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SAKI Training and Technical Assistance

SEXUAL ASSAULT UNIT ASSESSMENT REPORT

Mobile Police Department (AL)

Kevin J. Strom, PhD, RTI International

James Markey, MEd, RTI International

Jordan Satinsky, Montgomery County Police Department

Amy Durall, International Association of Chiefs of Police

Crystal M. Daye, RTI International

Tom Scott, PhD, RTI International

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1. Sexual Assault Unit Assessment Overview

1.1 Introduction

The National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) is a Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) program that assists jurisdictions with addressing unsubmitted sexual assault kits (SAKs). SAKI's mission is to support jurisdictions as they establish effective and sustainable practices for responding to, investigating, and prosecuting sexual assault cases; collecting and processing sexual assault evidence; and supporting survivors of sexual assault. The SAKI Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Sexual Assault Unit (SAU) Assessment provides a comprehensive review of the process for investigating sexual assault within and outside of the law enforcement agency's domain.

The City of Mobile, Alabama, is one of the jurisdictions actively addressing their unsubmitted SAKs while also assessing the processes by which they respond to, investigate, and prosecute sexual assault cases. In 2015, the Mobile Police Department (MPD) started using SAKI funding to formally address the backlog of previously unsubmitted SAKs. Over these past several years, MPD has worked to implement comprehensive sexual assault response reform across the department, including creating a Special Victims Unit (SVU) and Family Justice Center (FJC). MPD has been testing previously unsubmitted SAKs and investigating the associated cases. Additionally, MPD is supporting a range of training related to sexual assault evidence collection; technology; and multidisciplinary, trauma-informed response.

1.2 Scope of the Assessment

The SAKI SAU Assessment Team has expertise in sexual assault response and investigation, evidence identification and collection, criminal analysis for research and evaluation, and victim advocacy. MPD collaborated with the assessment team throughout the assessment process to ensure a full review of MPD's current sexual assault response procedures, with an emphasis on sexual offenses committed against adults. The assessment included a review of department policies and procedures, interviews with key internal and external personnel, and a review of investigative case files.

This report details the findings and recommendations from the MPD SAU Assessment conducted from May through July 2019. The report also identifies available resources, materials, and trainings to address specific needs for the agency. For the purposes of this assessment, the assessment team followed the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) definition of rape to determine which investigative case files would be reviewed. The FBI defines rape as "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (FBI, 2014). Using this definition, the assessment team then selected and reviewed case files from 2017 and 2018.

2. Assessment Methods

The assessment team consisted of four subject matter experts: one research criminologist with more than 15 years of experience working with law enforcement agencies on their response to sexual assault and other violent crimes; two experienced police sexual assault detectives with over 50 years of collective experience in law enforcement, including leadership roles; and a victim advocate with expertise in all aspects of response to rape victims and Rape Crisis Center (RCC) administration. The team carried out the assessment in three stages:

1. Reviewed relevant MPD policies and procedures related to sexual assault response
2. Conducted in-person interviews with key internal staff and external community partners
3. Completed a systematic review of sexual assault investigative case files

The assessment team developed processes to ensure that similar questions and metrics were obtained for each stage. Upon completing the three stages, the assessment team reviewed and agreed on key findings to establish validity and present recommendations.

The assessment team also linked recommendations to appropriate standards developed in the *National Best Practices for Sexual Assault Kits: A Multidisciplinary Approach* report created by the Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Reporting (SAFER) Act Working Group (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). The National Institute of Justice–sponsored SAFER Act Working Group “was directed to address issues relating to evidence collection; prioritization of evidence and time periods for collection; evidence inventory, tracking, and auditing technology solutions; communication strategies; and victim engagement and notification.” (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). The SAFER Act Working Group identified 35 recommended best practices for jurisdictions to consider when addressing sexual assault and unsubmitted SAKs.

2.1 Policy Review

The MPD provided the assessment team with copies of written policies and procedures relevant to the agency’s sexual assault response and investigations protocols. The policy review sought to (1) assess whether the MPD’s sexual assault response policies were sufficient to independently guide a detective through the agency’s sexual assault investigation process; (2) determine whether policies provide officers and agency personnel with sufficient guidance about the processes and standards for responding to reports of sexual assault; (3) determine whether policies provide MPD with sufficient measurements and oversight to ensure the investigative process provides clear internal expectations and also effectively delivers services to the community; and (4) assess whether the policies are current and align with known best procedures and national standards of practice in adult

sexual assault investigations. This review relied on the assessment team’s collective experience and expertise to identify strengths, gaps, and potential areas for improvement. As a baseline for the sexual assault policy review, the assessment team considered the following questions:

- Do the policies fall within the agency’s overall mission and resource capabilities?
- Do the policies incorporate best and current standards of practice for responding to sexual assault?
- Have the policies been reviewed and updated within the past 5 years?
- Do the policies provide information about understanding victimization to include trauma-informed interviewing, victim-centered approaches, and offender characteristics?
- Do the policies address a comprehensive approach to sexual assault investigations that includes guidance for communication personnel, first responders, detectives, and supervisors?
- Do the policies outline specific operational duties, roles, and responsibilities of personnel who respond to or conduct sexual assault investigations?
- Do the policies provide definable and defensible standards for detectives who are assigned to the investigative unit?
- Do the policies provide review and oversight guidelines for all supervisors?
- Do the policies provide case management standards for detectives that outline and describe how and when cases will be assigned, when follow-up will be completed, and how cases will be documented and supplemented?
- Do the policies provide standards for comprehensive training and continuing education in sexual assault response and investigation?
- Do the policies provide guidance about investigating crime scenes and handling evidence in sexual assaults, including the transfer and laboratory submission of SAKs?
- Do the policies provide guidance about the clearing and closing of investigations, including outlining the definitions of “exceptional clearances” and “unfounded” and under what conditions these statuses should be utilized?

2.2 Personnel Interviews

Interviews were conducted with key MPD personnel—including patrol officers, detectives, supervisors, crime scene technicians, and agency command staff. Interviews were also conducted with individuals in the greater Mobile community who respond to and support sexual assault victims; these individuals include prosecutors, sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs), victim advocates, and crime laboratory personnel. These in-person interviews were conducted over a 2-day period. Personnel interviewed were not individually identified as a part of this report.

The Special Victims Detail (SVD) is one of five specialized details that falls within the Investigative Operations Division—SVU. The SVU section is overseen by a lieutenant. Currently, MPD does not have a detective dedicated solely to the investigation of SAKI cases generated from crime laboratory testing of backlogged SAKs. SAKI cases are assigned and investigated by an SVD detective who is also responsible for other investigations and cases outside of SAKI.

In completing the interviews, the assessment team utilized two-person teams and employed semi-scripted interview questionnaires (see **Appendix A**). Interviews typically lasted 30–60 minutes. The assessment team collectively reviewed interview results and compiled their notes to help identify key themes.

Table 2-1. Personnel Interviews Conducted

Agency Affiliation	Role	Number
MPD	SVD Detectives	3
MPD	SVD Supervisor	1
MPD	Patrol Supervisor and Officer	2
MPD	Crime Scene Technician	1
MPD	Command Staff	3
MPD	SAKI Site Coordinator	1
Lifelines Counseling Services of Mobile	Administrator and Advocate	1
Mobile County District Attorney’s	Specialized Prosecutor	1
Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences	Supervisor	1
USA Children’s and Women’s Hospital	SANE	1
University of South Alabama	Researcher	4

2.3 Case Review

Reviewing investigative case files allowed the assessment team to examine investigative procedures, department response, and case outcomes in everyday practice. The selected cases represented a random sample of reported sexual assaults in 2017 and 2018 that met the previously described FBI’s summary definition of rape. MPD provided the assessment team with files that included incident numbers, dates, offense types, evidence logs, suspect and victim information, original and supplemental reports, and other relevant materials.

The review used a predetermined set of data metrics (see **Appendix B** for a representative list of data variables and definitions) and collected assessment measures that were discussed with MPD during the pre-site planning process. Information collected included, but was not limited to, the following:

- Timeliness of the investigation
- Indications of victim-centered interactions
- Use of accepted standard response and investigative follow-up techniques
- Coordination and utilization of resources
- Thoroughness of investigation with final documentation and disposition

As a note, during the case file review and data gathering, the team noted numerous files in which important and instrumental case information was missing or not documented. MPD also maintains a separate case management system that potentially contains information relevant to cases; the assessment team did not have access to this information. To ensure confidentiality, the information contained in the case file review did not include personally identifiable information—such as names, addresses, or dates of birth. All assessment team members associated with this project signed a confidentiality and nondisclosure agreement that ensures confidential information will not be shared outside of the research team. This methodology was reviewed and approved by the RTI Institutional Review Board, which protects human subjects in research.

3. Assessment of Policies and Procedures

The foundation for a strong, effective, and sustainable response to sexual assault is in an agency's policies and procedures. Written policies that dictate the initial response and follow-through of the investigation process are critical to providing uniformity and accountability across the agency. Sexual assault policies and procedures should address the complexities of sexual assault cases and should include, at a minimum, trauma-informed and victim-centered response methods; clear guidance about expected operational steps, incorporation of victim services, working as a multidisciplinary team (MDT), and protocols for conducting victim interviews; steps for coordinating sexual assault forensic exams; timelines and expectations for following-up on cases—including investigative follow-up and identifying, collecting, processing, and submitting forensic evidence.

The assessment team reviewed Mobile's policies and operating procedures related to sexual assault response. The following MPD documents were reviewed:

- Criminal Investigation Administration and Operations. General Order 42. Various updates.
- Criminal Investigation Section Standard Operating Manual:
 - Special Victims Unit—CIS 2017-04
 - Special Victims Detail—CIS 2017-04.27
 - Organization and Administration. General Order 11. Various updates.

Based on the policy review, we found that MPD does have a sexual assault policy that provides fundamental instructions and guidance for personnel assigned to the Special Victims Detail. However, it was noted that much of this policy provided limited guidance and specifics in some areas. For example, the policy lacked detailed operational direction for patrol and detectives; omitted key aspects of investigative case follow-up and documentation, did not define certain aspects of how sexual assault cases were to be managed and overseen, and did not specify particular aspects of the detective call-out and crime scene response processes. **Sections 3.1–3.2** contain the findings and recommendations that are specific to the policy review.

3.1 Criminal Investigation Administration and Operations (General Order 42)

General Order 42, Criminal Investigation Administration and Operations, provides general guidelines for all MPD detectives conducting investigations within the department. Although many of the guidelines apply to the functions of a sex crime detective, a specialized standard operating procedure (SOP) specific to the SVD is in place and is reviewed in **Section 3.2**.

Specific to General Order 42, we recommend the following for MPD consideration:

- **General Order 42. Complete an administrative, technical review of this order.** Ensure that current dates for policy sections/pages are consistent with each other. The document shows conflicting dates on each page of the order. Continue to periodically review investigative policy for updating and improving response utilizing evidenced-based practices.
- **42.1.1 24-Hour Investigative Coverage. Articulate call-out expectations and responsibilities.** When detectives are called to a crime scene, all personnel at the scene should understand the specific roles and responsibilities of the detective and patrol personnel. Ensure this policy outlines specific actions of patrol personnel. Review detailed criteria for when SVD responds to assist patrol, specific actions of the detectives following response, and the expectation that all on-scene activities are documented in a report.
- **42.1.3. Case Management. Provide greater detail and definition about case clearances.** Ensure that only appropriate cases are being classified under the current FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) definitions—including Clearance by Arrest, Exception, and Unfounding. Consider moving Unfounded closure to farther down the current list of case closures and be sure to include all UCR definitions for easy access. Consider providing greater guidance about sexual assaults for subsection M, Victim Refused to Cooperate including supporting documentation defining what actions are considered uncooperative in nature. Develop an internal case clearance definition and process for those clearances not captured by the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)/UCR. This will not only provide the agency with information about the specific types of case clearances for each investigator but also help the public understand why certain clearances were utilized.
- **42.2.3. Follow-Up Investigative Steps. Consider adding information or instructions about collecting evidence, specifically SAKs.** If MPD personnel outside of the SVD do not have access to the SVD SOP, providing guidance in this order would be helpful towards ensuring a consistent agency response. Include a reference identifying where officers can access this information in the SVD SOP.
- **42.2.8. Technical Aids for Deception. Include specific instruction that prohibits utilizing a polygraph on sexual assault victims.** Current policy may be interpreted that this practice is acceptable for sexual assault victims; however, having a written statement prohibiting this procedure provides clarification for all personnel.
- **42.2.10. Interview/Interrogation Room. Provide information and guidance about interviewing sexual assault victims.** When practical, include information about the interview room available at the SVD offices within the FJC/RCC and how officers can coordinate its use.

3.2 Criminal Investigation Section: Special Victims Unit—SOPs Manual

This SOP provides the SVU-SVD additional specialized direction, procedural steps, and compliance for detectives in investigating and managing investigations. The assessment team recommends that MPD review and assess the following areas:

- *Review guidelines for investigative follow-up steps to include defining appropriate interview guidance with victims.* The assessment team recommends that MPD policy clearly articulate critical trauma-informed steps and approaches necessary in these interviews. MPD should define and provide guidance for detectives about how to gauge the best time to approach and conduct these interviews. This information can help define standards of response, provide clear guidance, and ultimately identify gaps in resources and training.
- *Implement quality case management protocols for SVD investigations.* Although the current policy addresses general assurances of completing assignments and follow-up, implementing defined operational standards, goals, and expectations for detectives supports a consistent investigative response. The assessment team recommends establishing written guidelines for task completion and timelines about when to complete defined tasks and what information to document in the report.

For example, specific timelines should be required for the following activities:

- Initiating follow up to include victim interviews
 - Field and investigative follow-up
 - Crime scene follow-up
 - Witness contact
 - Documentation of reports and supplements
- *Clarify personnel selection and training processes for sex crimes investigators. implement a mandatory and reoccurring training curriculum for all SVD detectives.* The assessment team recommends that MPD create and clearly define selection standards for officers applying to (or assigned to) the SVD. Training standards should be outlined and established for officers assigned to the SVD.
 - *Articulate clear response expectations of agency personnel both sworn and professional non-sworn staff, including interaction with sexual assault victims and communication with victim advocates.* This information should specify how dispatchers, patrol officers, and detectives respond to victims in a trauma-informed, victim-centered manner. Also make sure victim advocates are incorporated across all stages of the process. The assessment team also recommends that MPD provide guidance for the roles of personnel, including the mandatory notification and coordination of a victim advocacy response on all cases.
 - *Provide clear and defined expectations and responsibilities for sexual assault supervisors and detectives during a call-out response.* Current policy does provide some general guidance about expectations. Expand on response expectations and expectations for employing necessary support to assist. All on-scene personnel should understand the operational roles and responsibilities. Include the specific call-out criteria that would require a response from the SVD.
 - *Assess and clarify SANE examination times.* Although current MPD policy states 72 hours, national research and accepted response standards have increased SANE collection time to 120 hours.
 - *Ensure accurate and complete case clearances.* When a detective inactivates a case, MPD should ensure there is an established method for supervisory review, approval, and final approval of documentation. Although current policy identifies the various

classifications for case clearances, additional definition and case examples would be helpful to ensure these standards are being met.

- *Create a more robust cold case investigations policy.* Include expectations and critical investigative steps. Outline the requirements and responsibilities of the cold case detective and supervisor. Establish a written policy to ensure consistency and sustainability within the SVD.
- *Define and describe the roles and purpose of MPD in the SART and MDTs, as well as the type of assistance MPD can bring to the team—including overall goals of the SART, meeting structure and areas to be addressed, and the job roles and frequency with which they should attend.* It is also important that any staff attending understand their role in the SART, why they are attending, the expertise they bring and the larger benefits to their unit, MPD and community.
- *Define policies and protocols for follow-up that address processing crime scenes, collecting evidence, and handling SAKs.* For SAKs, the assessment team recommends that, in accordance with Alabama state laws, all policies are consistent and that timelines are established for taking possession of SAKs and transferring them to the crime laboratory. In addition, ensure there is direction on the retention of SAKs and any associated evidence. The policy should also include a section about informing sexual assault victims about MPD's sexual assault evidence testing and retention policy.
- *Address information for the collection and storage of SAKs from nonreporting victims (described as "hold kits").* Current policy does not address this area. The assessment team recommends that MPD develop a policy to describe procedures associated with "hold kits" even though there is no Alabama state law that dictates. The policy should also include a section about informing sexual assault victims about MPD's sexual assault evidence testing and retention policy.
- *Outline standards and logistics for interviewing sexual assault victims.* Update and articulate expectations for victim interviews to ensure detectives are using non-interrogation rooms, employing trauma-informed practices, following the mandate of recording all victim statements, and involving trained victim advocates in post-interview care. The assessment team recommends mandating the electronic recording of all victim, suspect, and witness interviews.

4. Case Review Data

The MPD investigative case file review included 102 randomly selected sexual assault cases from 2017 and 2018. The assessment team reviewed, collected, and extracted case information from MPD’s sexual assault investigative files. In some instances, the assessment team followed up with MPD staff to collect additional information (e.g., updates for pending cases) or to address specific questions. **Table 4-1** summarizes case characteristics from the data collected from MPD case files. Note: The assessment team based statistical information on details contained within the reviewed case files.

Table 4-1. MPD Case Review Data

Sexual Assault Case Review	Outcomes
Number of Cases	102 (100%)
Cases assigned to detectives	93 (91%) ^a
Location of Assault	
Victim’s residence	29 (28%)
Suspect’s residence	21 (20%)
Hotel	15 (15%)
Outdoor/alley	10 (10%)
Vehicle	7 (7%)
Case Characteristics	
Suspect known to victim	69 (68%)
Alcohol used by suspect	15 (15%)
Alcohol used by victim	33 (32%)
Drugs used by suspect	8 (8%)
Drugs used by victim	15 (15%)
Victim reported incapacitation	29 (28%)
Investigative Process	
Contact with victim made within 2 days	86 (84%)
Detective/victim follow-up interview	94 (92%)
Interviews recorded (detective/patrol)	6/21 (6%/20%)
Advocate contacted by police department	25 (24%)

(continued)

Table 4-1. MPD Case Review Data (continued)

Sexual Assault Case Review	Outcomes
Investigative Follow-Up Activity	
Witnesses identified	60 (59%)
Witnesses interviewed (of those identified)	38 (63%)
Detectives responded to the scene	89 (94%)
Crime scene identified	78 (76%)
Crime scene located (of those identified)	52 (67%)
Crime scene processed (of those located)	13 (25%)
Evidence Collection	
Sexual assault exams completed/SAK collected	65 (64%)
SAK submitted to laboratory (% based on SAKs collected)	63 (97%)
SAK submitted to laboratory within 60 days	56 (86%) ^b
SAK screening/testing complete	10 (16%)
Other Evidence Collected	
Cell phone relevant to case	36 (35%)
Cell phone analyzed	11 (30%)
Social media relevant to case	11 (11%)
Social media analyzed	1 (9%)
Additional physical evidence collected	54 (53%)
Suspect evidence collected (<i>n</i> = 61) ^c	33 (54%)
Confrontation call attempted	1 (<1%)
Suspect Information	
Identified	79 (77%)
Located	61 (77%)
Arrested	21 (27%)
Interviewed by detectives	53 (87%)
Suspect statement (<i>n</i> = 53)^c	
Contact was consensual	28 (53%)
Invoked rights	3 (6%)
Denied contact	20 (38%)
Was not at scene/present	1 (2%)
Admitted/confessed	0

(continued)

Table 4-1. MPD Case Review Data (continued)

Sexual Assault Case Review	Outcomes
Case Clearance and Closure Rationale	
Cleared by Arrest	18 (18%)
Exceptionally Cleared	45 (44%)
Unfounded	3 (3%)
Pended	24 (24%)
Met FBI Definition (<i>n</i> = 45) ^c	12 (12%)
Case Submissions and Prosecutions	
Submission to prosecutor	46 (59%)
Prosecution declination	6 (13%)
Cases filed	1 (2%)
Cases not submitted	36 (46%)
Prosecution Rationale Cited	
Uncooperative victim	17 (37%)
No probable cause/Does not meet prosecutor standards	10 (22%)
Case open/no decision noted	14 (37%)
Prosecution Rationale Cited	
Uncooperative victim	17 (37%)
No probable cause/Does not meet prosecutor standards	10 (22%)
Case open/no decision noted	14 (37%)

^a Case files reflected 91%, MPD advised they had documentation indicating 100%.

^b Case file indicated 86%, MPD had separate documentation indicating all SAKs were submitted to lab in fewer than 60 days.

^c The numbers here reflect a smaller sample size of cases compared to the overall review of 102 cases. Statistics for suspect evidence collected is based on *n* = 61; suspect statements reflect a *n* = 53, and cases cleared that met the FBI definition is based on a *n* = 45.

5. SAU Assessment Findings

This section details key findings from the MPD SAU Assessment, including information gathered from personnel interviews and investigative case file review. The assessment team identified processes that work effectively—along with opportunities, response gaps, and department needs. These findings also informed recommendations that can assist in making continued improvements and developing sustainable MPD sexual assault response practices.

The findings are organized beginning with initial response to the reported crime (by patrol and detectives) through case follow-up and final closure of the investigation. This section also addresses observations related to the involvement of multidisciplinary partners associated with sexual assault across the response spectrum. During the file review and data gathering process, the assessment team noted that (1) numerous files were missing information and (2) important and instrumental case material had not been documented.

5.1 Initial Response to the Reported Crime

5.1.1 Patrol Officers and Detectives

Overall, the assessment team found MPD's response to reports of sexual assault to be timely, organized, and responsive to victims. In most instances, victims received a standardized level of service and care from first responders, and initial police interviews appeared to gather some information that assisted in agency follow-up actions.

Patrol officers and SVD detectives had a general understanding of their roles in the initial response. Accepted practices for the initial response were carried out, which included determining the scope of the crime, conducting a brief interview the victim, identifying potential witnesses and crime scene, coordinating any medical treatment, and identifying and locating the suspect(s).

Patrol officer response typically followed MPD's SOPs. Although first responders had limited direction in terms of policy, MPD did define some provisions for conducting standard response actions—such as securing the scene, identifying and interviewing witnesses, locating suspects, and notifying detectives. At times, officers would also provide transportation for victims to receive medical treatment. The assessment team supports providing clear and detailed direction for patrol officers in sexual assault response; the team made additional observations about the process for detective notification. When contacted, either MPD's on-call detective or an SVD detective consistently responded to the scene to assist. External partners (e.g., SANE, victim advocate) are also routinely notified and assisted in providing victim support and care.

Initial scene response at early stages of a sexual assault investigation by an experienced sex crimes detective and victim advocate can contribute to positive case outcomes.

Research about homicide response supports this claim, showing that timely response by detectives to the crime scene is one of the key predictors of case clearance (Wellford & Cronin, 2000). In the MPD case file review, the assessment team found that initial on-scene patrol officers notified detectives in 94% of cases. There are general call-out policies and provisions for notifying and requesting assistance from SVD detectives. In the reviewed cases, detectives ultimately responded to the scene 89% of the time. This notification was generally documented by patrol officers. However, relevant to MPD's SVD call-out procedures, the notification of (and response by) specialized SVD detectives did not always occur. Many notifications by patrol when on the scene were directed to the available on-call detective who sometimes was from a nonspecialized unit. This process is possibly a function of logistics, resources, and current MPD policy direction. The non-SVD detectives who responded to the scene did not possess the specialization for sexual assault investigations. This process can impact final case outcome. Having SVD detectives on initial scenes who are responsible for the case and who possess specialized skills supports an efficient agency response. Although this may not always be possible, this approach helps build a stronger relationship with the victim. The assessment team recommends reviewing this process and identifying areas to improve call-out practices.

5.1.2 Documenting the Initial Response

Report documentation by patrol officers was largely found to be limited; however, included information was appropriate in terms of generally describing the scope of on-scene activities. On occasion, information included fundamental facts required to initiate further investigation of a crime. Completion of basic questioning by the patrol officer of the victim and any witnesses was noted. (**Section 5.1.3** provides additional interview assessment.) This made assessing officer-victim interaction challenging and left many questions unanswered. Additionally, outside of agency policy, officers are provided limited direction and standards for their activities and documentation when responding to reports of a sexual assault. Numerous files revealed additional officer activities and actions may have assisted in gaining critical information about the incident. This included fundamental initial response information about how they were dispatched, who called, who was present on scene, and any steps they may have taken and key observations.

The type of on-scene follow-up and subsequent documentation by the responding patrol officers varied. For example, some patrol officers documented that they conducted an initial victim interview, notified detectives, and assisted in facilitating a medical exam for the victim. Few made a concerted effort to locate a crime scene (when appropriate) and to contact and interview witnesses or suspect(s). These types of actions, if completed, were not consistently documented by patrol officers. These actions should be completed as they are extremely beneficial to the investigation.

When patrol officers documented they were able to identify potential witnesses, clear documentation and fundamental details about witnesses were inconsistently reported. Other times, the roles and actions of potential witnesses were not clearly articulated. A review of data indicated that in 59% of cases, witnesses were identified during the investigation; of those cases, witnesses were interviewed only 63% of the time.

The assessment noted that when detectives had responded on scene to patrol requests, there was limited documentation that outlined the investigative activities they conducted while on scene. Some activities were believed to have been documented in the MPD case management system; however, the SAKI SAU assessment team did not have access to these data. The assessment team recommends that the process be reviewed to ensure that (1) completed on-scene activities are accurately documented and (2) critical activities are documented in the case file.

5.1.3 Victim Contact and Interviewing

The first contact that law enforcement has with a sexual assault victim can influence the entire investigation. Law enforcement's delayed or negative initial interactions may contribute to a victim's decision to withdraw from the investigative process and may increase psychological trauma for the victim. Positive interactions with police can improve a victim's confidence in their ability to participate in the legal process (Patterson & Campbell, 2010). Making a victim feel at ease, comfortable, and supported during initial contact is critical to the success of a sexual assault case. A patrol officer can facilitate a successful initial interview by choosing an appropriate and private location to speak with the victim. Case files indicated victim interview locations varied and were, at times, situationally dependent. In general, patrol officers conducted interviews at the location from which the victim called to report the assault or where police responded.

A victim-centered agency response should be professional and trauma informed. This incorporates understanding, empathy, and support for victims at these initial stages and when gathering narrative statements about the assault. In association with the SAKI project, the City of Mobile and MPD have employed a program titled The Promise Initiative (TPI); the program is designed to create a coordinated community response to sexual assault by

- developing a comprehensive, victim-centered, and trauma-informed approach;
- engaging in capacity-building to prevent high numbers of unsubmitted SAKs in the future; and
- supporting the investigation and prosecution of cases for which SAKs were previously unsubmitted (Mobile Police Department, 2019).

TPI focuses on ensuring a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach; however, few personnel mentioned TPI during their interviews or talked about receiving victim-centered

trainings to include trauma-informed response. Even with limited training, there were only isolated exceptions in which a patrol officer documented interview tactics that blamed or questioned the victim's actions in a way that could be construed as victim blaming. Victim-detective interactions were similarly reviewed at both the initial reporting and during case follow-up. There were no notable instances in which detectives overtly used victim-blaming or questioning of victims' actions.

Victim-centered responses include providing privacy for victims. Patrol officers conducted most interviews in areas where other individuals—including SART partners—were present. It is important to ensure privacy and keep the investigative interview and victim statements separate from other statements made by the victim to other partners (SAKI Guidance document, 2017). All personnel should attempt to use supportive and private interview locations when speaking with victims.

Detectives should also offer a safe environment for interviewing victims. For MPD, detective interviews were conducted both on scene and at SVD offices within the FJC/RCC. Victims could travel to SVD offices at the FJC to be interviewed in a safe and secure room. This shows MPD's awareness of a victim-centered response. Having an advocate present during interviews was also an option that MPD used. Other SART members were not routinely part of the interviews. Keeping investigative and SANE interviews separate ensured the integrity of the information being gathered. Both practices reflect a good model supported by national best practices.

Obtaining relevant information is a core practice of an investigation. To obtain said information, the law enforcement officer interviews victims, witnesses, and suspects. Collecting accurate and complete information and acting upon this information are essential. There were clear opportunities to clarify and gain additional information from victims during and after interviews; these opportunities were not pursued. Clarification is important and continued engagement with victims can be extremely helpful. Having clear procedures for officers that include specialized training and roles in interviewing victims may help ensure a victim-centered response and improve the quality of relevant interactions and information.

Another practice relevant to victim interviews addresses audio and video recording. Patrol officers wear body cameras that were sometimes used to record sexual assault interviews. Detectives intermittently recorded victim statements. In one instance, the documentation showed that only part of the victim interview was recorded, but there was no information about why this occurred. Although this was an exception, inconsistently recording statements can have an adverse impact on victims and case outcomes. MPD policy does not provide much specific guidance about recording sexual assault victim statements and interviews. Recording can also eliminate the practice of having victims provide handwritten statements. MPD should review policy to address the use of body-worn cameras in sexual assault cases.

On occasion, victims were asked to provide written statements. Utilizing written statements should also be assessed. Whereas recording the victim interview is accepted as a national best practice (Archambault & Lonsway, 2008), there is little information about the effectiveness of written statements from sexual assault victims. When taking verbal statements, clear direction should be outlined for patrol officers who have access to employ body-worn cameras and detectives who conduct initial and follow-up interviews. Ensuring a consistent practice for officers and detectives will enhance the investigative process, encourage accurate and complete documentation, and facilitate agency transparency.

5.1.4 Detective Assignment and Victim Follow-Through Practices

Conducting appropriate investigative actions and timely victim follow-through is critical; continued and well-timed victim interactions provide an opportunity for the victim to remain engaged in the criminal justice system and offer the best opportunity to ensure support services are provided (Campbell, 2006; Laxminarayan, 2012).

With an overwhelming number of detectives responding to the original scene, victim contact appears timely and appropriate. In 89% of sexual assaults reported to MPD, detectives responded to the original call location. The responding detective is subsequently assigned as the permanent case agent, which helps ensure continuity with victim engagement.

Supervisors formally assign all cases through MPD's RMS. This practice provides an efficient and effective case assignment and accountability process. The SOP for assignment appears to be institutionalized in the SVD policy and is beneficial as well as timely in case follow through.

Upon completion of on-scene activities, responding patrol officers complete a summary report to document their actions. SOP outlines this requirement to document case activity in file supplement forms and in case management tracking. The assessment team found that documentation in case files was minimal and lacked detail. Key foundational and fundamental information about officer actions was often missing. This can greatly hamper important follow-up activities and could generate questions about agency thoroughness. The assessment team viewed this as an opportunity for improvement by employing training, standards for written documentation, and policy as it relates to patrol responsibilities and expectations.

Case assignment for follow-up investigation is also a critical measure of the effectiveness of a detective response. Timely assignment and contact with victims are valid measures of a good sexual assault response. MPD policy dictates that a detective be notified and respond to the scene of an original call. This has resulted in extremely timely detective-victim contact. Most detective contact and involvement are completed on scene. As a result, detectives were able to successfully make victim follow-up contacts in 92% of cases. This reflects a good response practice and avoids many issues that occur when a delay in detective follow-up negatively impacts victim participation, the ability to collect evidence,

and suspect identification. MPD's current policy does not provide detailed and specific operational guidance surrounding criteria for detectives' response to scenes or criteria for detectives' actions during and after response to scenes; revising the policy to include this guidance would standardize agency action. Strengthening policy in this area can help provide an extra measure of quality assurance and investigative expectation.

The assessment team examined many details of detective-victim interactions. As noted, most cases involved the detective and victim meeting at the location of the original 911 call. According to available documentation, follow-up contact after being on scene was minimal and on occasion, detective follow-up contact was completed over the phone. In-person contact and interviews with victims are sound response practices for gathering information and building rapport.

Having a specially trained sexual assault detective conduct a comprehensive fact-finding interview is a critical step to progressing a case and strengthening the victim's relationship with law enforcement. MPD's SVD detectives indicated that they choose to delay the initial interview on a case-by-case basis; this decision depends on each victim's current emotional state and ability to be questioned. Re-contacting and re-interviewing victims are, at times, recommended and necessary steps. These steps allow

- detectives to meet with victims to further enhance the case,
- key facts and information to be gathered,
- previous statements to be clarified, and
- victims the time and space to decide whether to engage in the process.

This practice also provides support for victims to obtain resources and information, victim advocacy support, and a variety of other services. It was noted that this practice is in place in the field, but there is no guiding policy to ensure it is institutionalized as a best practice for current and future investigations.

Beyond the initial interview and contact, the assessment team observed little documentation about continued contact between detectives and victims, as well as between victims and other SART members (see **Section 5.2**). Detective supplemental reports contained limited information about when follow-up and contact with the victim occurred, if new investigative information was discovered, or what attempts had been made to clarify information or previous details. These interactions were sparsely supplemented in the case file and provided limited additional facts or statement clarification. Obtaining additional information germane to a case provides detectives with new avenues for further investigative action and is critical in file documentation.

5.1.5 Use of Victim Advocates and Follow-Up with Victims

Connecting victims to advocacy services, both at the initial reporting stages and throughout the criminal justice process, encourages a victim-centered response and victim engagement. MPD does not currently employ victim advocates. Lifelines Counseling Services (LCS), a community-based organization, provides advocacy response and services to victims. MPD's relationship and collaboration with LCS is described as a positive working partnership. LCS communication with patrol officers was limited to initial hospital response, but the communication and relationship were more robust with detectives. This may be attributed to the recent co-location of SVD detectives and advocates off site in the RCC—sometimes referred to as the FJC. Developing a strong advocate-MPD relationship helps clarify and provide the necessary victim support. Both MPD and LCS share a desire to continue improving communication, partnerships, and victim care.

Internal and external personnel indicated victim advocates are routinely notified by hospital personnel about sexual assault victims. This response was described as 24/7 when a victim is assaulted and is seen at the hospital. Following any initial victim contact at the hospital, there is no indication that advocates are integrated in the ongoing investigative process to support victims. Documentation of advocacy response and associated activities was not consistently reflected in MPD case files; only 24% of files had any indication that an advocate responded to the victim or was involved in the case. MPD personnel from the SVD advised the assessment team that advocates respond to the hospital in 100% of the cases involving a sexual assault report. It is unclear whether the information contained in the files may or may not accurately reflect the type (and frequency) of services that LCS provides.

Documenting advocacy information in case files will provide a comprehensive and transparent view of the MPD's response and how they support victims throughout the criminal justice process. A formal agreement between MPD and LCS about victim services for SAKI does exist. However, MPD does not have a formal written policy or interagency agreement that directs and addresses the use of victim advocacy for current sexual assault response. Establishing operational guidance ensures clear, concise roles and response between MPD and victim advocates.

5.2 Case File Documentation

5.2.1 Accuracy and Consistency in Documentation

Complete, accurate, and consistent documentation of sexual assault cases from initial response through case closure is essential to successful investigations. Documentation should include all completed investigative activities and any updates about victim contact, follow-through efforts, outcomes (e.g., Did the prosecutors file the case?), and case closure. Including descriptive documentation about when tasks and activities were attempted, are in progress, or were not completed is a standard practice. MPD had limited written

documentation, which frequently restricted the assessment team's ability to provide complete and appropriate analysis; additionally, the lack of information could hinder MPD's ability to effectively pursue and successfully adjudicate cases.

A thorough investigation must first and foremost include accurate and detailed documentation about the victim's statement. Victim interviews documented in written reports showed a consistent approach for obtaining information, with most interviews using a "just the facts" approach (i.e., who, what, when, and where). On occasion, there were files in which incidents were described using vague and unclear language. For example, officers documented that the victim was involved in "heavy petting" prior to the assault or the suspect was "feeling on her as her lady parts were showing." There was no indication whether these words were used by victims or were an officer's interpretation. In a written report, such descriptors are vague and confusing and do not accurately reflect what may have occurred.

Case files had inconsistent writing styles and contained assorted pieces of information in a variety of report formats. Reviewed files appeared to be incomplete; these files included missing demographic data and incomplete investigative activities. Many files did not contain key standards of investigation, SANE laboratory results, complete witness information and statements, crime scene descriptions, and key follow-up actions. File documentation appeared to use a variety of reporting styles and formats as well. Many reports included an investigative supplement in what appeared to be a formatted Word document; other files were in a free-style supplement or memo style, and some files had a bulleted-style report. These inconsistencies can lead readers to believe the agency is not organized and perhaps is unprofessional in their approach to investigations.

A potential factor impacting the consistency of documentation is how often the current MPD RMS is used. Different reporting forms were observed, which may be in part due to the structure of the current RMS. Pre-narrative sections for essential information were underused, and the RMS software contains a limited number of structured fields; these fields are important for gathering critical standardized data. Information not contained in structured fields was sometimes found in the narrative section of the report, making analysis of key data difficult. Having robust pre-narrative fields and ensuring this information is routinely documented both supports more detailed, accurate documentation and intelligence analysis. It is critical that all key demographic data elements for victims, witnesses, and suspects in the pre-narrative are complete. Implementing a more robust quality assurance oversight function to the current RMS would be beneficial to ensuring complete and accurate crime documentation and reporting.

Documentation of the narrative within the free-text section also differed in files reviewed by the assessment team. Key information appeared in some reports but was not present in others. As previously mentioned, missing file information included detailed statements

about the incident by the victim and follow-up contact, witness discovery, and associated statements, also noted missing was notification of advocates, suspect contact and descriptors, identification of and response to potential crime scenes, and possible evidence collection. Other key details in case documentation, including case disposition and prosecutorial actions, lacked a consistent and standardized documentation method. Many cases omitted information that supported certain case closure status and clearance conclusions. Agency policy or procedure provided to the assessment team offered limited investigative guidance for proper/universal report documentation (see **Section 5.2.3**).

Accurate and consistent documentation is critical for supporting a victim-centered response. Such documentation helps support agency professionalism and quality assurance, which can both identify needs, opportunities, and response gaps. When these elements are lacking, the ability to pursue cases is weakened and can expose the department to concerns about investigations being inadequate or lacking professionalism. MPD policy outlines basic procedures and expectations about written documentation. Agency leaders and supervisors should ensure documentation is complete and continue to identify elements that may contribute to gaps and inconsistencies.

5.2.2 Language Employed and Descriptive Content

The initial contact that the victim experiences with law enforcement develops first impressions, sets the stage for future engagement in the investigation, and impacts victim healing and recovery. Positive interactions and communication with the victim can also increase the likelihood of gathering accurate information. Collectively, these interactions also impact an agency's overall reputation and levels of trust with residents.

Although the assessment team did not observe or review the actual interviewing process, evaluation of the language and descriptive terms within the individual case file reports found that overall, officers documented victim statements. In describing their victim interviews, officers generally avoided victim-blaming language. Only on rare occasions were words such as "alleged" and "claimed" used to describe a victim's statement.

5.2.3 Case Resolution and Disposition

How an agency resolves sexual assault cases directly reflects the effectiveness of their response. The FBI UCR definition of case clearance provides nationally adopted definitions for the clearing of police investigations. The assessment team followed this standard during the case file review. Although briefly mentioned, MPD policy does not provide further direction to outline detailed guidelines for appropriate case resolution. Final case disposition was consistently documented in the pre-narrative section; however, files lacked information to support the rationale. The Exceptionally Cleared status was the most widely assigned clearance for case disposition. This accounted for 45 cases or 44% of all investigations. Reviewers determined 27% appeared to meet the FBI UCR definition for exceptional

clearance. MPD personnel believe they adhered to UCR standards for exceptionally clearing cases, particularly when a case is submitted to the grand jury (GJ) and subsequently not charged. A current review of policy and practices is recommended to ensure UCR standards of case closure are understood, are being followed, and are being uniformly applied for sexual assault cases.

In 91% of cases, a final disposition was documented; of those, 63% provided some information or rationale that supported the closure conclusion. When provided, there appeared to be several practices to describe why cases were closed. The most frequent justifications reported were about the victim not cooperating or not wanting to prosecute (24%), the case not meeting prosecution standards (5%), or the lack of evidence (4%). Providing case closure documentation is a recognized standard that ensures agency transparency. With appropriate supervisory guidance and oversight, this documentation ensures cases are consistently and appropriately investigated.

The “unfounded” classification of sexual assault reports has been one area that is part of a larger national discussion. There are few clear standards and limited guidance across the discipline for when to appropriately unfound a case. The assessment team determined MPD possessed a low rate of unfounded cases. Of the cases reviewed, MPD classified 3% as unfounded. Accepted national studies indicate that between 2% and 8% of rape cases fall into this category (Lonsway, Archambault, & Lisak, 2009); MPD’s rate of unfounded cases falls within this generally accepted area (PERF, 2013) and appears appropriate. It is recommended that MPD review policy and practices for clearing sexual assault cases to ensure investigations are consistent and conclusions are supported by the investigational findings. This should include a review of the current process about how decisions are made when probable cause may exist to arrest a suspect. The assessment team received information that MPD officers, including detectives, have been asked not to make arrests in sexual assault cases based on probable cause without the Mobile County District Attorney’s Office’s (MCDAO’s) permission. Cases involving other crimes do not follow this practice. Identifying the reasons behind this practice and improving this process across the board will enhance investigative case follow-up, support community safety, and develop positive case outcomes.

5.3 Investigative and Crime Scene Follow-Up

Investigative follow-up—including crime scene investigation—is a critical component of high-quality sexual assault responses; this follow-up occurs after the initial response to, contact with, and interview of the victim. Follow-up practices should involve pursuing information that is relevant to the investigation—such as identifying and processing a crime scene, collecting potential physical evidence (see **Section 5.3.5**), interviewing relevant witnesses, obtaining information on social media, conducting confrontational or control calls with the

suspect (see **Section 5.3.3**), and contacting and interviewing the suspect. These activities constitute a thorough investigation and contribute to successful case outcomes.

Several opportunities for investigative follow-up were noted. Many of these did not appear to have been pursued, potentially having an impact on the case outcome. The following areas were noted most often:

- No attempt to identify or locate potential witnesses named in the report.
- Incomplete follow-up victim interviews that may have yielded additional information.
- Medical records from victim treatment at the hospital were not obtained, reviewed, or documented to identify additional corroborating information.
- A potential crime location was not documented or followed up on.
- Incomplete/limited attempt to pursue and interview identified suspects.

Further detailed information relating to these opportunities is provided below.

5.3.1 Follow-Up with Witnesses

Identifying, locating, and interviewing all persons with information about a crime are core and accepted investigative standards. Of the cases reviewed, 59% of the case reports indicated there were witnesses (including outcry) or other persons with information about the crime. Of these, MPD detectives followed up with witnesses in 63% of cases. Many unknown factors may have influenced these results; the assessment team did not receive these results. Witness information and names, when documented, were found in file narratives. Sometimes this information would appear as only a name, with no other type of supporting documentation—such as the person’s relationship to the crime or critical contact information. Interviewing and follow-up were inconsistent with a noticeable number of potential witnesses. This is a fundamental standard for investigation practices; when it is not followed, the potential to secure critical case information is negatively affected. Additionally, not following this standard creates a barrier to effective crime analysis and research—thus impacting case outcomes.

5.3.2 Interviewing Suspects

Identifying suspects and obtaining statements are essential steps toward a complete, effective investigation. All efforts should be made to legally and professionally conduct these interviews. Standards of practice include working to identify and locate the suspect, conducting interviews that apply sound strategies, and documenting all information accurately. MPD files indicated detectives were able to *identify* a suspect in 77% of the cases, and 77% of these suspects were physical *located* with an *investigative interview* completed 87% of the time. As noted, there may be factors within and outside of the detectives’ control that can impact their ability to complete an interview (e.g., no probable cause to arrest, suspect refused to be interviewed, potential threat to victim as suspect is

current or former partner, or suspect's location is unknown). When a suspect cannot be located or interviewed, the detective should clearly document this information and the circumstances in their case file. All internal and external agency resources should be routinely applied to assist in the identifying and locating of suspects to ensure a complete and robust investigation.

Obtaining information during a suspect interview is an important component of a quality investigation. Determining an effective interview that adds case value from the suspect interview was an area that the assessment team reviewed. This assessment was limited by the amount of detailed documentation in the file about the interview. Although information was clearly obtained in most suspect interviews, detectives oftentimes appeared only to ask the suspect whether they had assaulted the victim. At times, suspect questioning appeared to be approached as a step needed to complete the case.

Suspect interview statements and the effectiveness of interrogations are important when determining continuing case strategy. When statements were documented, suspects in

- 53% of cases stated the contact was consensual,
- 38% of cases denied the assault,
- 6% of cases invoked their right to an attorney,
- 0 cases suspect made incriminating statements or confessed to the assault.

In assessing the detective's interview strategy, only 20% appeared comprehensive in nature and appropriately documented. Many interviews lacked key questions and details.

Recording interviews is accepted as a general standard for interviews. This practice assists in investigative clarification, supports accurate documentation, and ensures interviews are appropriate and meet legal requirements. Policy encourages recording; however, due to the available documentation, the assessment team was unable to clearly and accurately determine detailed information about the detective-suspect interaction. Recording allows for the suspect's statements to be reviewed and assessed at a later date. . It also can remove the formal aspect of typing or writing while interviewing, which can help detectives build rapport with suspects—allowing for a more accurate and complete portrait of the event.

During interviews, additional investigative opportunities can be developed as a result of suspect statements. Upon completion of MPD interviews, there were generally no indications of any coordinated investigative follow-up effort. Suspects were not contacted after the interview, even after new investigative information was discovered. In one specific file, the suspect statement could have been supported or found to be deceptive by completing basic follow-up at the scene, which was a local hotel.

Interviewing potential suspects may also provide detectives with the opportunity to legally collect forensic evidence (e.g., DNA, body swabs) from suspects. This can also support the

investigation and further case strategies. Based on the case file documentation, forensic evidence was collected from the suspect in only 54% of cases in which a suspect was contacted. When a collection is available but not completed, standard practice is to articulate the rationale in the written report. Legal collection of physical evidence from a suspect should always be considered and is viewed as a sound practice for sexual assault investigations.

5.3.3 Conducting Confrontational or Control Calls

Sexual assault is one of the most complex and difficult types of cases to investigate and resolve. Many sexual assaults do not involve witnesses and these crimes have scant forensic evidence, appearing to be what some refer to as a “he said, she said” situation. Detectives must consider using a variety of investigative tools to help resolve these cases. One such tool is the “control” or “confrontational” phone call with a suspect. Completed by the victim under the detective’s guidance and with the support of a trained victim advocate, the call—if successful—could provide valuable information and assist in determining what occurred during the crime. The assessment team noted this investigative tool was not employed. Although 82% of cases may have benefited from this tool, it was utilized only one time. MPD should provide guidance for developing training and equipment in utilizing this tool; additionally, MPD should ensure detectives have the skills and ability to complete these calls using a multidisciplinary, victim-centered, and trauma-informed approach.

5.3.4 Accessing and Searching Electronic or Social Media Data

The use of electronic and social media in sexual assault cases is common. Obtaining this information during the investigation may provide valuable details about suspect or victim relationships and activities, corroborate information, and identify previously unknown witnesses or associates. Electronic evidence includes data from cell phones (e.g., texts, call logs, GPS locations) and information from social media (e.g., emails, posts on Instagram and Facebook). When social or electronic media appeared to be involved, MPD sought and accessed this information in only a minimal number of cases. Cell phone data were investigated in 30% of cases and only 9% of cases reflected that social media data were accessed. Legal or other restrictions prohibiting the collection of this information were rarely documented. In cases that indicated a mobile device had been involved in the victim-suspect interaction, there was not sufficient documentation as to (1) whether data from the mobile devices were accessed and (2) what information—if accessed—was collected and used in the investigation. MPD does have a basic written policy for investigating, obtaining, documenting, and preserving these data. Providing additional guidelines and specific training may clarify and enhance this type of investigative practice for improved case follow-up.

5.3.5 Locating and Processing Crime Scenes

Identifying and collecting items of evidentiary value beyond the SAK are critical components of an effective sexual assault response. Crime scene examination is a standard of practice and an important avenue that can help detectives identify and investigate critical physical evidentiary information for case resolution. This information provides scientific details about what happened but also is valuable in corroborating statements of victims, witnesses, and suspects. In examining this area for MPD, additional items of evidentiary value were identified and collected in 53% of cases.

The ability to process a crime scene is contingent on searching for and successfully identifying the location. MPD crime scene response and responsibilities are generally outlined within the department policies. A review of files determined that processing a scene was case dependent and occurred occasionally. Potential opportunities to collect additional evidence were identified in case files, but no documentation was provided as to subsequent detective actions. MPD does employ a specialized crime scene unit. This unit was not routinely notified or requested to assist SVD detectives and respond to scenes. Officers and detectives advised they are familiar with practices for crime scene response and evidence collection.

Statistically for the MPD, the crime scene was identified in 76% of reported cases; 67% of those scenes were subsequently physically located, and 25% of these were processed for evidence (i.e., examined, processed, and evidence collected). As noted, patrol officers and first responders were limited in their initial investigation activities. Their on-scene follow-up generally consisted of providing transportation for the victim to a sexual assault medical exam, identifying witnesses, and locating a physical crime scene occasionally. Patrol officers rarely conducted crime scene investigation but would secure the scene and make notification to detectives who then assumed responsibility and control.

Files reviewed indicated SVD was notified by on-scene patrol officers in 93% of cases. Although detectives responded 94% of the time, only 25% of these responses resulted in a crime scene being processed. As a result, additional probative evidence was identified, collected, and/or impounded in only 53% of the cases where a scene was investigated. General evidence items collected included—but were not limited to—crime scene photographs and physical evidence, such as victim clothing and bedding, occasional texts, or emails. Crime scene follow-up is critical in a robust investigation. Having experienced and knowledgeable detectives or crime scene technicians available on scene can greatly enhance the investigative opportunities for future case resolution. The identification, scene processing, evidence collection, and subsequent laboratory testing and analysis of evidence are key components in an effective and thorough investigation.

MPD policy does fundamentally address crime scene response and investigation for detectives. This policy identifies general directions for managing any crime scene but does

not provide any detailed specialized information or operational procedures and directions for sexual assault investigations. Having a robust agency policy and standard practice in place ensures that scenes are processed and critical evidence is collected. Having written guidelines in place establishes an essential foundation for sexual assault response—ensuring personnel understand the importance of crime scenes and are trained to properly evaluate, process, and collect relevant evidence at crime scenes.

5.3.6 Physical Evidence and Laboratory Analysis

There are many benefits to completing a victim forensic medical evaluation and other crime scene investigations—including the collection of forensic and physical evidence, which has the potential for crime laboratory analysis. Sound evidence response practices can support a victim’s medical needs, establish the elements of a crime, place the suspect with the victim or at a scene, and produce investigative leads (including the connection of suspects to other victims or other crimes). In 64% of MPD sexual assaults, a SAK was collected and case files generally contained a statement regarding the victim’s willingness to participate in the sexual assault medical examination. File documentation was consistent when officers assisted in facilitating the SANE examination, including providing transportation to the hospital.

MPD’s established sexual assault response facilitates the completion of a medical exam and the collection of important evidence, which increases communication between law enforcement and medical personnel. Case files contained limited documentation about ongoing communication among officers, detectives, and medical personnel (e.g., SANEs). This communication gap was reflected in personnel interviews because minimal initial on-scene or post-examination contact between police (e.g., patrol and SVD) and medical providers was articulated. Increasing communication with SANEs can help identify important case information that may not have been discovered otherwise. For example, victims may disclose additional details about the assault that may assist in the investigative process; medical personnel may also discover additional injuries or evidence that may corroborate details about the assault. SANEs routinely attend SART meetings and indicate that they are available to assist detectives and other team members. According to policy, the time frame for when SANE examinations are completed and SAKs collected is 72 hours. Current practice across the nation establishes 120 hours as a standard. Reviewing this policy with MPD partners is recommended.¹

Maintaining custody and care of all evidence throughout the investigation is essential. MPD’s policy about handling evidence and the chain of custody for SAK evidence is minimal. The policy addresses the importance of taking custody of SAKs and submitting them to the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences (ADFS). Detectives are responsible for completing

¹ MPD has indicated to the assessment team they are updating their policy to increase the examination times up to 96 hours. This is in accordance with the current Mobile SANE practice.

this action, but there are no specific time requirements or operational directions for when this should be completed.

Alabama does not have any statutes mandating the handling of SAKs; however, MPD officers indicate all SAKs are retrieved from the hospital and submitted to ADFS. Among cases in which the victim received a medical forensic exam and a SAK was collected, SAKs in 97% of cases were submitted to ADFS for analysis, based on case files 86% of those were submitted within 60 days. MPD staff did indicate they had additional documentation outside of case files that showed 100% of SAK's were submitted in less than 60 days. It is a good standard of practice model for law enforcement agencies to ensure that police expeditiously and properly handle SAKs. Recent research indicates that testing all SAKs can provide valuable investigative intelligence to link offenders and cases, while also contributing to the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS).

MPD does not have its own forensics crime laboratory, and any forensic evidence collected in a sexual assault investigation is submitted to the ADFS. This includes SAKs and other evidentiary items collected from suspects or crime scenes. Only 41% of case files indicated that the laboratory had completed screening or any DNA analysis on the SAKs. Being able to accurately document and track the status of physical evidence in an investigation affects how a case is managed and allows clear areas in which to provide supervisory oversight and investigative accountability. Although additional laboratory processing may have been completed, this information was not available in the reviewed case files. There also appeared to be a lengthy delay between SAK submission and any results, which SART members raised as a concern.

Finally, ADFS administers notifications to law enforcement about positive DNA results from CODIS. ADFS indicated they currently notify MPD detectives of laboratory results through email. Other communication between ADFS was not mentioned. In the past, ADFS has participated in SART meetings as a way to continue communication, but indications now are that these meetings were not beneficial or necessary to ADFS personnel. **Section 5.7.3** discusses additional observations regarding ADFS and MPD.

5.3.7 Case Submission to the Prosecutor

The MCDAO is the sexual crimes prosecution agency for MPD. This includes case reviews, charges, and prosecutions of current and cold case sexual assaults. MPD follows a standardized case submission process. Additional information about prosecutorial practice is discussed in **Section 5.5.2**.

Staff from both agencies indicated that the relationship between the agencies is strong. The case submission process was explained during the personnel interviews with both MPD detectives and MCDAO staff. Based on when suspects were identified in the investigations, 59% of MPD cases had documentation that the case was submitted to the prosecutor. Files

indicated that the prosecutor declined 13% of cases, with the most common reason being lack of victim cooperation or desire to proceed. Details about case submissions and filing dispositions were not consistently or clearly documented in most case files, which made accurately assessing this area of performance difficult. MCDAO advised that cases were consistently reviewed in person by an MDT.

MPD personnel indicated they are expected to have a prosecutorial review of all cases with engaged victims. In addition to review by MCDAO, the prosecutor presented all sexual assault cases to a GJ. Many cases that the assessment team reviewed were submitted for prosecutorial and GJ reviews when further investigative steps or key follow-up tasks had not been completed or were missing. MPD has no written policy or standards or agreement for case submission to MCDAO. Although there is an investigative checklist to facilitate this review, implementing a written agreement of MPD policy could ensure more consistency in how and when cases are submitted for prosecutorial review and provide guidance for detectives in terms of documentation and follow-up.

5.4 SVD Resources and Workload

One goal of the SAKI SAU Assessment was to examine the status of the SVD staff, including their roles and responsibilities within the agency, and the availability of other support personnel to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the collective sexual assault response. As part of the assessment process, several brief questionnaires were administered to the SVD and other MPD investigative details; the questionnaires asked about workload, stress management, and time management. The aggregate results from these questionnaires are incorporated into the following summaries. In light of a lack of national standards, observations and recommendations about caseload/workload are based upon evaluation of data of the SAKI SAU team collective team experience and information collected by national organizations from previous unit assessments.

5.4.1 SVD: Detective Caseload

At the time of this assessment, SVD had one squad of three detectives assigned to investigate adult sexual assaults and elder abuse cases. One detective is the unit supervisor whose responsibilities include completing additional administrative functions; one detective is responsible for cold case sexual assaults. Based on information that MPD provided for 2016 and 2017, the SVD Unit has not increased current levels of staffing over this time period (three detectives), although their caseload size did increase from an assigned total of 132 new cases in 2017 to 201 cases in 2018. Additionally, detectives were assigned 46 cold cases in 2017 and 29 in 2018. Detectives' caseloads averaged 60 (2017) and 75 (2018) per year, which in 2018 represented an average of 8 new cases per detective per month.

Although there is limited research addressing staffing and caseloads for sexual assault detectives, previous recommendations estimate the optimal detective caseload to be

approximately eight cases per month (e.g., PERF 2013). However, when considering recommended caseload size per detective, several additional factors must be considered—including the fact that sexual assault cases can be highly complex and time consuming, and that detectives often continue to investigate other types of criminal acts after being assigned to the SVD. In Appendix C, we present data that demonstrate non-investigative activities—such as completing administrative duties, assisting other detectives, traveling, and making court appearances—require much time from the detectives. These additional non-investigative activities may impact a detective’s capacity to incorporate many of the recommended investigative follow-up activities for these cases. Achieving an appropriate victim-centered response requires more time spent per case and additional staff resources. MPD would benefit by continuing to monitor detective activities and identify trends in work related efficiencies which may be improved through the adjustment of resources.

Despite these time requirements and the difficulties of investigating these crimes, SVD detectives appear to be successfully managing the requirements of their work. However, detectives across the MPD SVU (including SVD) were also surveyed about current job stress, job strain, and burnout. Detectives in the unit expressed that they are usually under a lot of pressure at work and that their job is emotionally draining. The detectives did not report becoming callous or worried that the job was hardening them emotionally, which are indicators of burnout. However, it is important to note that the job strain and job stress currently reported by the unit can lead to burnout in the long term. Regarding workload, the detectives generally agreed with the statement, “The amount of work I’m expected to do is reasonable,” but disagreed with the statement, “I have enough time to get the job done.” Overall, these results depict a resilient unit conducting tense and high-pressure jobs.

The assessment team recommends that MPD leadership continue to monitor SVD detectives, their caseloads, and job-related wellbeing—particularly as these areas relate to work-related demands and time pressure; this recommendation was made based on the SVD caseload, the detectives’ perceptions, and the need for a greater commitment to complete detailed documentation. It is important that the detectives receive the support they need to alleviate and manage their work-related stress and strain and to prevent burnout. As caseload trends continue to increase, future consideration should be given to increasing the number of SVD personnel—including taking steps to enhance resources that could free up detective time (see **Section 5.6.5**). The assessment team identified other opportunities for improvement, including (1) formalizing a process for identifying and recruiting the most suitable candidates for SVD investigative positions and (2) developing guidelines and appropriate qualifications for SVD detectives and supervisors (see **Section 5.6.4**).

5.4.2 Agency Advocates

In the interviews with internal agency staff and external partners, the assessment team noted that MPD and the MPD SVD do not employ advocacy personnel; MPD relies on the community organization LCS for victim advocacy, response, and support. As of the publishing of this assessment, information was provided that indicated MPD is exploring and potentially hiring advocacy staff within the department. These positions, when properly clarified for roles and responsibilities, could ultimately save time for the unit's detectives and improve the unit's ability to serve victims throughout the entire sexual assault investigation and victim-engagement process.

5.4.3 Training and Experience of SVD Staff

Detectives' experience levels in the SVD varied. Most understood their roles and responsibilities in investigating sexual assaults and all believed additional training would be helpful. Some SVD personnel reported receiving specialized training for their position. The type and amount of training experienced varied across officers and detectives. Personnel at all levels expressed wanting to receive additional and ongoing training in sexual assault response and investigations. They believed this training would help improve their response to victims and the quality of their investigations. Information gathered indicated that the specialized DNA Unit had received multiple types of sexual assault training, and the SVD had received very little training. This finding is supported by assessment observations that indicate understanding of certain investigative processes may be missing. Ensuring that personnel are knowledgeable and experienced is considered an intangible standard of any SVD that supports a robust and improved sexual assault response.

Training SVD detectives is critical and should be identified and prioritized within MPD. Organizational priority and commitment have been shown to improve the quality of investigations and can ensure a well-trained, highly functioning sustainable unit for the future.

5.4.4 Mentorship and Supervision Opportunities

Appropriate assignment and personnel selection are pivotal to running an effective SVD. MPD currently has no operational procedures or standards for identifying and selecting investigative and supervisory personnel for the SAU. Transferring to this highly specialized unit is not a structured process and candidates are determined by referrals. Recruiting, mentoring, and retaining at all levels of SVD sets the foundation for a sustainable response to sexual assault cases. MPD would benefit from implementing a clear job qualification, transfer, and assignment process exclusively for sexual crimes detectives and supervisory positions. This process would help communicate the importance of these cases to MPD personnel and demonstrate MPD's commitment to improve its response to sexual assault victims in Mobile.

5.4.5 Professional Staff

A final staffing consideration is to use professional staff to assist SVD detectives through activities such as collecting data, analyzing cases and offender crime, tracking cases, entering and managing data, filing, and answering phones. SVD detectives working at the FJC/RCC routinely had access to the MPD Crime Analysis Unit but did not have direct access to critical electronic criminal databases. The detectives were required to travel to an MPD facility when they needed to use these databases. Having computer access at the FJC/RCC would allow them more time for investigative follow-up and would partially relieve the burden of administrative travel and some duties. During this assessment, MPD completed the hiring process for a full-time data analyst. New information is emerging from jurisdictions across the United States about the prevalence of serial sexual assaults and crossover offenses with other types of crime (Lovell et al., 2017). Performing critical analysis will enhance the investigative process for identifying these offenders. This type of response, along with continuing to maximize the use of forensic evidence, is key to conducting strong sexual assault investigations.

5.4.6 Physical Work Location and Facilities

All three detectives assigned to the SVD were housed with LCS advocates and provided access to other services in the FJC/RCC. These relationships with advocates facilitated important communication and coordination between disciplines. The proximity of detective workspaces and victim interview rooms can also benefit from communicating and establishing trust with victims. These rooms are considered “soft” interview room space and not used as “interrogation” rooms. In terms of areas for improvement, the MPD rooms are not equipped for video or audio recording, so retrofitting the rooms for recording should be explored.

5.5 Multi-Agency Communication and Collaboration

Research has shown that working as an MDT can foster the sharing of resources and expertise and provide a more seamless response to sexual assault victims (Greeson & Campbell, 2013). With that in mind, this assessment incorporated input from all disciplines that are part of the response to sexual assault in the city of Mobile.

One overarching finding about MPD multi-agency collaboration was the current utilization of an active SART in the greater Mobile community. The assessment team received comments from active SART members indicating the SART provides key lines of communication between disciplines and functions in both a technical and practical sense. Although this SART addresses current sexual assault investigations, the MPD member who is responsible for SAKI cold cases also participates and provides information and feedback about these cold cases.

5.5.1 Forensic Medical Providers

U.S.A. Children’s and Women’s Hospital (USACWH) provides medical examinations to sexual assault victims in Mobile 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The SANE program is supported through USACWH and is a well-established (began in 1999) and organized forensic nursing program that provides 200 sexual assault exams each year. The program has seen a 14% increase in reported sexual assaults in 2018 and 2019. Information determined by the assessment team indicated the collaborative relationships among the SANE program at USACWH, MPD SVD, and LCS are very positive and open. SANE program personnel regularly attend SART meetings. The program’s response practice is described as a victim-focused approach. SANE or hospital staff automatically notify an LCS advocate who will respond to the hospital. Although described as a routine practice, MPD case file review revealed limited information supporting this. Providing examinations all day, every day and access to an advocate are activities supported as best practices.

For MPD, written case file documentation regarding forensic medical exam results and communication with SANEs was lacking. Although the SANE-MPD relationship was described as positive, the opportunity exists to improve communication and the relationship. SANE staff reported generally having limited contact with the responding MPD personnel and this was reflected in the file’s lack of documentation about communication. Several areas were identified to help improve communication. One such area was to ensure that MPD officers, detectives, or patrol make personal contact directly with a SANE when they are on the scene; the nature of the conversation and information obtained should also be documented. In the days after the examination, detectives should ensure they debrief with the SANE to determine what information may be helpful to the investigation. Several files contained important information in the SANE report that was not included in the police report. If critical information is missing from the case file, this can have an adverse consequence on case resolution.

Additional considerations to support improved and ongoing communication and collaboration should include cross training MPD and SANE personnel. This practice provides many benefits, promotes a seamless response, and improves services for victims.

Where communication is a critical component, each partner’s roles and limitations should be defined and respected. At times, it was noted that joint SANE and police-victim interviews were conducted. The SART should assess this specific procedure because it is currently neither recommended nor supported nationally; SAKI TTA also does not recommend or support this approach. This approach can negatively impact the investigation process and can blur the distinct roles between the two partners.

5.5.2 Prosecution

Members of the MCDAO expressed their commitment to pursuing sexual assault cases, improving the system response, and facilitating open communication with MPD and the SVD detectives. MCDAO utilizes a specialized prosecutor for sexual assault cases because this approach helps to ensure consistent and regular communication. The prosecutor participates regularly in SART meetings and confers with MPD detectives to ensure cases are properly staffed. Prosecutors manage 10–15 total sexual assault cases per month; there was a desire to increase agency staffing for these cases to improve review and response. There is no formal case review criteria or policy to guide these staffing decisions between detectives and prosecutors. More than half (59%) of cases were reported to have been presented to the prosecutor and then forwarded to a GJ. The number of cases that the GJ accepted and charged is unclear; however, the GJ recently accepted zero of eight cases presented. There was no feedback or indication as to why such a high rate of GJ turndowns occurred. Methods to improve outcomes of sexual assault cases may involve researching and possibly exploring with the GJ why they are not indicting; consideration for jury polling post-hearing may assist in this research.

Another factor noted that many MPD case files submitted to the prosecutor appeared to have, and would benefit from, additional follow-up investigative opportunities. These opportunities include:

- standardizing pre-submittal investigative practices to ensure the identification and interview of outcry witnesses,
- incorporating a more robust investigation and analysis of identified suspects,
- pursuing social media and electronic evidence related to the assault,
- identifying stronger methods to help corroborate aspects of victim statements, and
- exploring the use of the investigative control or confrontation phone call.

MPD should institutionalize and support these standards by establishing consistent training (including cross-discipline training) and ensuring case quality by continuing to utilize the previously established MCDAO investigation task checklist. Employing a joint investigative check list between detective and prosecutor will improve the submission and review process, thus improving the quality of the case for the GJ.

MCDAO has recently implemented one promising practice in partnership with LCS personnel. Prior to cases going to GJ or trial, victims who may testify receive an orientation of the courtroom and an overview about things to expect. This practice shows a positive step toward improving outcomes and support for victims.

Additionally, reviewing the various outcomes from court proceedings helps strengthen and enhance future investigations and prosecutions. There are numerous review models in place

across the nation that conduct post-court outcome reviews. MPD, along with MCDAO, would benefit from developing a review team that could assess the case and the GJ outcome to identify areas of improvement for criminal justice system response. Based on these reviews, both agencies could develop a joint strategy to sexual assault cases that would include multidisciplinary trainings about sexual assault response and practices for educating the community and GJ members about the realities of these cases.

The assessment team noted several opportunities to enhance interagency relationships and support victims by improving system outcomes. Opportunities for improvements to the investigative process will better prepare cases for presentation to the prosecution team and for final GJ review. MCDAO staff reinforced their commitment to working alongside MPD to improve sexual assault response and create better system outcomes for victims.

5.5.3 Crime Laboratory

The ADFS provides forensic services to MPD and is tasked with providing laboratory analysis and support to law enforcement agencies across Alabama. The laboratory's access to resources greatly affects the ability to provide timely forensic analysis. All SAKs collected in Mobile are submitted to the crime laboratory for analysis. ADFS believes this practice has caused a significant delay in analyzing and reporting SAK results. Prior to the SAKI project and the procedure to submit all SAKs, the testing turnaround time was approximately 90 days. Since SAKI began, ADFS estimates that SAK testing now takes at least 180 days. It is unclear if the laboratory has assessed their practices for efficiency, but ADFS still uses traditional serology methods, which is the slower method for screening.

When ADFS completes testing results, relevant information about findings is communicated to MPD via email; written laboratory reports are also mailed to an MPD contact. This system appears to have limited assurance that critical information is being received efficiently and effectively. SAK submission documentation to ADFS is generally included in the MPD case file. Most case file reports did not include testing results or information related to any analysis timelines. This is an area that should be further explored to determine the overall impact of testing delays on investigation outcomes and follow-up. Having accurate and consistent documentation about laboratory testing results in the case files is an important metric when evaluating the overall sexual assault response and identifying potential gaps and opportunities between the laboratory and detectives. During interviews, staff indicated that communication with MPD is positive, but most communication was limited to providing written reports about laboratory results.

MPD's submission of SAKs for laboratory analysis is a standardized and accurate procedure that aligns with national standards. Laboratory procedures appear to be lacking in efficiency and timely communication with detectives. ADFS previously participated in the Mobile SART/MDT but has since stopped attending because ADFS staff indicated there was no need to do so. Further discussion with other members of the Mobile SART/MDT revealed that

ADFS simply stopped attending the meetings without providing a reason. ADFS expressed their displeasure with the original SAKI project and how the project taxed their resources. ADFS did not give information about what training or support they provide for new MPD detectives and supervisors. Consistent and improved communication needs to be a priority for both the crime laboratory and the MPD SVD. Continued effort to improve relationships and communication will benefit all MPD members and the greater SART. Both MPD and ADFS personnel expressed their commitment to continuing this effort.

5.5.4 Victim Advocacy

Supporting and serving sexual assault victims through the investigative process are key to a sound sexual assault response strategy. LCS of the greater Mobile community has been providing quality services to victims for 2 decades. Their relationship with MPD has been constantly improving and growing. Having detectives and victim services in one location supports a victim-centered approach, promotes communication, and maximizes resources. Both LCS and MPD personnel believe that they have a strong relationship and have a desire to continue to address and resolve gaps and challenges. During this assessment process MPD completed the hiring process for a full-time victim advocate. With this coordination with LCS will be critical; the results are anticipated to enhance all aspects of sexual assault response. When this transition begins, MPD needs to review current agency policy and ensure the implementation of clear, sustainable direction and practice.

6. Recommendations

High-functioning, coordinated, trauma-informed, and victim-centered practices are hallmarks of strong law enforcement response to sexual assault. MPD has implemented and established many of these components to create a sound and sustainable foundation. First responders and detectives carry out their tasks and responsibilities in a professional, informed, and efficient manner. MPD displays and employs many positive and promising practices in its response to sexual assault crimes. MPD has many areas to be proud of—from employing specialized detectives co-located with advocacy, to on-scene response practice and SAK submission. Areas of opportunities, service gaps, and response challenges occur within all organizations. Addressing these areas will allow MPD to continue to excel and accomplish the goal of forever improving its response to sexual assault in the community.

Agency strengths, gaps, and opportunities are identified in the following series of recommendations. The assessment team’s recommendations are, where appropriate, linked to recommendations from the SAFER Act Working Group (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). For further information about these national recommendations, visit www.SAKITTA.org. The SAKI TTA assessment team supports the recommendations made within this report. Support for many of the recommendations is offered through SAKI briefs, virtual technical assistance, and online coursework; online training resources include SAKI TTA webinars, the SAKI TTA Toolkit, and the SAKI TTA Virtual Academy. Additional opportunities for in-person training are also available. Much of this assistance can be accessed via www.SAKITTA.org.

6.1 Strengths of MPD Response

The following strengths were identified during the assessment and can serve as foundations for continued improvements moving forward:

- All reports of sexual assault were documented in an official police report. These initial patrol reports were consistently assigned to a specialized SAU for follow-up investigation.
- A standardized response process is in place to give sexual assault victims the opportunity to receive critical assistance, including a forensic examination by a trained SANE and support from victim advocates.
- MPD has a policy that outlines the fundamental duties for patrol and detectives. The standardization of response is seen in how first responders handle on-scene reports of sexual assault, including facilitating a forensic medical examination and identifying and securing any crime scenes.
- The collection and processing of physical evidence also follows a well-established policy for handling SAKs. This process covers the possession, transfer, and submission of SAKs to the crime laboratory in an efficient manner. All of these steps follow best practices for sexual assault evidence and SAKs. An established detective notification and call-out procedure exists for all reported sexual assaults. This ensures that trained detectives respond early in the process and that skilled

personnel follow-up on all sexual assault sexual assault. Ensure that the call-out is equitable between all investigators to assist in decreasing burn-out.

- There is a standardized communication process with the prosecutor’s office to review and submit sexual assault investigations to consider whether charges should be filed.
- SVD detectives are co-located with the local advocacy organization in the FJC. These partners work together in an established multidisciplinary approach.
- SAU supervisors and detectives are committed to providing a high-quality response and continued support to sexual assault victims. SVD’s commitment is demonstrated by the request for this assessment and the cooperation seen throughout the process.

6.2 Key Recommendations for Improvement

As with any organization, opportunities exist to identify and address areas that would benefit from improvement measures. The intent of any recommendation is to build on the current MPD foundation while continuing to improve future responses.

The assessment team identified a series of greater overarching opportunities for improvement and enhancement in MPD’s policies, procedures, training, and partnerships. Many recommendations can be addressed internally, though others require engaging external MPD partners.

6.2.1 Create Department-Wide Victim-Centered Policy

A well-written and detailed policy for agency response to sexual assault provides clear direction, sustains consistent practices, and supports agency commitment to the best response to sexual assault. As department personnel changes occur, policy can guide employees, provide onboarding skills, and ensure a sound ongoing sexual assault response.

SAFER Recommendation 22: All law enforcement personnel involved in sexual assault investigations should receive training in the neurobiology of trauma and specialized skills for interviewing sexual assault victims.

SAFER Recommendation 35: Mandatory training for those responding to sexual assault should be incorporated into every agency’s strategic plan.

6.2.2 Improve Interdisciplinary Communication and Collaboration

Victims of sexual assault and community members benefit from the coordination of critical resources. This collaboration enhances the overall responses and serves the victims in a seamless manner. Having a robust SART supports this recommendation. A SART is currently in place for the greater Mobile area; consideration of expanding and including additional community members will ensure all stakeholders are providing their expertise and perspective to the team. MPD SVD would benefit from improved relationships and communications with crime laboratory personnel, SANEs, and patrol personnel.

SAFER Recommendation 4: The multidisciplinary approach should seek out and include voices from underserved or vulnerable populations in the community’s response to sexual assault cases.

SAFER Recommendation 34: Jurisdictions should develop a communication strategy to increase transparency and accountability to stakeholders within their communities regarding the response to sexual violence.

6.2.3 Update and Improve Agency SVD SOP and Policy on Investigating Sexual Assault

All sexual assault response and investigation should have clear direction and align with accepted investigative procedure for detectives to follow—from case assignment, to follow-up, to case closure. It is critical to ensure a consistent, efficient, and thorough investigation. Investigations should include detailed call-out guidance, requirements and standards for case follow-up and closure, and documentation needs. Standardizing and deploying an investigative checklist can also assist in ensuring these standards are being met. A key objective for any law enforcement investigative unit is to make sure that all individuals assigned to investigative activities are professionally proficient and able to consistently serve the needs of victims (Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, 2011).

These recommendations can be aligned with the broader SAFER recommendations:

SAFER Recommendation 21: Law enforcement agencies should establish a system of accountability to ensure the timely follow-up on CODIS hits.

SAFER Recommendation 22: All law enforcement personnel involved in sexual assault investigations should receive training in the neurobiology of trauma and specialized skills for interviewing sexual assault victims.

SAFER Recommendation 23: Law enforcement agencies should implement electronic records management systems that incorporate investigative workflows to improve case investigations and communication.

6.2.4 Strengthen Policy and Oversight for Report Documentation

Ensuring that written sexual assault reports and subsequent documentation are entered into the RMS in a detailed, consistent, and complete manner will benefit the agency and victims alike. Such practices will improve the outcomes for specific cases and create additional opportunities for case review and quality control across all sexual assault cases and investigations. The results of investigative activities should be accurately and completely documented in the case file. Internal investigative guidelines should specifically and clearly address due diligence and timeliness of the documentation (Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, 2011).

Consistent supervisory review and approval of cases within the RMS will help ensure that recognized standards for investigation documentation are upheld and will promote the completeness, accuracy, and consistency of all MPD sexual assault reports. This review and approval also will provide accountability and direction in identifying and addressing gaps or opportunities in sexual assault response.

SAFER Recommendation 23: Law enforcement agencies should implement electronic records management systems that incorporate investigative workflows to improve case investigations and communication.

6.2.5 Review and Evaluate the Current Investigative Staffing, Caseload, Responsibility, and Resources

An investigation's quality is directly impacted by the time and resources available. Resources should be appropriate to address the type and volume of sexual assault cases, ensuring that detectives are given the opportunity and means to fully investigate and resolve assigned cases. These factors can also impact personnel morale and work-related burnout. MPD should conduct ongoing evaluation to identify these needs and ensure equitable case assignments and resources across the agency.

6.2.6 Assess and Establish a Formalized Procedure for the Submission and Review of Completed Current Sexual Assault Investigations with MCDAO

Having a clearly established and agreed-upon formal case submission and review process will improve communication and assist in the quality and adjudication of cases. Communication can be improved by ensuring both parties understand investigative and prosecutorial standards. Utilizing a sound and well-vetted case submission/investigation checklist supports a best practice for sexual assault investigations. This procedure needs to ensure that the MCSAO is trained in trauma-informed/victim-centered investigations and the appropriate utilization of the GJ process for criminal investigations?

6.2.7 Increase Comprehensive Training Program for Sexual Assault Response—Emphasizing Academy, Patrol, Investigative Levels

Provide increased direction and support for implementing mandatory and reoccurring training for employees who respond to sexual assault. Increased training can assist MPD with ensuring all officers use a standardized response and understand the dynamics of sexual assault. This allows MPD to effectively assess and evaluate agency response and performance in responding to sexual assault victims.

SAFER Recommendation 22: All law enforcement personnel involved in sexual assault investigations should receive training in the neurobiology of trauma and specialized skills for interviewing sexual assault victims.

SAFER Recommendation 35: Mandatory training for those responding to sexual assault should be incorporated into every agency’s strategic plan.

6.2.8 Conduct Regular Self-Evaluation to Measure the Effectiveness of the Department’s Response to Sexual Assault Cases

Develop processes for assessing the department’s performance. These processes should include an annual community-based survey with questions about instances of victimization not reported to the police and people’s perceptions about trust and confidence in police (e.g., Are victims likely to cooperate with the police?). Additionally, a reoccurring internal review of case follow-up and clearances will help create a standard of practice and define response expectations.

SAFER Recommendation 4: The multidisciplinary approach should seek out and include voices from underserved or vulnerable populations in the community’s response to sexual assault cases.

SAFER Recommendation 19: Law enforcement agencies should perform an annual audit verifying that all SAKs in the property room are present and in their specified location.

SAFER Recommendation 34: Jurisdictions should develop a communication strategy to increase transparency and accountability to stakeholders within their communities regarding the response to sexual assault.

6.3 Full List of Recommendations

Based on the analysis of assessment findings, the following table provides a detailed and refined list of recommendations for the MPD.

Table 6-1. Detailed List of SAU Assessment Recommendations

Initial Response by Patrol Officers and Detectives
Review and clarify procedures with written policies to improve patrol and SVD detective notification and interaction on call-out responses. Ensure duties and expectations are clearly understood.
Implement mandatory comprehensive sexual assault training for all MPD personnel. Identify curriculum that includes trauma-informed responses, victim interviewing, and case follow-up standards.
Define clearly in written policy one timeline for when a forensic sexual assault exam should be offered and ensure that patrol officers, investigators, and external partners agree with and are aware of the policy.
Initial Response Documentation
Establish detailed written procedures and associated training to ensure reports and official police report documentation contain clear and concise information.
Identify one consistent template or report format for use. Ensure compliance through a quality control review.

(continued)

Table 6-1. Detailed List of SAU Assessment Recommendations (continued)

Victim Contact and Interview
Ensure that patrol officers receive fundamental training about how to interact and work with victims in sexual assault cases. Consider establishing a program within patrol units with specially trained liaison officers who can respond to reports involving a sexual assault.
Establish policy that requires statements from sexual assault victims, witnesses, and suspects to be recorded. Ensure personnel have the tools to comply with this policy.
Review and articulate detailed direction for follow-up contact with a victim to include interviewing options.
Establish procedure for ensuring victims are interviewed in a trauma-informed manner.
Detective Case Assignment and Victim Follow-Up Practices
Conduct an agency-wide review and evaluation of detective caseloads and monitor job-related stress, strain, and burnout. Implement this process as an ongoing practice.
Develop and clarify in writing case management procedure for SVD detectives to ensure fundamental steps are being completed and cases are receiving consistent and thorough follow up. Include detailed standards to ensure all investigative actions are documented accurately and completely to reflect effort made by detectives.
Ensure that the SVD detectives are engaged with the victim beyond the initial contact and throughout the investigative process; the results of such activity and contact should be documented within case file.
Ensure a victim advocate is engaged on all adult sex crime cases from initial response through follow-up assistance. Accurately document victim advocacy contact and services in case files.
Accuracy and Consistency in Documentation
Develop a consistent and structured documentation or written report format that all detectives will be required to use. Include the use of an investigative checklist to assist in this process.
Explore creating a report writing standardized “template” for detectives to follow when documenting their investigation follow up.
Review the standardized technical and administrative review process for all investigative case files, ensuring accuracy and consistency among detectives. Include the use of a supervisory checklist to assist in this process.
Ensure that victim, suspect, and witness statements and essential demographic data are accurately and completely entered into the investigative case file for every case; ensure this happens throughout the administrative review process. Identify means to address any deficiencies in this task.
Explore options to enhance accuracy and report documentation for detectives via mandatory written recording for victim, witness, and suspect statements.
Ensure thorough administrative oversight so that final case disposition and closure are clearly outlined and documented in the report. This should include supporting written rationale for disposition decisions.

(continued)

Table 6-1. Detailed List of SAU Assessment Recommendations (continued)

Investigative and Crime Scene Follow-Up
Review SVD call-out procedure. Streamline the logistical process by creating a clear and defined standard policy and criteria for when detectives from SVD respond to a call-out request. Outline specific expectations and duties of both on-scene patrol officers and detectives.
Provide clear guidance and directions for case follow-up when there is a crime scene. Ensure appropriate training is provided and that detectives have the necessary tools for scene identification and processing. This would help to ensure all investigative avenues are appropriately pursued and increase the number of crime scenes that are identified, located, and processed when critical evidence is collected.
Require all crime scene investigations and related activities to be documented in writing in the investigative file through a supplement report.
Determine the feasibility of granting SVD detectives working at the FJC/RCC access to the criminal history database to allow on-site and expedited criminal history checks for investigations.
Provide new and ongoing training to detectives about investigative strategies for sexual assault cases to decrease missed opportunities to identify or follow-up on case leads. This will improve the overall quality of the investigation when submitted to the prosecutor.
Suspect Contact and Interviews
Provide additional and specialized training for detectives about strategies that can be used in suspect interviews. Include training on offender behavior, serial nature of some offenders, and co-occurring crimes committed by the suspect.
Establish investigative standards in SOP that ensure detectives pursue (1) obtained information and (2) investigative leads that emerge from these interviews.
Outline, in policy, the collection of forensic evidence from suspects. Develop written operational direction about when to complete, who should complete, and where to complete this task.
Create standard policy to ensure tools are established for recording all suspect interviews.
Confrontational or Control Calls
Take steps to incorporate the use of confrontational or control calls as an investigative tool, when appropriate. Create and implement operational policy. Develop in-house training or attend specialized training about the use of such calls and also incorporate trained victim advocates into the process.
Electronic or Social Media Data
Provide additional guidelines and training about when and how to access and search for electronic or social media data. This will assist in further developing this form of investigative practice to improve information gathering and case follow-up.
Physical Evidence and Laboratory Analysis
Provide more guidelines and training to encourage detectives to increase communication and interaction with SANEs about additional facts that may have been discovered. Utilize this relationship to determine if information collected by SANEs could be helpful in the investigation.
Improve accurate and consistent documentation in police reports about SAK management, submission, and laboratory testing results.
Ensure that crime laboratory results and SANE information relevant to the investigations are written and documented in a supplement report as a part of the case file.

(continued)

Table 6-1. Detailed List of SAU Assessment Recommendations (continued)

Case Submission to the Prosecutor
<p>Reassess the current case submission practice for forwarding files to the prosecutor. Determine an agreed-upon set of submission standards to be completed to expedite charging for review and moving forward. The policy should provide guidelines that ensure consistency across investigations and that will assist in providing guidance for detectives. Outline procedures for arrests in sexual assault cases that are congruent with current investigative arrest practices employed by MPD for all other crimes and best practices. Furthermore, MPD executives should request MCDAO have more than one prosecutor review these cases to promote quality control and discussion amongst these agencies.</p> <p>Research and develop a policy and mutual agreement with MCDAO to provide detectives the discretion to affect an arrest based on probable cause.</p> <p>Assess the implementation of a post-GJ review process, a SAKI-SART post review. Use this as an opportunity to identify areas of the investigation/prosecution where improvements can be made.</p>
SVU: Investigative Case Closure and Caseload
<p>Develop a standard document for a consistent quality control procedure for when sexual assault investigations are closed. Reaffirm through training and supervisory review the allowed circumstances for each case disposition. Ensure all case dispositions are in writing in the case file, including supporting rationale for the decision.</p> <p>Develop a process to monitor workloads closely, continually evaluate this, and—if supported—recommend the need for additional SVD detectives and supervisors.</p>
Professional Staff
<p>Identify a mechanism for conducting more detailed intelligence analyses of sexual assault cases. Such features could facilitate linking less-severe and more-severe cases, connecting persons between cases, or identifying suspect patterns and behaviors. This process change helps to relieve detectives of this administrative-driven function.</p> <p>Articulate, through policy and job description, the crime analyst’s duties. Such duties include—but are not limited to—monthly SVD statistical recap reports, analysis of all crimes and linkages to sexual assault, suspect history packets and intelligence work ups, and trends and patterns of criminal activity related to sexual assault and other sex crimes.</p> <p>Consider adding an evidence technician position to assist the SVD detectives with handling SAKs (e.g., impounding SAKs, submitting SAKs to the crime laboratory for testing).</p>
Training for Special Victims Unit Personnel
<p>Review the current training provided to all agency personnel. Provide SVU and SVD detectives with mandated new and continued specialized sexual assault training (up to 40 hours). Include enhanced training for patrol officers. Training topics should include, but not be limited to, the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Victim dynamics and trauma, to include continuing trauma-informed interviewing (officers/detectives) ▪ Evidence in sexual assault (e.g., identifying, documenting, and processing crime scenes) (officers/detectives) ▪ Suspect behavior to include effective interviewing and interrogations (detectives) ▪ Sexual assault medical exams: essentials for law enforcement (officers/detectives) ▪ Investigative follow-up strategies (detectives) ▪ Report writing and case documentation (officers/detectives) ▪ Case preparation, submittal, and prosecution (detectives) ▪ DNA and crime laboratory capabilities (officers/detectives)

(continued)

Table 6-1. Detailed List of SAU Assessment Recommendations (continued)

Mentorship and Supervision Opportunities

Review performance management personnel evaluations. Ensure individual goals, duties, and job responsibilities align with national standards of practice for sexual assault investigations.

Have supervisory staff formalize a process for identifying and recruiting the most suitable candidates for detective work in the SVD.

Implement an effective job qualification process exclusively for transitioning and promoting personnel to SVD supervisory positions.

Designate a “trainer detective” position and develop a written evaluation process for the “orientation, on-boarding, and assimilation” of new detectives to the SVD.

Explore introducing a sexual assault patrol liaison position. Develop training, policy, and protocol for this position. Utilize this to assist MPD in the identification and recruitment of officers to the SVD.

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Appendix A: Interview Guides

SAU Assessment Purpose Statement

- Interviewer self-introduction
- Describe purpose and focus of the assessment

Explain the SAKI grant and the overall goal of the grant to include improving the overall response to sexual assault.

Sample wording: As part of this goal [MOBILE POLICE DEPARTMENT] has requested and agreed to host a Sexual Assault Unit Assessment. This is not an audit or inspection but a multi-disciplinary assessment of the current response to cases of sexual assault with the [MOBILE POLICE DEPARTMENT]. When completed a final assessment report will be generated that will provide leadership with timely information, highlight good practices, and identify opportunities and provide recommendations.

- The interview today is part of the entire assessment and will focus on you and the tasks, duties and responsibilities you have in responding to sexual assault. Feel free to ask any question of the interviewers.

Law Enforcement Stakeholder Interviews

Questions for SAU Detective

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Investigation Division:

Total years in Sex Crimes:

1. Describe your job duties as a detective investigating sexual assaults?
 - a. At what point do you become involved in a reported sexual assault?
 - b. Do you record interviews for sexual assault cases?
2. Are there written agency guidelines specifically addressing sexual assault response?
 - a. Does the agency have a policy specifically addressing sexual assault unit investigations?
 - b. Does the agency have a policy specifically addressing case management in the sexual assault unit?
3. Describe any specialized training and education you received in the investigation of sexual assault cases.
 - a. Is this training on-going? If yes, how often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
 - b. Approximately how many hours of sexual assault investigation training do you receive?
4. Describe the case management process.
 - a. What is the case assignment process?
 - b. What is your monthly new caseload? (Estimates are acceptable)
 - c. How are cases supplemented?
 - d. How are cases closed?
 - e. How are cases submitted to the prosecutor?
5. How are evidence/crime scenes in sexual assault cases handled?
 - a. Is there a specific policy for handling sexual assault evidence and/or crime scenes?
 - b. What is your policy for impounding and submitting sexual assault kits?
6. Do you communicate with other disciplines outside of your agency (e.g., advocates, SANEs, prosecution)? Please describe.
7. Does your agency participate in a SART or MDT? If so, how often do you meet?

8. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
9. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Question for SAU Detective Sergeant

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Badge:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years as Supervisor in Investigation Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Investigation Division:

1. Describe your role or job duties as a Detective Sgt. in sexual assault cases.
 - a. What types of cases does your unit investigate?
 - b. At what point in a reported sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
2. Describe any specialized training and education you received in the investigation/supervision of sexual assault cases.
 - a. Is this training on going? If yes, how often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
 - b. Approximately how many hours of sexual assault investigation training do you receive?
3. Are there written agency guidelines specifically addressing sexual assault response?
 - a. Does the agency have a policy specifically addressing sexual assault unit investigations?
 - b. Does the agency have a policy specifically addressing case management in the sexual assault unit?
4. Describe the case management process.
 - a. What is the case assignment process?
 - b. How many sexual assault cases does your unit investigate monthly?
 - c. What is your detective monthly caseload? (estimates are acceptable)
 - d. How are cases supplemented?
 - e. How are cases reviewed and closed?
5. What is your agency's selection process for supervisors and detectives in the sexual assault unit?
 - a. How do you measure and evaluate your detectives' performance?
6. How do you communicate with the patrol division regarding sexual assault cases?
7. Do you communicate with other disciplines outside of your agency (e.g., advocates, SANEs, prosecution)?

8. Does your agency participate in a SART or MDT? If so, how often do you meet?
9. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
10. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Questions for SAU Lieutenant

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years as Supervisor in Investigation Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Investigation Division:

1. Describe your job duties as a SAU lieutenant when responding to sexual assault calls.
 - a. At what point in the sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
 - b. What types of cases does your unit investigate?
2. What is your agency's selection process for supervisors and detectives in the sexual assault unit?
 - a. How do you measure and evaluate your detectives' performance?
3. Describe any specialized training and education you received in the investigation/supervision of sexual assault cases.
 - a. Is this training on going? If yes, how often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
 - b. Approximately how many hours of sexual assault investigation training do you receive?
4. Are there written agency guidelines specifically addressing sexual assault response?
 - a. Does the agency have a policy specifically addressing sexual assault unit investigations?
 - b. Does the agency have a policy specifically addressing case management in the sexual assault unit?
5. Describe the case management process.
 - a. What is the monthly sexual assault caseload for the sexual assault unit? (estimates are acceptable)
 - b. What is the monthly caseload for detectives?
6. How are evidence/crime scenes in sexual assault cases handled?
7. Describe your process for the review and crime lab submission of sexual assault evidence.
 - a. Is there specific policy for handling sexual assault kits?
8. What are the case submission standards for sending cases to the prosecutor?
9. Do you communicate with other disciplines outside of your agency (e.g., advocates, SANEs, prosecution)?

10. Does your agency participate in a SART or MDT? If so, how often do you meet?
11. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
12. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Questions for Patrol Officer

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Patrol Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Patrol Division:

1. Describe your job duties as a patrol officer when responding to sexual assault calls?
 - a. Do you record interviews for sexual assault calls?
 - b. What is your role in processing, collecting and impounding sexual assault evidence?
2. Does your agency sexual assault response policy/protocol clearly outline the role of patrol officers when responding to sexual assault calls?
3. Are you responsible for any follow up activities when responding to a sexual assault?
 - a. What are your duties at a sexual assault crime scene?
 - b. Do you contact the Detectives, SANE, or victim advocate?
 - c. Do you write a report?
4. What is your involvement in the sexual assault medical examination?
5. Do you communicate or interact with detectives in the sexual assault unit after the initial call/report?
6. Describe any specialized training and education you received in the investigation/supervision of sexual assault cases.
 - a. Is this training on going? If yes, how often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
 - b. Approximately how many hours of sexual assault investigation training do you receive?
7. What would be helpful in assisting you in your response to sexual assault?

Questions for Patrol Sergeant

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Patrol Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Patrol Division:

1. Describe your job duties as a patrol sergeant when responding to sexual assault calls?
 - a. Do you respond to the crime scene?
 - b. Are you responsible for any follow up activities when responding to a sexual assault?
2. Are you responsible for any follow up activities when responding to a sexual assault?
 - a. What are your duties at a sexual assault crime scene?
 - b. Do you contact the Detectives, SANE, or victim advocate?
3. Does your agency sexual assault response policy/protocol clearly outline the role of patrol officers when responding to sexual assault calls?
4. Do you communicate or interact with detectives in the sexual assault unit after the initial call/report?
5. Describe any specialized training and education you received in the investigation/supervision of sexual assault cases.
 - a. Is this training on going? If yes, how often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
 - b. Approximately how many hours of sexual assault investigation training do you receive?
6. What would be helpful in assisting you in your response to sexual assault?

Questions for SAU Major Crimes/Assistant Chief/Commander

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years as Supervisor in Investigation Division:

Total years throughout your career in the Investigation Division:

1. Describe your role in responding to and investigating sexual assaults.
 - a. At what point in the sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
2. Describe your agency's sexual assault response policy.
3. On average, how many sexual assault investigations does your agency conduct in a year?
4. What is your agency's selection process for supervisors and detectives in the sexual assault unit?
 - a. How do you measure and evaluate your detectives' performance?
5. Describe any specialized training and education you received in the investigation/supervision of sexual assault cases.
 - a. Is this training on going? If yes, how often do you receive training specific to sexual assault response?
 - b. Approximately how many hours of sexual assault investigation training do you receive?
6. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
7. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Questions for Victim Advocate (Agency/System-based)

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Crime Scene:

1. Describe your job duties as a system-based advocate in the sexual assault investigation process.
 - a. At what point in the sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
 - b. Do you have a policy to describe your role in sexual assault investigations?
2. What types of sexual assault cases do you respond to?
3. What sexual assault training did you receive prior to becoming an agency advocate?
 - a. How often do you receive continuing education?
4. How often do you communicate with detectives about sexual assault cases?
5. Do you communicate with other disciplines outside of your agency (e.g., advocates, SANEs, prosecution)?
 - a. Do you participate in SART or MDT meetings?
6. Describe your relationship with community-based advocates.
7. Are you involved in the victim notification process?
 - a. If so, what is your agency's protocol for victim notification?
 - b. Are you involved with victim notification in cold case sexual assaults?
8. What area of improvement can be made to better serve sexual assault survivors [not specifically for advocate improvements only]?
9. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
10. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Questions for Crime Scene/Evidence Technician

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Crime Scene:

1. What is your role in responding to sexual assaults?
 - a. How are you notified of sexual assault calls?
 - b. Do you follow a written policy when responding to a sexual assault call?
2. What type of training and education have you received in crime scene processing?
 - a. Have you received training specifically on collecting sexual assault evidence?
3. Describe your follow up activities for sexual assault cases after your initial response.
4. How often do you communicate with detectives in the SAU?
5. What is your role in impounding and submitting sexual assault evidence to the crime laboratory?
6. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
7. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Community Stakeholder Interviews

Questions for Prosecutor

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position and agency:

Total years of experience as a prosecutor:

Total years of experience in sexual assault prosecutions:

1. Describe your role in sexual assault cases?
 - a. At what point in the police investigation do you become involved sexual assault cases?
 - b. How are sexual assault cases submitted to your office?
2. Does your office have a specialized sexual assault unit?
 - a. Is there a dedicated code case prosecutor?
3. What type of specialized training have you received in sexual assault?
4. What types of cases do you prosecute?
 - a. What is your monthly caseload?
5. Describe your communication with law enforcement—specifically the sexual assault unit and/or with detectives.
 - a. Does your office train on sexual assault with law enforcement?
 - b. Are there submission standards or requirements for sexual assault cases?
6. Does your agency participate in the SART or MDT?
7. Do you respond on scene to assist on LE sexual assault investigations?
8. Does your office have specific procedures or policies that you follow when reviewing, charging, prosecuting a sexual assault investigation?
9. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
10. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Victim Advocate (Community-based)

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position:

Rank:

Total years of L.E. experience:

Total years in Crime Scene:

1. Describe your job duties as a community-based advocate in the sexual assault investigation process.
 - a. At what point in the sexual assault investigation do you become involved?
 - b. Do you have a policy to describe your role in sexual assault investigations?
2. What sexual assault training did you receive prior to becoming an agency advocate?
 - a. How often do you receive continuing education?
3. How often do you communicate with law enforcement/agency victim advocates about sexual assault cases?
4. Describe your relationship with other community partners regarding sexual assault investigations.
 - a. How often do you communicate with SANEs?
 - b. How often do you communicate with prosecutors?
5. Do you participate in SART or MDT meetings?
6. Are you involved in the victim notification process?
 - a. If so, what is your agency's protocol for victim notification?
 - b. Are you involved with victim notification in cold case sexual assaults?
7. What area of improvement can be made to better serve sexual assault survivors [not specifically for advocate improvements only]
8. How do you feel you could be better utilized in the criminal justice system?
9. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
10. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Questions for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position and agency:

Total years of experience:

Total years of experience in sexual assault examinations:

1. Describe your role in sexual assault response?
 - a. What is the process for notifying you of an assault?
 - b. Describe the process after the initial call.
 - c. Do you have a SANE on call 24/7?
2. Is there a timeframe for which a sexual assault exam is completed following the assault?
 - a. Do you offer to do a forensic medical exam without law enforcement?
 - b. What happens to the SAK after the exam?
3. Is an advocate called and when does this happen?
 - a. Who is responsible for calling or notifying the advocate?
4. What communications do you have with law enforcement prior to, during, or after the exam?
5. Do you meet regularly with other partners (law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, crime laboratory) as part of sexual assault investigations?
6. Do you participate in the SART or MDT?
7. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
8. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Questions for the Crime Laboratory

Assessor/s:

Date:

Name:

Position and agency:

Total years of experience:

Total years of experience in sexual assault examinations:

1. Describe your process for handling and processing sexual assault evidence.
2. Describe your communication process with sexual assault detectives.
 - a. Do you communicate law enforcement on the submission of evidence?
 - b. Are you involved in the evidence submission conversation?
 - c. How are the testing results communicated to detectives?
3. Do you have an opportunity to provide feedback to the quality of evidence collection to SANEs or crime scene technicians?
4. Do you have a submission or prioritization policy for testing sexual assault kit evidence?
 - a. Are there any reasons a sexual assault kit would be declined for testing in the laboratory?
5. How are CODIS hits communicated to partners?
6. Do you participate in the SART or MDT?
7. Is there any training you can recommend to sexual assault investigators, SANEs or prosecutors?
8. What type of internal support or resources would be helpful in your current position?
9. What type of external support would be helpful in your current position?

Appendix B: MPD Database Variables and Definitions

SABiR Data Fields*
Number of cases reviewed
Cases assigned to detectives
How case was reported
Date/time/location of assault
Date/time/manner of report
Cases in which the suspect was known (e.g., friend, acquaintance, coworker)
Cases in which the suspect and/or victim used alcohol and/or drugs
Cases in which drug-facilitated sexual assault is suspected
Victim reported incapacitation
Detective/victim contacted/contact within 48 hours
Detective follow-up interview with victim/interview assessment
Interview recorded
Victim advocate notified
Witnesses identified/interviewed
Detective responded to scene
Crime scene identified/located/processed
SAK collected
SAK submitted to laboratory less than 60 days
SAK screening/testing completed
Cell phone/social media evidence collected
Additional case evidence collected
Suspect physical evidence collected
Confrontation call completed
Suspect(s) identified, located, interviewed, and/or arrested
Suspect interview assessment
Suspect statement to detective/interview assessment
Case clearance rational
UCR case clearances/meet FBI standards
Cases submitted to prosecutor
Cases filed/declined
Prosecution declination rational

*These are key data fields for the MPD's SAU Assessment.

Appendix C: Time Spent on Investigative Activities

Interviews with three SVD detectives provided information about the distribution of time spent on investigative and non-investigative activities. Interviewers collected the number of minutes per day that the detectives spent on each of 19 activities for 10–11 days. The interview results show that detectives spent most of their workdays reviewing or writing case report files (13%–35%), followed by administrative duties (11%–15%). Of the various investigative tasks, detectives spent the most time interviewing victims, witnesses, or suspects (7%–13%); making case-related phone calls (4%–15%); canvassing (5%–9%); and traveling for investigative activity (1%–4%). Certain activities required much time from one investigator but not the others. One detective spent 14% of his/her time in court, though this activity required less time from the other detectives (3% and 6%). This same detective spent twice as much time (10%) assisting other detectives. Lastly, a different detective spent 15% of his/her day screening cases, and the other two detectives spent 2% of their time on this activity.

Table C-1. Percent of Time Spent on Investigative and Non-Investigative Activities

Activity	Detective 1	Detective 2	Detective 3
Administrative duties	11%	14%	15%
Training	0%	0%	0%
Case screening	2%	15%	2%
Canvassing area	5%	9%	8%
Crime scene processing	0%	0%	0%
Impounding evidence	1%	5%	8%
Reviewing/writing Case reports/files	23%	13%	35%
Preparing/serving Search warrant	1%	1%	5%
Interviewing (victim, witness, suspect)	7%	13%	9%
Case-related phone calls	9%	15%	4%
Case-related meetings	5%	0%	0%
Case crime analysis	0%	0%	0%
Assisting another detective	10%	5%	5%
Arrest of suspect	1%	3%	0%
Preparation for court	2%	1%	1%
Court appearance/testimony	14%	3%	6%
Travel to investigative activity	3%	4%	1%
Travel to court-related activity	3%	1%	2%
Other	2%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%