

PALM BEACH GARDENS POLICE DEPARTMENT

COLD CASE INVESTIGATION

POLICY AND PROCEDURE 4.2.2.16

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PURPOSE: To establish guidelines for defining a cold case, to establish evaluation criteria prior to investigation and to record investigative actions and activities.

SCOPE: This policy and procedure applies to all members, to include civilian volunteers assisting after completion of a background check.

REVIEW RESPONSIBILITY: Investigations Bureau Major

POLICY: It will be Department policy that all capital crimes or other crimes carrying no statute of limitations are investigated until solved, exceptionally cleared or all forensic and investigative leads have been exhausted.

PROCEDURE

1. ESTABLISHING COLD CASE EVALUATION CRITERIA

- a. It will be the responsibility of the Investigation Bureau Major or their designee to review unsolved cases that meet the definition of a cold case.
- b. The Investigation Bureau Major will determine which cases are assigned for further investigation based on objective criteria to include, but not be limited to the following:
 - i. A suspect or suspects was previously named and/or recently identified through forensic methods.
 - ii. Significant physical evidence such as fingerprints, DNA, or shell casings can be reprocessed with new or advanced forensic techniques.
 - iii. Newly documented leads have arisen.
 - iv. Critical witnesses are now accessible or willing to cooperate.

2. RECORDING INVESTIGATIVE ACTIONS OR ACTIVITIES

- a. The Investigation Bureau Major will maintain a list of "cold cases". The list should include the names of the detective and other members assigned to the case.
- b. If necessary, a complete review or reorganization of the original case file should be performed to verify that all reports, papers, notes and evidence are physically available.
- c. Detectives assigned to cold cases will document investigative leads that have been completed, or that need to be completed.
- d. The detective assigned to the Cold Case will meet with the Investigation Bureau Major to discuss the merits of the case on a regular basis.
- e. The actual cold case records will be securely maintained in a file cabinet or storage room.

3. GLOSSARY:

Cold Case – A “Cold Case” is any homicide, suspicious death, unidentified human remains, missing person’s (under suspicious circumstances) cases or other offense having no statute of limitation that have gone unresolved for two (2) or more years, due to a lack of leads or case activity. This criteria/definition does not encompass those cases of homicides, suspicious deaths, etc. that commonly exceed more than two years of active investigative work. Only at such time that the investigation exhausts all available leads and becomes inactive for a period of 2 years or more would that case be added to the cold case files.

Unsolved Case – Because cases may or may not have a suspect named at the time of the crime and/or developed during the investigation, a case is considered unsolved until a suspect has been identified, charged and tried for the crime, or until the case can be exceptionally cleared as in the case of a deceased suspect.

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APPROVED:

Stephen J. Stepp
Chief of Police

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