



Atlanta Police Department – Standard Operating Procedure		
	<p align="center">APD.SOP.5040 Homicide Unit Effective Date: March 28, 2024</p>	
Chief Darin Schierbaum	Signature by: DS	Date Signed: 3/27/2024

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

APD.SOP.5040 Homicide Unit
Policy revisions and highlights:

- 1. Section 4.6 Cold Case Squad:
Coleman-Baker Act

APD Staff,

The Policy and Standards Section has changed the “APD.SOP.5040 Homicide Unit.”

The Coleman-Baker Act (OCGA § 17-21-1, HB 88) is a law that was passed by the Georgia General Assembly to establish a uniform procedure for the review and, if required, the reinvestigation of Cold Case Homicides.

The law enables a citizen with connections to a certain Code Case Homicide (relative, spouse, partner, etc.) to complete a Cold Case Review Request (Form APD 316) to begin the process.

The law has procedures that the investigator(s) follow in every step of the process:



- 1. Accepting a request.
- 2. Declining a request.
- 3. Cold Case Review Procedures.
- 4. Full Reinvestigation.

Thank you and stay informed!

Policy and Standards Section
Planning, Research, and Accreditation Unit

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1. PURPOSE

This directive identifies the responsibilities and investigative processes of the Homicide Unit, including the Homicide Cold Case Squad and the Homicide Complex Case Squad.

2. POLICY

The Atlanta Police Department (APD) will conduct comprehensive homicide investigations in an efficient and effective manner.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Major Crimes Section (MCS) Commander is responsible for randomly auditing open and closed Homicide Unit case files to ensure the highest professional standards are maintained on all investigations.

3.2 The Homicide Unit Commander is responsible for the administration of the unit and will maintain a close liaison with other investigative units and other law enforcement agencies, to ensure that vital information is exchanged, and investigations are coordinated when necessary.

3.3 The Homicide Unit commander will ensure that information is being distributed between the different watches, and the Section and Division commanders are updated on key investigations.

3.3 The Homicide Unit supervisors will respond to all scenes involving a possible homicide. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring the crime scene is secure, overseeing the collection of evidence, and communicating with the lead investigator to resolve any issues that may arise.

3.4 The Homicide Unit supervisors on scene will notify the Unit commander, the Section commander, and appropriate members of the command staff. The watch supervisor is also responsible for overseeing and reviewing the case files and ongoing investigations.

3.5 All Homicide Investigators are responsible for responding to homicide scenes, completing homicide investigations and case files, interviewing witnesses and suspects, and initiating the arrest procedures.

3.6 Homicide investigators will cooperate with and assist prosecuting attorneys and attend all required court proceedings.

4. ACTION



4.1 Unit Commander

4.1.1 The Unit commander will continuously review every open homicide case file, and at the 90-day mark will formally review the file.



4.1.2 During the reviews, the Unit commander will ensure the appropriate paperwork is in the file/electronic file, including all paperwork listed in APD.SOP.5010 "Criminal Investigations Division" and that the watch supervisor has noted any corrections or additional investigations that need to be completed on the file.

4.1.3 The Unit commander will review and sign off on all homicide case files when they are closed.

4.2 Homicide Supervisors

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- 4.2.1 A Homicide supervisor will respond to the scene of all homicides.
- 4.2.2 The Homicide supervisor will oversee the crime scene and will be responsible for notifying appropriate personnel regarding the incident.
- 4.2.3 A Homicide supervisor will review and sign off on each open master file at 15-days, 30-days, 60-days, 90-days, 6-months, and 1-year intervals from the date of the homicide, and when each file is closed.
- 4.2.4 The supervisor will ensure the appropriate paperwork is in the file, and all leads are being pursued.
- 4.2.5 The supervisor will note any corrections that need to be made and list any additional interviews or follow-up investigations that need to be completed by the assigned investigator.
- 4.2.6 Supervisors will assign cases on a rotating basis; in cases needing particular expertise, supervisors have the option to assign specific investigators outside the normal rotation.
- 4.2.7 The release of information to the news media will be in accordance with APD.SOP.1060 "Public Affairs."
- 4.2.8 When at a crime scene, the Homicide supervisor will decide what information is to be released to the media.
- 4.2.9 The Homicide supervisor, or a higher-ranking officer, will be the designee to release the information to the media at the scene. Follow-up or in-depth media inquiries should be coordinated to the Public Affairs Unit.
- 4.3 Investigators
 - 4.3.1 The Homicide Unit will investigate all cases of homicide or life-threatening injuries that would become a homicide if the victim expired.
 - 4.3.2 A Homicide investigator will respond to all instances where an officer is the victim of an aggravated assault with serious injury.
 - 4.3.3 The Homicide Unit will also investigate adult missing person cases, death in custody cases, and all active kidnappings the victim's life is in imminent danger and the victim has not yet been located.
 - 4.3.4 The Homicide Unit will handle all child-kidnapping cases, with the exception of interference with custody disputes.
 - 4.3.5 When an investigator in the Homicide Unit is required to respond to the scene, they will
 - 1. Assess the scene.
 - 2. Gather information (according to APD.SOP.3081 "Crime Scene Investigations").
 - 3. Determine if the crime is a possible homicide.
 - 4.3.6 If the victim is stable, or if the elements of the crime do not appear to be a homicide, the investigator will notify the zone officer or appropriate investigative unit to take over the scene.

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4.3.7 If the crime is a possible homicide, the Homicide investigator will take over the crime scene and:



1. Ensure the crime scene is secure.
2. Debrief the responding officer and direct him or her to assist as needed.
3. Identify, separate and secure, if necessary, witnesses and suspects.
4. Ensure a homicide investigator responds to the hospital where the victim was transported, if applicable.
5. Ensure and/or verify that a crime scene log is being completed.
6. Call for a Crime Scene Technician.
7. Notify the Fulton/DeKalb/Clayton County Medical Examiner's Office.
8. Notify the Georgia Bureau of Investigations office, if necessary.
9. Oversee and direct the Crime Scene Unit Technician in the photographing, gathering, cataloging, and preserving all of the evidence.
10. Canvass the area for witnesses and additional evidence.
11. Obtain statements from witnesses and officers.
12. Notify the Fulton/DeKalb/Clayton County District Attorney's Office, as appropriate.

4.3.8 Before the end of the tour of duty, the lead investigator will:

1. Complete and submit an incident report.
2. Enter the information into the Homicide Data Book.
3. Collect all of the statements and other pertinent paperwork.
4. Begin a master file and a working file of the incident.
5. Maintain and update the master Homicide file.
6. Store the master file in the Homicide File Room.

4.3.9 Within seventy-two (72) hours of being assigned to the case, the investigator will have in the master Homicide file/electronic file:

1. Investigation Summaries.
2. All related police incident reports.
3. All completed statements of witnesses, suspects, officers, etc.
4. Any other relevant documents; and

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5. Any arrest/search warrants applicable to the investigation.

4.3.10 A Homicide investigator will review appropriate 911 tapes for calls regarding each incident to ensure all of the information that was given to the operator is known, and all potential witnesses have been located.

4.3.11 If any video or audio recordings become part of an investigative file, a copy of the recording will be made.

1. The recording will be labeled with:

- a. the case number.
- b. a brief description of what the recording contains.
- c. victim information.

2. The master recording will be stored in the master Homicide file and electronic file.



3. A brief synopsis of all video or audio recordings will be included in the SUMMARY section of the homicide investigative file. If needed, the Homicide investigator will transcribe all, or all of the relevant portions, of the recording. (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 83.2.2b)

4.3.12 Within 60 days of homicide file:

- 1. Being closed.
- 2. Becoming inactive because all leads and investigative options have been exhausted.
- 3. Been open for one (1) year.



The master file and electronic file will contain the following items (if applicable) listed in the following order:

- a. Investigation Summaries.
- b. Family Contact Log.
- c. Copies of all related police incident reports.
- d. Lead investigator's summary/supplements, including a synopsis of the witnesses' statements.
- e. Other investigator's supplements.
- f. Crime scene sketch.
- g. All statements.
- h. Weapon diagram.
- i. Body diagram.
- j. Crime lab reports.

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- k. Autopsy report.
- l. Crime scene / witness canvass log.
- m. Criminal history log (victim and defendant).
- n. Warrants (search and arrest).
- o. Arrest and clear up reports.
- p. All receipts (vehicle impounds, property).
- q. Crime scene photographs and notes.
- w. Cell Phone records.
- x. Digital media.
- y. Other relevant documents.

- 4.3.13 When a file is completed and closed, the file will be submitted to the Unit Commander for reviewing.
- 4.3.14 When a suspect is identified, and an arrest warrant is obtained, the investigator will notify the Fulton County or the DeKalb County Prosecuting Attorney's Office and present them with a copy of the warrant and other pertinent investigative documents.
- 4.3.15 A complete warrant package will be submitted to the Fugitive Unit and the warrant will be flagged in the Identification Unit as soon as the warrant is obtained.
- 4.3.16 When an arrest is made, the Homicide investigator will follow the procedures for proper prosecuting authority's office:
- 1. Prepare and submit the required documents.
 - 2. Have the suspect transported to the appropriate detention facility.
- 4.3.17 The Homicide investigator will go to the Identification Unit and have the original warrant pulled and cleared from the NCIC system as mandated by GCIC/NCIC policies and procedures.
- 4.3.18 Unless excused by the prosecuting attorney on the case, the investigator will attend all court proceedings according to APD.SOP.3160 "Court Responsibilities."
- 4.3.19 The Homicide investigator will input applicable data on the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP) website, when applicable, within 60 days of the homicide and notify the Homicide Crime Analyst.
- 4.3.20 All property that is turned into the Property Control Unit as evidence from a homicide scene will remain in Property indefinitely. The property is not to be released or destroyed so it will be available for court, the appeals process, or cold case investigations in the future.

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4.4 Audits

4.4.1 When a Homicide investigative file is closed, the file will be reviewed by the watch supervisor for completeness and forwarded to the Unit commander.

4.4.2 The Section Commander ,or designee, will audit open and closed Homicide files for:

1. Quality.
2. Completeness.
3. To ensure all possible leads have been exhausted.

4.5 Cold Case Squad

4.5.1 Homicide investigators assigned to the Cold Case Squad will investigate cases that are complex in nature or have the potential for creating significant public outcry or concern.

4.5.2 The Homicide Unit Commander will determine which cases will be assigned to the Cold Case Squad.

4.4.3 Homicide investigators assigned to the Cold Case Squad will review and investigate unsolved cold homicide cases that have been identified as having some solvability potential.

4.4.4 Cold Case investigators and supervisors will review homicide cold cases to determine if there are potential solvability factors that require further investigation and may lead to the apprehension of the offender.

4.4.5 All investigative actions taken by the Cold Case investigators will be documented in the case file in the same manner as the active homicide investigative case files. (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 42.2.7)

4.6 Cold Case Squad: The Coleman-Baker Act



4.6.1 The following procedures are for the review and reinvestigation of Cold Cases in compliance with OCGA § 17-21-1, The Coleman-Baker Act.

4.6.2 Cold Cases initially investigated by the Atlanta Police Department's Homicide Unit individually or in coordination with another law enforcement agency are subject to OCGA § 17-21-1, The Coleman-Baker Act.

4.6.3 Responding to Cold Case Review Request

Upon receiving a Cold Case Review Request (Form APD 316), the Cold Case Squad will:

1. Send a written notification to the Cold Case Review requestee.
2. The written notification will state that the request is under review to establish if the case falls within the guidelines of OCGA § 17-21-1.
3. The written notification will include the contact information to the Office of Professional Standards (OPS) and the procedures for filing a complaint on an investigator for alleged misconduct.

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4.6.4 Accepting a Cold Case Review Request

A written notification will be sent to the Cold Case Review requestee when the case review has been accepted and initiated.

4.6.5 Declining a Cold Case Review Request



A written notification will be sent to the Cold Case Review requestee advising them that their request is declined and the justification for being declined.

4.6.6 Cold Case Review Procedure

1. A review of the investigative procedures used and those possibly missed during the initial investigation.
2. A review of the case witnesses to determine if additional interviews are required.
3. A review of all forensic evidence to determine if proper analysis practices were used in the initial investigation.
4. Determine if additional analysis of forensic evidence would reveal new information relevant to the investigation.
5. Update the case file using the most current investigative standards.
6. If the case review requires more than six (6) month time limit, the case review can be extended for another six (6) months.
7. Notification will be sent to the case review requestee advising them of the extension.

4.6.7 Full Reinvestigation

1. After the Cold Case Review, the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) Commander, or designee, can authorize a full reinvestigation if any of the following criteria is present:
 - a. Previously unidentified evidence.
 - b. Newly discovered leads.
 - c. A likely suspect is identified.
2. All findings will be documented in response to each element of the investigative criteria.
3. Notification of the investigative findings will be made following the reinvestigations conclusion.
4. Reinvestigation Requirements
 - a. Review of all previously collected and analyzed evidence.
 - b. Analysis of evidence which may have certain forensic value that could developing into leads or a possible suspect.

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- c. The reinvestigation will not be conducted **by** solely by the primary investigator of the case.
- d. The CID Commander, or designee, will assign investigators to the case.
- e. Only one (1) reinvestigation will be conducted at any one time with respect to the same victim.
- f. Upon conclusion, If the reinvestigation identifies evidence and a suspect for possible prosecution, the Cold Case Squad will submit the entire case file to the proper prosecuting authority.
- g. Upon conclusion, If the reinvestigation does not identify any new evidence, leads, or suspects, the Cold Case Squad will notify the case requestee of their findings.

4.6.8 The Cold Case Squad will be responsible with collecting the following data and sending it to the Carl Vinson Institute of Government of the University of Georgia as required in OCGA § 17-21-3(k).

- 1. Total number of requests received annually.
- 2. Total number of six (6) month extensions granted annually.
- 3. Total number of full reinvestigations that were initiated annually.
- 4. Total number of full reinvestigations that were forward to the proper prosecuting authority.



4.7 Officer-Involved Shooting Scenes

- 4.7.1 All employees will immediately report the discharge of a firearm to an on-duty supervisor in the appropriate zone of occurrence.
- 4.7.2 Officer safety is paramount in any officer involved shooting incident. Nothing in this policy will preclude an officer from taking reasonable actions to ensure the safety of the scene as well as the safety of the officers or public at large.
- 4.7.3 Whenever an officer discharges their firearm at a person and there is no known physical injury or death, the on-duty zone supervisor will immediately notify the Communications Section and the Office of Professional Standards (OPS) of the incident.
- 4.7.4 The zone supervisor will take control of the scene to ensure that the crime scene is secure, a crime scene log has been started and maintained, and all witnesses (including officers), remain at the scene and separated until directed by the Homicide Commander, or their designee.
- 4.7.5 The Homicide Commander, or their designee, will evaluate each situation and respond on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.7.6 Whenever the discharge of a firearm results in the physical injury or death of another, the on-duty zone supervisor will immediately notify the Communications Section, the zone commander, and the Office of Professional Standards (OPS) of the incident.
- 4.7.7 The on-duty zone supervisor will respond to the scene and request the Homicide Unit and Georgia Bureau of Investigations (GBI). The zone supervisor will take control of the scene to ensure that the crime scene is secure, a crime scene log has been started and maintained, and



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all witnesses (including officers), remain at the scene and separated until personnel from the Homicide Unit arrive on scene and assume responsibility.



- 4.7.8 The Homicide Unit will investigate what precipitated the incident in which the officer discharged their firearm.
- 4.7.9 In certain cases, the Homicide Unit shall have the option to request that the GBI file any criminal charges that are warranted within the investigation.
- 4.7.10 The Homicide Unit will investigate what precipitated the incident in which the officer discharged their firearm and will be the primary liaison to the GBI for any requests regarding the investigation. In certain cases, Homicide has the option to request that the GBI file any criminal charges that are warranted within the investigation.
- 4.7.11 When the initial incident is stabilized, and the scene is safe, the officer(s) involved in the discharge of their firearm will do the following:
1. Holster and snap in their firearm. The magazine should not be removed, and the weapon should not be reloaded, or altered, in any way. Thereafter, the weapon is not to be removed from the holster until directed to do so by the GBI. In cases involving shotguns and/or long rifles used by officers, the weapon will be placed on “safe” and isolated in a secure location.
 2. Request Emergency Medical Services for any injured person.
 3. If the involved officer is injured, the first responding officer will ensure that minimal disruption of the scene occurs during medical treatment.
 4. No items, including weapons, radios, O.C. spray, batons, etc. should be removed, collected, or altered from their original resting place unless a safety concern is present. If there is a safety concern, clearly document where any item was moved and by whom in a formal statement.
 5. Any weapon handled by responding officers will remain in the custody of the officer who first took possession of said weapon until it is turned over to the GBI. This is to include extra weapons, gun belts, and any magazines.
 6. If the officer is transported to a hospital, the person who takes control of the officer's weapon and equipment at the scene will remain there until debriefed by the GBI; and
 7. The first responding officer, and all officers involved in the incident who are not injured will be transported to a location designated by the Homicide Unit after the scene is rendered safe.
- 4.7.12 After the scene is safe, protect the crime scene and preserve all evidence. Prior to the arrival of the GBI and/or the Homicide Unit, no individuals will be allowed to enter into the scene except to perform emergency medical assistance or assist in the preservation of the scene. This includes all other police officers and supervisors, with the exception of the GBI, the Homicide Unit, the Atlanta Police Command Staff, and/or their designee. Anyone who enters the scene for any reason will be identified and noted on a crime scene log for the GBI.
- 4.7.13 The involved officer(s) will make no detailed statements of the incident surrounding the shooting until the GBI arrives.

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- 4.7.14 the involved officer(s) may be debriefed by a responding supervisor and/or the Homicide Unit to assist in collecting information that may aid in the preservation of any evidence or the identification or capturing of any suspects, to include:
1. Description of the suspect.
 2. Direction of travel.
 3. Possible suspect weapons.
 4. etc.
- 4.7.15 Keep all witnesses at the scene, and request that they do not discuss the incident with each other. Immediately separate them as much as possible after obtaining their:
1. Name.
 2. Address.
 3. Date of birth.
 4. Verified phone number.
- 4.7.16 The on-duty supervisor and the Homicide Unit will coordinate with the GBI on the transport of anyone who needs to be interviewed by the GBI.
- 4.7.17 Involved officers will be treated with dignity and respect and be afforded all rights applicable by written directive and the law.
- 4.7.18 Involved officers will only be requested to provide information regarding the incident to the Homicide Unit or the GBI.
- 4.7.19 The responding supervisor will ensure that the following is done:
1. OPS notified the Psychological Services and Employee Assistance Program Unit (PSEAP).
 2. Involved officers will be required to undergo drug testing at Caduceus. A member of the department's OPS will be responsible for ensuring that this occurs prior to the end of the officer's shift.
 3. The Homicide Unit will secure all body-worn camera footage and immediately notate if there is no footage available.
 4. The Zone Commander has been notified.
 5. A Use of Force report is completed for each directly involved officer.
- 4.7.20 A Division Commander, or their designee, along with the Homicide Unit will coordinate with the GBI and provide a preliminary Media Release. All subsequent Media requests will be referred to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI).
- 4.7.21 The Homicide Unit will coordinate with the department's Chaplaincy Unit within 24-hours, or as soon as practicable if on-scene identification cannot be made.

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- 4.7.22 The Homicide Unit will make sure that sufficient information (victim's name, family address, phone number) is provided to the Chaplain to ensure that there are lines of communication with the deceased individual's family.
- 4.7.22 Nothing stated in this section should be construed to suggest that the death investigation will be compromised; rather the department recognizes family members of the deceased are due communication.
- 4.7.23 A Homicide Unit supervisor will complete the Force Usage Review Assignment (FURA) Memorandum and forward it to the Chain of Command (APD.SOP.2020 – Disciplinary Process, Section 4.11.5) and will complete a Replacement Weapon Memorandum.
- 4.8 In-Custody Severe Injury and/or Death
- 4.8.1 Any time that there is a question as to whether an injury or death of another is potentially the result of being in-custody, the on-scene supervisor will notify the Homicide Unit and OPS, who will respond to the scene.
- 4.8.2 Whenever there is a known officer-involved incident which has resulted in the physical injury or death of another or an in-custody severe injury (paralysis, comas, etc.) or death, the Homicide Unit will respond to the scene, secure the scene and in accordance with Section 4.6.6, request that the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) respond to the scene to investigate of the incident.
- 4.8.3 If the incident occurs during Morning Watch hours, the Night Commander will respond to the scene. They will remain on the scene until relieved by the Homicide Unit.
- 4.8.4 The Homicide Unit will remain on the scene to provide the GBI with the support necessary to complete the crime scene investigation.
- 4.8.5 The on-duty zone supervisor will ensure adequate personnel remain at the scene for security and crowd control until the scene is cleared by the GBI.
- 4.8.6 The responding supervisor will ensure that the following is done:
1. OPS notified the Psychological Services and Employee Assistance Program Unit (PSEAP).
 2. The Homicide Unit has secured all body-worn camera footage and immediately notate if there is no footage available.
 3. The Zone Commander has been notified.
 4. A Use of Force report is completed for each directly involved officer. This report will be completed by a Homicide Unit supervisor.
- 4.8.7 A Homicide Unit supervisor will ensure that an original police report for the officer-involved incident or in-custody severe injury and/or death is completed.
- 4.8.8 The MIT will complete all:
1. Supplemental incident reports.
 2. Arrest tickets.

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3. Arrest reports for unrelated charges utilizing the same incident number of the police incident if they are not using an original incident number.

4.8.9 The Homicide Unit will submit their reports to Central Records and provide the GBI with copies of all related documents.

4.8.10 The Homicide Unit will serve as the liaison to assist the GBI with obtaining documentation and other needs as reasonable to further their investigation.

4.8.11 A division commander or designee will coordinate with the GBI and provide a preliminary Media Release. All subsequent Media requests will be referred to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI).

5. DEFINITIONS

5.1 Cold Case: An open homicide case that is more than three years old from the date of the homicide that is inactive because all investigative leads have been exhausted. (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 42.2.9a)

6. CANCELLATIONS

APD.SOP.5040 "Homicide Unit" effective December 30, 2020

7. REFERENCES

APD.SOP.1060 "Public Affairs"
APD.SOP.3081 "Crime Scene Investigations"
APD.SOP.3086 "Project Lifesaver Atlanta"
APD.SOP.5010 "Criminal Investigations Division"

Atlanta Code Section 98-3, "Mattie's Call"

Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), 6th ed. Standard 42.2.7 and 83.2.2b

OCGA § 17-21-1, The Coleman-Baker Act (HB 88).

Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) Directive 8-8-26, Cold Case Reviews and Reinvestigations to the Coleman-Baker Act, August 15, 2023.