



Office of the State's Attorney
FY 2021 Budget Briefing
April 30, 2020



FY 2020 Initiatives

District Court Discovery Unit

- Legal assistants tasked with requesting and obtaining evidence for discovery
 - In 2020, the majority of the evidence is collected electronically, but physically provided, and then must physically be copied and provided to the defense

Established Strangulation Protocol

- Strangulation is the most lethal form of domestic violence
- Partnering with law enforcement and hospitals to implement this new protocol

Accelerated Prosecutions

- Reduced time required for motor vehicle homicides
- More vertical screening
- New accountability measures



FY 2020 YTD Case Loads

Circuit Court

- Some event in more than 10,000 cases
 - 4,206 Trial Dates Scheduled
 - 1,720 Motions Dates Scheduled
 - 923 Sentencings
 - 10,058 Violations Of Probation
 - 417 Bond Hearings
 - 301 Post Convictions/Reconsideration Hearings
 - 84 Competency Hearings

District Court

- More than 10,800 new cases



Conviction and Sentencing Integrity Unit

- **Unit Created in FY 2020**

- Reviews sentencings and convictions in past cases
- Each case is reviewed on its own merits
- Many of the sentencings reviewed are of “juvenile lifers”
- Partnership with the Innocence Project on wrongful convictions
- Cases can be referred for independent review by Judge Alex Williams
- Referrals to Reentry Court
- Support for Parole Requests before the Governor
- Recommendations for commutation
- Focus on successful reentry



Public Integrity Unit

- **Unit Created in FY 2020**

- Focus on public misconduct and police use of force
- A comprehensive and independent investigation of each case
- Each case involving the firing of a weapon examined
- Each case of alleged abuse of authority
- Also cases involving fraud and improper acts by governmental officials
- Significant victories

- **State v. Stephen Downey**

- Prince George's County Police Officer assaulted a man who was handcuffed and seated in a County police cruiser



Legislative Accomplishments

Lt. Richard Collins III Hate Crime Bill

- Allows the State to prove that a crime was committed in whole or in part due to a person's race, color, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or homelessness
 - Previously the law required the State prove the crime was committed because of the person's enumerated factor

Strangulation

- Makes strangulation a First Degree Assault
 - Based on the lethality of strangulation and future risk factors associated with strangulation
 - Tied to a new Strangulation Protocol for law enforcement



Technological Upgrades

- **Creation of a new Centralized Electronic Evidence Portal**
 - Storage of evidence from police and other sources
 - Ability to access, process and share evidence through discovery
 - Partnership with OIT and Public Safety Communications
- **Continuing Improvements to SAO Case Management System**
 - New Discovery and Witness Module
 - Enhanced user features
- **Preparation for Transfer to MDEC**



Commitment to Diversion and Reentry

Renewed Focus on Diversion

- New Human Trafficking Program
- Evaluating additional diversion programs

Search for Alternative Resolutions

- Looking for alternatives for non-violent and minor offenders

Commitment to Reentry

- Back on Track program
- County's Reentry Task Force
- Need for additional resources and options



Response to COVID-19

Operation Safe Release

- Release of defendants incarcerated in the County Department of Corrections
- Review of proposed release of defendants prosecuted in our County currently incarcerated in the State system
- Release of juvenile respondents in held in custody

Continuing Operations

- Initial Appearances, Bond Hearings, Emergency Petitions, Protective Orders, Juvenile Matters
- Increased investments in IT equipment to support telework mandate

Staff Training

- Comprehensive training for staff three or more times a week

Continuing Case Review and Action

- Screenings, case analysis, discovery preparation, plea negotiations continue



More than 25% Reduction in Jail Population

- Participation in Initial Appearances and Bond Reviews
- Earlier release for those scheduled to be released soon
- Review of older defendants and those with medical conditions
- Consultation and joint motions with the Public Defender
- Close cooperation with the Department of Corrections
- Clear criteria for release
 - Nonviolent offenders who do not pose a recognizable danger to others
 - No significant history of failure to appear for court
 - No significant history of serious offense



Challenges for Reopening



A significant backlog of cases

- Extra-large dockets in Circuit and District Court
- Increased pressures for quick discovery
- Increased burden on staff

Logistical problems

- How to maintain social distancing
- Availability of jurors
- Reluctance by witnesses
- Continuing remote access to be required

Need for new policies

- Decisions on future detentions
- Changes to charging decisions
- Need for alternative dispositions and diversion