Police Department
Case Management Review – Assaults Unit
December 4, 2019

Report Highlights

Incident Reports
Based on cases selected, incident reports were generally completed in accordance with policy. Additional training related to incident status designations would assist in accurately summarizing the investigative activity documented within the Records Management System.

Case and Workload Reviews
Unit policy was updated in April 2019, requiring the documentation of supervisory approvals for case status changes. Supervisory reviews and documented approvals help ensure the investigative quality of the case, and the timeliness of conclusions.
Executive Summary

Purpose

Our purpose was to determine if case management practices within the Violent Crimes Bureau, Assaults Unit, were documented per policy and completed in a timely manner. We also conducted a high-level staffing analysis to determine if current staffing levels can accommodate the number of cases assigned to this unit.

The team was comprised of City Auditor Department (CAD) and Police Department Professional Standards Bureau, Inspections Unit (PSB) personnel.

Background

The mission of the Violent Crimes Bureau (VCB) is “to support the Phoenix Police Department's purpose of ensuring the safety and security of each person in our community by conducting initial follow-up investigations thoroughly, completely and ethically.”

VCB is made up of the following investigative units: Assaults Unit, Gang Enforcement, Homicide Unit, Night Detective Detail, and Robbery Unit. The Assaults Unit is comprised of two details: Assaults and Bias/School Crimes. These squads are responsible for investigating assaults, aggravated assaults, threats, bias-motivated, and school-interference crimes. The Crime Gun Intelligence Unit (CGIU) was transferred to the Assaults Unit in February 2019, and is responsible for inter-agency collaboration focused on the collection, management, and analysis of crime gun evidence.

Between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2018, approximately 15,600 cases were assigned to VCB Assaults and Bias/School Crimes detectives. Our review focused on the documentation of the incident status, interview process, and case management (i.e., appropriate statute and disposition codes, as well as timeliness). We also analyzed current staffing caseloads using the Police Executive Research Forum’s methodology.

Results in Brief

*VCB Assaults and Bias/School Crimes detectives generally completed the selected incident reports per department policies. A review of incident status definitions is needed to ensure consistent and timely application. Using correct status designations results in accurately summarizing the progress or investigative activity documented within RMS.*

Our case review focused on evaluating if documented evidence within the Record Management System (RMS) supported that investigative elements were completed in accordance with policy. We found general compliance in most areas reviewed. Compliance with policy: (1) aids in preventing premature "pending" or "closing" of cases; (2) ensures that victim, witness, and suspect interviews are summarized, recorded, and
impounded correctly to support legal practices; and (3) promotes accurate crime statistics and the timeliness of investigative activity.

Additional guidance is needed for incident status designations, as revised policy requires detectives to further define investigative activity completed. Using correct status designations results in accurately summarizing the progress or investigative activity documented within RMS.

**VCB Assaults Unit supervisors used formal and informal methods to review detective caseloads and investigative quality. Unit policy was updated in April 2019 to require written supervisory approvals for case status changes. Supervisory review and documented approvals help ensure the investigative quality of a case and the timeliness of conclusions.**

VCB Assaults Unit supervisors performed formal reviews of caseloads using RMS management reports. Informal reviews occurred throughout the investigation as sergeants participated in investigative tasks, communicated throughout the process, and conducted periodic reviews of open cases.

For the period tested, supervisors completed written monthly notes for employees per policy. Monthly information reviewed included: (1) evaluations of core City values, (2) supervisory inspections, (3) job-specific factors, (4) reports reviewed, and (5) supervisory notes related to action items on open cases or work assignments.

Based on discussions with VCB Assaults staff, it wasn't until April 2019 that unit policy required that the supervisory approval to change an incident status be documented in the RMS Case Management Record. For reviewed cases pended or closed after April 1, 2019, written supervisory approvals were documented for most case management records per policy. Supervisory reviews of status changes and dispositions ensure investigative quality, timeliness, and adequate documentation.

**Based on a high-level review, current VCB Assault Unit staffing levels are less than calculated needs. Further analytical study related to workload activities is necessary to provide a more accurate staffing calculation.**

Utilizing a methodology identified by the Police Executive Research Forum, staffing calculations were based on identifying the number of cases which fall into solvability categories, and applying an estimated average time to each category. Our review identified that the current staffing level of 30 detectives is 13 less than the calculated 43 detectives.
Department Responses to Recommendations

Rec. 1.1: Review incident status designations to ensure consistent and timely application.

**Response:** The Assaults Unit and Crime Gun Intelligence Unit supervisors will review Operations Orders 4.45.3.A with their detectives on the appropriate use of the investigative status codes. This directive will be documented and included in monthly supervisory notes for all detectives. During mandatory supervisory reviews of incidents that have any of the “Pended” or “Closed” statuses, supervisors will ensure daily that the appropriate status is assigned based on the totality of the investigation and take corrective action as deficiencies are identified.

Furthermore, the Investigations Bureau is working on establishing consistency protocols on case status reviews within each of the Units.

Consistency protocols will begin after all Units’ current processes are reviewed. Estimated date to begin is March 1, 2020.

**Target Date:**
March 1, 2020
Supervisors were notified on Monday November 4th of the directive and will begin this action by the end of November and documented in November’s monthly notes.

Consistency protocols will begin after all Units’ current processes are reviewed. Estimated date to begin is on or before March 1, 2020.

**Explanation, Target Date > 90 Days:** N/A
1 – Case Management Review

Background

Criteria used to determine if case management adhered to policy and procedures came from Police Department Operations Orders, Violent Crimes Bureau Manual, and supervisory interviews. The review focused on case status designations, interview documentation, and general case management elements (i.e., appropriate statute codes, case dispositions, and timeliness).

Case status was considered complete if the incident status was appropriate based on investigative work documented within RMS, and if status updates were processed per policy. For testing purposes, we divided the incident status into a “primary” and “secondary” designation. The primary designation defined the base status (i.e., open, pended, or closed); the secondary designation best described the state of the investigation (i.e., pended-lab, pended-suspect contact, closed-cleared, or closed-all leads exhausted).

The interview process was determined complete if all victim, investigative lead, and/or witness interviews were summarized, and recordings conducted and impounded for felony cases. It was considered acceptable if an interview attempt was documented. Suspect interviews were reviewed separately only if a suspect was identified and located.

Case management elements were considered complete if the:

- Statute codes appropriately reflected the actual incidents under investigation;
- Cases were supplemented in RMS on a timely basis, and did not have periods greater than six months for which work was not documented;
- Disposition codes (case clearance information) were properly assigned, when applicable; and
- Furthers (cases requiring clarifications at the request of a prosecuting agency) were completed timely and per policy.

We identified and reviewed 330 of 15,648 cases (2%) assigned to VCB Assault and Bias/School Crimes investigators from January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018, to evaluate if investigations were documented per policy and completed in a timely manner. Reviews conducted by both CAD and PSB staff were compared and summarized.

Results

For the cases selected, incident status designations were updated per policy. However, a review of status definitions is needed to ensure consistent and timely
application. Using correct status designations results in accurately summarizing the progress or investigative activity documented within RMS.

The incident status reflects the investigative summary of a case and is to be kept current by either completing an Incident Supplement or updating the status code field within RMS. Per Operations Order 4.45, a “pered” case indicated that investigative efforts were exhausted, and the case placed on hold pending the development of further information. A case could be pended waiting for lab results, suspect contact, or victim contact/info (all secondary status designations intended to clarify the reason for the pend). A “closed” case indicated that an investigation was concluded. Secondary “closed” designations include cleared, all leads exhausted, or the victim refused/declined to cooperate in the investigation or declined to prosecute. Policy also noted that an incident supplement was required to change status codes from “open” to “pered” (for reasons of suspect contact or victim contact/info) and from “open” to “closed.”

We tested 330 incident reports to determine if the case status was updated and designated per policy. Our results are noted in the following chart:

Incident Status Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written Updates</th>
<th>98%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Case Status</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Case Status</td>
<td>78%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Incident status updates were completed per policy. Reviewing incident status definitions aids in consistent application and accurate investigative summaries.

As the chart illustrates, of the 330 incidents reviewed:

- 322 of 330 status updates (98%) were modified correctly within RMS
- 266 of 330 primary status designations (81%) were compliant with policy definitions (e.g., “pered” or “closed”)
- 258 of 330 secondary status designations (78%) were compliant with policy definitions (e.g., “cleared” or “all leads exhausted”).
Reasons why a case status designation may have been considered incorrect included the following:

- Cases prematurely “pended” or “closed” prior to documenting investigative activity or that were missing required documentation, e.g., interview summaries; or
- Cases noted as “cleared” but lacking an arrest, exception, or unfounded disposition.

Inconsistencies in this category increase the risk of incomplete casework or case inactivity. Continuous supervisory review of designated reports, as identified in Observation 3, may improve the documented status within case management.

For the cases reviewed, interviews were generally documented per policy. Compliance with policy ensures that victim, witness, and suspect interviews are summarized, recorded, and impounded correctly in support of proper investigative practices.

Operations Order 4.19 provided guidance for victim and witness interviews, and suspect interrogations. Notations included “interview every witness and victim,” “document everything said,” and “when officers audio record an … interview with a suspect, witness or victim… the audio recordings will be processed/stored following the procedures … for evidence, impounding and property.”

We tested 330 cases to determine if interviews or interview attempts were documented per policy and found that 293 reports (89%) were compliant. We considered interviews incomplete with Operations Orders if a victim, suspect, and/or witness interview, or interview attempt, was not documented.

For the cases selected, case management elements were generally completed per policy. Using the correct offense and disposition codes helps ensure cases are routed to the appropriate unit, and correlate to accurate statistics.

Per Police Department Operations Order 4.45:

“the assigned investigator will ensure the offense code/s … reflects, as closely as possible, the actual incident under investigation.”

“all Priority 1 and Priority 2 IRs will have follow-up initiated within five working days and documented in an Incident Supplement within 20 days of the actual follow-up. Priority 3 through Priority 5 IRs will have follow-up initiated within ten working days after receipt and will normally be supplemented within 30 calendar days after receipt by the investigator.”

“Clearance information will be updated by completing an Incident Supplement ensuring the appropriate ‘Clearance Disposition’ … is selected from the drop-down boxes…”
“If an Incident Supplement has not been submitted within 30 days of receipt of the “Further”, the investigator will notify the unit supervisor with an explanation.”

We tested 330 cases to determine if general case management elements were documented per policy. Our results are noted in the following chart:

Case Management Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate Offense Codes</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposition Codes Entered*</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthers Completed Timely*</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages were based on the number of reports identified, and if activity was addressed per policy.

Case management elements were generally completed per policy. Appropriate offense and disposition codes aid in statistical reporting.

As the chart illustrates, of the 330 reports reviewed:

Appropriate Offense Codes

Appropriate offense codes were used in 307 (93%) cases. Correct use of offense codes helps ensure cases are routed to the appropriate unit and correlate to accurate statistics. Of those considered incorrect, the majority were for incidents requiring a higher felony class, e.g., aggravated assault or discharging a firearm at a structure.

Timeliness

309 of the 330 reviewed cases (94%) were worked timely. Twenty-one of the reviewed cases had periods of inactivity of six months or more. The average length of inactivity of the 21 cases was 10 months.
It appears that most case inactivity was due to delays in documenting or finalizing incident supplements; or missing documented outreach/interviews with identified individuals.

**Disposition Codes Entered**

Of the 330 cases reviewed, 92 (28%) required a disposition code. Seventy-five of 92 (82%) were dispositioned correctly. Most of the errors were either missing dispositions, or had exceptionally cleared dispositions which did not meet clearance criteria related to suspect identification and location.

**Furthers Completed Timely**

Of the 330 cases reviewed, 13 (4%) were furthered. Unit personnel addressed nine of the 13 within the 30-day policy and resubmitted 12 cases to the prosecuting agency.

**Recommendation**

1.1 Review incident status designations to ensure consistent and timely application.
2 – Workflow Compliance

Background

Incident records assigned to an employee are held in a workflow or ‘queue’ for further investigation. This workflow group is identified by an employee’s serial number. Per PD staff, these workflows are always maintained in the system, whether it’s empty or has assigned cases. This allows units to hold pended and closed cases in a retired detective’s workflow prior to reassigning them to a new detective.

“RMS workflow” was defined as “messaging about specific records”. The message stays permanently attached to a case and can be reviewed by selecting the “workflow” button within any module. Different types of workflow messaging include, but are not limited to, the following states:

- "Begin Auto" – system generated when an original report is uploaded to RMS and there is an indication of a primary offense. This directs the message to the investigative support detail (ISD) of the work unit.
- “Notify Investigator” – transitioned message from the ISD function to notify the detective that an incident has been assigned for further investigation.
- “Accept/Close Workflow” – closing message to indicate that the detective has accepted the incident record for further investigation.

We reviewed workflow groups to determine compliance with VCB Assaults Unit procedures related to case transfers, and supervisory assignments, as well as the use of RMS assignment messaging.

Results

No workflows (queues) were identified that were holding open, pended or closed assault cases. One workflow was identified for a vacant detective position that was holding CGIU-closed field interviews (FIs) that recorded non-criminal information. Unit staff is in the process of clearing the unassigned workflow.

Unit policy is to transfer all cases to a current unit detective when someone separates from the VCB Assaults Unit. During our data review, we did not locate any vacant workflows holding open, pended, or closed cases.

We did locate one employee workflow, assigned to a vacant detective position, which held closed FIs. Per policy, FIs are to record non-criminal information. Upon review, these FIs correctly documented non-criminal incidents, and Unit staff is in the process of clearing the unassigned workflow.

VCB Assaults Unit supervisory workflows followed unit policy as these queues were not holding workable or open cases. Periodic review of sergeants’ queues aid in the timely and appropriate distribution of cases.
Per unit procedures, supervisors are not to carry open or workable cases other than those incidents temporarily held for reassignment after a detective leaves the unit. We found no open cases assigned to VCB Assaults Unit sergeants or the lieutenant during two random reviews.

*The majority of case assignment messages reviewed were in an acceptable status. This ensured that cases were timely assigned, and received/reviewed, by VCB Assaults and Bias/School Crimes personnel for investigative follow-up.*

Workflow items are managed using the *Draft, Inbox, Sent*, and *Outbox* views. When a form is completed and saved, it stays in the FBR *Draft* folder. From the *Draft* folder, there are typically two options: “submit” to workflow, or “save” it to the server. When a form is submitted to workflow, the form will reside in the appropriate *Inbox* for a user or group.

We reviewed the use of workflow messaging, related to case assignments, to determine if VCB Assaults and Bias/School Crimes personnel transitioned and accepted workflow messages timely. We found 327 of 330 (99%) reviewed cases had proper origination, assignment, and closure of RMS workflow notifications.

**Recommendation**

None.
3 – Supervisory Review

Background

Operations Order 4.45 noted “Supervisors will review all Incident Reports and Supplements and periodically review Case Management Records. Investigation Management/Quality Control reviews completed by supervisors and documented on the Detectives Supervisor’s Monthly Inspection Report will include, but are not limited to, the following: incident report status, offense code, interviews, timeliness of submitted/approved reports, and overall report quality.”

Unit policy required supervisory personnel to complete the Supervisor’s Monthly Inspection Report for each member of their squad. Assaults Unit supervisory reviews included, but were not limited to, interactive RMS reports, case assignments, and incident records. Informal reviews occurred throughout the investigation as sergeants participated in investigative tasks, communicated throughout the process, and conducted periodic reviews of open cases.

Per Operations Order 5.1, “Supervisors will review and approve all designated reports/forms in the Field Based Reporting (FBR) that are completed by employees under their supervision for completeness, accuracy, timeliness, and quality. This will include the adherence to policy, investigative techniques, and final disposition. Incident Reports and Supplements will also be reviewed to ensure the supporting criteria of the actual incident under investigation is correctly listed. …Supervisors will maintain a written record of their observations of each employee.” Unit policy was updated in April 2019 requiring supervisors to note their review of any incident record or supplement that changed an incident status; this notation was to be captured in the RMS Case Management record.

We tested supervisors’ monthly reviews and case status approvals to determine if they were completed timely and documented per policy.

Results

Reviewed monthly supervisory notes were completed timely and processed per policy. Routine written supervisory review of staff activity helps ensure adherence to policy and correct use of investigative techniques.

Supervisors were to complete the Monthly Inspection Report for each employee which is reviewed by the unit lieutenant. Once the lieutenant initials the report, it is returned to the supervisor and shared with the employee.

We obtained and reviewed the Supervisor’s Monthly Inspection Reports for January 2018, April 2018, and May 2018, for all Assaults Unit squads. Supervisory notes had the required elements and were maintained per policy. Monthly information reviewed included evaluations of core City values, job duties, incident records, case workload, and supervisory notes related to action items on open cases or work assignments.
**Unit policy was updated in April 2019 to require written supervisory approvals for case status changes. For the period tested, written supervisory approvals were documented in the case management record for most cases as required by unit policy. This helps ensure cases are completed timely and appropriately.**

Operations Order 4.45 noted that the status of an Incident Report (IR) will be kept current by either completing an Incident Supplement, or by the primary case agent updating the "Status" code in the RMS Incident module. Once an IR has been assigned to an investigator, an incident supplement will be completed to change status codes from “open” to “pended” or “closed.”

VCB Assaults Unit policy required supervisory review of any supplemental report that changed the status of an incident to “pended,” “closed,” or “submitted.” However, it wasn’t until April 2019, that Unit policy required that the supervisory approval be documented in the RMS Case Management Record.

Of the 330 cases reviewed, 14 had incident status changes after April 1, 2019. We tested these 14 cases to determine if written supervisory approvals for case status changes were completed per unit policy. We found documented reviews for 10 of 14 cases.

Written supervisory approvals of status changes allow sergeants to determine if cases pend or close prematurely, and if so, address accountability. This allows for investigative quality control that could prevent the misrepresentation of case workloads, as well as identify cases having further investigative potential.

**Recommendation**

None.
4 – Staffing Overview

Background

In 2011, the Berkshire Advisors, Inc. recommended a total of 22 staff for the VCB Assaults Unit within the "Innovation and Efficiency Review of the Phoenix Police Department" report. At that time, the Assaults Detail had 15 detectives. Currently, the Assaults Detail has 18 assigned detectives. Bias/School Crimes and CGIU Details were recently moved to the Assaults Unit, and have 4 and 8 assigned detectives, respectively.

Based on police staffing research, we were unable to locate a universal standard for calculating investigative staffing. Staff levels for investigative personnel depends, not only on the number of cases, but also on the types of criminal offenses and the time required to investigate each type. In general, investigative units that maintain performance data (e.g., the number and type of cases assigned, regular and overtime hours worked), in addition to actual time studies, may have the best approach for workload projections.

VCB Assaults Unit supervisory personnel were supportive of using an investigative staffing methodology identified by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF).\textsuperscript{1} PERF utilizes solvability categories and an estimated average time for each category. Solvability categories included the following:

- Contact Only - cases that result in no follow-up or in simply re-contacting the victim (0.5 hours)
- Less Complicated - substantial solvability factors are present that require relatively little further investigation to close the case (3 hours)
- Typical - those with moderate level of solvability factors (6 hours for Assaults and Bias/School Crimes; 10 hours for CGIU)
- More Complex - limited solvability factors present that require substantial effort and are difficult to close (24 hours)

We requested VCB Assaults Unit supervisory staff review one month’s worth of cases and identify solvability categories. We performed a high-level review that annualized solvability categories and associated hours, determined an estimated percentage of chargeable hours, and calculated staffing levels.

Results

\textit{Based on a high-level review, current VCB Assaults Unit staffing levels are less than calculated needs. Further analytical study related to workload activities is necessary to provide a more accurate staffing calculation.}

\textsuperscript{1} The City Auditor Department does not express an opinion on the viability of the PERF methodology.
VCB Assaults Unit sergeants reviewed June 2019 incidents and categorized them by PERF’s classifications. Utilizing this data, we performed a high-level analysis for Assaults, Bias/School, and CGIU Details that included the following:

- Determined work hour availability at 68% of annual 2,080 hours per detective
- Calculated June 2019 category percentages for each detail
- Applied June 2019 category percentages to annual incident assignments to estimate annual category counts
- Multiplied the annual category counts by category hours to determine the total number of hours needed to work all assigned cases
- Identified current staffing levels

Staffing calculations were based on the total hours required for investigative work divided by the total time available per detective. A summary of staffing calculations for each detail is noted in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staffing Calculations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calculation Description</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total hours available per year per Detective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chargeable hour rate(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual hours available per Detective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of calculated investigative hours (annualized)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Detectives required to cover calculated workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Detectives currently in VCB Assaults Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential staffing shortage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workload calculations resulted in possible staffing shortages for Assaults and CGIU Details.

\(^2\) The chargeable hour rate was based on annual work hours available less training, meal breaks, leave, and holidays (72%), less a small percentage (4%) to account for City or County Court attendance, and property review/purging.
In general, staffing calculations identified the following:

- Current Unit staffing of 30 detectives is 13 less than the CAD calculated 43 detectives; and
- Current staffing of 18 Assault Detail detectives is four less than the identified count of 22 during the 2011 Berkshire study.

**Recommendation**

None.
Scope, Methods, and Standards

Scope

We reviewed a sample of 330 cases that were assigned to VCB’s Assaults and Bias/School Crimes detectives from January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018. Our review consisted of 15 cases selected by interval from each of the 22 detectives. We excluded cases assigned to CGIU detectives, as their work supports department-wide investigations, as well as interagency collaboration including federal, state, and county personnel.

We also reviewed processes associated with workflow messaging, as well as unit supervisory practices related to quality control and monthly reviews.

Staffing calculations were completed for all three details (Assaults, Bias/School Crimes, and CGIU).

Methods

We used the following methods to complete this audit:

- Identified and reviewed pertinent regulatory, unit, and department policies relevant to case management, reporting, and inspections
- Interviewed appropriate Police staff to identify business processes
- Interviewed Assaults Unit lieutenant and sergeants to document current case management practices
- Obtained and reviewed VCB Assaults Unit caseloads
- Identified and reviewed VCB Assaults Unit incident reports to verify compliance with key policies and procedures
- Obtained and reviewed VCB Assaults Unit supervisory documentation to verify compliance with key policies and procedures
- Calculated investigative workloads

Unless otherwise stated in the report, all sampling in this audit was conducted using a judgmental methodology to maximize efficiency based on auditor knowledge of the population being tested. As such, sample results cannot be extrapolated to the entire population and are limited to a discussion of only those items reviewed.

Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our
findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We are independent per the generally accepted government auditing requirements for internal auditors.