

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, 2016

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 (first full term 2015-2018)

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*)

VACANT as of Aug 5, 2016 (*Statewide Victim Organization*) - appointed by Governor (first term 2013-2016)

Rob Wells (*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 6, 2015

February 5, 2016

May 6, 2016

August 4, 2016

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>



COLD CASE PLAYING CARDS/POSTERS

The Cold Case Playing Card Program has been active in Colorado for a couple of years. This year, the CBI again was able to create and distribute another 5,000 decks of playing cards to replenish and add to the existing playing card program. This brings the total number of decks of playing cards to four.

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. This additional edition features another 52 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.

Within the last couple of months we also created a poster for each deck of playing cards. We are working with our law enforcement partners as well as members of the judicial districts to have these posters hung in their offices where members of the public will see them.

2015-2016 EFFORTS AND OUTREACH

- In April 2016, the CBI was able to hire a temporary employee to assist in the review of cases previously identified as open during the 2010 Cold Case Grant. Four cases are in the process of being investigated at this time.
- Members of the Cold Case Task Force participated in the First Annual Missing in Colorado Event held on August 6, 2016 at the Lowry Conference Center. This Event was sponsored by the Longmont Police Department and attended by local law enforcement across the state and members of the CBI.
- The Cold Case Task Force (Members and attendees), along with other CBI staff and law enforcement officers from across the state, plan to participate in the Annual FOHVAMP Conference, Saturday, October 1, 2016 at The Brittany Hill in Thornton. The Task Force Members will provide information previously discussed during the quarterly Cold Case Task Force Meetings.

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

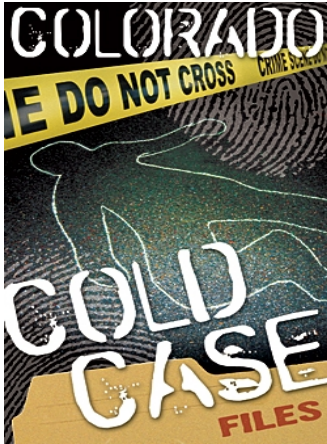
The CBI continues to offer specialized Cold Case Investigation Training with funding obtained through the POST Board Grant.

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 2015-2016, the CBI provided the following Cold Case Homicide Investigation Best Practices classes:

- Cold Case Training, Lakewood, CO –February 23 - 24, 2016
- Cold Case Training, Douglas County, CO - June 22 – 23, 2016

This year, the CBI again obtained P.O.S.T. Board Grant funds for 2016-2017, in the amount of \$17,300.00. These funds will continue to support Cold Case and Missing Person training classes. Upcoming sessions are scheduled:

- January 2017 – Denver, CO
- March 2017 – Grand Junction
- May 2017 – Pueblo, CO



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. In the past year, the CBI has received 53 requests for assistance with the investigation, analysis, case organization, and forensic evidence review of cold 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 both 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

The Review Team met four times this year. The dates and presenting agencies are listed 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

January 6, 2016

FBI presented the History of Scott Kimball
 Westminster Police Department presented the 2004 homicide of Catrina Powell

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 it provides the best available information. During the past year, improvements and additions were made to the database ensuring that as much detail as possible is available, with revisions to victim demographics, photographs and case narratives. To that end, and in recognition of the National Day of Remembrance on September 25, 2016, the CBI created a press release focusing on the victims in these cases and requested families to review the database to ensure the information available is both accurate and complete.

The CBI database currently lists 1,791 cases (1,346 Homicides; 411 Missing Persons; 29 Unidentified Remains, and 5 “Other” [pending determination by the law enforcement agency as to whether the case is a 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. You may notice an increase in the numbers associated with the missing person category. This year, the CBI has worked to increase its quality control procedures to better determine the accuracy of our missing person records. This review in turn causes the need for additional cases to be added to the Cold Case Database. While Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons (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 suicide by the coroner.

DISCUSSION TOPICS; ON-GOING ISSUES

A significant amount of collaboration has taken place 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 the 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. Pursuing 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. The 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. The CBI continues 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 investigative 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.