

DENVER'S COLD CASE PROJECT: ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS

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The Denver Police Department (DPD) Crime Laboratory serves the City and County of Denver and its 550,000 citizens. In 2002, DPD Detectives and scientists from the crime laboratory began to discuss and plan a DNA cold case project, recognizing the power of DNA technology and CODIS to solve cold case sexual assaults and homicides dating as far back as the 1960s. The DPD received federal grant funds from the National Institute of Justice in 2004 to launch the Cold Case Project, which has been a collaborative team effort between the DPD crime lab, Cold Case Detectives and the Denver District Attorney's Office over the past three years. To date, investigators have reviewed over 4,242 cold cases and submitted over 955 cases with potential biological evidence to the crime laboratory for testing. Approximately 458 cases have been tested, resulting in 230 DNA profiles submitted to CODIS and 85 CODIS hits, or a 37% hit rate. Over 30 of these cases have been filed with the Denver District Attorney's Office and many have been successfully prosecuted. Through the Cold Case project, the Denver DA's office began the first "John Doe" case filings in Denver, which are based on an individual's DNA profile instead of his or her name. Over 71 "John/Jane Doe" filings have been completed in Denver, with five converted to a name since filing. Ongoing work on the Cold Case Project continues to promote public safety in Denver by identifying and bringing to justice violent offenders.