

# Sexual Assault Investigations

Austin Police Department

Joseph Chacon, Police Chief

# Sex Crimes Investigations

- Sexual assault is one of the most traumatic types of criminal victimization. Whereas most crime victims find it difficult to discuss their victimization, sexual assault survivors find it especially painful.
- Many survivors of sexual assault are intensely traumatized not only by the humiliation of their physical violation but by the fear of being severely injured or killed.
- APD recognizes this and has dedicated appropriate resources to ensure procedural justice for survivors of sexual assault, as well as wrap-around supportive services.
- Any person who believes they have been sexually assaulted should immediately report the incident to 911.



# APD Sex Crimes Unit Changes - Personnel

- Increases in the number of Sex Crimes investigators
  - June 2017 – Four (4) Detectives
  - October 2019 – Two (2) Detectives
  - March 2019 – One (1) Sergeant
  - January 2021 – One (1) Detective
  - Total Sworn Personnel – 20 Detectives, 3 Sergeants, 1 Lieutenant, 1 Commander
- Retired APD personnel
- APD Increased the number of Victim Service counselors available to assist survivors.
  - The Sex Crimes Unit has five (5) full-time Victim Service Counselors.
  - The Domestic Violence Unit has eight (8) full-time Victim Service Counselors.
  - The Crisis Team has 17 full-time Victim Service Counselors.



# Victim Services Manager

- The Victim Services Manager reports directly to the Chief of Police and attends Executive Staff meetings on a weekly basis.
- The Victim Services Manager has direct access to the Chief and does not need to wait for a meeting; instead, he or she can contact the Chief whenever necessary.



# APD Sex Crimes Unit Changes - Protocols

- June 2019 - A new protocol was implemented in which Victim Services Crisis Response Team Counselors are dispatched to Sex Crime calls alongside Officers.
  - The goal of this protocol is to enhance support given to victims during their initial outcry to law enforcement, to lessen the number of times the victim needs to describe the assault, and to move towards a coordinated response of both law enforcement and counseling support for victims of Sexual Assault.
- Victim Services coordinated the training of over 120 Community Therapists in the trauma focused therapeutic technique of EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing).
  - 50 Community Therapists are solely dedicated to serving survivors of sexual assault.
  - In exchange for this training, the therapists are providing pro bono counseling sessions to victims/survivors of crime.
- Survivor Notification Protocol



# APD Sex Crimes Unit Changes – HB 1172

- Prior to interviewing a victim of sexual assault, HB 1172 requires investigators to offer victims the opportunity to have an advocate from a sexual assault program present during the interview.
- A new APD policy was approved and mandates that any survivor who provides a statement to the Sex Crimes or Family Violence unit be given the option of having an advocate present with them during their interview. They also have the option to have a counselor sit with them, if so desired.



# APD Sex Crimes Unit Training

- Violence Against Women (VAWA) conference
- Alcohol-Facilitated Sexual Assaults
- TAASA (Texas Association Against Sexual Assault) Law Enforcement Sexual Assault Training Conference
- Digital evidence online training
- Trauma Informed Interview training covering Neurobiology of Trauma and Effect on the Brain and Trauma Informed Interviewing – taking place in November 2021
- Training Academy curriculum review



# APD Sex Crimes Unit - In Progress

- PERF audit of cases involving sex crimes – anticipated completion date May 2022
- Sex Crimes Cold Case Unit - protocol and guidelines development
- Sexual Assault Response and Resource Team (SARRT) monthly meeting participation





# Questions?

APD Sex Crimes Unit