

# St. Joseph, Missouri Police Department



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SUBJECT: COLD CASES		
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## I. Purpose

It is the purpose of this directive to establish guidelines for the further investigation of cases of a more serious nature where all leads have been exhausted with no successful resolution.

## II. Definition

Cases where all leads have been exhausted but insufficient evidence has been developed to charge an individual, or individuals, with a crime, or in some other way to provide case clearance, is commonly referred to as a “cold case”. Cold cases are violent or other major felony crimes; i.e., murder, attempted murder, missing adult where foul play is suspected, missing child, rape or other sexual crime involving serious injury to the victim, which are not subject to a statute of limitations.

These types of crimes may or may not have a suspect identified at the time of the crime or determined during the initial investigation, however, with the discovery of genetic forensics which provide law enforcement the ability to more accurately identify perpetrators, along with other forensic technologies developed in recent years, cold cases once considered unsolvable may now be reviewed and ultimately solved. Also, facts not known and leads developed only later may become available when cases are periodically reviewed.

## III. Procedure

1. Cold case review:
  - a) All cases meeting cold cases criteria will be fully reviewed on a five (5) year basis.
  - b) Any time information relevant to a cold case is received or developed that case will be reexamined.
  - c) At least annually the Detective Division Commander or designee will produce a report informing the Chief of Police of the status of all cold cases. This will

require that the Commander or designee review any new information and make a determination about the appropriate course of action. Available options are:

1. Acknowledge a review of the information in supplemental form but take no action; and
2. Reopen the case as an active investigation.

2. Cold case criteria for review:

- a) Review the case file and evidence to determine if new techniques exist that were not previously available that might result in a resolution,
- b) Have the same or a different detective look at the evidence from a fresh perspective for the possibility that a new approach might be considered for additional follow up,
- c) Consider reopening the case as an active investigation when circumstances indicate the opportunity to develop new information.
- d) Upon request from the detective commander, a case may be removed from the cold case list if circumstances allow.

3. Evaluation criteria:

Cold cases will be classified in the Department's Case Management System using the minimum solvability factors:

- a) Physical evidence collected (i.e. evidence that may be valuable for DNA analysis, ballistics, or fingerprint databases, which may substantially advance a case beyond its original level);
- b) Witness/witnesses;
- c) Suspects known or named; and
- d) Does the case meet cold case criteria? Y=Yes, N=No

Detectives may also choose to consider other solvability factors that may lead to the classification of meeting cold case criteria.

4. Consideration/s for reopening a cold case:

- a) Limit on statute of limitations;
- b) Technological considerations, such as the nature and condition of the evidence as originally collected, stored and in some instances, subject to other forensic tests;
- c) Practical considerations, such as the availability of witnesses in the event, further testing or investigation would identify a suspect and lead to an arrest and trial;
- d) Interview with victim or victim's family. Sometimes, after the passage of several years, in cases of a sexual nature, the victim may not wish to relive the events and may not wish to willingly participate in the investigation;

- e) Resource issues, such as the time and money available for investigation and forensic analysis; and
- f) Consultation with the Prosecuting Attorney.

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Chris Connally                      Chief of Police

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Date