



## Office of the Lawrence County District Attorney

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### LCDA Sexual Assault/Child Abuse Task Force – 2016 Year-End Update

*For Law Enforcement Agencies*

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#### **Background:**

Upon assuming the office of District Attorney, in his first term, DA Joshua Lamancusa saw a significant need for enhancing investigations in sexual assault and child abuse cases and increasing cooperation and communication between local police departments in case investigations involving sexual assault and child abuse. With the assistance of sexual crimes/child abuse prosecutor Jonathan Miller, the Lawrence County District Attorney's Sexual Assault/Child Abuse Task Force (SATF) was launched in 2012 and formally approved in 2015 by participating municipalities and the County. The SATF is comprised of officers from the largest five municipalities in Lawrence County, as well as a State Police, Adult Probation, and County Detectives. The Lawrence County DA's Detective Bureau acts as administrator of the Task Force.

#### **Purpose:**

The Sexual Assault/Child Abuse Task Force is designed to do the following:

1. Create a specialized and highly trained task force composed of participating officers from the larger municipalities within the County, under the direction and supervision of the sexual assault prosecutor and District Attorney, to enable effective and efficient investigation and prosecution of sexual assault, child abuse, and child sexual assault cases within Lawrence County.
2. Provide each participating officer (except APO) with county-wide jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute sexual assault and child abuse. This allows departments to handle cases involving multiple assaults occurring in more than one jurisdiction, with a connection to the officer's primary jurisdiction. This provides cohesiveness and continuity to the investigation and charging of sexual offenders.
3. Provide each participating officer with access to, and funding for, sexual assault and child abuse specific training, at least annually.



4. Provide each participating department/officer with equipment useful in the investigation of CA/SA.
5. Allow local departments access to technical and manpower assistance in CA/SA investigations, and allow overtime reimbursement for extra-jurisdictional work provided by officers to other departments, upon approval from the District Attorney.
6. Allow for sharing of forfeited assets or proceeds from the sale of those assets in sexual assault cases, as provided under Title 18, Section 3141.
7. Allow for coordinated, county-wide efforts in monitoring Megan's Law registrant compliance within the County, on an ongoing basis and at least annually.
8. Increase public awareness and acknowledgement of the County and local police departments' commitment and efforts to vigorously investigate and prosecute sexual offenders and child abusers.

**Structure:**

The SATF operates under the direction and control of District Attorney Lamancusa and Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Miller. DA Detective Vincent Martwinski serves as administrative officer in charge of SATF operations.

Participating departments/officers:

Lawrence County DA Detective Bureau:

Det. Vincent Martwinski (Admin OIC / ICAC)

Det. Harry Gustafson, Jr.

Lawrence County Sheriff's Office:

Deputy Matthew Venasco (DA Detective)

Shenango PD:

Officer Caleb Duff

New Castle City PD:

Lt. Kevin Seelbaugh;

Neshannock PD :

Officer Matt Seamans



PSP New Castle:

Undesignated (formerly held by Trooper Harry Gustafson)

Ellwood City:

Undesignated

Union PD :

Lt. Ryan King

Adult Probation :

Officer Andrew Crowl

**Funding/Costs:**

Funding for the task force is based on donations from community members/groups, asset forfeitures, and the District Attorney's Budget.

**Implementation and Operations:**

All Task Force Officers have received training specific to sexual assault and child abuse investigations, with most officers receiving annual training in SA/CA investigations.

All officers have completed basic REID interviewing courses and several have completed Advanced REID.

Five Task Force Officers are A-certified by PSP to conduct wiretaps.

Task Force-trained officers have handled over 100 cases of sexual assault/child abuse in their originating municipalities since 2012.

Task Force officers have assisted with or assumed lead investigative responsibility in over a dozen SA/CA cases for other municipal departments since formal approval in 2015.

The SATF has enabled the sexual assault/child abuse prosecutor to attend advanced-level trainings in CA/SA investigations and prosecutions multiple times per year.

The SATF has conducted two rounds of SORNA (Megan' Law) registrant compliance checks within Lawrence County, the first in 2014 and second in 2016, resulting in the charging of over a dozen violators. SATF also continually monitors SORNA registrant lists for Lawrence County.

The SATF also monitors the progress and status of ongoing investigations by municipal departments for the District Attorney and ADA, to ensure that no cases fall through the cracks.



### **Future Operations:**

The SATF will be expanding our capabilities to engage in computer crimes investigations, both reactive and proactive. The LCDB is now an ICAC affiliate which provides SATF with access to actionable information on child online exploitation.

The addition of Detective Harry Gustafson, a former 25 year veteran of the PA State Police with eight years experience as the lead sexual assault investigator for PSP New Castle Barracks, adds manpower and substantial experience and expertise to the Task Force.

The SATF is working towards sending a Task Force Officer for polygraph training with the goal of having a trained, equipped, and readily accessible polygraph specialist available for case investigations.

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