

Annual Report – Cold Case Task Force

To the Colorado House and Senate Judiciary Committees (Section 24-33.5-109(8), C.R.S.)

October 1, 2015

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

There are sixteen members of the Cold Case Task Force. The Senate President and the Speaker of the House each appoint two family representatives, as well as one chief of police and one sheriff. The Executive Director of the Colorado District Attorneys' Council (CDAC) appoints three district attorneys (representing rural, suburban and urban offices). The Governor appoints two representatives of statewide victim advocacy organizations and the forensic pathologist. The appointees to these positions are limited to serving two consecutive terms. Two positions are filled by statutory designation (Executive Director of the Department of Public Safety, or his/her designee; and the Attorney General, or his/her designee).

Current members:

Laura Saxton (Family Representative); appointed by Senate President (first term 2015-2018)
Sean Gruno (Family Representative); reappointed by Senate President (second term 2015-2018)
Chief Douglas Stephens (Littleton Police Department); appointed by Senate President (first term 2015-2018)
Sheriff William Elder (El Paso County); appointed by Senate President (first term 2015-2018)
Ramona Blee (Family Representative); reappointed by Speaker of the House (second term 2015-2018)
Rhonda Fields (Family Representative); appointed by Speaker of the House (first term 2015-2018)
Sheriff Bill Masters (San Miguel County); appointed by Speaker of the House (first term 2015-2018)
Chief Greg Testa (Boulder Police Department); appointed by Speaker of the House (first term 2015-2018)
Dr. Amy Martin (Forensic Pathologist); appointed by Governor (serving unexpired term 2012 - 2015)
Mark Hurlbert, Assistant District Attorney, 18th Judicial District – (*Representing Urban District Attorneys, 2013-2016, appointed by Exec. Dir, CDAC*)
Ryan Brackley, Assistant District Attorney, 20th Judicial District (*Representing Suburban District Attorneys, 2010-2013; 2013-2016; appointed by Exec. Dir., CDAC*)
Jim Bullock, District Attorney, 16th Judicial District (*Representing Rural District Attorneys, 2013-2016, appointed by Exec. Dir. CDAC*)
Sterling Harris (*Statewide Victim Organization*) - appointed by Governor (first term 2013-2016)
Tina Terry (*Statewide Victim Organization*) - appointed by Governor (serving an unexpired first term 2013-2016)
Scott Turner, Deputy Attorney General (*Statutory position*)
Michael Rankin, Director, Colorado Bureau of Investigation (Chair) (*Statutory position*)

COLD CASE TASK FORCE MEETINGS

10 am-noon
 690 Kipling St. Lakewood

November 7, 2014
 February 6, 2015
 May 1, 2015
 August 7, 2015

Please join us – All are welcome!

**VISIT THE NEW CDPS
 WEBSITE
 FIND COLD CASE
 INFORMATION AT**

<https://sites.google.com/a/state.co.us/cdps-prod/home/cold-case>



TRAINING UPDATE P.O.S.T. Board Grants

An on-going need identified by law enforcement agencies is for competent and specialized Cold Case Investigation training. The Cold Case Task Force has remained focused on this identified need, and supports the classes that have been presented across the state.

The CBI Cold Case Analyst continues to review and update the curriculum as needed to ensure the course aligns with the best practices and the constant changes in technology regarding the testing of crime scene evidence.

With the funds obtained from P.O.S.T. in 2014-2015, the CBI was able to provide the following Cold Case Homicide Investigation Best Practices classes:

Cold Case Training, Lakewood, CO - January 7 – 8, 2015
Cold Case Training, Douglas County, CO - June 2 – 3, 2015

CBI was again successful in obtaining P.O.S.T. Board training funds for 2015-2016, in the amount of \$11,580.00. These funds will continue to support Cold Case and Missing Person training classes. Upcoming sessions are scheduled:

January 2016 – Denver, CO
May 2016 – Pueblo, CO

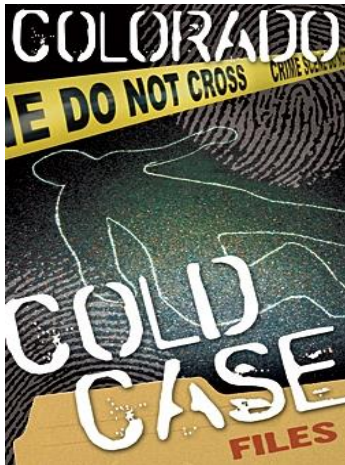
Training sessions continue to serve 25-35 participants

COLD CASE PLAYING CARDS

The Cold Case Playing Card Program has been in play here in Colorado for nearly a year. This year the CBI was able to create and distribute another 5,000 decks of playing cards to replenish and add to the playing card program. The new decks of playing cards were distributed to both the Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC) and the more densely populated local detention facilities across the state. These two additional editions feature another 104 cases. The phone is ringing and tips are coming in based solely on the distribution of these playing cards. Hopefully, new information will continue to come from these cards and assist investigators in solving these cases. In the future we hope to make the cold case playing cards available for purchase at the commissary within the local detention facilities.

2014-2015 EFFORTS AND OUTREACH

- CBI personnel continue to participate in law enforcement training efforts when requested
- The Cold Case Task Force (Members and attendees), along with other CBI staff and law enforcement officers from agencies across the state, participated in the Annual FOHVAMP Conference, Saturday, October 4, 2014 at The Brittany Hill in Thornton. The Task Force Members led a panel discussion about cold cases in Colorado.
- The 2015 Annual FOHVAMP Conference combined with the 1st Annual Memorial Walk was held this year on Sunday, August 30, 2015 at Clement Park in Littleton, CO. The event was attended by members of the Cold Case Task Force, Co-victims and local law enforcement officers from across the state.



REQUESTS FOR CBI ASSISTANCE

The statute (Section 24-33.5-425(3) (a) and (b), CRS), provides that local law enforcement agencies (on their own initiative or at the request of family members) can request CBI investigative assistance with cold homicide cases. During this past year, CBI has received 21 requests for assistance with investigation, analysis, case organization, and forensic evidence review of cold cases. We have seen a slight decline in the number of requests due in part to the conclusion of the NIJ Grant last year. However, just this month we were contacted by a local agency and asked to assist in various ways with more than 50 separate cases.

COLD CASE REVIEW TEAM

The Cold Case Review Team continues to be a “best practices” effort. The participation of the team members (who volunteer their time) continues to be remarkable. The value of this effort comes from the breadth of knowledge and experience of the members. The experts include individuals from the CBI Forensic Laboratory and CBI Investigations, the Coroners’ Association, detectives and investigators from police and sheriffs’ departments, representatives from the Attorney General’s office, Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance (COVA) and the FBI, as well as forensic pathologists, and prosecutors. The team meets 2-4 times per year. When cases are presented for review by the investigating jurisdiction, it is important that the current and past investigators, the DAs, and any laboratory personnel attend. If the case has ties to more than one jurisdiction, investigators and prosecutors from each jurisdiction are encouraged to participate.

The foundation of success for this review process is the generous sharing of knowledge and expertise by the members who represent the various disciplines. The Review Team members and their agencies are contributing many hours to these efforts. CBI and the Cold Case Task Force members continue to encourage agencies to take full advantage of this resource available to cold case investigations. Agencies which have used the team have been very pleased with the process. Just a few weeks ago the 18th Judicial District, along with the Aurora Police Department was able to prosecute and convict Jon D. Harrington of the 2003 homicide of Carolyn Jansen. This case was presented to the Cold Case Review Team in December of 2010.

The Review Team met 3 times this year. The dates and presenting agencies are below:

February 17, 2015

Commerce City Police Department presented the 2008 homicide of Marco Escalera
Commerce City Police Department presented the 1999 homicide of Calvin Collins

May 19, 2015

La Plata County Sheriff’s Office presented the 2012 homicide of Dylan Redwine

September 29, 2015

Douglas County Sheriff’s Office presented the 1993 Jane Doe Case
Attorney General’s Office presented the 1987 homicide of Peggy Hettrick

CBI DATABASE UPDATE

Updating the database has been a priority. Each year, more cases fall into the “at least three years old” criteria. The CBI has created a procedure that provides calendar year-end contact with all Colorado law enforcement agencies, requesting submission of additional cases that have aged to three years. Just as it is critical that cases are added, agencies have also notified the CBI when cases have been solved and arrests have been made.

It is important that the database remain dynamic so that it provides the best available information. During the past year, improvements and additions were made, ensuring that as much detail as possible is available, with revisions to victim demographics and photographs, as well as augmentations to case narratives. In September of 2013, the database was upgraded, adding data fields and functionality, including more robust search capabilities. Security features which allowed better tracking of changes made to the database were also included. In the year since these upgrades were completed we are happy to report we have not identified any new needs in the way of functionality and have been able to focus on database content. To that end in recognition of the National Day of Remembrance on September 25, 2015, the CBI created a press release focusing on the victims in these cases and asking families to review the database to ensure the information available is both accurate and complete.

The CBI database currently lists 1,615 cases (1,330 Homicides; 247 Missing Persons; 31 Unidentified Remains, and 7 “Other” [pending determination by the law enforcement agency as to whether the victim is missing or a homicide victim]). Because of the possibility that individuals who are listed as “missing persons or “unidentified remains” may be victims of homicide, the Cold Case Task Force supported the addition of these categories to the CBI database. While FOHVAMP also maintains a database, there will always be a disparity between the two as CBI does not include out of state cases or ones that have been determined to be suicides by the coroner.

DISCUSSION TOPICS; ON-GOING ISSUES

Much collaboration has been done to share issues and concerns among the Task Force participants. The members and attendees have had the opportunity to better understand the challenges and perspectives of others; the co-victims, law enforcement and prosecutors. But there are still issues that are under discussion:

- Although the economy has improved, law enforcement agencies, including the CBI, continue to experience resource challenges. A priority for CBI and for the Department of Public Safety continues to be to support the investigative efforts of all law enforcement agencies seeking resolution of cold homicide cases. Searching for justice for the victims and their family members, as well as the community as a whole, continues to be a goal and priority. Often there is more than one response to a problem. For Cold Cases, the CBI and the Department of Public Safety will continue to provide leadership to the Cold Case Review Team. CBI has also expanded capabilities through the use of interns and volunteers. Updating the Cold Case Training so that it is relevant and available throughout the state continues to be a priority so that law enforcement, prosecutors and coroners will have the best available knowledge to help them solve these cases.
- CBI staff members (Investigation Section and Forensic Laboratory) continue to consult with law enforcement agencies on their cold cases in a variety of ways. These discussions provide additional avenues for case resolutions. The partnerships have been developed over the past eight years will only improve outcomes. We continue to raise awareness about the importance of communication between law enforcement and co-victims.
- Fully funding the “Cold Case Unit” at CBI that was authorized in the 2007 legislation has never come to fruition. Since then we have seen a dramatic change in the allocation of resources dedicated to cold case efforts in our state. The Task Force will continue to examine best investigation practices, as well as successes in other states, so the Task Force or its individual participants might provide information and recommendations to legislators regarding the need for additional resources at the state level.