

Review of Sexual Assault Investigations 2025



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Objectives of the Review

The purpose of this review is to ensure that the St. Thomas Police Service conducts comprehensive investigations into reported sexual assault cases, upholding the highest standards to protect victim's rights and ensure fair treatment throughout the process. Additionally, this review aims to confirm that the service's existing policies and procedures align with current legislation and established best practices. This assessment will examine incidents of sexual assault, domestic sexual assault and sexual offences against children reported to the St. Thomas Police Service in 2025. The key objectives of this review as follows:

- **Review of Policies:**
Evaluate the existing policies governing the investigations of sexual assaults, domestic-related sexual assault, and sexual offences against children.
- **Mechanisms for Tracking Offences:**
Recognize and assess the current mechanisms to track incidents of sexual assaults, particularly those related to domestic and child cases.
- **Incident Analysis:**
Identify and analyze sexual assault incident outcomes, exploring the circumstances and contributing factors.

This report aims to provide insights into the current investigative policies and procedures, offering recommendations for change to further enhance the effective and sensitive approach taken by the St. Thomas Police Service during investigations.

Method

This review was conducted by the supervisor of the Criminal Investigations Branch commencing in January of 2025. A review of sexual assault investigations occurs daily, monthly and yearly.

- A review of all sexual assaults, threshold and non-threshold offences, was conducted on an ongoing basis. The incidents that met the submission criteria were added to the Provincial Approved Software (Powercase) by trained users and a ViCLAS report (Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System) was completed.
- In 2025, the St. Thomas Police recorded 68 incidents that were investigated as sexual assault or attempted sexual assaults. This includes sexual assaults, invitation to sexual touching, sexual interference, and sexual exploitation. 64 of these incidents resulted in the submission to ViCLAS (Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System).
- Powercase is a crucial tool for managing Major Cases, including sexual offences. The St. Thomas Police Service reviews all sexual offences allegations to determine if they meet the criteria for entry into the ministry approved software. Powercase streamlines case management, enhances data analysis, and simplifies evidence disclosure, ensuring thorough and efficient investigations. This software supports all investigative stages, automatically linking similar entities and identifying patterns across cases. The software has built in analysis tools to provide clear visuals of relationships, helping investigators quickly assess investigation connections and advance their cases.
- In 2025, of the 68 incidents investigated as sexual assault or attempted sexual assault, 64 of those investigations were entered onto Powercase. The entries into Powercase include all victims, all persons that are suspected/accused/charges, all offence locations, and police reports relating to the incident. The completion of the Powercase materials ensures the St. Thomas Police are completing their part to share important information with other police agencies.
- The following are the charge statistics for 2025:
 - 34 charges of sexual assault laid in 2025.
 - 0 charges of aggravated sexual assault.
 - 0 charges of sexual assault with a weapon.
 - 12 charges of sexual interference (child sex offence).

- 1 charge of invitation to sexual touching (child sex offence).
- 0 charges of sexual exploitation (child sex offence).
- 1 charge of luring a person under 16.
- 1 charge of Makes, Prints, Publishes or Possesses for the Purpose of Publication of any child sexual abuse and exploitation material.
- 3 charges of voyeurism.
- 6 charges of indecent acts.

There were 8 online sexual assault forms submitted to the St. Thomas Police Service in 2025.

Incident Outcome Analysis 2025

A comprehensive review was conducted regarding the outcome of all sexual assault and sexual related offences, and the following was noted:

- Out of 64 investigations analyzed, 37 resulted in laying criminal charges, accounting for 50.00 % of all sexual-related offence investigations.
- Additionally, 19 investigations resulted with the victim/complainant declining to proceed, accounting for 25.7 % of sexual-related offences.
- Furthermore, in 18 investigations, resulted with insufficient evidence to proceed with criminal charges, accounting for 24.3% of sexual-related offences.

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-006 Criminal Investigation Management Plan
- LE-020 Collection, Preservation & Control of Evidence
- LE-021 Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse
- LE-024 Domestic Violence Occurrences
- LE-027 Child Abuse and Neglect
- LE-034 Sexual Assault Investigations
- LE-036 Child Pornography & Internet Child Exploitation
- LE-046 Sexual Offender Registry
- PR-11 DNA
- PR-48 Victim's Rights
- PR-49 ViCLAS
- PR-80 Human Trafficking
- VA-001 Witness Assistance

Objective Findings and Recommendations

Objective 1:

To review related policies and procedures.

Findings:

The policies and procedures relating to sexual assault investigations maintain their relevance for members of the St. Thomas Police Service. These policies were reviewed by the supervisor of Criminal Investigations in 2025. Additionally, members of the St. Thomas Police Service, including members of criminal investigations, underwent training on Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence.

The service continues to work closely with community partners and has established a new partnership for 2026 with Changing Ways to assist intimate partner violence within the City of St. Thomas.

Recommendations:

All members of the criminal investigations and all supervisors continue to attend the intimate partner violence course provided by the Ontario Police College.

Establish a strong partnership with Changing Ways in 2026 to assist in the prevention of intimate partner violence.

Objective 2:

Tracking Mechanisms

Findings:

Reported sexual assaults are tracked through the NICHE Records Management System (RMS). These incidents are then put into Powercase and a ViCLAS is completed if they investigation meets the proper classification criteria.

Recommendations:

All reported incidents for 2025 were analyzed on an ongoing (daily) basis throughout the year to ensure accuracy. These incidents were found to be categorized correctly through the use of NICHE, ViCLAS and Powercase. It is recommended to continue the current protocol where the supervisor of CIB communicates monthly with a civilian member of police records to ensure accurate classification of occurrences on the NICHE database.

Objective 3:

Incident Analysis

Findings:

No incidents were cleared as “unfounded” in 2025. Incident outcomes included criminal charges, the victim/complainant declining to proceed, or insufficient evidence was found to support criminal charges.

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 component of a recruit's training is designated for sexual assault investigations.

All threshold offences (serious offences) are reassigned to the Criminal Investigations Branch as per the Criminal Investigations Management Plan. All members of Criminal Investigations have completed the Sexual Assault Investigations course as of January 2026.

All members of the unit are provided with additional training courses including Offences Against Children, Human Trafficking and Major Case Management.

Designated members of the unit participate in "community partner" committees including the high-risk domestic offender committee. These committees were created and designed to bring together community partners to address these serious cases.

In 2025, the Sergeant of CIB took on the role as the supervisor of the Sexual Offender Registry. The Sergeant received additional training for this new role and is responsible for the ongoing monitoring of convicted sexual offenders within the City of St. Thomas.

Recommendations

- Ensure all police officers receive continuous and ongoing training relating to Sexual Offences. (Courses, Conferences, and Community Partnerships). Ongoing training is essential to staying current and networking with other agencies.
- Ensure members of the Criminal Investigation Branch receive further training opportunities that is trauma informed. Members of CIB will continue to receive training in intimate partner violence, interviewing, and child offences that is trauma informed in 2026.
- Prioritize and support ongoing professional development initiatives for members of CIB. This will ensure CIB members are aware of the latest investigative techniques and best practices. Additionally, periodic evaluations and feedback can be implemented by supervisors and fellow members to gauge the direct impact of training on the investigative outcome.

- Continue to have the Criminal Investigations Supervisor complete a daily oversight to all sexual offence investigations and continue to track these investigations accordingly.

2025 Update

In 2025, members of the Criminal Investigations Branch actively engaged in specialized training courses to increase their abilities in key investigative areas. The diverse list of courses included:

Major Case Management – Providing officers with comprehensive skill and strategies essential for handling major and complex cases.

Sexual Assault Investigations – Specialized training to enhance understanding, sensitivity, and investigative technique related to sexual assault cases with a trauma informed approach.

Domestic Violence Investigations – Training aimed at improving responses to domestic violence cases, with an emphasis on victim support.

Powercase Investigations – Focused on the use and application of the Ministry Approved Software for complex major cases.

All members of CIB have completed the mandatory sexual assault investigators course.

The knowledge gained from these courses transfers into improved investigative capabilities for CIB members. This training enhances CIB's ability to conduct thorough, efficient, and trauma informed investigations.

This report reflects the commitment of the St. Thomas Police service and its goal for continue growth and excellence in investigations. The courses acquired provide the ability to effectively navigate the evolving challenges of policing and provide a trauma informed approach.