experiences and career planning opportunities. A formal plan that allows officers to grow and develop new skill sets will pay back dividends to the officers, the department and the community. For most law enforcement agencies, this structured process is known as a progression plan and normally incorporates the use of rotational assignments in job duties outside of patrol. The common theme is to provide standardized training, education and experience requirements for each rank and level of leadership within the agency, along with rotational assignment opportunities for every officer to develop the skills needed to perform at each level and progress to the next. Many officers find that once the probationary period ends, they are left with little or no career guidance or progression. This often leads to burnout. With staffing being a central issue to HPD, they should take every measure to keep and incentivize their current personnel. This applies to civilians as well. The Committee recommends that HPD develop a step-up program similar to the federal government for civilian hires as a way to elevate pay and credentials.[55]

From 2009 until 2016, HPD had what was called the Investigative First Responders Division ("IFR"), a hybrid patrol-investigation division, in which uniformed patrol officers continued to investigate the calls to which they initially responded. The calls were typically crimes that investigative units would have given lower priority. The division had been a part of a philosophy for the department to create a career path for investigators to fight crime more effectively with a smaller force. It also freed up senior investigators, allowing them to tackle more complex cases. After speaking with multiple members of the department, the Committee learned that many classified members were transferred into investigative units with no investigative experience. This included all ranks up to Commander. There was often little consideration given to the members' wants either, despite morale being something every department must be cognizant of. What the department is overlooking is that the level of expertise of the investigator can also contribute to case management. This is a way to help patrol officers who eventually want to work in an investigative division gain the necessary experience and be more successful later. Through the use of

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[55] *See* Within-Grade Increases (opm.gov) for detailed information regarding this federal program.

career guidance and enhancement tool, HPD can create an environment where officers continue to take on new challenges in diverse roles that will help them prepare for increased responsibilities. Officers will be continually motivated and thus feel a greater sense of job satisfaction. This kind of career path structure provides sustainability to the department as well as continuity of operations by continually advancing officers. Many of today's officers are interested in a different set of incentives, such as diversity of assignments; opportunities to learn and develop new skills; more flexible scheduling to support a desirable work-life balance; regular and more frequent promotional exams and having mentors they can turn to.

> 12. The Committee recommends HPD create and provide supervisory and leadership training for every rank, that goes beyond the logistics of using case management software.

What became clear after speaking with leadership at various levels was that the department did not provide consistent training and guidance for them to be effective in their current role. The lack of thorough, proactive police management training looms even larger as many older, experienced officers are heading into retirement. This will create upper-level vacancies that are often filled by officers with little to no formal leadership management and training. Leading a division or unit in law enforcement is an extremely challenging job that also requires mastery of what are often referred to as "soft skills"— such as communication, team building, problem solving and conflict resolution. This becomes particularly important in HPD when the department already deals with staffing issues and low morale. Leadership skills need to be developed early on to give officers time to grow into senior roles. This means training needs to be offered to officers at every level.

Moreover, now that the suspending of incident reports for violent crimes has been prohibited per updated department policy, HPD needs to strengthen case management training to help supervisors manage investigators with increased caseloads. Investigative case management is a structured approach that manages investigations from beginning to end. It involves setting clear objectives, creating detailed plans, and maintaining effective communication. While no investigation is exactly the same, cases still need structure. Investigations need to be carried out in a repeatable, consistent manner. There's a baseline of tasks that must be done for different types of investigations. Not everything will pertain to that particular case but staying on track with the correct flow of an investigation will ensure that the case moves forward. This can only be achieved when divisional leadership possesses the tool and skill set to effectively manage their team.

13. The Committee recommends HPD create collaborative training opportunities between HFSC, HAWC and HCDAO at both the patrol level and with the investigative divisions.

Multiagency collaboration is a force multiplier when it comes to meaningful improvement. Recognizing the pivotal role of patrol officers in responding to and supporting victims of crime, the committee proposes integrating co-facilitated victim and trauma-centered training into the curriculum at the Academy for patrol-level officers. Additionally, a yearly refresher course is recommended to ensure that all officers stay up to date with best practices and remain sensitive to the needs of victims. Today, investigators with a fundamental knowledge and understanding of how to identify, preserve and collect evidence properly can solve cases in more efficient ways. This not only serves the needs of SVD but also all investigative divisions. Investigative divisions should have written policies requiring officers thoroughly, accurately, and intelligently document evidence that is collected and they must be trained on how to properly do so. If they do not follow proper protocol, the evidence has the potential to become contaminated and lose its evidentiary value. Regular collaborative training with HFSC at the patrol level and on a yearly basis with the investigative divisions will ensure that officers are equipped with the most up-to-date knowledge and skills to investigate their cases. This includes but is not limited to CODIS training, training on how to properly secure and voucher evidence as well as training about evaluating things for evidentiary value and how to determine what is good evidence.

Engage in collaborative discussions with representatives from HAWC to seek their input and expertise in updating victim notification protocols. These discussions shall include reviewing existing protocols, identifying gaps or areas for improvement, and exploring best practices in victim-centered notification. Given the unique nature of sex crimes, investigating them requires a time-intensive approach that focuses on the victim. Increased collaboration with HAWC will help investigators acquire training and expertise necessary for trauma-informed interview techniques. These types of investigations are often non-linear in nature, requiring multiple victim interviews with frequent pauses during the investigation and gaining a better understanding the unique nature of this process will help not only the victim, but the department as well.

Moreover, increased collaboration through training and professional development with HCDAO has the potential not only to improve the investigations for the assigned officers but also to make the transition from investigation to prosecution smoother with a higher chance of a positive prosecutorial outcome. In Harris County, prosecutors determine which individuals should be charged or diverted and which cases

should be dropped. The primary goals of both HPD and HCDAO are to ensure public safety and reduce victimization. Achieving these goals through practices that are efficient, effective, and fair is paramount to the integrity and reliability of the system. Fostering and strengthening the relationship between HCDAO and HPD should remain a priority.

14. The Committee recommends HPD continually assess the needs of the SVD division and other investigative areas with a family violence nexus, by having closed cases reviewed and audited with service providers and advocates to ensure that the cases align with the department's victim-centered approach.
15. The Committee recommends HPD create a means of communication between divisional commanders and higher-level staff that suits the needs of the individual divisions beyond simply asking for monthly stat reports.

Instead of the large group weekly and monthly meetings, it would be beneficial to have smaller, more focused meetings where all stakeholders have an interest in the content shared, something similar to a SitRep but at the divisional command level. This will help ensure and promote consistency in the department.

HPD leadership should provide guidance to all levels of supervisors on the expectations of the flow of communication between various levels. Meetings and discussions should be proactive as opposed to reactive in nature.

16. The Committee recommends HPD should routinely and consistently examine areas where technology can aid the investigative divisions.

Modern police technology has allowed police agencies to find innovative ways to leverage new technologies as tools in order to improve public safety. One of the most significant ways technology has improved policing is through communication and coordination. Police technology plays a crucial role in modernizing police department operations. When one discusses how technology affects agency staffing, it is usually done in terms of the impact on an organization as a "force multiplier." The phrase force multiplier can best be described as the capacity to increase the effectiveness of a force without actually increasing the number of people within an organization.

Technological advances in recent years have changed the nature of policing so significantly that many methods and tools from just a decade ago have become antiquated and incompatible with current technology. In addition to ensuring that RMS is upgraded to address the case management needs of the department, upgrades more adequately in evidence and digital forensic technology can assist with the resolution of more advanced and technical crimes and allows officers to investigate crimes and locate criminals more efficiently and more quickly. When deciding what technologies to acquire, HPD should seek buy-in from the individual divisions and rank-and-file to ensure understanding and success at all levels. Strategic training for classified personnel on the ways to effectively utilize technology could also improve policing in the department.

The future of police and law enforcement lies in the ability to adapt and adjust to new technologies with the continued support of the local government and the community. This requires a mutual understanding that technology promotes objectivity and efficiency allowing police to do a better job.

> 17. The Committee recommends HPD present to City Council and the Mayor yearly or as needed on how any lack of resources may affect public safety.

Overview ⬤
Analysis ⬤
Findings ⬤
Recommendations ⬤

CONCLUSION

Overall, while the report underscores several strengths in current practices, particularly in complainant support and case resolution, it also identifies areas for process improvement, especially in investigation thoroughness and data accuracy. This review has identified suggested areas of improvement within HPD. Unfortunately, this cannot be done by the department alone. The identified recommendations largely stem from the overwhelming volume of incident reports and limited time and resources available for resolution. Addressing these concerns requires substantial resources, technology, personnel, and infrastructure investment. However, the crux lies in consistently managing operational issues across the board, ensuring that the objectives outlined in this assessment are implemented administratively and unilaterally. The Committee's review and assessment endeavors to formulate precise, feasible, and actionable recommendations, with the ultimate aim of effecting positive change within the department.

It is worth noting that in Chief McClelland Jr.'s *Proposed Operational Staffing Enhancements for the Houston Police Department*, he made it clear to both the current administration as well as the sitting council members in 2014:

> **"The manner in which data is analyzed and the methods used to deploy officers cannot replace the inevitable need of additional personnel at some point in the future. Failure to acknowledge this will ultimately result in missed opportunities for impacting crime and disorder. To the extent funding allows, it is wiser to build up capacity over time as opposed to waiting until a crisis appears, and we find ourselves 'playing catchup.' Being in a position to prevent, or at least minimize crime and disorder problems saves a lot of grief and regret for every potential victim."**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ellen Cohen (Chair)

Ellen Cohen, a former member of the Texas House of Representatives (2007-2011) and former Houston City Council Member and Mayor Pro Tem (2012-2020), is a now retired and well-respected public servant. During her tenure in Council, she championed eliminating the over 6,000 sexual assault kit backlog, the historic Pension Reform Package agreement, and many other initiatives to improve the quality of life of her constituents. Before being an elected official, she served for 18 years as the President and CEO of the Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC), focusing on eliminating domestic violence and sexual assault against women in the Houston area.

Captain Jeff Owles

Captain Jeff Owles has a long history of public service as a law enforcement officer. He is currently with the Texas Rangers, a Division of the Texas Department of Public Safety. He has over 21 years of law enforcement experience with the Department and over 12 years of service in the Texas Rangers. Captain Owles holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master peace officer proficiency certificate from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement. He has been previously recognized for his dedication and service to maintaining law and order in Texas.

Christina Nowak

Christina Nowak was appointed Deputy Inspector General of the Office of Policing Reform and Accountability for the City of Houston in September 2023. Nowak started her career as an Assistant District Attorney in Bronx County in New York City, prosecuting narcotics cases and specializing in the prosecution of gangs and homicides. After her decade-long career as a prosecutor, she joined the New York City Department of Education's Office of Special Investigations as Deputy Director. From there, Nowak joined the New York City Fire Department as Deputy Director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Office.

Rev. Leon Preston

The Reverend T. Leon Preston II answered the call to ministry and was licensed in January 1978 at the Greater Christian Hope Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. Serving as Pastor of Yale Street Baptist Church since 2009, he has been recognized as a humble servant. He led the congregation to significant growth, boasting a current attendance of 500 members at Sunday Morning Worship services. Rev. Preston's journey includes service in the Churches of God in Christ, where he was ordained as an Elder in 1989, and his years of experience in divinity aided him in his current role as a Law Enforcement Chaplain for the Harris County Constables Office.

Arturo Michel

Arturo G. Michel was appointed City Attorney for the City of Houston in December 2020, previously in that role from 2004 to 2010. Michel was a partner at Husch Blackwell LLP before becoming the head of the City's Legal Department. In addition to his public service, Michel enjoyed a long and distinguished career in private practice, focusing on public governance, litigation, labor, elections, K-12 and higher education, contracts, and procurement.