

Cold Case Task Force Meeting
February 9, 2023
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
In Person – and Virtual - Google Meet

Attendees: Director Chris Schaefer, Audrey Simkins, Kirby Lewis, Hazel Heckers, Dan Mc Casky, Silvia Pettem, Sean Gruno, Joe Vasquez, Rick Life, Missy Woods, Tiffany Rayback, Lisa Yoshida, Tammy Lee, Melissa Mc Gaw, and Melissa Kraker, Katelyn Jenkin, Matt Sailor, Moke Montez, April Hrenya-Wood, Karen Bliss, Michael Cano, Deena Ezzell, Kari Johnson, Michele Kennedy, Carrie Davis, Grant Grosgebauer.

Introductions

Those in attendance were welcomed by Assistant Director Kirby Lewis.

He thanked those in attendance at Colorado Missing Person Day, which was held on February 3, 2023 at the state capital.

CBI Updates

Cold Case Database –

Stats

1353 Homicide
453 Missing Person
81 Unidentified
3 Other

1890 Total

We have 3 interns currently and another will be joining us soon. They have been working on several projects since December.

Several meetings ago we talked about creating slides that would display the victims' name and date of the crime, a photo of the victim and the narrative in the Cold Case Database. We plan to begin sharing these slides via social media in the hopes of raising awareness for these cases. We began this process with missing person cases nearly 6 months ago. The feedback we have received thus far has been very positive. We hope the same will be true for the homicide cases. We are nearly halfway so there is much work still to do. I am hoping with the help of our interns by the time we meet next quarter that these slides will be built, and we will have begun sharing them.

We are also taking this time to review the cold case database. We are reviewing each case to ensure the quality of the photo is good, there are no typos in the case narratives and the

information shared in the narrative is appropriate for the public and that the records are as complete as possible.

We will also be comparing the cases contained in the cold case database to those included in the Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons (FOHVAMP) database. Each year Audrey sends a message to local law enforcement asking that they advise the CBI of any cases that have now reached the 3-year threshold mark from when the crime occurred. Sometimes these cases are provided to FOHVAMP before they are provided to the CBI, so this is a good way to double check that we have not missed any cases.

We will also be reviewing the active missing person records in National Crime Information Center (NCIC) to see which of those cases now meet the 3-year threshold requirement. We estimate that we will need to enter nearly 130 cases as part of this review. This will likely cause the number of missing person cases in the database to skyrocket. In addition, we will also compare the cases in the cold case database to those in the National Missing Unidentified Person System (NAMUS).

We continue to review our old lab files to ensure that all the cases that fit our criteria, unsolved homicide, long-term missing, unidentified remains and sexual assault cases are accounted for.

This is obviously a very large project but with the help of our interns we hope to complete this process by the end of 2024.

Cold Case Review Team -

We have at least 2 agencies, possibly 3 that are interested in presenting their case to the team. We have had a couple of agencies present to the Cold Case Unit and continue to encourage agencies to bring those cases to the Cold Case Review Team.

Cold Case Playing Cards -

The program is still in place. Agencies continue to reach out and ask for replacement decks as they go through them. We are currently on Deck 5. We hope to create a Deck 6 in the future. However, there is currently no timeline for this as there are no funds available. We continue to collect cases so that when the money is available, we have cases to add to the deck. If you have cases you would like to see included, please let us know. We also learned of a new podcast called "The Deck". This podcast only features cases which have been placed in a deck of playing cards. There are several other states across the country that have a playing card program. This is another great way to share information about these cases. The CBI has participated in 1 podcast, and it went well.

Unidentified Human Remains (UHR) Cases –

We continue to reach out to both Coroners and law enforcement agencies regarding unidentified human remains cases in the state of Colorado. Both to ensure that we have an accurate number and to discuss what items of evidence remain in each of these cases and confirm that the sample has been processed and entered into the CODIS database. We are on our 3rd round of calling. The process takes time as many of these cases are older and require research by the coroner or the law enforcement agency to determine what we even have left. We will continue reaching out until we have samples searching in CODIS for each case.

We also came across a new tool in NAMUS that provides a list of possible matches based on the location in which the person went missing as well as the height, weight, eye, hair, age and location. This will be a much larger project that will require us to look more closely to determine if there is a match. If there are no matches and the sample is good enough then the CBI does have funding available to send these cases out for the SNP or WGS analysis through a third party vendor. Currently the genealogy research in these cases is being done in-house with the assistance of Melissa Kraker. We have approximately 8 to 10 cases currently and are waiting for results in another 10 cases. Most of these cases are unidentified human remains cases but here are some sexual assault and homicide cases in the mix as well.

Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG)

The CBI continues to work with local agencies to discuss their cases and the remaining items of evidence to determine what if any additional testing can be done. Based on those conversations several cases have been submitted to the laboratory. This additional analysis is the beginning. As those items of evidence are analyzed and tested the CBI scientist also evaluates those items of evidence to determine if enough genetic material exists to move forward with FGG. The lab work to create the SNP file for the FGG work is still completed through a third-party vendor laboratory. The CBI has purchased equipment over the last couple of years and is in the process of testing/validating some other items now. The genealogy research is now being done in-house for the most part. The CBI does have a dedicated forensic genealogist who is currently going through a certification process. There are other experts in our state and even in this room that are helping to share our program.

Forensic Services

CODIS Numbers -

Total Samples Received	8,005 (Approx 2,338 per month)
Number of Samples profiled	6,029 (Approx 2,010 pr month)
Of those samples profiled	
- Arrestee samples	5,074
- Convicted Offender samples	955

Arrestee	367,461
Convicted Offenders includes Juv. Offenders	216,564
Total number Offenders	584,025

Total CODIS Hits for the Quarter 378 (Approx 126 per month)

163 hits related to property crimes
64 hits related to burglary crimes
47 hits related to sex crimes cases
14 hits related to homicide cases
30 hits related to person crimes
40 hits related to robbery crimes

We continue to see many hits when it comes to property crimes. It is important to continue collecting evidence in these cases so that DNA forensic analysis can be done, which is providing investigative leads in other types of cases in our state.

We often talk about DNA at these meetings but also wanted to mention an upgrade that is happening with the fingerprint system. They are getting a new system and the algorithm that runs in the background is being upgraded. This new system is expected to go live at the end of the calendar year. Once the system is live, we will encourage agencies to resubmit fingerprints in their cold cases that were not previously identified.

New Business

Now that the CBI has a dedicated Cold Case Unit it is important to look ahead to see what does the future of the Cold Case Task Force look like. Initially, this task force was created to begin the conversation about cold case investigations and to develop best practices for these investigations. Since inception 15 years ago the best practices have changed. We have adapted to improvements in old technology. We have seen innovation with new technologies and are developing the best practices around their use. We need to continue to offer educational opportunities to our law enforcement partners and help where we can. We need to continue to seek funding sources to make the use of the latest technology a reality in our cold case investigations.

Some additional places we may want to further review include the following.

- Assist/Support efforts to misdemeanor DNA collection laws in Colorado
- Review existing DNA collection laws to ensure we are compliant (lawfully owed DNA)
- Increase the use of Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP) in our state
- Present regularly to CSOC/CACP/CDAC on best practices around cold case investigation and encourage collaboration with some of these larger topics
- Revamp the Cold Case Training

Recent Successes -

The Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office has had some recent success with the Andrew Graham case which was a homicide case from 2009.

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office has also had some recent success in the 1985 homicide of Roger Dean and a cold sexual assault case using FGG.

The CBI made and identification of a John Doe from 1970 in Lake County with FGG.

The Weld County Sheriff's Office worked with a third-party vendor on the FGG to identify a 2018 John Doe.

Open Forum –

The CBI Cold Case Unit is up and running. We are working on a couple of cold cases. We are in the process of developing policy and procedure for the rules of engagement and are always looking for ways to support those law enforcement agencies in rural Colorado.

General discussion around proposed legislation that would require the collection of DNA in misdemeanor cases.

Colorado has been very good about collecting DNA samples from DOC inmates between 2006 – 2010. Wondering what other states are doing around the collection of DNA from long-time offenders in the state prisons.

General discussion around the collection of dental records for missing persons in Colorado. The suggested time frame to collect these records might be 60 days.

Status of familial testing in Colorado? How will this process work? They are still looking for a way to narrow the females so that the results produced are helpful and the investigating agencies have a way to investigate the investigative lead produced through this testing.

Next Meeting-

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Friday, May 5, 2023. This meeting will be held from 10:00 AM – 12 noon. The meeting will be held at 690 Kipling Street in the first-floor conference room.