

Review of Sexual Assault Investigations



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Objectives of the Review

In February of 2017 the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services made a request of all Police Services in Ontario to consider conducting a review of sexual assault investigations. This review will focus on incidents of sexual assault, domestic sexual assault and sexual offences against children, reported to the St. Thomas Police Service in 2019. The following objectives have been identified.

- Review the current policies governing the investigations of sexual assaults, domestic related sexual assaults and sexual offences against children
- Recognize the mechanisms used to track these offences
- Identify those incidents that have been cleared as “unfounded”
- Review “unfounded” investigations to determine what factors facilitated the outcome

Method

This review of sexual assault investigations was conducted by the supervisor of Criminal Investigations was commenced in March of 2020.

A review of sexual assault investigations takes place daily, monthly and yearly.

These statistics are garnished from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) within the Niche Records Management System (RMS).

- In 2019 the St. Thomas Police recorded 53 incidents that were investigated as sexual related offences. These incidents include all alleged reported incidents of a sexual nature. 45 of these complaints resulted in the submission of a Viclas (Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System)
- There were 12 sexual assault charges laid in 2019
- There were 10 charges relating to sexual offences against children
 - 4 Invitation to Sexual Touching
 - 4 Sexual Interference
 - 2 Child Exploitation

Current Policies and Procedures Relating to Sexual Assault Investigations

The following policies and procedures have been implemented by the St. Thomas Police Service for reports of sexual assault, domestic sexual assaults and sexual offences against children.

- LE-034 Sexual Assault Investigations
- LE-046 Sexual Offender Registry
- LE-024 Domestic Violence Occurrences
- LE-027 Child Abuse and Neglect
- LE-006 Criminal Investigation Management Plan
- LE-020 Collection of Evidence
- LE-021 Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse
- LE-036 Child Pornography
- PR-11 DNA
- PR-48 Victim's Rights
- PR-49 Viclas
- VA-001 Witness Assistance

Objective Findings and Recommendations

Objective

To review the related policies and procedures

Findings

The policies and procedures relating to sexual assault investigations remain relevant and are consistently adhered to by all members of the Service. Policy LE-034 needs to be updated to reflect the way victims of trauma remember events and trauma informed response to victims to adhere to best practices and to align with the training provided by the Ontario Police College.

The Service continues to work closely with community partners involved in victim's rights and resources.

Recommendations

Update the policy to include definitions of 2SLGBTQQIA, Indigenous, Trauma Informed, Victim/Survivor Centered, Intimate Partner Sexual Violence.

Update the recruit manual to include available video training for trauma informed response to victims.

Objective Findings and Recommendations

Objective

Tracking Mechanisms

Findings

Reported Sexual Assaults are tracked through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) within the Niche Records Management System (RMS).

Recommendations

All reported incidents were analyzed and found to be categorized correctly. No recommendations required.

Objective Findings and Recommendations

Objective

Review all “unfounded” incidents.

Findings

- There were no unfounded incidents in 2018

Recommendations

There are no recommendations identified.

Training

Sexual assault investigation training is incorporated at the recruit level. Adequacy levels are tracked by coach officers and approved by the recruit’s direct supervisor. A stand- alone component of a recruit’s training is designated for sexual assault investigations.

All threshold offences are reassigned to the Criminal Investigations Unit as per the Criminal Investigations Management plan (LE-006). All members of the unit have been trained in Sexual Assault Investigations, however one remains to be trained in Sexual Assault Investigations Involving Children at The Ontario Police College.

These officers are members of the Sexual Assault Investigators Association of Ontario (SAIAO).

All members of the unit are provided with additional training provided by local and regional Crown Attorneys who specialize in sexual violence prosecutions.

Designated members of the unit participate in “community partner” committees created and designed to address the sensitive nature and issues confronting victims and survivors of sexual assault.

Recommendations As A Result of This Review

- Provide a Comprehensive evaluation of the viability and relevance of a continued Elgin County Sexual Assault Protocol after discussion with community stake holders.
- Ensure those members (both front-line and investigators) involved in investigating Sexual Violence Offences receive continuous and ongoing training. (ie. SAIAO conferences, Crimes Against Women Conferences, etc). Training such as this helps keep members current and is an excellent opportunity to network for future development.
- Update and/or create a policy in regards to Human Trafficking and the correlation with Sexual Violence Investigations.
- Update ViClas policy to include 'digital/electronic' submissions.
- Update the policy to include definitions of 2SLGBTQQIA, Indigenous, Trauma Informed, Victim/Survivor Centered, Intimate Partner Sexual Violence.
- Update the recruit manual to include available video training for trauma informed response to victims.

Inspector Barnes Comments

I appreciate the comprehensive review conducted by Sgt Cummings and his several recommendations noted above.

Upon administrative approval, the above tasks will be assigned to Sgt Cummings to oversee and complete in 2020.