

2018 Annual Report

Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations



Investigation, Advocacy Services, Prosecution

2018 Annual Report Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

Our mission is to protect and support all children, families and adults by strengthening our community's response to abuse through investigation, prosecution and intervention while fostering professional collaboration to promote education and advocacy regarding the prevention of abuse.

WHAT WE DO...

The Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations (CUSI) is a multi-agency task force dedicated to providing criminal response to reports of sexual assaults, serious child abuse and child fatalities. For 26 years, the primary focus has been to protect and support all children, adults and families. CUSI defined what is now known as a true multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach to investigating crimes of this nature. The multidisciplinary team is the heart of CUSI and is composed of seven police detectives, a unit director, a victim advocate, an in-house investigator with the Department for Children and Families (DCF), and a dedicated prosecutor from the Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office. We work jointly with mental health providers, medical providers and Department of Corrections. In addition, CUSI shares space and supports the ***Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center (CCAC)***.

CUSI has become a model for multidisciplinary teams (MDT) throughout the state. These teams maintain specialized skills for outstanding investigations and victim services which involve sexual offenses and serious child abuse. The fundamental goal of CUSI is to conduct the highest quality criminal investigations for these types of crimes while meeting the emotional needs of victims and families. Due to the complexity and importance of these cases, it is vital CUSI detectives be immersed in specialized training to provide support to victims and their families while holding offenders accountable.

The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center, working together with CUSI, is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit entity offering a range of services to children and families affected by these crimes. The primary goal of ***The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center*** is to ensure that children are not further traumatized by the intervention system intended to protect them. This program has many benefits, with an approach that allows for faster follow-up to child abuse reports, more efficient medical and mental health referrals, fewer child interviews, more successful prosecutions, and consistent support for child victims and their families. It is our goal to support them and meet their emotional needs.

CUSI and the ***CCAC*** investigate these crimes in Chittenden County which consists of a population of approximately 172,952 residents. On average, CUSI investigates over 290 cases a year; 66% of those cases involve child victims. In recent years we have noticed an increase in the complexity of cases given the substantial increase in computer usage, social media and other mobile devices.

CUSI works closely with the statewide ***Internet Crimes against Children Task Force (ICAC)***. ***ICAC*** expertise is frequently used during cases of computer-facilitated exploitation or when computer-generated evidence may strengthen a CUSI case. CUSI detectives work with the ***ICAC*** team and have received extensive training in computer forensics and online undercover operations. While investigating these

cases, CUSI may also work with *HOPE Works*, and the *Forensic Nursing Program* at the University of Vermont Medical Center, including the *Childsafe Clinic*. We continue to work with other collaborative partners throughout the county and our state as well.

TRENDS

Repeat victims, human trafficking, mental health issues, drug addiction, and victims at risk

INVESTIGATIONS MAY INCLUDE

Victim interviews, medical/SANE exams, witness interviews, search warrants, scene examinations, photographs/videos, evidence collection, controlled phone calls, electronic device analyses, phone records, internet/website records, polygraphs, biological evidence collection, suspect interviews, surveillance, arrests

INVESTIGATING AND PROSECUTING

Sexual assaults, lewd and lascivious conduct, serious child abuse, child fatalities, human trafficking, sex offender registry and violations, child pornography

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Keeping our staff up-to-date with national standards for investigation, prosecution, and prevention of sexual abuse is of the utmost importance. Ongoing training and professional education are paramount to the CUSI mission. In fiscal year 2018, staff members attended numerous trainings and conferences on sexual abuse, child homicides as well as child abuse and exploitation.

Trainings attended: *Investigating Basic Sex Crimes, Homicide School, Unexplained Child Death Investigations, Complexities of Co-occurring Crimes &Victimization, Criminal Interview & Interrogation, International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment, Human Trafficking Conference, Conference on Crimes Against Women, Interviewing & Long Term Techniques in Human Trafficking, Basic Forensic Interviewing, Advanced Forensic Interviewing, Special Investigations MDT Approach, Neurobiology of Trauma & Sexual Assault, Introduction to the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview*

CUSI investigators also teach *First Responder Training* and *Sexual Assault Investigations* to other state and local law enforcement officers. These courses cover the specifics of suspect interview techniques, legal issues and considerations in evidence collection. The training focuses not only on the investigation of sexual abuse crimes, but also provides specific guidance and practice on interviewing victims in a caring, non-threatening manner. These interviewing techniques lead to more reliable information to investigating crimes and greater reduction in victim court appearances.

OUR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CCAC)

The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center works side by side with CUSI to emphasize the coordination of investigations and intervention. This ensures ongoing and effective teamwork, including seamless communication among the multidisciplinary team (MDT) which is the core of the agency.

The CCAC provides many benefits including:

- Prompt follow up to reports of abuse
- Consistent and compassionate support to the child and family
- A family friendly environment designed to create a sense of safety and security for children
- Referrals to professionals with expertise in specialized disciplines
- Fewer victim interviews
- Increased successful prosecutions

In addition, a cost benefit analysis conducted by the National Children's Alliance Advocacy Center, funded by the *National Children's Alliance* (NCA), evaluated investigations in a county that uses a CAC approach versus a county that uses traditional joint investigations has proven to be 36% less expensive and more highly valued by community members.

The CCAC is a separate financial entity from CUSI and has a 501(c) (3) non-profit status. The CCAC, including the Director's salary, continues to be supported solely through state, federal and private grants. *The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center is an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance.*

MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM RESPONSE

Due to CAC accreditation requirements determined by NCA, the CCAC formed a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT). Staff from CUSI, DCF, the State's Attorney's Office, mental health providers, Department of Corrections, pediatric trauma specialists and Forensic nurses all meet monthly to review CUSI cases involving child victims. In certain cases, other professionals may attend these meetings as well. This forum proves to be very effective; it provides an opportunity to thoroughly review cases and gain input from a variety of disciplines to ensure every possible aspect of an investigation has been considered prior to disposition

PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY

Currently Detective Corporal Don Demar coordinates the *Chittenden County Sex Offender Registry Compliance Check*. Hundreds of Compliance checks are done throughout our county to enforce accountability and ensure security in our community. 248 sex offenders are currently located in Chittenden County. CUSI maintains information pertinent to sex offender compliancy checks in Chittenden County and works with the VCIC sex offender registry, US Marshalls, Probation and Parole and all law enforcement agencies in Chittenden County including Immigration and Customs. To learn more about the *Vermont Sex Offender Registry* please go to Vermont Crime Information Center or search

<http://vcic.vermont.gov/sexoffender>

GENERAL BUDGET

The ***Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations*** maintains a specialized approach of improved protection and services for victims in our community. This Unit promotes cooperative efforts between the various agencies that are involved in the prevention, investigation, advocacy, medical and therapeutic treatment and prosecution of cases to better protect and serve victims and families. Part of that cooperative effort includes contributions from towns in Chittenden County to help sustain this specialized unit.

The current funding formula is based on population and excludes those communities that contribute one or more full-time detectives to the CUSI operation. The cost is \$1.82 per person. The population for each community is based on the 2010 federal census data as updated by the Vermont Health Department in their annual report. The latest update available at the time the budget was set for the fiscal year 2019 was for calendar year 2015. To determine each community's share of the total cost, the population numbers for the towns that contribute one or more detectives is subtracted from the total population for the county. The total assessment (\$99,620 for FY 2019) is then divided by the population (54,587) of the remaining communities. This amount (\$1.82) is then multiplied by the population on the non-contributing communities.

Currently in fiscal year 2019, all towns in the county benefit from CUSI services and have been asked to pay their fair share. Invoices have been sent to each town and the Policy Board and Directors make themselves available to towns for presentations at the local level. Representatives from CUSI are available upon request to answer questions or provide presentations to any local Select board or municipal body.

GRANT REVENUE

To further its mission and provide the highest quality investigations and training, the unit regularly applies for state and federal grants and seeks additional private funding throughout the year.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW...

- CUSI has allocated for change in legislature for recommending sustainable funding options for specialized investigative units (SIU's) on local, county and state levels.
- Presentations were made to various Town Managers and Select Boards around Chittenden County.
- We continued to raise awareness about the effectiveness of CAC's and SIU's and expand our outreach and communication to endorse the SIU/CAC mission.
- We have increased private funding.
- We attended and provided specialized trainings for those working in the field of sexual abuse, child fatalities and severe physical abuse.
- We upgraded our interview equipment within our physical office space.
- We have investigated 337 cases.

AS A RESULT...

We maintain a high conviction rate, even in the most challenging cases. Since the start of this year, we have investigated high profile cases, not to mention the ones that are not seen in the media. We strive to do the most comprehensive investigations and pride ourselves on our ability to do so.

July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 we have seen 337 cases which include 222 children and 115 adults.

During this year, CUSI saw an increase in case referrals from both DCF as well as local law enforcement agencies. These cases continue to get more and more complex with new technology components being created on a frequent basis. The investigations require the detectives to spend significant amounts of time gathering information from corporations like Facebook, Google, Yahoo, Snapchat, Plenty-o-Fish, Instagram, cell phone wireless carriers, etc. The amount of data that is gathered then requires the investigator to spend a tremendous amount of time reviewing the documents and gathering evidence. For detectives to have access to this information, it often requires the issuance of multiple subpoenas and the application of search warrants from a judge before we can even gather the documents that we need from these companies. The cases that we investigate are considered the most heinous crimes to investigate other than murder. The negative effects of these crimes stay with a victim for their entire life and, therefore, we do the best job we can to build the strongest case against the defendants that we investigate.

Special Investigative Units (SIU's) are also required by Vermont law to investigate Human Trafficking. CUSI now provides training to our staff relevant to Human Trafficking. These types of investigations are similar in many ways to the cases that we already investigate; however, there are some very distinct differences that, without proper training, would not allow detectives to be successful. The Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations have worked on several cases of "Human Trafficking" within Chittenden County. These cases require a significant amount of additional resources and expertise that will undoubtedly require additional funding by the State of Vermont in the future. CUSI also participates on county and state-wide committees and taskforces which focus primarily on human trafficking.

CUSI continues to have an active role in teaching at the Vermont Police Academy. CUSI teaches the three-day sexual assault investigation training block that is taught twice a year during the basic police recruit training classes. This block of education encompasses many aspects of sexual assault investigations from the first initial uniform officer's response, to the needs of victims and the process of building a successful case that will lead to a successful prosecution. CUSI has also taken a lead in educating other agencies on how to respond to human trafficking and how to advocate for these victims.

One of the last areas where CUSI has tried to have a more active involvement is in public outreach. Traditionally, CUSI has been looked at as leaders in providing training to youths and parents around Internet Safety. These informational programs are held in a variety of settings - often in schools. CUSI welcomes the opportunity to be invited into any of our communities within Chittenden County.

Consequently, we want to thank all our municipalities for your continued support. Without your patronage we could not apprehend, convict or incarcerate countless perpetrators. We take pride in keeping our community safe and contributing to your piece of mind. We often receive complimentary letters and phone calls from survivors, their family members, and others. We are always open to feedback and we ask that you direct any concerns or compliments to the Unit's Director, Sergeant Brian LaBarge.

CUSI CASE INCIDENTS & SEX OFFENDERS BY LOCATION
July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

Town of Incident	Case Count	Sex Offenders
Bolton	0	1
Burlington	108	77
Charlotte	0	4
Colchester	36	19
Essex	35	29
Hinesburg	8	3
Huntington	3	4
Jericho	3	3
Milton	35	29
Richmond	6	4
Shelburne	8	9
South Burlington	29	16
St. George	0	2
Underhill	1	8
University of Vermont	7	0
Westford	1	4
Williston	7	13
Winooski	19	16
Out of County Assist	13	
Out of State Assist	9	
Unknown	9	
Total	337	248

OUR TEAM...

The following personnel are currently assigned to CUSI

Sergeant Brian LaBarge

Director - Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

Home Agency: Burlington Police Department

Years of Service: Serving since 2005

Assigned to CUSI as Director: April 2018

Email: blabarge@bpdvt.org

Detective Corporal Rene Young

Investigator - Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

Member- Vermont Internet Crimes against Children Taskforce

Home Agency: Burlington Police Department

Years of Service: Serving since 2007

Assigned to CUSI: September 2013

Email: ryoung@bpdvt.org

Detective Corporal Krystal Wrinn

Investigator - Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

Member- Vermont Internet Crimes against Children Taskforce, Vermont Human Trafficking Task Force

Home Agency: Burlington Police Department

Years of Service: Serving since 2009

Assigned to CUSI: October 2016

Email: krinn@bpdvt.org

Detective Corporal Donald Demar

Investigator – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

Member- Chittenden County Sex Offender Registry Coordinator

Home Agency: Colchester Police Department

Years of Service: Serving since 1985

Assigned to CUSI: September 2014

Email: donald.demar@vermont.gov

Detective Michael Chistolini

Investigator – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

Home Agency: Essex Police Department

Years of Service: Serving since 2013

Assigned to CUSI: April 2018

Email: mchistolini@essex.org

Detective Cassandra Ellison

Investigator – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

Home Agency: South Burlington Police Department

Years of Service: Serving since 2015

Assigned to CUSI: August 2018

Email: cellison@southburlingtonpolice.org

Detective Trooper David Hurwitch

Investigator – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

Home Agency: Vermont State Police

Years of Service: Serving since 2009

Assigned to CUSI: January 2017

Email: david.hurwitch@vermont.gov

Detective Elizabeth Felicciardi

Investigator – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

Home Agency: University of Vermont Police

Years of Service: Serving since 2012

Assigned to CUSI: September 2017

Email: efelicci@uvm.edu

Veronica Rathgeb-Executive Director CCAC

Executive Director-Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center with CUSI

Years of Service with CCAC: Serving since November 2013

Email: vrathgeb@bpdvt.org

Armina Medic-Victim Advocate

Victim Advocate- CUSI: Office of the Chittenden County State's Attorney

Years of Service: Serving since 2002

Assigned to CUSI: October 2014

Email: armina.medi@vermont.gov

Kimberly Staiano-DCF

Designated CUSI Investigator-Vermont Department for Children and families (DCF)

Years of Service: Serving since 2014

Assigned to CUSI: September 2018

Email: kimberly.staiano@vermont.gov

Dana Disano- Prosecutor

Deputy State's Attorney assigned to CUSI- Chittenden County State's Attorney

Years of service: Serving since 2010

Assigned to CUSI: March 2017

Email: dana.disano@vermont.gov

Melissa Baker- CAC Case Coordinator

CAC Case Coordinator

Years of Service with CCAC: Serving since April 2016

Email: mbaker@bpdvt.org

CUSI Policy Board Members October 2018

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