Special Victims Unit: Progress and Implementation Update

CITY & COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

December 2026

Topics

1. Next steps from October 8 Joint Hearing on SVU

2. Update on SAEK Bi-Annual Report

Commitments from the October 8 Hearing and Resolution (File No. 261268)

Workstream	Actions Underway
Investigative Quality & Consistency	• Standardized investigative checklist and supervisory review • Monthly review of active cases • Expanded trauma-informed and evidence-based interviewing training • POST-certified training for investigators • Recurring patrol training and feedback on report quality
Capacity & Staffing	• Dedicated Captain for SVU leadership • Continued growth in investigators with defined staffing and caseload targets • Strategies to recruit and retain investigators
Survivor Experience & Communication	• Consistent victim contact at defined milestones • Improved access to victim support services and referrals • Communication tracking through case management and supervisory review
System Accountability & Transparency	• Independent case review modeled on the Philadelphia Model • Recurring cross-agency review of case outcomes; improved UCR/NIBRS reporting • Case-management dashboard and implementation accountability tracking

Implementation Process Since October 8

Details on the page that follows

Area	Progress / Actions Underway	Status
Investigative Oversight	Unit order establishing case-file review expectations and Lieutenant responsibilities, including oversight of investigative completeness and case-status decisions	**In progress**
Survivor Communication	Unit order establishing communication milestones, regular contact expectations, and notification of significant case-status changes	**In progress**
Victim Services	Unit order establishing expectations for providing survivors with information about available support services and referrals	**In progress**
Staffing & Leadership	Permanent Captain assigned to provide dedicated SVU leadership and oversight	**Complete** and ongoing
Implementation Accountability	Mayor's Office interagency workgroup to track implementation milestones, review deliverables, and address barriers	**Being established;** expected kick-off December
Legislation	Resolution introduced by Supervisor Melgar, co-sponsored by Board President Mandelman and all members of the Board, to strengthen sexual assault investigations and survivor services	Proposed

Workgroup Members

- Office of Mayor Daniel Lurie
- Supervisor Myrna Melgar's Office
- San Francisco Police Department
- San Francisco District Attorney's Office
- Mayor's Office of Victim Rights
- Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP)
- Department on the Status of Women (DOSW)
- Commission on the Status of Women
- San Francisco Women Against Rape
- Office of Transgender Initiatives
- Community United Against Violence (CUAV)
- Department of Police Accountability (DPA)

How We Will Measure Success

Workstream	Measures of Success
Investigative Quality & Consistency	• 100% of cases moved to Open/Inactive meet the documented investigative standard • 100% receive required supervisory review • Monthly case-quality reviews demonstrate consistent adherence to investigative standards
Capacity & Case Management	• Increased number of SVU Investigators • Time to assignment: target 48-72 hours
Survivor Experience & Communication	• Open/Active cases with victim contact within 30 days: target ≥80% • Cases where SFPD is last documented contact: target ≥80%
System Accountability & Transparency	• Required public reports issued on time: 100% • Recurring cross law enforcement agency case review completed on established cadence

Next Steps

- **SVU Unit Orders:** Finalize and issue four unit orders addressing case-file reviews, survivor communication, and victim services
- **Implementation Workgroup:** Participate in the Mayor's Office interagency workgroup to track progress, review implementation quality, and address barriers
- **Police Commission Reporting:** Provide ongoing updates, including a potential implementation report documenting progress and remaining actions

Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK) Biannual Report – Jan 1 – Jun 30, 2026

170 SAEKs processed within 120 days

34 days Average processing turnaround

80 Foreign DNA profiles uploaded to CODIS

23 CODIS profile matches

0 SAEK backlog

The report also documents 124 survivor notifications, 40 declined notifications, and 6 cases handled by outside agencies for notification purposes.

Appendix

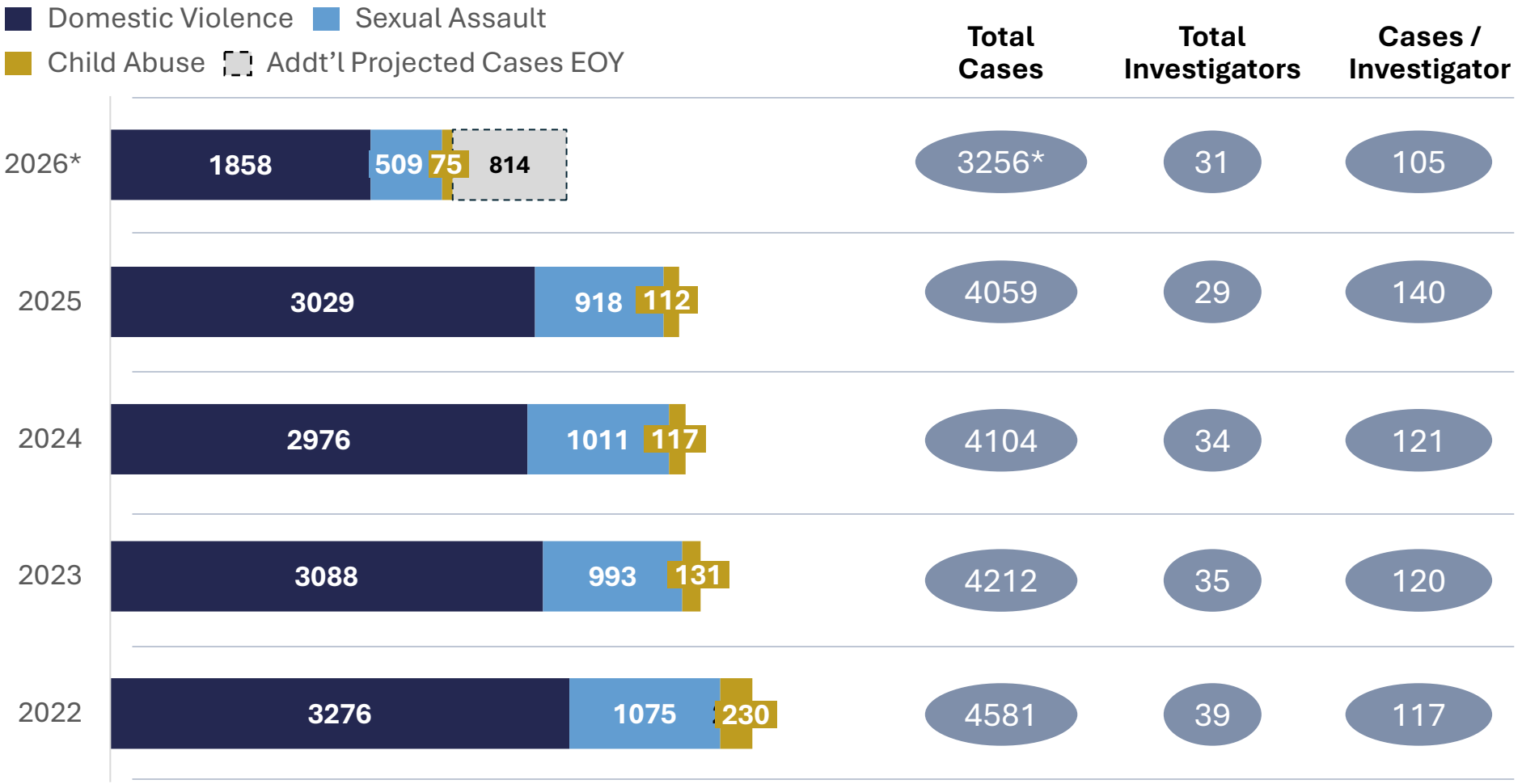
Actions We Are Taking

Workstream	Actions Underway
Investigative Quality & Consistency	• Implement a standardized investigative checklist aligned with POST investigative practices, documenting key investigative steps taken, exhaustion of remaining leads, and rationale before a case moves to OPEN/INACTIVE, with continued required supervisor review **(By Jan. 2027)** • Establish monthly supervisory review all OPEN/ACTIVE cases to assess investigative completeness and identify cases requiring additional action **(By Dec. 2026)** • Expand specialized training for SVU investigators, with an emphasis on trauma-informed and experiential interviewing techniques **(Beginning Jan. 2027; ongoing)** • Provide recurring training for patrol officers on sexual-assault response, report-taking, appropriate classification, and routing of cases to SVU **(Beginning by Jan. 2027; ongoing)** • Establish a recurring feedback loop between SVU and the Training Division to identify gaps in initial reports, reinforce expectations in Academy and patrol training, and conduct an annual retrospective to continuously improve report quality **(Underway; annual review beginning 2027)**
Capacity & Staffing	• Assign permanent Captain to provide dedicated SVU leadership and oversight **(Complete)** • Continue adding investigators as department-wide staffing grows, with defined caseload and staffing targets **(In progress)**
Survivor Experience & Communication	• Establish consistent victim contact at milestones and defined intervals while cases are ACTIVE, including notification of significant case-status changes **(By Jan. 2027)** • Incorporate contact time into the case-management dashboard and supervisory review process **(Longer term)**
System Accountability & Transparency	• Establish recurring review across SVU, relevant SFPD units, the DA, and appropriate law enforcement partners to examine aggregate case outcomes, identify systemic gaps, and track corrective actions **(By June 2027)** • Align record-keeping with UCR/NIBRS practices and establish consistent, timely management and required public reporting **(By June 2027)** • Implement dashboard tracking assignment, caseload, case status, aging, and cases requiring leadership attention **(Longer term)**

Staffing

DATA AS OF SEPT 2026

Reported Cases by Top SVU Investigative Fields



*Adjusted for full year

Case Activity Status for Investigations

DATA AS OF SEPT 2026

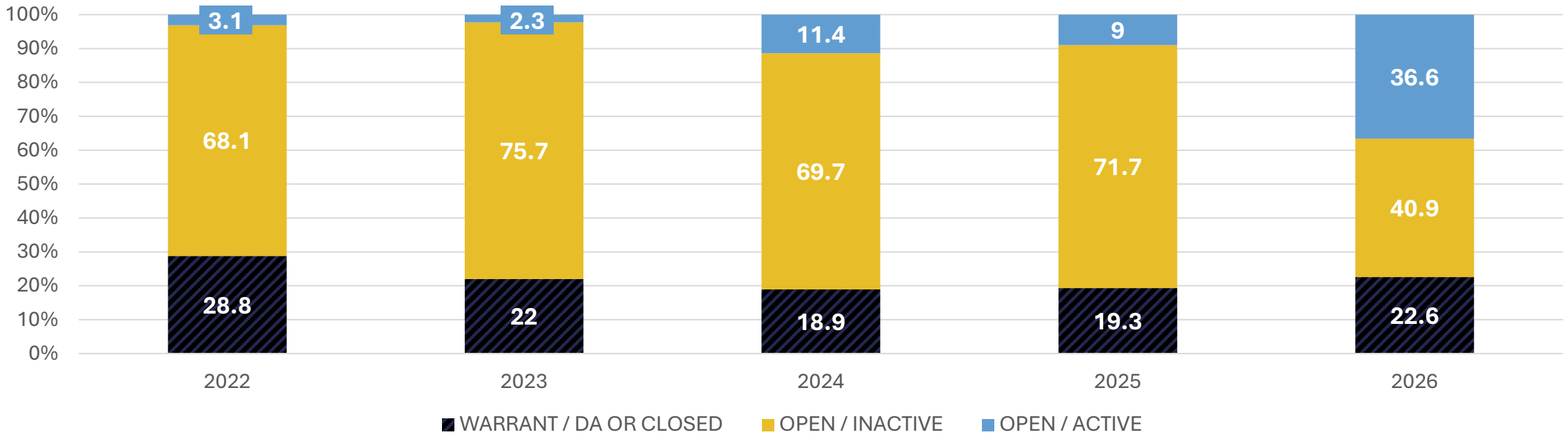
Status	Definition
OPEN / ACTIVE	**There are investigative steps still available.** The case remains active while investigators are pursuing viable leads, evidence, or investigative tools
OPEN / INACTIVE	**Available investigative avenues have been exhausted for now.** The case remains open and can be reactivated if new evidence, information, or leads emerge
WARRANT / DA	**The case has advanced toward enforcement or prosecution.** A warrant is being pursued/issued or the case has been presented or referred to the District Attorney
CLOSED	**The case has reached a final disposition.** SVU uses this status incredibly narrowly, so many unresolved cases remain OPEN/INACTIVE rather than being administratively closed

ACTIVE means there is still something to pursue: cases remain active as long as there are viable investigative steps available. INACTIVE is a broad category, not the same as “closed”: because SVU keeps unresolved cases open, the inactive caseload includes cases where investigative avenues have been exhausted but the case could still be reactivated with more evidence.

Case Activity for Sexual Assault Cases

DATA AS OF SEPT 2026

‘Case Status’ Details for Reported Sexual Assault Cases Between 2022 – 2026, %



OPEN / INACTIVE is often the appropriate status for an unresolved case when there are no actionable investigative steps; cases remain open and can return to active status as circumstances change

Of **OPEN/INACTIVE** cases in September 2026: ~92% were 1+ years old, 30% have unknown suspects (Cases may be counted in more than 1 bucket)

[Recommendations to Strengthen Response and Accountability for Sexual Assault Survivors]

Resolution urging the San Francisco Police Commission and San Francisco Police Department to implement recommendations identified and discussed at the Joint Hearing of the Board of Supervisors' Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women on October 8, 2026 (File No. 260893) regarding the staffing needs, policies, and procedures for responding to and addressing reports of sexual assault.

WHEREAS, Sexual assault is a pervasive public safety issue that leaves a lasting traumatic impact on survivors, their families, and our community; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco historically demonstrated its commitment to survivors with investments in community-based advocacy groups, 24-hour crisis hotlines, and specialized trauma care designed to remove barriers to healing and legal recourse; and

WHEREAS, Despite these resources, there continue to be institutional barriers that make it more difficult for survivors to access services and to achieve justice; and

WHEREAS, In May 2025, the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee held a hearing on the staffing levels and policies of the Special Victims Unit (SVU); and

WHEREAS, In July 2026, investigative reporting by the San Francisco Standard illuminated challenges of survivors with their cases despite having known suspects and forensic evidence; along with data showing that San Francisco Police Department classified 78% of rape cases as "inactive"; and

WHEREAS, As a continuation of the May 2025 hearing and in response to recent allegations, on October 8, 2026, the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women held a joint hearing (File No. 260893) regarding the

staffing needs, policies, and procedures for responding to and addressing reports of sexual assault with presentations by the San Francisco Police Department, Mayor's Office for Victims' Rights, and Office of Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP); and

WHEREAS, During the hearing, Supervisors and Commissioners discussed recommendations presented by the Mayor's Office for Victims' Rights based on extensive research into the best practices currently utilized by law enforcement agencies nationally and internationally, on how to strengthen the response and protocols for survivors of sexual assault with the commitment to follow up with a set of recommendations and policy proposals, and

WHEREAS, The best practice-based recommendations are on file with the Board of Supervisors in File No. 261268, which is hereby declared to be a part of this resolution as if set forth fully herein; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Police Department's presentation, on file with the Board of Supervisors in File No. 261268, which is hereby declared to be a part of this resolution as if set forth fully herein, contains commitments for improvements and timelines for implementation of these improvements; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on the Status of Women subsequently submitted a set of recommendations on October 30, 2026 on file with the Board of Supervisors in File No. 261268, which is hereby declared to be a part of this Resolution as if set forth fully herein; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors supports the collaborative implementation of the following recommendations identified and discussed at the hearing; and urges the San Francisco Police Commission and San Francisco Police Department to adopt actions under their respective jurisdiction:

1. **Expand Trauma-Informed Training for SVU Investigators and Patrol Officers and Strengthen Investigations**

   a. Develop a plan and timeline for requiring trauma-informed training that utilizes best practices from nationally recognized experts and evidence-based trauma-informed interviewing practices that result in the most accurate and comprehensive collection of information from survivors and that minimizes secondary trauma for investigators

   b. Provide re-training on National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) sex-crime classification to ensure cases are accurately routed to SVU and ensure that SVU investigators complete applicable POST-certified training on sexual assault

   c. Ensure that officers provide an affirmative offer of support services for victims including, but not limited to, providing referrals to victim advocates, support agencies, and state-certified Sexual Assault Counselors

   d. Ensure an investigative approach that focuses on corroborating or contradicting the suspect's account and behavior; and applying the probable cause standard

   e. Collaborate with community partners and City agencies on specialized anti-bias training to ensure culturally responsive language and practices for victims of diverse backgrounds including variations in gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability.

2. **Streamline Victim-Investigator Communications**

   a. Establish a protocol for assigning an investigator to a case and a timeframe for initial contact with victim ideally within 48 hours

b. Require communications between investigators and victims for milestones and expected check-in schedules; and provide victim with a process to connect with investigators and/or advocates for support throughout the process

3. Implement an Annual Independent Case Review

a. Collaborate with partner agencies and trained subject matter experts to implement an independent annual review of a random selection of sexual assault cases in the aggregate that were classified as closed and inactive to identify patterns, trends, systemic issues, and procedural gaps based on the Philadelphia Model established by the Women's Law Project and the Philadelphia Police Department in 1999 and which is used by law enforcement agencies across the country

4. Establish Quality Control and Baseline Documentation Standard before Case Is Deemed Inactive or Closed

a. Codify protocols, consistent standards, and documented baseline of investigative steps that need to be taken before a case is closed/deemed inactive; and a process for oversight by superiors

b. Make an effort to ensure that victims are informed when their case is moved to inactive/closed, including an explanation of the case status and investigative history

c. Create and publish department guidelines for sexual assault investigations so that members of the public have a better understanding of how cases are handled

5. Strengthen Reporting on Public Dashboard and Accountability Matrix

a. Identify action items in an accountability matrix with expected timelines to track progress towards improved outcomes for sexual assault

b. Strengthen timely publication of data of case outcomes through a dashboard to complement existing sexual assault reporting requirements

6. Improve Caseload Management and Time Optimization

a. Assess staffing and assign a reasonable caseload to SVU investigators ensuring they are provided resources and time to conduct investigations

b. Identify strategies to recruit and retain SVU investigators

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors supports the convening of interagency partners including, but not limited to, the Mayor's Office, San Francisco Police Department, Mayor's Office for Victims' Rights, SHARP, Department of the Status of Women, Commission on the Status of Women, and community service providers that support sexual assault survivors to meet regularly, to establish measures of success, and to track implementation of recommendations; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors supports establishing a process to allow survivors to provide input and feedback on their experiences in a manner that is protected, confidential, and conducive to improving protocols; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors commits to collaborating with the Police Commission in the implementation of the recommendations; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors directs the Clerk to transmit copies of this Resolution to the San Francisco Police Commission, Chief of Police, and the Mayor's office.

Semi-Annual Report to the Police Commission
Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK)
January 1-June 30, 2026

Pursuant to San Francisco Police Commission Resolution No. 16-28, the department will provide the Police Commission, on a semi-annual and annual basis, a report that details the Department's compliance with collecting and analysis of Sexual Assault Evidence Kits (SAEKs) and reporting results to Sexual Assault Victims.

Item	**Collection and Processing**	
1	Number of on time (within five days) SAEKs collected by Trauma Recovery/Rape Treatment Center and submitted to Crime Lab within five days of incident	166
2	Number of late (beyond five days) SAEKs collected and submitted to Crime Lab	4
2a	Explanation of late submission: Outside jurisdiction submissions and Federal holidays contributed to late submissions	Outside Jurisdiction
3	Number of SAEKs processed by Crime Lab within 120 days	170
4	Average Turn Around Time for SAEK process completion	34 days
5	Number of SAEKs outsources to an outside lab for processing within 120 days	0
6	Number of SAEKs resulting in a foreign DNA Profile (other than victim/survivor) subsequently being entered into CODIS within 120 days	80
7	Number of Foreign DNA profiles resulting in a CODIS profile match	23
8	Number of Foreign DNA profiles resulting in no CODIS profile match	57
9	Number of SAEKs not resulting in a foreign DNA profile	90

Item	**Notifications and Outcomes**	
10	Number of victim/survivor notifications made by SVU, per Victim Bill of Rights (Penal Code Sec. 680)	124
11	Number of victim/survivors declined and/or refused notification	40
12	Number of attempted notifications (wrong number, relocation, no call back, over three(?) attempts by SVU)	0
13	Number of outside agency cases (outside agency handles notification to victim)	6
14	Number of SAEKS with no notification	0

Item	**Case Status**	
15	Inactive cases	132
16	Cleared/Closed cases	24
17	Open cases	14

Inactive Cases:

- Unknown Suspect/No DNA Uploaded to CODIS for later ID. No other probative evidence
- Unknown Suspect/ DNA Uploaded but not yet identified
- Victim becomes uncooperative or refused any further contact after SAEK Evidence collected at Rape Treatment Center
- Known Suspect/Victim cooperative. Suspect thought the sex was consensual and there is no other corroborating evidence

Cleared Cases:

- Cases that are adjudicated/ Arrest Made
- Outside Jurisdiction Investigations, SAEK completed at SFGH/Rape Treatment Center (crime occurred on SF State, UCSF, US Park Fed Land, CHP jurisdiction)
- Victim terminates investigation and signs "Affidavit of Termination"
- Statute of Limitations reached, case formally closed out

Enclosed: