

2022

ANNUAL REPORT



Office of the Hudson County Prosecutor
Esther Suarez
Prosecutor

•

595 Newark Avenue
Sixth Floor
Jersey City, NJ 07306

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
MESSAGE FROM THE PROSECUTOR	1
EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW	2
PRETRIAL DIVISION	5
TRIAL DIVISION	7
CIVIL LITIGATION UNIT.....	9
FORFEITURE UNIT.....	11
IN-COURT UNIT	12
INSURANCE FRAUD UNIT	14
MAJOR CASE UNIT	19
NARCOTICS TASK FORCE.....	28
SECURITY PLANNING UNIT/COUNTER TERRORISM UNIT	30
SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT.....	34
SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT	36
JUVENILE UNIT	45
APPELLATE UNIT	47
OFFICE OF VICTIM WITNESS ADVOCACY	49
COMMUNITY OUTREACH OFFICE	52

MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR ESTHER SUAREZ



I am pleased to present the 2022 Annual Report of the Office of the Hudson County Prosecutor for your review in accordance with the requirements of N.J.S.A. 52:17B-111. This report reflects the commitment to excellence by the women and men of this office who serve the residents of Hudson County with constant proficiency.

Last year continued our return to normalcy after several years of unpredictability due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes it brought to New Jersey courthouses. I am extremely proud of the professionals in this office and the way they adapt to the daily challenges with amazing flexibility. Each day has been met with a sincere determination to continue our mission of providing justice while also doing our part to protect the residents of Hudson County.

As always, it is a privilege to serve as Hudson County Prosecutor and I am grateful to those who helped us accomplish so much during the past seven years. Specifically, I would like to thank our local, county and state law enforcement partners, the Hudson County Executive and his administration, and the Board of County Commissioners for its support and cooperation.

Respectfully submitted,

ESTHER SUAREZ
Hudson County Prosecutor

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

In the seven years this administration has served Hudson County, our commitment has been, and will be, to serve the residents justly and fairly.

The Hudson County Prosecutor's Office is responsible for detection, arrest, indictment, and conviction of those who violate the laws of the State of New Jersey. The success of the HCPO is a testament of the administration's ability to respond to the individual needs of Hudson County's residents quickly and efficiently.

The HCPO strives to see that the State of New Jersey attains justice for everyone in Hudson County; not only for victims of crime, but also for defendants, witnesses, law enforcement and all citizens with whom our office comes into contact.

In 2022, the professionals of the HCPO worked tirelessly for Hudson County residents as each new challenge presented itself throughout the year and as we safely returned to pre-pandemic procedures. Assistant Prosecutors maintained flexibility to meet the needs of the courts, continued to achieve impressive conviction rates and ensured all crime victims were treated with dignity, respect, and receive justice.

The HCPO made investments to improve the current workspace at its current facility on Newark Avenue in Jersey City while the county continued construction of the Frank J. Guarini Justice Complex, which is expected to be completed in late 2024.

Most notable, the investigative division relocated from our outdated building on Duncan Avenue to a state-of-the-art facility at the Meadowview Complex in Secaucus. The new Law Enforcement Complex includes a Child Advocacy Center, Forensics Lab, Cybersecurity Lab, and DNA Lab, with the latter slated to open by year's end. The Prosecutor-based Child Advocacy

Center is a tremendous asset, particularly to the Special Victims Unit, as it provides a more welcoming space to victims of sex crimes and immediate access to essential recovery resources.

Communication and cooperation with law enforcement partners at the federal, state, county, and local levels are key components of an efficient and effective response to crime and threats. As new challenges arise, agencies must respond with flexibility and urgency. In 2022, the HCPO continued to build and strengthen working relationships with its partners to address crime and other law enforcement matters. This would not have been possible without the support and commitment of Hudson County's Chiefs of Police.

One of the methods of collaboration used by the HCPO involves assigning investigative personnel to partner agencies. In 2022, the HCPO continued to place an investigator on-loan to the Street Crimes Unit of the Jersey City Police Department. This initiative has expanded the sharing of intelligence information between both agencies and helped improve the solve rate for shooting incidents in Jersey City. Because the HCPO is responsible for the countywide investigation of homicides, sexual assaults and child abuse, the HCPO also actively recruits Detectives from local police departments to assist the Major Case Unit, Special Victims Unit, and the Narcotics Task Force. Sharing these resources resulted in the successful conclusion of multiple investigations, which are outlined in the body of this report.

The HCPO hosted various trainings for its law enforcement partners and recruits at the Hudson County Public Safety Training Center on topics that include sexual assault investigations and crisis intervention.

The professionalism demonstrated by HCPO Detectives and Agents allowed the Office to successfully adapt to new ways of completing all assignments. This dedicated group of professionals worked systematically to keep violent offenders off the streets of Hudson County.

Throughout 2022, the HCPO expanded and prioritized its Community Outreach programs. The Office identified new ways to engage with community leaders, Police Chiefs, and clergy to foster strong relationships with the communities we serve. These efforts included providing fresh food to community refrigerators established during the COVID-19 pandemic, initiating a medical supply drive in collaboration with a Jersey City-based Ukrainian organization, and hosting a candlelight vigil in recognition of International Overdose Awareness Month.

The achievements noted herein are the result of the HCPO's dedicated employees who consistently strive for excellence in both the courtroom and in the community. This Office reaffirms its commitment to serve the citizens of Hudson County each day with respect and dignity.



The Hudson County Prosecutor's Office celebrated the official opening of its new Law Enforcement Complex and Child Advocacy Center in Secaucus in October 2022. This new facility replaced the previous office on Duncan Avenue in Jersey City. The Complex includes a Child Advocacy Center, Forensics Lab, Cybersecurity Lab and a soon-to-be completed DNA Lab.

PRETRIAL DIVISION

The Pretrial Division includes Central Judicial Processing Court, Criminal Justice Reform Matters, Early Disposition Court, and the Grand Jury Unit. The Pretrial Division has responsibility for all aspects of general criminal matters from first appearance through Grand Jury presentment. The specialized units litigate their matters vertically.

The Pretrial Division has a staff consisting of one Chief Assistant Prosecutor, four Assistant Chief Assistant Prosecutors, nine Assistant Prosecutors, two Detectives, an Agent, and support staff.

Attorneys assigned to the Pretrial Division are responsible for case evaluation and screening of both warrant-complaints and summons-complaints at the first appearances for all matters not being handled by one of our specialized units. Cases are assigned immediately after the first appearance. The assigned attorney prepares the case, argues the detention motion, provides discovery and makes an appropriate plea offer at the Early Disposition Conference. As part of this process, the assigned attorney identifies whether a particular defendant is appropriate for Drug Court or Pretrial Intervention. Ultimately, if the case is not resolved, the assigned attorney presents the matter to the Grand Jury. The Pretrial Division also evaluates and screens non-apprehended matters and screens and approves citizen complaints generated on all indictable charges.

Investigators and Agents assigned to the Pretrial Division are responsible for collecting all relevant reports and evidence necessary to evaluate and prosecute cases. When necessary, and at the direction of an Assistant Prosecutor, the investigative staff may initiate additional investigations independently or in concert with the appropriate local police authority.

Agents and support staff are integral in preparing cases for each successive appearance and work closely with municipal departments to obtain reports, 911 recordings, CCTV video, and other

relevant evidence. Agents also coordinate the appearance of Police Officers and lay witnesses at Grand Jury hearings.

The Pretrial Division works in concert with municipal departments and other arresting authorities in order to obtain all relevant information as quickly as possible for a proper evaluation of all matters. Victim contact is essential and is made prior to the first appearance whenever possible.

TRIAL DIVISION

The Trial Division is responsible for prosecuting all indicted cases involving crimes not handled by the specialized units. These cases typically include robberies, aggravated assaults, gun offenses, burglaries and narcotics offenses. Cases that have not been resolved pre-indictment are assigned to the Trial Division for disposition. Initial plea offers for defendants in these indicted cases have already been extended and rejected in Early Disposition Court. The Assistant Prosecutors of the Trial Division continue to attempt to resolve their assigned matters, but the plea offers increase in severity at each stage of the proceedings in accordance with the escalating plea policy of the HCPO. Those cases that cannot be resolved by plea are brought to trial.

The Trial Division consists of 11 Assistant Prosecutors under the supervision of the Trial Chief Assistant Prosecutor and three Assistant Trial Chief Assistant Prosecutors. The Division is further staffed with investigative personnel consisting of two Agents and two Detectives under the supervision of a Sergeant. These investigators are tasked with procuring evidence, maintaining contact with witnesses, and assisting in the presentation of the case to the jury.

The Chief Trial Attorney also supervises the Recovery Court Unit — formerly known as the Drug Court Unit. The Recovery Court Unit represents the State in all aspects of the Judiciary's Recovery Court Program. The overall goal of Recovery Court is to identify those offenders who would benefit from drug and alcohol counseling in an attempt to break the cycle of addiction and recidivism. Recovery Court is an intensive probation created by statute that targets drug and alcohol addicted defendants who would otherwise be looking at State Prison sentences. The Recovery Court Program is unique as it is a team-based approach to a participant's treatment and recovery.

The Recovery Court team consists of a Judge, Assistant Prosecutors, Public Defenders, Recovery Court Coordinator, Team Leader, Supervising Probation Officers, and Probation Officers. The Recovery Court team remains actively involved with a participant's recovery during the entire supervisory period.

The Recovery Court Unit is staffed with two Assistant Chief Assistant Prosecutors and two support staff. Assistant Prosecutors who are assigned to Recovery Court review each application for admission into the program and determine if an applicant meets the statutory requirements for admission. Assistant Prosecutors attend weekly team meetings and any court hearings that involve the applicant/participant to assess the progress that each individual is making in his or her recovery to ensure that any violation of the Court's sentencing and/or probationary conditions are addressed by sanctions or termination from the Recovery Court Program. Once a participant successfully completes Recovery Court, Assistant Prosecutors handle the Recovery Court expungements.

CIVIL LITIGATION UNIT

The Civil Litigation Unit of the Office of the Hudson County Prosecutor is responsible for overseeing and handling civil matters. This includes overseeing actions where the HCPO or its members are named parties and responding to subpoenas and requests under the Open Public Records Act.

The Civil Litigation Unit provides subpoenaed materials for civil lawsuits originating from criminal investigations. If a civil subpoena is returnable prior to the resolution of the related criminal case — and the HCPO determines whether disclosure of the materials will jeopardize the criminal prosecution — Motions to Quash or Motions for Protective Orders are filed. Additionally, in civil actions where the HCPO is a named party, the Civil Litigation Unit acts as a liaison to, and in consultation with, civil attorneys representing the HCPO. This Unit tracks the progress of both state and federal lawsuits and prepares concise summaries of these lawsuits.

Another task undertaken by the Civil Litigation Unit is replying to queries under OPRA. Given the diversity and number of inquiries made by the media, attorneys, and citizens, it is imperative that requestors receive — in a timely manner — all records to which they are entitled. This promotes transparency in government, a chief goal of OPRA.

In addition, the Civil Litigation Unit acts as a liaison to all police departments in Hudson County. As a result of various Attorney General Directives, local police departments must forward OPRA requests and other records requests to the HCPO for approval or comment. As a result, the Unit receives daily requests for guidance from local police departments and their municipal attorneys. The Hudson County Prosecutor's Office Custodian of Records helps guide the municipalities through requests involving OPRA and Common Law Right of Access.

Currently, the Civil Litigation Unit consists of a Chief of the unit and one support staff. The support staff is responsible for providing administrative assistance to the Chief of the unit. The support staff also receives, copies, and files all real estate foreclosure notices as the HCPO or the county may be named as a creditor of the foreclosed party. These notices and pleadings are delivered to County Counsel for any needed response.

FORFEITURE UNIT

Civil forfeiture actions are instituted against money or property that is deemed to be the proceeds of illegal activity or that has been, or was intended to be, used in the furtherance of illegal activity. The purpose of seeking forfeiture of such money or property is to deter future acts of criminality by preventing individuals from profiting from their unlawful conduct and/or the use of said money or property in future crimes. In civil forfeiture actions, the State bears the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, the criminal character of the property. Defendants/claimants have the right to challenge the forfeiture. If the State prevails in a forfeiture action, the forfeited money or property is utilized solely for law enforcement purposes.

Currently, the Forfeiture Unit consists of an Assistant Chief Assistant Prosecutor, one Assistant Prosecutor, and two support staff. The Assistant Chief and Assistant Prosecutor are responsible for handling all civil forfeiture actions from inception through trial. The two support staff are responsible for providing administrative assistance to the Assistant Chief and Assistant Prosecutor.

IN-COURT UNIT

The primary function of the In-Court Unit of the Office of the Hudson County Prosecutor is to provide investigative support for those cases assigned to the Pretrial and Trial teams. In 2022, the Unit was comprised of one Captain, one Lieutenant, one Sergeant, 13 Detectives, nine Agents and four support staff.

The investigative personnel of the In-Court Unit assist Assistant Prosecutors in completing their assignments with several investigative tasks including but not limited to the following:

- Further investigation of post-indictment cases
- Locating victims and witnesses
- Interviewing victims, witnesses, and suspects
- Conducting formal recorded statements
- Personal service of subpoenas
- Transporting and retrieving evidence to and from various agencies and labs
- Transporting victims and witnesses
- Apprehension of fugitives
- Arrest of bail violators and others for various criminal offenses
- Performing background investigations on HCPO applicants
- Generating subpoenas for active criminal investigations conducted by local law enforcement
- Conducting investigations that arise during the course of pretrial and trial preparation
- Screening civilian walk-in/telephone complaints that may be either criminal or civil in nature and referring those complaints to the proper jurisdiction for investigation
- Obtain hair and buccal swabs by either a court order or consent from defendants, victims, and witnesses for laboratory DNA analysis
- Assisting outside law enforcement agencies with investigative follow up

During the incipient stages of Criminal Justice Reform, it was determined that all local police departments should upload all incident reports directly to InfoShare and all digital evidence via Evidence.com to meet the 2017 Criminal Justice Reform performance standards. Since the implementation of InfoShare and Evidence.com, In-Court personnel have been working with municipalities to achieve 100 percent compliance in utilizing evidence.com to provide a more expedient and efficient way to handle digital, documentary, and photographic evidence. Due to the structure and

limitations of larger agencies within Hudson County, this process has been arduous at times, but it is steadily improving.

During 2022, the investigative efforts of the In-Court Unit resulted in approximately 400 investigations being conducted and 8,200 Assistant Prosecutor investigative requests completed as a result of those investigations. Below is a further breakdown of the investigative efforts:

- 400 investigations conducted by In-Court personnel, post-complaint investigations
- 360 original exclusive investigations (walk-ins)
- As a result of these investigative efforts, 13 original complaints resulted in criminal charges

During 2022, Detectives assigned to the In-Court Unit conducted 51 background investigations including but not limited to prospective employees of the HCPO.

During 2022, In-Court Detectives and Agents assisted Hudson County municipal police departments by generating 651 Grand Jury subpoenas for active, on-going investigations.

The In-Court Unit continues to become more efficient. Detectives assigned to the Unit work diligently to improve cases as they ascend from pre-indictment to post indictment stages, thereby further ensuring that justice is served for the residents of Hudson County.

INSURANCE FRAUD UNIT

The Insurance Fraud Unit of the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office continues to investigate and prosecute violations of New Jersey insurance fraud statutes and related criminal activity. The IFU's enforcement efforts include an emphasis on insurance fraud, fraudulent health care claims, the manufacture and sale of fictitious documents, and insurance related arsons involving both dwellings and vehicles. Arrests effectuated by municipal police departments and other law enforcement agencies are also routinely reviewed by the IFU to determine if further investigation is warranted. These arrests are evaluated for their trends in insurance fraud. The IFU also participated in community outreach to enhance deterrence. Seven of the Unit's cases received press coverage in 2022. Four of the Unit's investigative activities during the reporting period are described below.

SELECTED CASE SUMMARIES INSURANCE FRAUD UNIT

State v. Yasir Raza, Haq Khan and Muhammad Khan

Travelers Insurance alleged that their insured, Yasir Raza, engaged in a 'double-dipping' insurance fraud scheme. Yasir Raza reported that a 2018 Tesla Model 3 was used to transport a Lyft passenger, Haq Khan, when it was involved in a motor vehicle collision on August 29, 2021 in Jersey City. According to Raza, he swerved out of the way of a motorcycle and struck a utility pole. Travelers Insurance contacted both Raza and Haq Khan who each gave recorded interviews of what happened during the accident. After further investigation, Travelers Insurance found that the exact same vehicle was reported as involved in another motor vehicle collision on August 25, 2021, four days earlier than the collision that Raza and Haq Khan were claiming. A claim for the August 25, 2021 collision was paid by GEICO. Based on the information received from GEICO's

claim, Yasir Raza advised that he lost control of the Tesla. The vehicle was disabled and totaled following the collision on August 25, 2021.

Travelers Insurance also found that a third claim was established with Progressive Insurance, again for the same Tesla. Travelers Insurance found that this claim was reported by Muhammad Khan on August 29, 2021, and was reportedly connected to an Uber fare. The IFU's investigation concluded that the three men worked together to file three insurance claims with different companies in order to obtain multiple insurance settlements for damage incurred to the same vehicle.

All three defendants were enrolled into the Pretrial Intervention Program in September 2022.

State v. Karla Evora

Progressive Insurance claimed that their insured, Karla Evora, made material misrepresentations as to the circumstances of a collision that occurred on Cottage Avenue in North Bergen on April 29, 2021. Evora's vehicle, a 2018 Ford Sport Utility Vehicle, swerved out of control and struck a guardrail and a parked vehicle. North Bergen Police Officers arrived on the scene and found that the driver of the Ford fled the scene. Witnesses advised the responding officers that a male exited the vehicle, told them not to call police, and fled the scene on foot. Soon afterwards, Evora arrived on scene and told police that she was the driver of the car at the time of the collision. Evora subsequently filed a claim indicating she was the driver. This matter was referred to the IFU for further investigation.

IFU reviewed 911 calls from North Bergen and found that Karla Evora had called to report her Ford SUV as stolen. The operator called Evora back shortly thereafter, and Evora advised that she just found out her car was not stolen and that her child's father was involved in a collision with

her SUV and left to find a tow truck. The operator advised her to respond to the collision scene. While on scene, the IFU observed Evora on body worn camera advise the officers that she was the driver when the collision occurred. Evora sought medical attention for the collision despite not being present, and her claim for benefits was submitted to her insurance company. The IFU subpoenaed medical records, which indicated that she identified herself to an urgent care facility as the unrestrained driver during the collision.

On March 30, 2022, Evora pleaded guilty to third-degree Insurance Fraud and was entered into the PTI Program for one year.

State v. Margaret Ryan

Progressive Insurance claimed their insured, Margaret Ryan, made misrepresentations with respect to a collision in which she was involved. According to phone calls with Ryan, she advised Progressive Insurance that she was at a party on January 2, 2021, and that somebody hit her parked vehicle and fled. Progressive Insurance reviewed photographs, which showed the airbag was activated and damage to the front passenger side. Progressive Insurance investigated the claim and found that a police report existed for a motor vehicle collision, and Ryan was listed as a passenger. The details in the police report matched the damage to the vehicle that Ryan was claiming. Ryan, however, denied involvement in the collision and claimed that an ex-girlfriend may have had access to the car.

Progressive Insurance located a video that was taken moments after the collision and showed the aftermath of the collision, including Ryan getting out of the vehicle. Progressive Insurance referred the matter for investigation. The IFU located body cam footage from police officers who visited Ryan in the hospital after the collision. During the video, Ryan told the officers that her girlfriend took the car and she jumped into the passenger seat before the collision occurred.

On May 13, 2022, Margaret Ryan appeared before Judge Rodriguez and pleaded guilty to third-degree Insurance Fraud. Ryan was entered into the PTI Program for one year.

State v. Edwin Salamea

On September 4, 2020, a Jeep was traveling on Bergenline Avenue in Union City when it struck a parked Toyota Rav-4 that was occupied by Jaylene Salamea. The Jeep reversed, pulled away forward, and continued until striking another vehicle. The driver of the Jeep then fled the scene on foot. Union City Police Officers responded to the scene and an accident report was taken. The accident report from that evening listed Jaylene Salamea as the sole occupant of the vehicle.

Subsequent to the collision, insurance claims were filed by Jaylene Salamea, Edwin Salamea, and Soledad Salamea. Edwin Salamea claimed he was injured in the collision and sought medical treatment on four occasions through his insurance claim: Salamea visited doctors on two occasions and had two sets of x-rays taken. On February 4, 2021, Edwin Salamea submitted to an Examination Under Oath, during which he indicated that when Tejada's vehicle hit his car, it ricocheted, hit him, and pushed him into a wall. Edwin Salamea obtained legal counsel and filed an Affidavit of No Insurance in which he attested that he was injured in the collision, and filed an application for Personal Injury Protection coverage in which he indicated he was injured in the collision.

The IFU investigated the matter as a possible 'jump-in' scheme. The IFU located Emergency Medical Services' reports from Union City that confirmed that Soledad Salamea was at the scene of the crash. The IFU also contacted the Union City Police Department and was able to obtain a CCTV video that captured the collision. The video showed that Jaylene Salamea was inside the vehicle, while Soledad Salamea was standing outside of the family's Rav-4. The video shows Edwin Salamea walking down the sidewalk towards the car when the Jeep struck the parked Rav-

4. Soledad Salamea was impacted by the collision; however, Edwin Salamea was several feet away at the time. The CCTV video conclusively showed that Edwin Salamea was not touched at all by either vehicle.

On August 23, 2022, Edwin Salamea pleaded guilty to fourth-degree Unsworn Falsification and was admitted into the PTI Program for one year.

MAJOR CASE UNIT

The Major Case Unit is comprised of approximately 50 sworn and civilian personnel under the command of a Captain. The Detectives assigned to the MCU are tasked with investigating a wide variety of complex crimes. In addition, they engage in partnerships with local, state and federal authorities in an effort to provide the community with the highest level of innovative law enforcement service.

Detectives participate in information sharing forums to discuss crime trends and investigative techniques with local, state and federal partners. The MCU consists of the Homicide Unit, the Gang Intelligence Violent Crimes Unit, the Crime Scene Investigation Unit, the Regional Collision Investigation Unit, and the Regional Arson Task Force. A Senior Assistant Prosecutor has primary oversight responsibility for all investigative and legal activities. The legal staff consists of several highly trained Assistant Prosecutors and support staff who are on call 24/7 to provide counsel, prepare charging documents, and seek court authorization for search warrants, communication data warrants, orders of temporary detention, and any other legal action which will facilitate the investigation.

The Homicide Unit investigates all homicides, suspicious deaths, in-custody deaths and police-involved shootings in Hudson County. The Homicide Unit is comprised of approximately 20 sworn and civilian personnel divided into four squads under the command of the Captain and under the direct supervision of a Lieutenant and four Sergeants. Detectives assigned to the Homicide Unit are available on a 24 hour basis to respond to incidents. The moments and hours immediately following a homicide are often the most important for investigators. Detectives will examine the scene of the incident, locate and interview witnesses, obtain video surveillance, speak

with family members or friends who may have relevant information, and work concurrently with other units in an attempt to develop suspect information.

The Gang Intelligence Violent Crimes Unit conducts Intelligence-based investigations in an effort to effectively combat crime through the gathering of actionable intelligence as it relates to the existence of criminal suspects and organizations that disproportionately drive violent crime within Hudson County. Under the direct supervision of a Lieutenant and a Sergeant, the GIVC Unit targets those individuals and enterprises for aggressive investigation and prosecution with an overall goal of crime reduction; more specifically crimes of violence. Detectives assigned also participate in community outreach programs in an effort to educate the community on the dangers of street gangs.

The Crime Scene Investigation Unit is comprised of a squad of highly educated and trained Detectives that work under the direct supervision of a Lieutenant and a Sergeant. CSI Detectives are available on a 24 hour basis to respond to incidents. Detectives are responsible for identifying, collecting, preserving, and packaging physical evidence at the scene of a crime. A great deal of the CSI work is performed at a crime scene, where Detectives collect everything from firearms and fingerprints to DNA samples and photographic evidence. Detectives then maintain chain of custody throughout the forensic process until the investigation is resolved. The CSI Unit works closely with all federal and local law enforcement partners.

The Regional Collision Investigation Unit — under the direction of a dedicated Assistant Prosecutor, Lieutenant, and Sergeant — is a Task Force comprised of highly trained Detectives and Officers from the HCPO as well as surrounding municipalities and police agencies. This Unit was created to ensure a comprehensive and uniform approach to the complex investigation of fatal and life threatening collisions. By utilizing the Task Force concept, all citizens within Hudson

County are guaranteed that every collision investigation is completed with the highest level of investigative service to the point of prosecutable standards or assurance of all civil implications.

The Regional Arson Task Force was established to assist local authorities in the determination of the origin and cause of suspicious fires, coordinate criminal investigations, and follow up investigations with local authorities in cases of suspicious or arson fires. The RATF consists of both fire department personnel and law enforcement personnel. These combined fields are essential for conducting a thorough and complete fire investigation and scene examination. Seasoned on-loan members of local fire departments who have knowledge of fire behavior and suppression tactics are teamed with law enforcement officers who have knowledge of legal issues and interviewing skills. Members of the RATF work to provide the highest level of service to the citizens of Hudson County. In 2022, the RATF conducted 11 total fire investigations, including oversight and follow-up.

SELECTED CASE SUMMARIES

HOMICIDE UNIT

State v. Justin Goris

On Saturday, February 12, 2022, at approximately 8:22 p.m., members of the Jersey City Police Department responded to a call for shots fired at 112 Myrtle Avenue in Jersey City. JCPD officers located a male, later identified as Devin Bryant — DOB 11/09/2006 — with an apparent gunshot wound. A firearm was located in close proximity to the victim at the scene. The victim was transported to Jersey City Medical Center where he was pronounced dead at approximately 9 p.m. The Hudson County Prosecutor's Office Homicide Unit was notified and responded. The New Jersey State Regional Medical Examiner's Office performed the post mortem examination of Bryant and determined the Cause of Death to be a Gunshot Wound to the abdomen and the Manner of Death to be Homicide. During the course of the investigation the Homicide Unit identified a

suspect as Justin Goris — DOB 05/27/2004. Goris was apprehended by New York City Sheriff's deputies — accompanied by the United States Marshalls Task Force — and held in Brooklyn before being extradited to New Jersey. He was charged accordingly.

State v. Sean Williams

On Saturday, May 29, 2022, officers from the Jersey City Police Department were waved down near 112 Bostwick Avenue in Jersey City at approximately 1:52 p.m. for an injured male. The victim, later identified as Jawon Purcell — DOB 06/30/1993 — was found on the ground bleeding with apparent puncture wounds to the body. The HCPO Homicide Unit was notified and responded. Purcell was pronounced dead at 2:03 p.m. The Northern Regional Medical Examiner's Office performed the post mortem examination of Purcell and determined the Cause of Death to be Sharp Force Wounds of the head, neck, torso and upper left extremity and the Manner of Death to be Homicide. Investigators were able to identify Sean Williams — DOB 11/19/1988 — as the suspect in the death of Purcell. Williams was arrested in Allentown, PA, on October 1, 2022 and extradited to New Jersey. He was charged accordingly.

State v. Quadre Domnie et al.

On Sunday, June 12, 2022, at approximately 11:15 p.m., a JCPD unit located at the intersection of Union Street and Martin Luther King Drive was notified of a shooting that occurred in the area on Forrest Street and MLK Drive. Upon arrival, they located shell casings but no victim. Later in the investigation, it was discovered that a victim was transported to Jersey City Medical Center in a personal vehicle. The victim sustained several gunshot wounds to his upper torso and was pronounced dead at 12:43 a.m. on June 13, 2022. The Regional Medical Examiner's Office performed the post mortem examination of the victim — Kyle J. Howard (DOB: 09/23/1987) — and determined the Cause of Death to be a Gunshot Wound to the chest and the Manner of Death

to be Homicide. The Homicide Unit was able to determine that Jekhi Wade (DOB 07/21/2003) and Quadre Domnie (DOB 08/24/2000) were suspects in the death of Howard. On July 25, 2022, Wade and Domnie were apprehended and charged accordingly. On October 17, 2022, Dahmar Robinson (DOB 08/27/2000) was also arrested and charged for the murder of Howard. Robinson was being housed in the Morris County Correctional Facility on an unrelated charge at the time of his arrest.

State v. Joshua Gonzalez

On Tuesday, July 12, 2022, at approximately 6:42 a.m., a male was with a female friend in her house located on Clinton Avenue in Jersey City. A suspect entered the home and had a dispute with the male and female. The suspect used a knife to stab both victims during the dispute. The male victim — Jason Khusial (DOB: 12/29/2000) — drove to his home located at 186 McAdoo Avenue. He was later found in a lifeless condition by his mother in the living room of his home with multiple stab wounds. He was pronounced dead at approximately 10:14 a.m. The Regional Medical Examiner's Office performed the postmortem examination of Khusial and determined the Cause of Death to be Multiple Sharp Force injuries and the Manner of Death to be Homicide. During the course of the investigation, members of the Homicide Unit were able to ascertain that Joshua N. Gonzalez (DOB 04/19/1998) was responsible for the death of Khusial. Gonzalez was subsequently apprehended by the U.S. Marshals Service and charged accordingly.

State v. Deon Williams

On Sunday, September 25, 2022, at approximately 3:32 a.m., members of the Hoboken Police Department responded to the area of 560 Marshall Drive on a report of shots fired. Upon arrival, officers were called to the front entrance of 560 Marshall Drive where they observed the victim — later identified as Christopher Garcia (DOB: 05/01/1994) — laying on his back in a

lifeless condition. The Hoboken Volunteer Ambulance Corps transported the victim to Jersey City Medical Center where he was pronounced dead at 3:56 a.m. The Regional Medical Examiner's Office performed the post mortem examination of Garcia and determined the Cause of Death to be Gunshot Wounds to the torso and right thigh and the Manner of Death to be Homicide. During the course of the investigation, members of the Homicide Unit were able to identify Deon Williams (DOB 01/17/1997) as a suspect. On November 19, 2022, the United States Marshals Task Force apprehended Williams in Elizabeth. The Task Force also apprehended Demetria Huggins (DOB 04/15/1984) at that time. Both suspects were charged accordingly.

State v. Roger Pickett

On Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at approximately 9:06 p.m., JCPD dispatch received a call from an off-duty JCPD officer regarding a shooting in the area of Dales Avenue in Jersey City. Officers arrived to find a male on the sidewalk who appeared lifeless. EMS arrived and transported the victim — later identified as Jovahn M. Horne (DOB: 11/14/1998) — to Jersey City Medical Center. The victim was pronounced dead at approximately 9:40 p.m. The Regional Medical Examiner's Office performed the post mortem examination of Horne and determined the Cause of Death to be a Gunshot Wound of the torso and the Manner of Death to be Homicide. During the course of the investigation, it was determined that Roger Pickett, Jr. (DOB 09/02/2000), was a suspect. Pickett was apprehended and charged accordingly.

SELECTED CASE SUMMARY REGIONAL FATAL COLLISION UNIT

On Saturday, January 8, 2022, at approximately 8:34 p.m., the Jersey City Police Department responded to a call of two juvenile males on a motorized bicycle struck by a vehicle who fled the scene. The collision occurred in the area of Summit and Jewett avenues. Upon arrival,

Jersey City Police Officers located a 17-year-old male victim lying in the roadway suffering from a lower leg injury, later deemed Bodily Injury. A second male victim, age 18, suffered lower leg injuries that required surgery, (later deemed Serious Bodily Injury.) On January 18, 2022, the Jersey City Police Department contacted the Regional Collision Investigation Unit regarding the pedal-cyclist hit-and-run with Serious Bodily Injury. Detectives from the Unit canvassed the scene and reviewed numerous video surveillance footage from around the collision scene. After reviewing numerous surveillance videos, a silver 2017 Toyota Rav4 with New Jersey plates and front-end damage was identified as the striking vehicle. As the investigation progressed, the unoccupied vehicle was located on Storms Avenue in Jersey City on January 19, 2022. The vehicle was subsequently secured and processed by members of the Crime Scene Unit. On January 20, 2022, Marvin Lara was arrested and charged with one count of Knowingly Leaving the Scene of a Motor Vehicle Accident Resulting in Serious Bodily Injury, one count of Endangering an Injured Victim, and one count of Causing Serious Bodily Injury in a Collision While Being Unlicensed. Lara's criminal court processing is still pending.

**SELECTED CASE SUMMARY
REGIONAL ARSON TASK FORCE**

On Wednesday, April 13, 2022 at approximately 1:05 p.m., the Secaucus Police and Fire Departments received 911 calls for a heavy smoke condition at 13 Marina Key, located within the Harmon Cove Townhouse complex in Secaucus. Upon arrival, responding units observed fire on the roof of 13 Marina Key. The Secaucus Fire Department conducted offensive fire operations preventing the spread of fire to adjoining units. The Regional Arson Task Force was requested to conduct an investigation into the origin and cause of the fire along with the Secaucus Police Department and Secaucus Fire Prevention Unit. During the investigation, numerous interviews were conducted by RATF members identifying the first signs of fire and smoke in the common

attic area of the second floor. The area of origin was identified within the common space area for the fireplaces attached to 12, 13, and 14 Marina Key. A distinct “V” pattern was observed behind the fireplace located within 14 Marina Key. The cause of the fire was listed as undetermined, however, electrical could not be ruled out at the time of the investigation. No injuries or fatalities occurred during this event.

SELECTED CASE SUMMARY GANG INTELLIGENCE VIOLENT CRIMES UNIT

In an investigation that began in May of 2022, the Gang Intelligence Violent Crimes Unit, in conjunction with the United States Attorney’s Office, arrested and charged 10 members of a violent Jersey City street gang known to traffic various quantities and mixtures of heroin, fentanyl, cocaine and phencyclidine. The Marion Gardens Housing Complex criminal street gang is responsible for numerous acts of violence, including assaults, non-fatal shootings, as well as several homicides. Members of the Gang Intelligence Unit worked this case to ensure the safety of the community and that the individuals responsible for violence would be held accountable.

The investigation included extensive operations, leading to multiple arrests. The following members of the criminal street gang were arrested: Myron Williams (DOB 12/6/93); Andre Alomar (DOB 5/1/01); Herbert Thomas (DOB 6/22/75); Roger Pickett (DOB 9/2/00); Anthony Rogers (DOB 4/3/00); Naim Richardson (DOB 4/21/93); Quaseame Wilson (DOB 8/12/96); Javon Williams (DOB 2/13/97); Jawaad Davis (DOB 3/24/02); and Keith Anderson (DOB 2/19/02).

As part of the initial investigation, all members were charged with the intent to distribute 100 grams or more of a mixture and substance containing a detectable amount of heroin, 40 grams or more of a mixture and substance containing a detectable amount of fentanyl, and 500 grams or more of a mixture and substance containing a detectable amount of cocaine.

Additionally, members of the GIU, with the assistance of the United States Attorney's Office and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives made more than 20 arrests, authored and executed more than 10 search and seizure warrants, and submitted more than 20 Communication Data Warrants. This resulted in the additional seizure of one handgun, approximately 820 grams of a heroin/fentanyl mixture, approximately 120 grams of crack cocaine, approximately 48 grams of MDMA, along with methamphetamine, phencyclidine, other prescriptions drugs, and more than \$14,000 in United States currency.

The investigation was conducted as part of the Jersey City Violent Crime Initiative. The VCI was formed in 2018 by the United States Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey, the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office and the Jersey City Police Department, for the sole purpose of combatting violent crime in and around Jersey City. As part of this partnership, federal, state, county, and city agencies collaborate to strategize and prioritize the prosecution of violent offenders who endanger the safety of the community.

All defendants are facing a mandatory minimum of five years in prison, a maximum penalty of 40 years in prison, and a fine of up to \$5 million.

NARCOTICS TASK FORCE

The purpose of the Narcotics Task Force is to identify, investigate and dismantle large scale and occasionally violent drug trafficking organizations in and around Hudson County.

In 2022, the NTF was comprised of one Captain, one Lieutenant, two Sergeants, 11 Detectives, four Assistant Prosecutors — including one Chief Assistant Prosecutor, and two support staff members.

The NTF is responsible for investigating high-level drug and firearm traffickers. Many of these cases involve multi-state jurisdictions and, at times, international locations. The NTF not only focuses on seizing and recovering large quantities of controlled dangerous substances, but also tracking and identifying any and all assets obtained in connection with the trafficking and distribution by the drug organization.

The following section contains two highlighted investigations from 2022.

SELECTED CASE SUMMARIES NARCOTICS TASK FORCE

State v. Roderanace Pickney, et.al

Between November 2021 and June 2022, the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office Narcotics Task Force, along with Jersey City Police Department Street Crimes Unit and United States Department of Homeland Security conducted a narcotics investigation targeting Charles King, a known distributor of large quantities of heroin and fentanyl in Jersey City. Through multi-agency cooperation, they were able to infiltrate King's network of distributors and initiate a state level Title III investigation. A wiretap subsequently revealed that King procured large quantities of fentanyl from a California source via the United States Postal Service; heroin from a Bronx, NY, based source identified as Martin Adorno; and, that King used a Newark residence to mill large

quantities of heroin and fentanyl. An ongoing investigation in partnership with the United States Inspection Service and the United States Postal Inspection Service-Office of the Inspector General led to interception of an inbound package from California containing one pound of fentanyl. The investigation also led to the identification of a United States Postal Service employee who assisted King in monitoring and delivering inbound packages laden with drugs. On June 7, 2022, a multi-agency takedown was coordinated and executed on locations in Jersey City, Newark, Rahway, and Bronx, NY. The takedown resulted in the arrest of King, Adorno, and 14 other individuals, as well as the seizure of approximately 720 grams of heroin/fentanyl, six handguns, one shotgun, three vehicles, more than \$158,000 in currency/bank account funds, and more than \$500,000 in high-end jewelry and watches. King was charged with leader of a narcotics trafficking network, maintaining a production facility and multiple first- and second-degree narcotics related offenses.

State v. Nicholas Mora-Daza, et al.

During the month of March 2022, the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office Narcotics Task Force — with the assistance of Homeland Security — conducted a narcotics investigation targeting Nicholas Mora-Daza, et al, a known distributor of cocaine in the West New York/Weehawken area of Hudson County. The NTF was able to conduct undercover buys of cocaine from Mora-Daza. During the course of the investigation and subsequent surveillances, Mora-Daza's co-conspirators were identified along with identifying their stash location. Upon completion of numerous undercover purchases from Mora-Daza, a search warrant was executed at John Paul Perez's residence in Weehawken. This search warrant resulted in three arrests, including Mora-Daza and Perez, and the seizure of approximately two-and-a-half kilograms of cocaine.

SECURITY PLANNING UNIT/COUNTER TERRORISM UNIT

The Security Planning Unit/Counter Terrorism Unit is a squad within the Office of the Hudson County Prosecutor that fills various roles within the Counter Terrorism Task Force overall effort. Members of the SP/CTU work closely with local, state, and federal officials related to disaster response plans, utilization/coordination of resources, security planning, training, and various federal and state funding initiatives that involve Hudson County. The SP/CTU is also involved in the review of vulnerability at various critical infrastructure sites, development of Target Hardening and Risk Mitigation plans, and maintaining and updating information related to each site. The Unit acts as the liaison to the local Office of Emergency Management.

During 2022, the SP/CTU was comprised of one Lieutenant, one Detective, and one Risk Mitigation Planner for half of the year. The Lieutenant and Detective serve as the Office Liaison to the Hudson County Office of Emergency Management and CCTC. They were also assigned in an on-loan capacity to the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force.

During 2022, the SP/CTU continued to serve various roles related to the Hudson County Office of Emergency Management, Urban Area Security Initiative Region, County Working Group for Homeland Security Grant Programs, and the Hudson County Counter Terrorism Task Force. These duties include attending numerous meetings, developing Investment Justifications and Spending Plans for numerous grant funding initiatives, equipment procurement and installation, as well as work on various committees and sub-committees related to OEM, CWG, UASI and CTTF related issues.

One of the major initiatives continued by the Unit in 2022 is the enhancement of the Automated License Plate Reader program. Through direct involvement in UASI, Unit members participated in the design, funding, and procurement processes, as well as installation of hardware

and software related to the project. Installation of this equipment required coordinating with the vendor and with each police department to complete the deployment of this important tool. In 2022, ALPR projects were pursued to enhance video analytics with ALPR software on the County's ALPR server. These projects were funded by the CWG.

The Unit's Risk Mitigation Planner was a member of the UASI Critical Infrastructure Protection subcommittee and the County Working Group. Through these memberships, our RMP represented the County on matters involving the National Infrastructure Protection Plan and grant funding directly related to the protection of critical infrastructure sites within Hudson County. The RMP continued to monitor the status of existing critical infrastructure sites. This monitoring, coupled with our intelligence components at the FBI JTTF, provides for the seamless sharing of intelligence between the law enforcement community and various critical business sites.

The RMP also provided security assessments. The assessments included Site Assistance Visits for private and public sector partners under the auspices of the HCPO and the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. The RMP was directly responsible for the identification, updating, and assessing the changing list of infrastructure sites within the county. In addition, the RMP conducted training sessions and presentations throughout the county to assist local agencies with security surveys for the 12 municipal school districts.

Outreach efforts by the SPU increased the number of House of Worship applications for the DHS/FEMA Non-Profit Security Grant Program. The SPU continued to work with Houses of Worship for the 2022 grant program that was set at \$150,000 per site.

Also during 2022, the Unit continued oversight and maintenance of radiological detection equipment obtained through OHSP and New Jersey State Police. This equipment is part of the ongoing Secure the Cities Initiative, developed by the Department of Homeland Security, in

conjunction with the New York City Police Department, and is intended to enhance radiological detection capabilities in the region. Radiological terror attacks are of great concern in the region. The Unit has been tasked with receiving the equipment for all county law enforcement agencies, setting up training courses for local departments, ensuring annual calibration of equipment, distribution of equipment, as well as participating in regional planning, exercise drills, and deployment plans.

The Counter-Terrorism Task Force is made up of a County Counter Terrorism Coordinator, who is a Lieutenant from the SP/CTU and a Risk Mitigation Planner from the SP/CTU. The CTTF also has Municipal Counter Terrorism Coordinators from the various municipal police departments and other law enforcement agencies within the County. The CTTF works closely with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Local and county coordinators were given the task of investigating leads and conducting follow-up investigations that may — in any way — be related to terrorism. The information gained through these investigative leads is maintained in a statewide intelligence database known as SAR's — Suspicious Activity Reports — overseen by the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. The County Coordinators are also charged with overseeing the implementation of added security during periods of heightened alert levels, as well as overseeing various other security and intelligence initiatives.

The CTTF continued its work this past year, working closely with the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, the Joint Terrorist Task Force, Department of Homeland Security, and other state and local agencies. The CTTF carried out various initiatives throughout the year, including immediate response to various investigative leads and potential threats. The

responses included assisting local, state, and federal agencies investigating terrorism related leads/cases related in any way to Hudson County. Due to the CCTC being assigned in an on-loan capacity to the FBI JTTF, the CCTC was able to provide current threat streams to the CTTF and provide guidance on investigative leads and potential threats.

During 2022, the CTTF assisted OHSP in the handling of investigative leads, many of which were forwarded to local coordinators for further investigative action. All of these leads were entered into the SAR's database at CT Watch located at the Regional Operations and Intelligence Center in Trenton. The CTTF also participated in regional Homeland Security exercises, distribution of related equipment, and arranging training for their respective departments.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

The Special Investigations Unit is responsible for criminal investigations involving white-collar crimes including public corruption, bank/mortgage fraud, identity theft, credit card fraud, voter fraud, embezzlement, money laundering, and other financial crimes related to the misapplication or misappropriation of entrusted funds, and various types of theft. This Unit also conducts investigations into acts of cargo theft. The SIU routinely assists outside agencies and other units within the Office of the Hudson County Prosecutor when investigating matters involving financial records.

During 2022, the SIU was comprised of one Captain, one Lieutenant, one Detective, one Chief Assistant Prosecutor and one Assistant Prosecutor. Many of the matters handled by the SIU are long-term financial crime investigations that often require extensive records analysis, very detailed report writing, spreadsheet preparation, and physical and electronic surveillance. In addition, the SIU remains active in various public and private sector networking and information sharing groups/forums. These groups — which include law enforcement agencies, banks, investment firms, and other businesses — are often instrumental in the furtherance of investigations, and help streamline the ability to obtain necessary information in a short amount of time. The SIU also continued to work closely with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Postal Inspection Service, the United States Secret Service, the United States Department of Homeland Security, the New Jersey Attorney General's Office, and local police departments.

In 2022, arrests were made for various types of crimes, involving numerous smaller scale investigations, including a number of cases referred by the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission as part of its Facial Scrub Initiative. The following section contains examples of highlighted investigations from 2022.

**SELECTED CASE SUMMARIES
SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT**

State v. Deborah Thiry

A clerk who worked for the Harrison Department of Construction and Engineering stole approximately \$62,000 from the agency over a six-year period. Members of the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office Public Integrity Special Investigations Unit arrested Deborah Thiry, 52, of Harrison, on charges related to theft from the town. She was arrested without incident at the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office in Jersey City and was charged on a complaint-summons with theft by unlawful taking and tampering with public records. Following her arrest, Thiry was processed and released. This matter was initially referred to the Special Investigations Unit by the Harrison Police Department following a 2022 internal audit by the Town of Harrison. The audit revealed that from 2016 to 2022 approximately \$62,000 in various payments were unaccounted for after being collected by the Department of Construction and Engineering. According to public records, Thiry began her employment with the town in 2015 and earned a salary of \$39,543 the prior year. In October 2022, Thiry pleaded guilty to Tampering with Public Records or Information and was accepted into the PTI Program.

State v. Jennifer Jimenez

A North Bergen Town Hall employee was charged with illegally tape recording co-workers' conversations. Jennifer Jimenez, 24, of North Bergen, was charged with one count of illegally tape recording conversations, a third-degree crime. She was arrested without incident at the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office in Jersey City and released on a summons. The investigation revealed that the recordings were done as a result of an ongoing personal dispute and did not pertain to any official government business, operation, or function.

SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT

In 2022, the Special Victims Unit continued following protocols established by the Hudson County Prosecutor regarding allegations of sexual penetration, sexual contact of victims under the age of 13, and child physical abuse cases resulting in serious bodily injury. The SVU investigated sex offenses where strangers, registered sex offenders, law enforcement officers, teachers, and religious leaders were accused. The SVU also continued to work closely with state and local law enforcement agencies and the Department of Child Protection and Permanency on child physical and sexual abuse cases.

In July, the SVU, along with most of the field investigative units of the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office, relocated to the Meadowview Campus in Secaucus. The Meadowview Campus is a newly renovated facility that accommodates the placement of a Child Advocacy Center adjacent to the SVU investigative offices. In many respects, the relocation of the offices and establishment of the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office Child Advocacy Center has proven to be a significant advantage to both victims and SVU personnel. A memorandum of agreement has been established with the NJ Division of Child Protection and Permanency and the Hudson County Prosecutor that provides for members of the DCP&P to staff the CAC. This close working relationship allows victims faster access to services provided by DCP&P by allowing both agencies to directly share information each of the respective agencies need on a regular basis. Efforts are ongoing to place a Regional Diagnostic and Treatment Center within the CAC that will allow specialized clinicians to readily examine child victims.

The SVU provides assistance or direction when requested to all municipal, university, NJ Transit, and Port Authority of NY/NJ Police Departments. The SVU remains involved with the activation of the Sexual Assault Response Team on sexual assaults that occurred within a five-day

period. The SVU also arranges for the collection of Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits and related forensic evidence and handles the subsequent submission to the New Jersey State Police Forensic Lab.

The SVU continues to provide training on sexual assault investigations and the associated county protocol. Training sessions are given to municipal and college police departments upon request or our recommendation. Recruits at the Hudson County Public Safety Training Center also receive this specialized training. Municipal and college police are also invited to receive this sexual assault related training throughout the state.

SVU investigative and legal staff continue to monitor and assess internal protocols concerning case file preparation, arrests, evidence processing and analysis, and security. SVU staff receive in-house training sessions on interviews, interrogations, and tactics. Detectives also attend other related training courses throughout the year. The ongoing monitoring, analysis, and training are all done in an effort to continue to improve and maximize investigative excellence.

In 2022, the SVU investigated 317 cases compared to 394 cases in 2021. There were 87 arrests for SVU related crimes in 2022 compared to 85 in 2021. SVU personnel continued to perform at a high level, despite residual outbreaks related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Unit has one Captain, one Lieutenant, and four Sergeants. Each Sergeant supervises a squad of three to four Detectives. In 2022, the position of Agent was added to the SVU to assist investigative personnel with all tasks that do not require the duties of sworn law enforcement officers. Such duties may include, but are not limited to, serving as the Unit evidence custodian, reviewing outside agency assist cases, reviewing surveillance footage, and assisting with Grand Jury subpoena submissions for Internet Crimes Against Children investigations. The unit had 12 Detectives at the end of the year. The remaining on-loan detective to the SVU is from the Hoboken

Police Department. Two of the investigative squads work steady shifts 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and the two remaining squads work weekly rotating shifts of 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. or 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Each squad is on-call for the duration of one week, every four weeks. The unit has two clerical support staff.

The SVU has remained active with community outreach. Presentations on cyber bullying, sexual assault awareness, prevention, and handling of disclosures continue to be offered. These topics are presented at police departments, public schools, and universities. The audiences included law enforcement officers, teachers/school staff, parents, and students. The SVU's goal is to increase public awareness in hopes of educating people on how victims should be treated, reduce the amount of sexual abuse incidents, and to encourage victims of abuse to come forward.

Additionally, members of the SVU take part in the New Jersey Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. As part of the ICAC Task Force, the SVU has one Sergeant, two Detectives, and one Agent who are all overseen by the Unit Commander and have the additional responsibility of serving as part of the ICAC Task Force. In 2022, the ICAC Task Force received 554 cyber tips, 566 cyber tips were closed (including cyber tips from previous year), 55 were referred to other jurisdictions, six investigations were conducted, two arrests were made, and 295 subpoenas were served. The Detectives also executed 36 search warrants.

The use of electronic devices continues to increase in crimes against children, and as a result, critical evidence is often found on the devices. In 2022, there were 11 electronic devices forensically analyzed for investigative purposes.

Jersey City Medical Center, Hoboken University Medical Center, and Christ Hospital continued to be certified SART sites in 2022. There were 161 SART activations that required a

SVU Sergeant or Detective to contact the Forensic Nurse Examiner/SART Coordinator to initiate a response from law enforcement, a Forensic Nurse Examiner, and a Rape Crisis Advocate.

The SVU investigated several complex and challenging cases in 2022. The cases summarized below attest to the high quality investigative performance by SVU personnel. SVU supervisors, Detectives, Assistant Prosecutors, and local law enforcement officers worked collectively to develop and apply investigative strategies that resulted in arrests subsequent to many of the investigations. The thorough canvass for surveillance cameras and subsequent review of footage has been a critical investigative step in many cases. This requires patience and persistence, and SVU Detectives consistently display this skill. The Unit has also conducted an increasing amount of consensual intercepts pursuant to the New Jersey Electronic Surveillance and Wiretap Act, which continually prove their value in garnering critical information on cases.

SELECTED CASE SUMMARIES

SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT

State v. Karon Bell

On Saturday, December 11, 2021, a 36-year-old woman reported to the Kearny Police Department that she was the victim of a sex crime while working as an Uber driver. The victim told police she had never met the suspect before and that he identified himself as a police officer during a for-hire ride. A subsequent investigation by members of the SVU identified the alleged perpetrator as 23-year-old Karon Bell, of Newark, as the suspect wanted in connection with the incident. Bell was off-duty at the time. After a thorough investigation, Bell was charged with one count of criminal sexual contact. The case is still pending adjudication.

State v. Hercules Navarro-Cuevas

On February 28, 2022, a 13-year-old female reported to members of the Union City Police Department that she was involved in a sexual relationship with an adult male for the past few months. Further investigation revealed that Hermes Navarro-Cuevas, age 22, had engaged in numerous instances of sexual intercourse with the victim, including prior to the victim's 13th birthday. Members of the SVU charged Hermes Navarro-Cuevas with aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault by contact, and endangering the welfare of a child. He was arrested by members of Homeland Security Investigations at Newark Liberty International Airport in Newark and turned over to members of the SVU, who also discovered that Navarro-Cuevas had an outstanding criminal warrant out of North Carolina for an armed robbery that occurred in the town of Holly Springs. He was additionally charged as a fugitive from justice. This case is pending adjudication in the Hudson County Superior Court.

State v. Fernandez, et al.

On April 23, 2022, a 12-year-old female reported to the Jersey City Police Department that from the ages of 6 to 11-years-old, four males, who are unrelated to her but resided with her family during the time, had sexually assaulted her numerous times over the five-year period. Further investigation by members of the SVU resulted in the four suspects being charged with aggravated sexual assault and sexual assault by contact. All four suspects were charged as juveniles and the cases were adjudicated in the Hudson County Superior Court, Family Division, Juvenile Part.

State v. David Musial

On May 28, 2022, an 18-year-old male diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder reported to medical staff at Jersey City Medical Center that his music teacher sexually assaulted him during a four-year period, from the ages of 14 to 18 years old. Further investigation by SVU Detectives

identified the defendant as 62-year-old David Musial, an Emmy Award winning Jersey City composer and private music teacher. The victim told SVU Detectives that he had music sessions with Musial on Fridays and sometimes Saturdays for seven to nine hours. The victim further stated that most of their music sessions involved sex and would often begin by Musial taking his clothes off. Additionally, the victim did not tell his mother about any of these incidents until the day after prom, where he told her he did not want to go to music class. Musial was charged with aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault, aggravated criminal sexual contact, criminal sexual contact, and endangering the welfare of a child. This case is pending adjudication in Hudson County Superior Court.

State v. Shaquanna Baker and Edward Smith

On January 27, 2022, a 3-year-old female was brought to New York University Langone Hospital in critical condition with severe internal head trauma as a result of suspected violent abuse. Members of the New York City Police Department Special Victims Unit determined that the child was brought to that hospital from a motel in North Bergen where she possibly sustained the injuries. The child was deemed 'likely to die' by NYU Langone Hospital medical staff. Through significant investigative efforts, members of the HCPO SVU determined the 3-year-old child was abused while in the care of 29-year-old Edward Smith and the baby's 21-year-old biological mother, Shaquanna Baker, both of Far Rockaway, NY, as they stayed at the motel. Both Smith and Baker were charged with aggravated assault and two counts of endangering the welfare of a child. The 3-year-old child has made a significant recovery, but will need extensive medical care for the rest of her life. The case is pending adjudication in the Hudson County Superior Court.

SVU LEGAL TEAM OVERVIEW

In 2022, the legal side of the SVU was staffed with a Chief Assistant Prosecutor, Assistant Chief Assistant Prosecutor, and six Assistant Prosecutors. In addition to prosecuting sex crime cases originating from HCPO investigations, the team also prosecuted sex-crime cases investigated by municipal police departments.

The team was responsible for the prosecution of all disorderly persons domestic violence contempt cases in the Chancery Division, Family Part. The team also remained responsible for the tiering of all Hudson County registered sex offenders and the prosecution of failures to register and violations of Community Supervision for Life. The Unit opposed applications by Megan's Law registrants and Community Supervision for Life parolees to terminate their obligations.

The SVU also participated in quarterly meetings of the Domestic Violence Working Group, along with members of the Family Part staff, municipal police department domestic violence liaisons, municipal court judiciary members, Northeast Legal Services, and WomenRising. An important accomplishment arising from the Domestic Violence Working Group in 2022 was the transition from after-hours municipal police departments temporary restraining order hearings being recorded on a police line to now mandatory recordation on an Administrative Office of the Courts approved line. This change now allows prosecutors and defense attorneys to order transcripts when necessary on an indefinite basis from the Criminal Division Manager's Office where they will be properly stored in evidence.

The Assistant Chief and Chief Assistant Prosecutor served as intermediaries between municipal police departments and the Superior Court Family Division Manager's Office when issues arose on domestic violence restraining orders, particularly on the subject of service of restraining orders and the handling of afterhours TRO applications.

Furthermore, a supervising Assistant Prosecutor, along with SVU supervising investigators, participated in biweekly Multidisciplinary Team Meetings in order to share information on joint open cases with representatives from the four Hudson County offices of the DCP&P, a Deputy Attorney General, and representatives from the Audrey Hepburn Children's House. In 2022, the meetings returned to being conducted in person, and began being held at our Meadowview Campus.

The team was also responsible for providing legal advice to SVU investigators and all Hudson County municipal police officers with questions about domestic violence and sex crimes. SVU Assistant Prosecutors provided on-call coverage for these questions, as well as assistance with search warrants and CDWs, on a 24/7 basis throughout the year.

Pursuant to AG Directive 2018-5, the Assistant Chief and Chief Assistant Prosecutor approved all sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault charges filed by the HCPO SVU as well as ones filed by the municipal police departments. SVU prosecutors worked each weekend as required to screen new cases for CJR court and file weekend detention-motion cases. In September 2022, the Chief Assistant Prosecutor took over weekend CJR duties.

The Chief Assistant Prosecutor conducted trainings in sex crimes, child abuse and Megan's Law for recruits at the Hudson County Public Safety Training Academy in Secaucus, alongside the SVU Captain. The Chief Assistant Prosecutor also lectured for the Basic Sex Crimes/Child Abuse Investigations Course hosted by the New Jersey Sex Crimes Officers Association.

The SVU legal team also hosted a training for municipal police departments on the rollout of the Attorney General's Office Initial Incident Report Guidance Memo and helped implement internal procedures for the HCPO Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy to collect the forms from police and assist victims with the review of the forms.

The following section contains examples of highlighted prosecutions from 2022.

State v. Angel Rosario-Sanchez

Angel Rosario-Sanchez is a defendant convicted in 2022 after a jury trial for molesting a boy at a Union City public pool. He is facing five to 10 years in New Jersey State Prison subject to the No Early Release Act, Megan's Law, and Parole Supervision for Life. The defendant is a known Hudson County pedophile, who was once adjudicated delinquent for Sexual Assault by Contact, but the case was reversed.

State v. Francisco Realpe

The SVU prosecuted Francisco Realpe, a former Jersey City and Union City licensed teacher charged with statutory relationships with teens he knew when he was a teacher at Dickinson High School (2019 incident) and Union Hill High School (2004 incident). Realpe, who had no record, pleaded guilty in 2022 to two second-degree sexual assaults, which were treated as third-degree crimes. Realpe was eventually sentenced to four years state prison. He will be subject to Megan's Law and Parole Supervision for Life when released.

State v. Oscar Ramirez

The SVU was also active at the Appellate level on issues of public safety. After the Appellate Division made a ruling in 2021 in favor of the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office Motion for a Protective Order in State v. Oscar Ramirez, the Unit appeared before the Supreme Court to defend the Appellate Division decision. The State filed a routine protective order to keep confidential the address of a woman who was brutally dragged into a cemetery and raped. The Supreme Court concluded that protections ought to be in place to preserve the sanctity of a victim's home when a victim exercises his/her right to refrain from participating in a defense investigation.

JUVENILE UNIT

The purpose of the Juvenile Unit of the Office of the Hudson County Prosecutor is to advocate the State's position in the Family Part against juveniles alleged to have committed delinquent acts.

In 2022, the staff of the Juvenile Unit consisted of one Chief Assistant Prosecutor, three Assistant Prosecutors, one Agent, one Detective, and one full-time support staff.

Attorneys assigned to this section are responsible for the review, evaluation, preparation, and disposition of all complaints against juveniles assigned to the Superior Court Chancery Division – Family Part. The Chief Assistant Prosecutor assigned to the Juvenile Unit directly supervises the support staff and the Agents.

Investigative staff assigned to this section are responsible for obtaining police reports and other relevant documents. They are also responsible for collecting all evidence in the case and discovering it to defense attorneys. At the direction of an Assistant Prosecutor, the investigative staff also conduct supplemental investigations.

The support staff manages the internal juvenile database and all records related to juvenile matters. The support staff provides all other secretarial and clerical needs of the Unit.

Each day, the Chief Assistant Prosecutor is responsible for reviewing the complaints entering the Family Court Juvenile Intake Unit. The Team Leader reviews the complaint to see if the case warrants involvement by the HCPO. In making this determination, the Assistant Prosecutor uses the following criteria:

1. The nature of the offense
2. Whether any harm was inflicted on the victim
3. The age of the juvenile

4. The juvenile's past delinquent behavior
5. The juvenile's community and educational ties
6. The likelihood of the juvenile's success in any alternative disposition program

Thereafter, the preliminary or initial hearings are conducted. The HCPO is present at all cases designated for the Counsel Calendar. At the hearings, the State, if warranted, may argue for pretrial detention.

After the case is reviewed, the complaint and related documents are uploaded to the internal computer system — Infoshare — and the file is assigned to an Assistant Prosecutor. After the Assistant Prosecutor reviews the file, they work with the investigative staff to subpoena or locate victims and any possible witnesses, and obtain and discover any evidence for the case. During this process, the Assistant Prosecutor completes any pending pretrial motions and engages in plea negotiations. After disposition, the support staff closes the file in Infoshare and inputs the disposition including the charge, sentence, and any conditions imposed by the Judge.

APPELLATE UNIT

The Appellate Unit is responsible for representing the State's position in the appeals of convictions returned by the Appellate Section of the Division of Criminal Justice as well as representation of the State's position in response to Petitions for Post-Conviction Relief filed in Superior Court. The Unit is also responsible for the prosecution of municipal appeals. Additionally, the Unit is responsible for filing an Answer in a select number of Petitions for Writ of Habeas Corpus filed in the District Court of New Jersey and any resultant appeals in the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

In its current composition, the Appellate Unit staffs one Chief Assistant Prosecutor, one Assistant Chief Assistant Prosecutor, two Assistant Prosecutors, and one support staff.

An Assistant Prosecutor assigned to the Appellate Section has several responsibilities. The first responsibility is the preparation of appellate briefs raised by appeals of cases generated by the HCPO that have been returned by the Appellate Section of the Division of Criminal Justice. If oral argument is ordered on those issues, the Assistant Prosecutor is responsible for that argument before both the Appellate Division and the Supreme Court.

An Assistant Prosecutor assigned to this Unit is also responsible for the handling of miscellaneous matters heard by the Superior Court, Law Division. These include hearings on Post-Conviction Relief and municipal appeals. These cases require the preparation of briefs to be submitted to the Superior Court. As oral argument is often ordered in these matters, the Assistant Prosecutor is responsible for these arguments. An Assistant Prosecutor is also responsible for the handling of all expungement petitions.

An Assistant Prosecutor assigned to this Unit is also responsible for the handling of Petitions for Habeas Corpus relief in federal court. The responses necessary for such petitions

require the wholesale copying of the entire trial and appellate record for the federal court in addition to preparing the state's legal response.

The Assistant Prosecutors provide legal research and writing assistance and support to the Assistant Prosecutors assigned to various other sections of the HCPO as needed.

OFFICE OF VICTIM/WITNESS ADVOCACY

The mission of the Hudson County Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy is to ensure that all victims of a crime are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect by the criminal justice system, per the New Jersey Constitutional Amendment for Victims' Rights (N.J. Const., art. I, Para. 22), as well as the Crime Victims' Bill of Rights (N.J.S.A. § 52:4b-36). The goal of the Hudson County Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy is to safeguard and uphold the legal rights of all victims, witnesses, and victim survivors. The Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy strives to improve the image of the criminal justice system, in order to promote a cooperative, mutually beneficial environment for victims, victim-survivors, and witnesses involved in the criminal justice process in Hudson County.

To achieve this goal, the Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy provides services and resources to assist victims, victim survivors and witnesses in coping with the aftermath of a crime. Such services provided by the Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy include, but are not limited to:

- Advocacy; information on the status and disposition of adult criminal and juvenile cases
- Referrals to social service agencies and counseling services
- Assistance in filing applications with the Victims of Crime Compensation Office
- Assistance with property and evidence returns
- Orientation of the criminal justice system
- Accompaniment to court
- A safe, separate area for victims, witnesses and victim-survivors
- Assistance with Victim Impact Statements

The Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy is responsible for responding to the concerns of all crime victims, witnesses, and victim-survivors regarding their victimization, and to deliver the appropriate services. This is accomplished in a safe, responsive environment where they can have a Victim/Witness Advocate attend to their concerns. Providing these services and resources, as well as a responsive environment, promotes healing and empowers those victimized by crime.

In addition to providing services, the Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy maintains statistical data on all victims, witnesses, and victim-survivors, and the services rendered by the Unit. This statistical data and coordinating narratives are compiled quarterly and provided to the Office of the Attorney General and the State Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy to maintain grant funding.

Currently, the Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy is comprised of a Victim/Witness Coordinator and four Victim/Witness Advocates. Two of the advocates are bilingual in English and Spanish.

The Victim/Witness Coordinator and Advocates sit on multiple committees and boards, including the New Jersey Victim/Witness Coordinators Association, Hudson SPEAKS Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Sexual Assault Response Team Advisory Board, and Domestic Violence Working Group. Moreover, the Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy partners with various county and national victim-centered and community organizations to remain updated on new legislation and current trends with victims and victimization. These committees, boards, and partnerships are an imperative element to the Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy's functionality, as well as its commitment and duty to serve those of Hudson County.

The Hudson County Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy remains dedicated to victims, victim-survivors and witnesses of crime. The Office of Victim/Witness Advocacy will continue to

offer the appropriate support and knowledge that ensures victims can overcome their victimization and begin to heal.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH OFFICE

Throughout 2022, the Office of the Hudson County Prosecutor continued to assist the three community refrigerators operating in Hudson County by obtaining food through our collaboration with Hudson County's Department of Health & Human Services at the USS Juneau Center in Kearny. The HCPO also made an effort to share ongoing community volunteer opportunities with employees to encourage recreational community engagement. Diverse employee recruitment was a priority in 2022 with the HCPO attending multiple career and internship fairs across the tri-state area. The HCPO also maintained relationships with schools and universities to deliver pertinent messages about careers in law enforcement, internet safety, domestic violence, sexual assault, consent, drugs, gangs, bias, vaping, and more. In addition to reinforcing our existing relationships, the HCPO also devoted its attention to establishing new relationships with institutions of education throughout the county.

The office celebrated Black History Month by collaborating with the Boys and Girls Club of Hudson County to host a screening of the film *Hidden Figures*. After, the war in Ukraine began, the HCPO led a humanitarian aid effort for the war torn citizens by collecting medical supplies in collaboration with the Ukraine National Home in Jersey City. During Women's History Month, the HCPO organized an office-wide clothing drive to benefit Dress for Success Hudson County, an organization with a mission to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire, and development tools.

During the month of Ramadan, members of the HCPO attended community Iftars countywide. This allowed the HCPO to strengthen its relations with and the Muslim community and connect the religious leaders with the Critical Infrastructure Coordinator and Counterterrorism Coordinator to inform them of state and federal security grants and help them apply for threat

assessments. With the support of the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office of Victim Witness Advocacy, the HCPO collaborated with resource and advocacy groups to organize a memorial walk and resource event during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. In doing so, the HCPO promoted victims' rights and honored crime victims and their advocates, victim service providers, and allied professionals.

In May, the HCPO outreach personnel received Juvenile Justice Jeopardy game-leader training from Strategies For Youth, a national policy and training organization. SFY is dedicated to ensuring best outcomes for youth while interacting with law enforcement. This training was used to educate youth about how to navigate interactions with law enforcement, understand the legal consequences of their actions, and strategies for desistance from peers who engage in risky behavior.

During the summer, the HCPO developed educational programming for the elderly and the youth of Hudson County. The HCPO participated in Summer Police Academies in Hoboken, North Bergen, Union City, and Secaucus. The HCPO also organized a countywide Summer League Basketball Tournament that included a clinic by Coach Bob Hurley. The HCPO joined National Night Out activities in six municipalities by setting up tables and handing out promotional items and resources to residents of the towns.

For International Overdose Awareness Month in August, the Operation Helping Hand team hosted a Candlelight Vigil and Memorial Walk at James J. Braddock Park in North Bergen and provided all attendees with the resources available to help aid their recovery. The goal of the event was to help spread awareness, remember those whom we have lost, and help end the stigma surrounding addiction and substance related deaths.

In September, the HCPO supported the Muslim American Law Enforcement Association by providing materials and volunteers for its school supply giveaway. The HCPO also participated in the Recovery Walk for Wellness and Concert in the Park at Liberty State Park as a demonstration of solidarity with those who are living the reality of recovery from addiction. After the COVID-19 pandemic, issues of blood shortages became glaring. As a result, the HCPO coordinated with the Judiciary, Hudson County Sherriff, and Jersey City Medical Center to hold an interagency two-day blood drive.

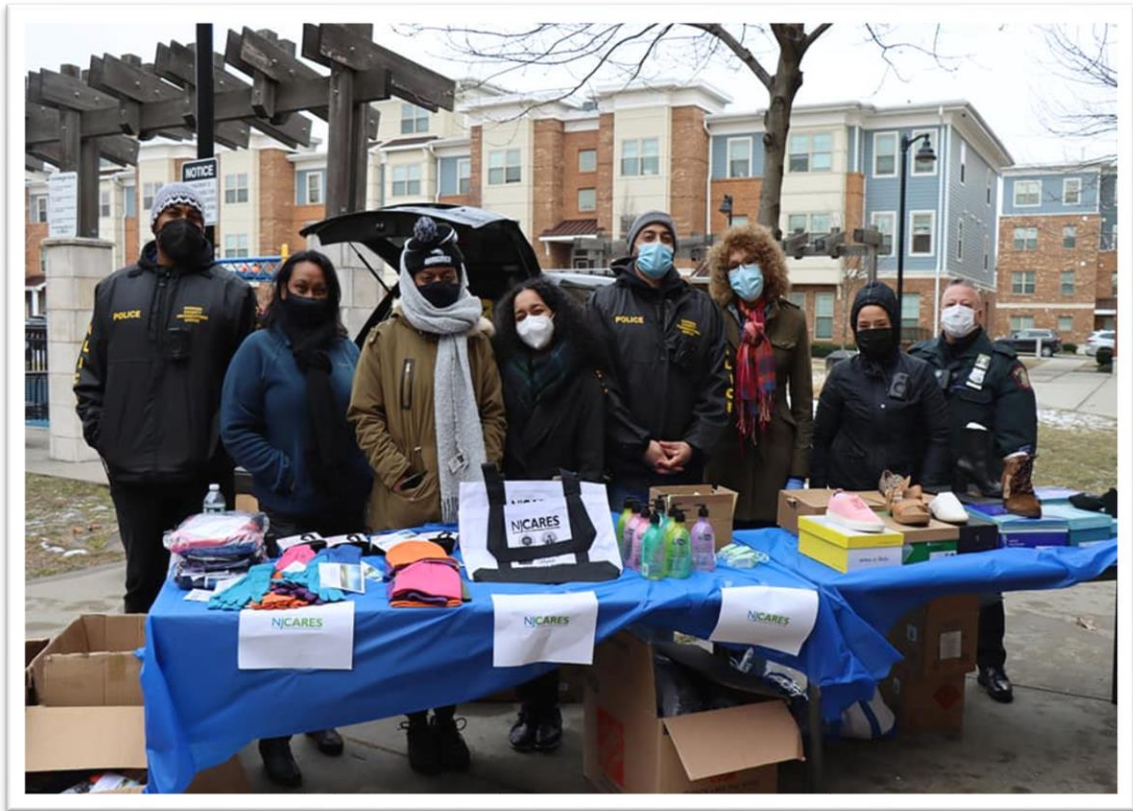
In October, the HCPO offered career guidance to college students enrolled in the undergraduate criminal justice and pre-law programs at New Jersey City University, Saint Peter's University, and Kean University. The HCPO also participated in the National Drug Take Back in all municipalities in Hudson County.

In November, HCPO Detectives volunteered to prepare and serve hot meals to those in need. During this time, the HCPO collected non-perishable food items to be distributed on Thanksgiving. Through these volunteer efforts and donations, the HCPO was able to provide meals to approximately 300 families.

The HCPO ended the year with a Holiday Toy Drive to benefit families in need during the holiday season in coordination with the Division of Child Protection & Permanency.



During the two-week period before Thanksgiving, members of the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office volunteered at the Salvation Army facility in Union City to help prepare for Thanksgiving. Our Office was able to help stock their shelves for the holiday season and replace dated kitchen utensils.



In February, the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office joined the Jersey City Police Department at the Gloria Robinson Food Pantry in Jersey City to distribute clothing and other household essentials as part of Operation Helping Hand.



In August, Operation Helping Hand led a Candlelight Vigil and Memorial Walk along with community and affiliated recovery partners at James J. Braddock Park in North Bergen. The event was to remember those whom we lost while also helping end the stigma associated with addiction and substance related deaths.



The Hudson County Prosecutor's Office – alongside the Hudson County Sheriff's Office and New Jersey Courts – hosted a blood drive in September at the Hudson County Administration Building.