



# CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS CASE MANAGEMENT

Mesa Police Department



## OBJECTIVES

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This audit was conducted to determine whether effective controls are in place to ensure that cases are properly assigned, investigated, and disposed of in accordance with applicable policies, statutes, and other requirements.

## BACKGROUND

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The Mesa Police Department is responsible for conducting preliminary and follow-up investigations for crimes that occur within city limits. Major crimes are assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division, which is comprised of the following units:

- Homicide — Investigation of homicide cases as well as industrial accidents involving death, child and infant death, drownings, shootings, and any natural or accidental death involving unusual circumstances.
- Document and Financial Crimes — Investigation of counterfeit currency and checks, forged and washed checks, credit card fraud, identity and mail theft, and internet crimes.
- Recovered Property/Pawn — Investigation of stolen property related to pawnshop activity as well as recovering stolen firearms and property and inspecting pawnshops for compliance with state and city laws.
- Special Victims (SVU) — The SVU is dedicated to investigating and addressing crimes involving vulnerable victims, including sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and missing persons.
- Missing Persons — Investigation of lost or missing adults and children.
- Sex Offender Notification and Tracking — Manages sex offenders who reside within city limits as well as ensures sex offenders comply with registration laws and enforce these laws for those in violation.
- Victim Services — Provides assistance to victims, survivors, and witnesses of criminal events as well as persons involved in non-criminal crisis circumstances.
- Computer Forensics — Investigation of evidence found on computers and digital storage media with the aim of identifying, preserving, recovering, analyzing, and presenting facts and opinions about the digital information.
- Criminal Investigations Filing Unit — Timely processing of felony and misdemeanor cases with the Maricopa County Attorney's Office and Mesa City Prosecutor's Office.

Our audit focused on case management operations, including the review of incident documentation, the appropriate disposition codes, and the timeliness of an investigation, for Homicide and Special Victims

(specifically sex crimes and child abuse) cases. Between October 1, 2021 and September 30, 2022, there were approximately 935 Homicide and Special Victims cases investigated.

## SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

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1. Documentation in case report narratives, especially for more complex cases, could be improved.
2. Timely reassignment of cases when detectives leave the department did not always occur.

## CONCLUSION

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In our opinion, the Mesa Police Department's Criminal Investigations Division has effective controls in place to ensure that cases are properly assigned, investigated, and disposed of in accordance with applicable policies, statutes, and other requirements. However, improved controls are needed regarding supervisor review of open cases, required documentation in case report narratives, and the reassignment of cases for detectives that leave the department. For additional details, please see the attached Issue and Action Plan.

## ISSUE AND ACTION PLAN

### Timely and/or appropriate case follow-up could not always be determined

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#### What We Found

During our review of 60 cases, which included 5 homicide, 23 sex crimes, 22 child sex crimes, and 10 child abuse cases. We found that, in most instances, cases were investigated timely and appropriately. However, timely and/or appropriate case follow-up could not always be determined for 11 of the 60 cases. Specifically, the following exceptions were found:

1. Timely follow-up was not always documented and/or dates were not consistently added to report narratives.
2. If there were delays in the investigation, the reasons were not always documented in the report narratives.
3. Cases were not always reassigned timely when a detective retired or left the department.
4. When an attorney was requested additional supervisor review and/or documentation was not consistently added to the report narrative.

#### What It Should Be

Mesa Police Department Policy DPM 3.3.75 “RMS Case Assignment, Management, Closure & Audits for Investigative Units” establishes the protocols for proper case management. To ensure investigations are completed timely and appropriately, supervisors should be reviewing open cases periodically and following up with the detectives or reassigning cases, as necessary. Additionally, case report narratives should be required to include dates and detailed documentation when investigations are delayed or encounter more complex situations.

#### Why Does It Matter

If not investigated timely and appropriately, cases may not be properly resolved.

#### What We Recommend and Management’s Action Plans

**Recommendation #1-1:** To ensure the timely and appropriate investigation of cases, management should:

- Review open cases at least monthly and follow up with detectives, as necessary.
- Require dates be added to report narratives.

- Require additional documentation in report narratives if there are delays in the investigation.
- Implement a process to ensure timely reassignment of cases when a detective retires or leaves the department.
- Determine if additional supervisor review or documentation is necessary if an attorney has been requested for a case.

**Action Plan #1-1:**

*Review open cases at least monthly and follow up with detectives, as necessary.*

1. Implement an automated “Follow up Overdue” case report.
2. Revise and Publish changes to DPM 3.3.75 (RMS Case Assignment, Management & Closure for Investigative Units).
3. Require CID and MFAC Supervisors to review changes to DPM 3.3.75 with all investigative staff.
4. Require CID and MFAC Supervisors to review “follow up assigned” and “follow up overdue” cases monthly.

*Require dates be added to report narratives.*

1. Require CID and MFAC Supervisors to conduct training for investigative staff that ensures case delays (i.e. waiting on lab results/search warrant information, unable to locate witnesses/suspects, etc.) are documented.

*Require additional documentation in report narratives if there are delays in the investigation.*

1. Require CID and MFAC Supervisors to conduct training for investigative staff that ensures case delays (i.e. waiting on lab results/search warrant information, unable to locate witnesses/suspects, etc.) are documented.

*Implement a process to ensure timely reassignment of cases when a detective retires or leaves the department.*

1. As a result of a proactive internal audit of the RMS case management system by the Mesa Police Department, prior to the COM case management audit, a full time sworn RMS supervisor position was created and is responsible for conducting routine audits of the RMS system.
2. The RMS supervisor receives notification of employees separated from the department. On receipt of the notification, the RMS supervisor conducts an audit of the case management system for cases assigned to the former employee. If a case is found, it is routed to the proper unit for reassignment.
3. A monthly audit report was created which lists all employees separated from the department and the cases assigned to each. This is a redundant verification that all cases assigned to former employees were reassigned to active-duty employees.

*Determine if additional supervisor review or documentation is necessary if an attorney has been requested for a case.*

1. Supervisors review case supplements/case facts for all case closures.

Individual or Position Responsible: [Commander Aaron Spicer](#)

Estimated Completion Date: [8/1/2024](#)

## SCOPE

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The scope of the audit was homicide and special victims cases from October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2022.

## METHODOLOGY

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To accomplish our objective, we performed the following:

- Interviewed Criminal Investigations Division management and staff. 2
- Reviewed Police Department policies to gain an understanding of department operations for case management.
- Selected a sample of 60 homicide, sex crimes and child abuse cases and reviewed case report narratives to determine if the cases were investigated timely and appropriately.

## AUDIT STANDARDS

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We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.





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