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APD.SOP.5040
Homicide Unit

Applicable To: Division and section commanders, Homicide Unit sworn employees

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1. PURPOSE

This directive identifies the responsibilities and investigative processes of the Homicide Unit, including the Homicide Cold Case Squad, the Homicide Complex Case Squad, and Homicide's Officer Involved Shooting Team (HOIST).

2. POLICY

The Atlanta Police Department will conduct comprehensive homicide and officer involved shooting investigations in an efficient and effective manner.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Major Crimes Section 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. The 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. The supervisor 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.



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- 3.4 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. 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 on Atlanta Police Information Network (APIN), the Homicide Unit case management system. During the reviews, the Unit commander will ensure the appropriate paperwork is in the 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. The Unit commander will review and sign off on all homicide case files when they are closed.
- 4.2 Watch Supervisors
- 4.2.1 A Homicide supervisor will respond to the scene of all homicides. The Homicide supervisor will oversee the crime scene, and will be responsible for notifying appropriate personnel regarding the incident.
- 4.2.2 A Homicide supervisor will review and sign off on each APIN 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.
- 4.2.3 The supervisor will ensure the appropriate paperwork is in the file, and all leads are being pursued. 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 on the Supervisor Case Review Checklist available on APIN.
- 4.2.4 Supervisors will assign cases on a rotating basis; in cases needing particular expertise, supervisors may assign specific investigators outside the normal rotation.
- 4.2.5 The release of information to the news media will be in accordance with APD.SOP.1060 "Public Affairs." When at a crime scene, the watch supervisor will decide what information is to be released to the media. The watch 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. A Homicide investigator will respond to all instances of Law Enforcement involved shootings which have resulted in the physical injury or death of another, including: when an officer is shot, regardless of the severity of the injuries. A Homicide investigator will respond to all instances where an officer is the victim of an aggravated assault with serious injury. The Homicide Unit will also investigate adult missing person cases, death in custody cases, and kidnappings where a demand for ransom has been made, or if the violence shown indicates that the victim's life is in imminent danger and the victim has not yet been located. If a kidnapped victim contacts the police after being released, the case will be handled



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by the Zone CID in which the kidnapping occurred. The Homicide Unit will handle all child-kidnapping cases, with the exception of interference with custody disputes.

- 4.3.2 When an investigator in the Homicide Unit is required to respond to the scene, he or she will assess the scene, gather information (according to APD.SOP.3081 "Crime Scene Investigations"), and determine if the crime is a possible homicide. 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. If the crime is a possible homicide, or if an Atlanta police officer is involved in the shooting, the Homicide investigator will take over the crime scene and will:
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. Begin the crime scene log, or take over the crime scene log from the responding officer;
 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; and
 12. Notify the Fulton/DeKalb/Clayton County District Attorney's Office, as appropriate.
- 4.3.3 Before the end of the tour of duty, the lead investigator will complete and submit an incident report (Form APD-001), and enter the information into the Homicide Data Book. He or she will also collect all of the statements and other pertinent paperwork and begin a master file and a working file of the incident. The master file will remain in the Homicide File Room. The investigator is responsible for maintaining and updating the master Homicide file.
- 4.3.4 Within seventy-two (72) hours of being assigned to the case, the investigator will have in the master Homicide file on APIN:
1. Investigation Summaries;
 2. All related police incident reports;
 3. All completed statements of witnesses, suspects, officers, etc;



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4. Any other relevant documents; and
 5. Any arrest/search warrants applicable to the investigation.
- 4.3.5 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.
- 4.3.6 If any video or audio recordings become part of an investigative file, a copy of the recording will be made, and the copy will be submitted to Property as evidence. The recording will be labeled with the case number, a brief description of what the recording contains, and victim information. The master recording will be stored in APIN and in the master Homicide file. 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.
- 4.3.7 Within 60 days of homicide file is closed, when the file becomes inactive because all leads and investigative options have been exhausted or when a file has been open for one (1) year, the master file on APIN will contain the following items (if applicable) listed in the following order:
1. Investigation Summaries;
 2. Family Contact Log;
 3. Copies of all related police incident reports;
 4. Lead investigator's summary/supplements, including a synopsis of the witnesses' statements;
 5. Other investigator's supplements;
 6. Crime scene sketch;
 7. All statements;
 8. Weapon diagram;
 9. Body diagram;
 10. Crime lab reports;
 11. Autopsy report;
 12. Crime scene / witness canvass log;
 13. Criminal history log (victim and defendant);
 14. Warrants (search and arrest);
 15. Arrest and clear up reports;
 16. All receipts (vehicle impounds, property);



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17. Crime scene photographs and notes;
 18. Cell Phone records;
 19. Digital media; and
 20. Other relevant documents.
- 4.3.8 When a file is completed and closed, the file will be submitted to the watch commander for reviewing.
- 4.3.9 When a suspect is identified, and an arrest warrant is obtained, the investigator will notify the Fulton County Complaint Room or the DeKalb County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and presents them with a copy of the warrant and other pertinent investigative documents. 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.
- 4.3.10 When an arrest is made, the Homicide investigator will follow the procedures for the Fulton County Complaint Room, the DeKalb County, or Clayton County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, prepares and submits the required documents, and will have the suspect transported to the appropriate detention facility. 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. Unless excused by the prosecuting attorney on the case, the investigator will attend all court proceedings according to APD.SOP.3160 "Court Responsibilities."
- 4.3.11 The Homicide investigator will complete a Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP) booklet, when applicable, within 60 days of the homicide and submit it to the Homicide Crime Analyst.
- 4.3.12 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.
- 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 on APIN to the Unit commander.
- 4.4.2 The Section commander will audit open and closed Homicide files, using the Homicide File Audit Checklist. The Section commander will audit all files for quality, completeness and to ensure all possible leads have been exhausted.
- 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. 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. 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.



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- 4.5. Complex 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. The Homicide Unit commander will determine which cases will be assigned to the Complex Case Squad.
- 4.6. Officer Involved Shooting Scene
 - 4.6.1 All employees will immediately report the discharge of a firearm to an on duty supervisor in the appropriate zone of occurrence.
 - 4.6.2 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.
 - 4.6.3 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 of the incident, request the on duty Homicide units, the Identification unit, the Office of Professional Standards (OPS), and respond to the scene. The zone supervisor will take control of the scene until relieved by a Homicide unit to ensure that the crime scene is secure, a crime scene log has been started, and all witnesses, (including officers) remain at the scene and separated.
 - 4.6.4 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 his or her 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 a Homicide or HOIST member. 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 a HOIST member. 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 a HOIST member; and
 - 7. The first responding officer, and all officers involved in the incident who are not injured will remain at the scene until relieved by a HOIST member.



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- 4.6.5 After the scene is safe, protect the crime scene and preserve all evidence. Prior to the arrival of HOIST, no individuals will be permitted 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 Homicide investigators. Anyone who enters the scene for any reason will be identified and noted on a crime scene log for HOIST.
- 4.6.6 The involved officer(s) will make no detailed statements of the incident surrounding the shooting until a Homicide unit arrives. However, the involved officer(s) may be debriefed by a responding supervisor to assist in collecting information that may aid in the preservation of any evidence or the identification or capturing of any suspects, to include: the description of the suspect, direction of travel, possible suspect weapons, etc.
- 4.6.7 Keep any and all witnesses at the scene, and request that they do not discuss the incident with each other. Immediately obtain his or her name, address, date of birth, and verified phone number, and separate them as much as possible.
- 4.6.8 The on duty supervisor will coordinate with the HOIST supervisor on the transport of anyone who needs to be interviewed at the Homicide office.
- 4.6.9 Involved officers will be treated with dignity and respect, and be afforded all rights applicable by written directive and the law.
- 4.7 Homicide's Officer Involved Shooting Team (HOIST)
 - 4.7.1 Whenever there is an officer-involved shooting which has resulted in the physical injury or death of another; an in-custody severe injury (paralysis, comas, etc.) and death; or officer shot in the line of duty, The Atlanta Police Department will utilize HOIST to respond immediately to the scene to conduct a timely, complete, and comprehensive criminal investigation of the incident.
 - 4.7.2 The first Homicide unit that responds to the scene will verify the officer involved shooting, and ensure that the HOIST supervisor or team member in charge has been notified.
 - 4.7.3 The on-duty zone investigative unit supervisor and investigators will also respond to the scene to assist the HOIST and Homicide units. If the incident occurs during Morning Watch hours, the on-duty General Investigations supervisor and investigators will respond to the scene. They will remain on the scene until relieved by the HOIST supervisor.
 - 4.7.4 The Homicide supervisor(s) and investigators on duty will immediately respond to the scene of any officer involved shooting, ensure that scene integrity is established and maintained, and remain for investigative support of HOIST.
 - 4.7.5 The lead HOIST investigator will start to the scene, noting the date, time and name of person requesting their response.
 - 4.7.6 The HOIST supervisor, and other HOIST members that are responding, will start to the scene, providing an estimated time of arrival via Detective Radio.
 - 4.7.7 The first HOIST member that arrives at the scene will assume responsibility of the scene.
 - 4.7.8 An on-duty zone supervisor will remain on the scene to provide HOIST and the Homicide unit the support necessary to complete the crime scene investigation. The on-duty zone supervisor will



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ensure adequate personnel remain at the scene for security and crowd control, until relieved by the HOIST supervisor

- 4.7.9 A HOIST or Homicide investigator will oversee and direct the Crime Scene Technician in the photographing, gathering, cataloging, and preserving of all evidence. At the discretion of the HOIST supervisor, the Georgia Bureau of Investigations Crime Scene Unit may be contacted to assist in the processing of the scene (CALEA 5th ed., Standard 42.2.1c).
- 4.7.10 The responding HOIST or Homicide supervisor will ensure that the following is done:
1. OPS instructed the chain of command to initiate the Force Usage Review Assignment (FURA) according to APD.SOP.2020;
 2. OPS notified the Employee Assistance Program and Psychological Services Unit (EAP-PSU);
 3. Fulton, DeKalb, or Clayton County District Attorney's Office has been notified of the incident;
 4. Fulton, DeKalb, or Clayton County Medical Examiner's Office has been notified, if applicable; and
 5. The Homicide commander has been notified.
- 4.7.11 A HOIST investigator will complete the original police report for the officer involved shooting and all charges related to it. If instructed to do so by a HOIST investigator or supervisor, the originating zone or unit will complete all supplemental incident reports, arrest tickets, and arrest reports for unrelated charges utilizing the same incident number of the police shooting if they are not using an original incident number. The originating zone or unit will submit their reports to Central Records and provide HOIST with copies of all related documents.
- 4.7.12 The HOIST investigator will manage his or her investigation in accordance with Section 4.3 of this Directive.
- 4.7.13 When the HOIST file is closed, or when the file becomes inactive because all leads and investigative options have been exhausted, the master file will be completed as specified in Section 4.3.7 of this Directive.
- 4.7.14 When a file is completed, the lead Investigator will submit it to the HOIST supervisor for review and approval. If approved, the HOIST supervisor will sign a Homicide File Review Coversheet and attach it to the file. The file will then be submitted to the Unit commander, the Major Crimes commander, and the Division commander for their approval and signature. The Review Coversheet will remain in the master file.
- 4.7.15 Three (3) copies of the complete file will be made. A Police Shooting/Death in Custody Distribution form will be filled out. A copy of the file will be distributed to the Office of Professional Standards, the Fulton/DeKalb /Clayton County District Attorney's Office, and the City Attorney's Office. A representative from each of these offices will sign and date the Distribution Form. The Distribution form will remain in the master file. The master file will be housed on APIN and in Homicide's master file room until transferred to the Central Records Unit.



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5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 APIN: Atlanta Police Information Network. A computerized case management system used by the Homicide Unit.
- 5.2 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 42.2.9a)
- 5.3 Homicide's Officer Involved Shooting Team (HOIST): HOIST will consist of a Homicide supervisor and Homicide investigators who are specially trained in investigating officer-involved shooting, and death of a suspect in custody cases.

6. CANCELLATIONS

APD.SOP.5040 "Homicide Unit" effective May 10, 2010 and signed June 9, 2010

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"
Form APD-001 "Incident Report"

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

Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc., 5th Edition standard 42.2.9 and 42.2.1(d)