

**COLD CASE SQUADS**  
**Colorado POST Approved**  
**Course # IH0005**

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“To the living we owe respect; to  
the dead we owe the truth”

Voltaire

# COLD CASE

An unsolved homicide or missing person where the originally assigned detective is no longer in homicide or able to actively investigate the case.

A case that has been inactive for a period of time

Unsolved-no known suspects

Unresolved-suspect known/ suspected but not prosecuted

Unidentified victim

# WHY????

A homicide investigation is never closed until the perpetrator is held accountable

It gives hope to the families of victims

The information may help solve other cases

Can help identify what steps should be taken with a fresh perspective.

Provide training : how to avoid common errors, identify problems that can be anticipated & how to solve them

“There can be no justice until those uninjured by crime become as indignant as those who are”

Solon, the lawmaker of Athens (died 559 B.C.)

# IDEAL CANDIDATE

Specialized training with homicide experience

Skilled interviewers/good listeners

Experience with informants & undercover operations

Awareness of scientific possibilities & difficulties

Patient and tenacious/persistent with common sense

Well versed in courtroom procedures Have ability to anticipate defense strategies

# YOU CAN'T SOLVE IT ALONE

No one of us is as smart as all of us.  
unknown

“Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself”

Eleanor Roosevelt

# SQUAD RESPONSIBILITIES

Cold Case Investigation

Assistance to other agencies

Re-trials of cases

Collection of data and statistics to aid similar investigations

# TIME

Fresh cases need immediate investigation-  
have to run with it. 66% custody w/in 24hrs.

Ally in cold cases

Friends/lovers become enemies

Witnesses may no longer be afraid to testify, may  
now need help with criminal justice system. No  
longer mind getting involved

Deep remorse by suspect or witnesses

# TIME

New found religion

Allows you to develop plan of attack, set scene  
for suspect interviews

Improvements in forensic technology &  
perspective

Offender may have re-offended (may see similar  
cases in other jurisdictions)

“The race is not to the swift, nor  
the battle to the strong, nor favor  
to men of skill; but time and  
chance happen to them all”  
(Ecclesiastes 9:11)

# TECHNOLOGY

## Advances in biological evidence (DNA)

transfers-ligatures, clothing, hair, ALS (alternate light source), YSTR (Y chromosome Short Tandem Repeats). An acid phosphatase test showing no sperm doesn't exclude the presence of male DNA.

**CODIS** Combined DNA Information System

# TECHNOLOGY

Advances in ballistics; NIBIN-National

Integrated Ballistics Information Network

Use of alternate light sources in conjunction

with cyanocacrylate (super glue)&

fluorescent dye staining

A.F.I.S. Automated Fingerprint Identification

System

Blood Spatter Interpretation

Statement analysis

# MEDIA

Fresh cases- feeding frenzy

In cold cases may help generate leads

America's Most Wanted

Remember, nothing said is "off the record"

# KEYS TO SUCCESS

## HAVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Funding may be needed travel&research

Be allowed to work without interruption

Relatively long term assignment

success won't come overnight

Flexibility

# TRACKING COLD CASES

Take advantage of computer database programs.

ViCAP (Violent Criminal Apprehension Program) the case

Maintain alphabetical lists of cases for easy reference

Identify and track all assigned cases

# Tracking Cold Cases

Maintain accurate and updated information

Update case info, transcribe tapes and videos

Create additional reports to clarify vague  
issues

# COLD CASE INVESTIGATIVE STEPS

# START WITH THE NEWEST CASE (Tips received may change this)

Its easier to find individuals

Uncollected evidence may still exist

# FILE REVIEW

Read and re-organize and index the COMPLETE File

Obtain and study all photos.

Read all officer/detective notes!!!!!!

Talk with available original detectives and others involved in the investigation(avoid why) Any documents? Their thoughts?

Develop a timeline and a link analysis

Prepare lists of potential interviews.

Statistically the killer's name was in the case file within the first 30 days !!!!!!!

# FILE REVIEW

Who was the suspect, is he alive

Analysis of any existing videos/audio tapes

Locate and catalog all written statements

Would a statement analysis be beneficial

# EVIDENCE REVIEW

Review **ALL** Evidence

Verify complete chain of custody

Physically view items with lab tech

Check for presence (don't assume it's there)

Conduct and document steps taken to locate any missing items

Check for decomposition and critter invasion  
is it properly packaged (verify initials & seals)

# EVIDENCE REVIEW

Is it ready for re-submittal?

If needed, consider transferring video and audiotapes to DVD/CD to reduce degradation.

Are additional examinations needed due to technology advancements?

# MEDICAL EXAMINER'S FILE

Review Totally!!!!!!!!!!!!

Is the original doctor available?

Do medical notes and autopsy photos exist?

Were **all samples** that were taken analyzed? If not where are they now?

Transfer photos digitally to DVD/CD)

Obtain death certificate and remains disposition  
(leads to funeral home information and their possible records)

# INVOLVE PROSECUTOR

Changes in the law

Future prosecution

What legal issues exist (privileged conversations, spousal relationships) Are they still valid?

Help with search warrant needs

# PREPARE A SYNOPSIS

Helps you direct the investigation

Allows easier presentation to others

Can be used for evidence submission cover  
letter

# Prioritizing Cases

Known suspect, preserved physical evidence,  
witnesses available

No known suspect but physical evidence  
preserved, witnesses available

No known suspect, insufficient  
evidence, witnesses available

No known suspects, physical evidence ,or  
material witnesses

# WHO BENEFITED MOST

Was there a will?

Life insurance (good records not available)

Mortgage or credit protection insurance

Property transfers

Relationships

Civil court records

# REDO BACKGROUND CHECKS

Criminal History (on everyone)

Is your best suspect currently or previously  
incarcerated, are intake reports available?

Are parole/probation records now available?

What has happened in witness's lives?

Conduct NCIC/CCIC off line searches and utilize  
QQ

New fingerprint records may exist

# CONTACT VICTIM'S FAMILY

Do this before beginning interviews

Helps put together victimology

Don't raise their hopes, there are no guarantees it will be solved

Explain the new activity that may occur

Be careful of family involvement (50%)

# CONTACT VICTIM'S FAMILY

Obtain copies of letters and photographs (may show associations, vehicles, clothing, jewelry etc)

This may reveal places victim/suspect may have frequented/visited (could lead to body disposal site in missing persons)

# Reconstruction

Helps to “brainstorm” the case

Helps reveal What+How+Why+When which  
often = WHO

Use a multidisciplinary approach-  
investigators, criminalists, pathologists,  
prosecutors & others

# Scene Visit

Helps to identify physical changes due to construction or remodeling (document through photography)

While present complete a canvas to determine if there may be potential witnesses that were missed the first time

# INTERVIEW PERIPHERAL WITNESSES

Are they still alive?

RELATIONSHIPS CHANGE

Criminal justice system involvement of  
players

Element of surprise no longer exists

# INTERVIEW MAJOR WITNESSES

Are they still alive?

New relationships

Criminal justice system involvement

Deaths of others who may influenced them

Maybe the right question wasn't asked

Review old polygraph charts & questions

Re-polygraph if necessary

# SUSPECT

Who were/ are the key persons in their life,  
former/current family members

Timeline his life

Who were/are his friends

Employment history (interview co-workers &  
bosses)

Military, prison, financial & medical records if  
possible

# SUSPECT INTERVIEW

Record the process

Do “cold” interview to alleviate suspect preparation

Take your best shot

Miranda (was it invoked prior)

if its needed downplay it

Don't become confrontational unless you can back it up (don't close doors)

Play to his ego

At the end ask for his advise!!!!!!!

# CASE CONTROL/DIRECTION

Lead sheets

Team conferences

Cooperate with the prosecutor

Monthly/quarterly revisit the to do list  
(update)

Make sure new information is documented in  
reports

# SELL YOUR CASE

Make it visual-use photos, timelines, charts, exhibits and PowerPoint (make it understandable)

Make it winnable thru a solid investigation

Assist with trial preparation tasks-don't just drop it at the prosecutor's desk

Stay involved !!!!!!!

**GOAL**

**SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION**

# UNABLE TO PROSECUTE ?

Completely document everything that was done by cold case investigators

Document why the case won't be prosecuted

The needed evidence or interview may show up later

**THE TRUE SECRET OF  
SOLVING COLD CASES IS  
PERSEVERANCE AND  
PATIENCE**

# THREE T's OF COLD CASES

TIME

TECHNOLOGY

TENACITY

# Possible Problems

Acceptance and cooperation with-in agency

Locating documents, items, witnesses, and law enforcement personnel

Cooperation from DA's, Coroner's Office, and other outside agencies

Non-cold case assignments

Not seen as necessary/important

“WE HAVE A CRIMINAL JURY  
SYSTEM WHICH IS SUPERIOR TO ANY  
IN THE WORLD; AND ITS EFFICIENCY  
IS ONLY MARRED BY THE  
DIFFICULTY OF FINDING TWELVE  
MEN EVERY DAY WHO DON'T KNOW  
ANYTHING AND CAN'T READ”

.....Mark Twain