



Charleston County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedures Manual

Sheriff Carl Ritchie

11-09 COLD CASE INVESTIGATIONS

- ☐ NEW
- ☐ REVISED
- ☒ REVIEWED

ACA Standards Reference:
CALEA Standards Reference: 42.2.7
NCCHC Standards Reference:
SCLEA Standards Reference:
SC Minimum Standards:

This policy dated 1/28/2025 replaces prior policies cited above and supersedes all previously issued directives.

I. Purpose:

To establish guidelines for conducting cold case investigations.

II. Policy:

The Sheriff's Office is committed to serving the citizens of Charleston County and is dedicated to providing quality law enforcement services to all victims of crimes. The type and timeless service provided during criminal investigations may vary from case to case. The very nature of criminal investigations is to seek the truth and bring law violators to justice. The Charleston County Sheriff's Office is continuing its commitment to the community by dedicating its law enforcement services to crime victims and their families in cases that have gone unsolved. The continuing search for truth and justice is the priority of the Sheriff's Office and is cornerstone for the development of the Cold Case Procedure.

III. Definitions:

- A. For purposes of this procedure, the word "deputy" applies to all agency employees with a certification classification of Class I, Class II, Class III, or Reserve Deputy, as defined by the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy.

The following terms are used interchangeably; however, they carry guidance to specific employees based on usage of the term:

1. Deputy, deputies, deputy sheriff, detention deputy, sworn employee, uniformed sworn employee, sworn administrative employee, and
 2. civilian, non-sworn employee.
- B. *Employee*: When used without further clarification, the term employee is inclusive of all agency members (sworn and non-sworn).
- C. *Cold Case*: A case that has been closed due to all leads being exhausted when originally investigated and/or a lack of viable evidence at the time to establish probable cause to develop any suspect(s) or make any arrest.

(Ref: CALEA 42.2.7 item a)

IV. Procedure:

- A. Establishing Cold Case Evaluation Criteria:

The establishment of a cold case squad is to review old and recent unsolved criminal cases and then to determine whether, with the

passing of time, circumstances surrounding the cases may have changed, to include recent advances in DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) analysis, opening up new possibilities of solvability. All possibilities will be sought out, investigated and exhausted until the case is either solved or taken to a point where the agency must again wait for new information before the investigation can continue.

(Ref: CALEA 42.2.7 item b)

B. Case Investigative Decisions:

1. A sworn Sheriff's Office detective will be selected as the lead detective for each cold case opened.
2. All involved detectives will read the complete cold case file prior to any additional investigation.
3. The lead detective will hold meetings as necessary to decide direction of investigation and assign investigative leads.
4. The assigned personnel will collectively:
 - a. determine the direction of the new investigation;
 - b. prioritize work to be done;
 - c. determine who will be given which leads and who will act as partners for any given task; and
 - d. determine what if any case information will not be given to witnesses, the public or the press.
5. The work schedule will be dictated by each case as approved by the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) commander, (i.e., how many days per week and how many hours per day).
6. A cold case squad master file will be established at the start of each case. A copy of all work/reports will be filed in the master file.
7. Hours worked will be logged and verified by a CID supervisor.

C. Field Notes:

1. Detective's name, date, time, case# and the name of the person being questioned must appear at the top of the page.

2. The address and phone number of the person being questioned should be clearly identified in the notes.
 3. Must be legible.
 4. Contents of notes must make sense to anyone who reads them.
 5. Telephone call interviews should be identified as such.
- D. Typed Memorandums of Interview (M.O.I.):
1. Notes will be filed with the M.O.I. in a folder bearing the name of the person interviewed.
 2. Same heading requirements as field notes.
 3. A copy of all M.O.I.'s will be placed in the current cold case master file.
 4. All M.O.I.'s and official reports will be reviewed and initialed by the lead detective prior to filing.
- E. Case Folders:
1. No personal case folders will be kept or maintained. Copies of personal field notes may be kept.
 2. All case folders will be kept and maintained within (CID).
 3. Folders that are removed for investigation will be identified and logged as being out of the main case file.
(Ref: CALEA 42.2.7 item c)
- F. Cold Case Spokesman:
1. The lead cold case detective will maintain regular communication with CID supervisors, who in turn will keep the Command Staff apprised of the progress of the case.
 2. The Public Information Officer (PIO) will talk to the media or setup interviews for the investigators, after the Sheriff and Command Staff have been briefed on any additional findings in an active investigation.

3. Cold case investigators will not conduct impromptu interviews with the media.
4. Details of an investigation will not be discussed with the general public.