Business Administration Unit

The staff of the Business Administration Unit oversee a $38.8 million operating budget, along with Essex County Prosecutor’s Office’s criminal forfeiture accounts. Additionally, the Unit oversees the Office’s 12 major grant-funded programs totaling more than $1.5 million per year. The Unit provides crucial infrastructure support services at the ECPO’s six office sites, including facility management, supply distribution, inventory, purchasing, budgeting, personnel records, time keeping, payroll, and criminal case file storage and retrieval. Capital equipment—copiers, telephones, fax machines, desk units and file storage cabinets—is continually monitored to identify and prioritize replacement needs.

The Unit assists the Prosecutor and the executive management team with long-term planning and strategic-decision support, including staffing plans, compensation policies, and capital spending/infrastructure decisions.

The Business Administration Unit’s support functions also include:

- Cooperation with program and financial auditors
- Workers’ Compensation reporting
- Office renovation and safety improvements
- Purchase request processing and shipping receipt
- Supply storage, inventory, and distribution
- Liaison to County, State, and Federal government offices

2018 Accomplishments

In support of the Prosecutor’s efforts to secure additional space for the Office to relieve overcrowding and to promote efficiency, the Business Administration Unit continued its on-going coordination with the County of Essex in improving facilities for our staff. In 2017 and 2018, the Office moved several operational groups out of a rented office facility in East Orange and relocated some of these units to the LeRoy Smith Building in the County Justice Complex in Newark. However, certain operations that deal with sensitive confidential matters were determined by management to best operate within their own segregated location, apart from the overall central office. These offices were thus relocated to newly rented modernized office space in West Orange, with the Administration Unit coordinating the relocation of files and furniture, along with the layout and set up of necessary office infrastructure.

The Unit also continued its efforts to efficiently manage the Office's overall file storage space, which is distributed over several sites and is in short supply. The Unit coordinates the disposal of paper files that are no longer needed, and ensures their
SUPPORT UNITS

proper disposal considering the potentially sensitive nature of certain material. Certain older paper files that were determined necessary to retain continue to be moved from overcrowded locations in the Veterans Courthouse to a more accessible location in Belleville, where better environmental conditions for long-term file storage are available. The Unit also continues to support a variety of digital scanning options for files where original document retention is not strictly mandated by law.

Administration staff provided the ECPO managers with planning and financial execution for the staffing and assignment changes that were necessitated by the New Jersey Criminal Justice Reform Initiative, which went into effect on January 1, 2017. This Initiative radically restructured the post-arrest process for defendants, largely eliminating bail and setting strict time limits for charge issuance, first appearance and grand jury scheduling. Experienced retired legal staff had been retained to work part-time during the evenings and on weekends so as to help meet the State's mandate for expedited post-arrest processing. Also, existing staff required rescheduling and overtime assignments, which the Administration Unit continually monitors so as to ensure efficiency.

Another key resource that supported the Reform Initiative was the procurement and roll-out of the CSI Infoshare enterprise-level database system, for unified data management of the ECPO's investigation and case prosecutions. The Business Administration Unit actively collaborated with the Information Technology Unit in the procurement and implementation of this new system, arranging for over $500,000 in new computer software procurements, and for their continuing upgrade and maintenance contracts. In 2017 and 2018, the Business Administration Unit also helped to coordinate the procurement and implementation of a new suite of Infoshare applications for the Juvenile, Domestic Violence and Victim Witness Offices.

The Business Administration Unit continued in 2017 and 2018 to work closely with the Prosecutor and other high-level ECPO managers in responding to the continuing fiscal challenges presented by reduced County revenues and a State-mandated 2% budget increase cap. Through careful planning and monitoring of expenditures, staff turnover positions were filled when necessary and critical to the continued functioning of the justice system in Essex County.

Business Administration Unit personnel continues to provide support in maintaining and updating the Office's web site, www.njecpo.org. The Unit also continues to assist in the maintenance of the web site's WordPress content management platform and is participating in discussions regarding future improvements to our site. In 2017 and 2018, the Unit also continued to provide the ECPO management with detailed statistical data look-up on-demand, along with monthly reports of key indicators that measure overall production volume and outcome performance.
Community Justice Unit

The Community Justice Unit promotes awareness of the role and function of the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office. By attending community meetings to address issues related to crime, substance abuse and crime prevention, the Unit serves as a liaison between law enforcement and the residents of Essex County. The Unit is dedicated to creating and executing programs that offer children and teens positive alternatives and interventional strategies aimed at preventing delinquency.

2018 Accomplishments

In 2018, the Community Justice Unit provided workshops to over 5,000 Essex County residents in 2018. The workshops topics included: bullying, careers in the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office, the criminal justice system, expungements, gang awareness, internet safety and a general overview of the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office.

For 17 consecutive years, the ECPO held a 5-week summer internship program to expose high school students to careers in law, law enforcement and government. Thirty high school juniors from Essex County participated in this unique program where they toured local and federal law enforcement agencies, participated in a mock trial, learned about local and state government, attended Trooper Youth Week with the New Jersey State Police and participated in cultural trips.
In August 2018, the Community Justice Unit help organize a community meeting to address the opioid crisis at the Glen Ridge Congregational Church, located at 195 Ridgewood Avenue in Glen Ridge. Representatives from the County of Essex, RWJ Barnabas Health, the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention Team of Essex, the Governor’s Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse, and Integrity House participated in the meeting.

In October 2018 the Community Justice Unit partnered with ADAPT (Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention Team of Essex County) and Essex County’s Department of Health Services to provide a half day information session on substance abuse resources to members of the clergy. The half-day session was held at Life Christian Church in West Orange. Over 100 clergy and community members attended the event.

In December 2018 the Community Justice Unit held a youth conference entitled: “What’s it All About?” World Against Violence (W.A.V.) Over 600 middle school students from Essex County attended the full day event at Caldwell University. Students participated in workshops on making positive choices, substance abuse prevention, teen dating, and Cyber-Safety. Over thirty representatives from various social service and youth agencies provided students with information on educational and recreational resources. This event was co-sponsored by Essex County’s Department of Community Health and ADAPT (Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention Team of Essex County).
**Information Technology Unit**

The Information Technology Unit's role is to advance the mission, vision and goals of the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office (ECPO) by providing technical solutions for law enforcement and trial court needs. The ITU is responsible for overseeing the design and implementation of all the technological needs of the office.

Starting in 2017, the Information Technology Unit has been responsible for training and implementing a new Criminal Case Management system, new Office Productivity Software, expanding the use of a Mobile Workforce and providing support 24/7 to in-house personnel and police departments in the county.

This was in part the result of what occurred in November of 2014 when New Jersey voters approved the Bail Reform/Speedy Trial Act, a ballot question, amending the state constitution to allow judges to release low-risk offenders without bail and deny bail to high-risk offenders. Previously, the state constitution guaranteed bail to all offenders, except those charged with capital crimes. Throughout 2015, the ITU had been working to prepare for the changes that took effect on January 1, 2017. Under the new law, a hearing must be held within 48 hours of arrest, including weekends, to determine whether a defendant is deemed high risk or not.

This change has provided an opportunity for all agencies to review and improve casework flow processing, policies and the use of technology to ensure the agency is prepared to meet the new standards.

The ITU consist of four sections: Network Administration/Helpdesk, Office Automation/Training, Software Engineering and Media Services/Litigation Support.

**Network Administration/Help Desk** – This section’s main objective is to focus on strategic areas that sustain critical infrastructure through day-to-day operations, modifications, augmentations, replacement and routine maintenance of desktop computer, communication equipment, server equipment, proper infrastructure security, software and database software. The section also provides end user hardware, software, computer support, as well as dependable remote, mobile services with appropriate security mechanisms.

**Office Automation/Training** – Advances in the training and support of individual computer users are met through “ECPO University,” a training program designed to support ECPO staff. Courses are offered to enhance the staff’s knowledge base, and mandatory courses, such as “Introduction to ECPO Technology” and “Introduction to Promis/Gavel” are included in the “New Hire” course.

**Software Engineering** – In the effort to meet the increasing need for statistical and technical data, the ongoing development of office-wide databases and maintenance of existing databases has allowed Assistant Prosecutors and detectives to track their cases, log evidence and print detailed reports.
SUPPORT UNITS

Media Services/Litigation Support – Media services are provided to all units of the ECPO to assist Assistant Prosecutors and detectives in preparing, organizing and presenting information at all stages of litigation. Media is conveyed through the creation of large-scale graphic displays, including maps, charts, graphs, timelines and automated presentations utilizing various video and computer equipment. Additionally, mass production of media discovery materials is generated from the ITU, among other services.

2018 Accomplishments

In 2018, the IT Unit continued working to provide 24/7 service to the lawyers and support staff who work in the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office. The Unit updated the network of office desktop computers with Windows 10 operating systems and Office 365 productivity applications; supported the installation of additional Infoshare data modules in the Victim Witness Office and Juvenile Trial Unit and expanded the use of portable mini-laptop computers especially in our CJP initial case screening unit.
Media Relations Office

The Office of Media Relations in the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office manages external communications for the largest and busiest Prosecutor’s Office in the State of New Jersey in the largest media market in the country.

The responsibilities of the Media Relations Unit include:

- Serving as lead spokesperson for the Essex County Prosecutor and office staff.
- Maintaining daily contact with print and broadcast media regarding homicides, arrests, trials, indictments, convictions and other newsworthy developments.
- Remaining on-call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for breaking news stories.
- Planning and managing press conferences.
- Developing and implementing a strategic communications plan with the Prosecutor.
- Assisting local police departments with media relations.
- Working cooperatively with law enforcement partners at the municipal, state and federal levels.
- Working closely with the Open Public Records custodian for the ECPO.
- Providing current information to public officials and government agencies on relevant investigatory and prosecutorial activities.
- Educating Assistant Prosecutors and other staff regarding dealing with the press.
- Overseeing the production of the ECPO Annual Report.
- Assisting with community outreach efforts.
2018 Accomplishments

In 2018, the Media Relations Office continued to deal with the digital age of news in which reporters are looking for timely and accurate information at a rapid pace and are eager to update significant breaking news stories around the clock.

While understanding that news never sleeps, the Media Relations Office works to strike a balance between three competing interests: protecting the rights of victims along with the integrity of investigations while recognizing and respecting the public’s right to know. Transparency is critical to maintaining public confidence in the Office. Yet, confidentiality is often crucial to the successful investigation and prosecution of cases. Consequently, the Media Relations Office attempts to keep the public informed regarding the status of cases while also protecting victims and the ongoing investigative process. It is a delicate balance.

Some of the cases that garnered significant press coverage during 2018 included the following:

**State v. Jimmy Mays and Lavelle Davis** -- Jimmy Mays, 35, of Egg Harbor and Lavelle Davis, 38, of Galloway were sentenced to lengthy sentences by the Honorable Richard T. Sules, Judge of the Superior Court, for a triple murder in Maplewood. Mays received a 153-year sentence and Davis was sentenced to 138 years for killing and torturing Lance Frasier, 44, of Newark and murdering Roshana Kelson, 30, of Paterson and Michael Davis, 45, of Maplewood. All three were killed in Michael Davis’ Maplewood home in January of 2017. The defendants, who knew the victims, came to Michael Davis’ home at 38 Van Ness Court looking for drugs and cash. They killed Michael Davis and Kelson, who were sleeping, and tortured Frasier before also killing him. All three were fatally shot. Under the No Early Release Act, they must serve 85 percent of their respective sentences before being eligible for parole.

**State v. Taquan Harris and Nafee Cotman** - On Oct. 11, 2018 Taquan Harris and Nafee Cotman enter guilty pleas in connection with the May 2, 2016 robbery murder of New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) student Joseph Micalizzi, 23, of Freehold. On the day scheduled for opening arguments, Harris admitted to fatally shooting Micalizzi. Cotman admitted to participating in the robbery.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Harris of Newark received 26 years in New Jersey State Prison. Cotman, an Irvington resident, was sentenced to 12 years in prison by the Honorable Ronald D. Wigler, the Presiding Criminal Division Judge. In both cases, the men will have to serve 85 percent of their respective sentences before they are eligible for parole.

Harris and Cotman admitted entering the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity house on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and climbing the steps to the third-floor bedroom with a plan to rob the occupants. Harris shot Micalizzi three times. One of the shots was fatal.
State v. Jeffrey Holland -- Jeffrey Holland, 30, of East Orange was convicted of triple murder for the killing of Tiniquah Rouse, 21, Ashley Jones, 23, and Jarrell Marshall, 28, following a trial before the Honorable Ronald D. Wigler, the presiding Essex County Criminal Division Judge.

In addition to being convicted of the three murders, the jury also found Holland guilty of desecration of human remains, hindering, felony murder, burglary, theft, unlawful possession of a weapon, possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose and multiple counts of endangering the welfare of a child.

On Jan. 29, 2016, Holland went to 29 Stratford Place, Newark, the residence of Rouse, with whom he had a romantic relationship, and strangled and drowned her. Holland subsequently put Rouse’s five-month old baby boy in a closet in the apartment before leaving the apartment. Law enforcement later found Rouse in her apartment bathroom deceased and mutilated. The baby boy was discovered alive without any physical injuries.

The next day, Holland went to 336 Clinton Place, Jones’ apartment. Holland kicked in the apartment door and shot Jones and Marshall. Jones and Holland previously dated but had broken up. Three children were located inside the apartment when the police arrived. The children included two children that Jones and Holland had together as well as a child of Marshall’s. They were not physically harmed.

State v. Arthur Lange -- On June 1, 2018 comedian Artie Lange, 50, was sentenced to probation for possession of heroin by the Honorable Nancy Sivilli, Judge of the Superior Court, after pleading guilty to possession of heroin.

Back in December 2017, Lange pled guilty to possession of 81 decks of heroin. The plea agreement called for a probationary term but was also supposed to include drug treatment. Judge Sivilli placed Lange on probation for four years, ordered him into outpatient drug treatment, mandatory drug screening, imposed fines and required him to perform 50 hours of community service. Lange would later be incarcerated for failing to obey the Judge’s order.

State v. James R. Ray, III -- New York lawyer James Ray, III, 55, was accused of fatally shooting Angela Bledsoe, the 44-year-old mother his daughter, at the home they shared on North Mountain Avenue in Montclair on Oct. 23, 2018. Before he was apprehended, he fled to Cuba.

The Essex County Prosecutor’s Office working with the FBI, the Montclair Police Department, Allentown, PA Police Department, the New Jersey State Police, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Embassy in Havana, and Enforcement and Removal
SUPPORT UNITS

Operations Customs were able to bring Ray back to the United States where he is awaiting trial.

He is charged with murder and weapons offenses. Ray practiced at The Law Firm of Ray and Associates on Fulton Street in Manhattan.
Victim-Witness Advocacy Office

The Essex County Office of Victim-Witness Advocacy was started by the Essex County Prosecutor's Office in 1982 pursuant to New Jersey law, which requires the county Victim-Witness Coordinator to implement and provide services to crime victims. The Office’s primary mandate is to fulfill the provisions of the New Jersey Constitution and New Jersey statutes which require:

- That crime victims be treated with dignity, compassion and respect.
- That victims be informed and consulted in matters such as plea bargaining.
- That victims be given the right to be heard at all stages of the criminal justice process.

The Essex County Office of Victim-Witness Advocacy helps victims and witnesses deal with immediate life needs, especially those who live within Essex County’s lower-income neighborhoods, who are most at-risk of experiencing violent crime and whose lives are most vulnerable to economic and personal disruption. The Office helps them to find the resources needed to maintain basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health care, employment, transportation, daycare for pre-school children, etc. It also assists victims and witnesses in dealing with the psychological trauma of crime (which cuts across all economic and social strata) and helps them obtain professional assistance as needed. The Office then helps victims and witnesses to understand and fulfill their rights and responsibilities within the criminal justice system, providing continual communication and coordination regarding case progress and participation in legal proceedings.

As appropriate, the Office accompanies victims to court. Office personnel also assist victims in gaining economic compensation for their losses through insurance, restitution and the Victims of Crime Compensation Board. The Office assures victims and witnesses that it is equally concerned with their overall well-being as with obtaining the conviction of the offender.

The Office of Victim-Witness Advocacy has a qualified staff with significant training and professional counseling experience in emergency assistance, crisis management and interpersonal violence. The staff includes a Victim-Witness Coordinator, Victim-Witness Counselors, and Clerical Assistants. The Coordinator meets bi-weekly with the Counselors to review and evaluate cases, discuss progress and develop service plans to ensure procedural and programmatic compliance with state and federal regulations. The Office is supported in part by state and federal government grants.

2018 Accomplishments:

In 2018, the Victim-Witness Advocacy Office assisted 14,469 victims and witnesses, initiating approximately 151,000 items of correspondence on their behalf.
SUPPORT UNITS

Office staff continued its 80-hour intimate partner violence training program in 2018. The program, entitled “Sanctuary,” is designed to provide residents who fall victim to domestic violence-related assault, sexual assault, and child abuse with supportive, culturally sensitive, crisis intervention services. Survivors of domestic violence-related homicide victims are also assisted through this program. Sanctuary volunteers meet three times a week over a seven-month period. Interactive exercises, which included role plays, case studies, scenarios, simulations, individual and group activities, video presentations, field trips, and court-watch activities, afford program participants the opportunity to develop and practice the skills covered during the training sessions.

Since its inception in 2010, Sanctuary has graduated over 350 volunteers who are now equipped to provide immediate outreach, advocacy, and support services to those intimate partner victims and their children within a 48- to 72-hour period.

The Unit continued to expand its formal relocation program in 2018, through which approximately 170 program clients and their families were assisted. This program provides security and protection to victims and witnesses who have been threatened, intimidated or harassed because they have provided information to law enforcement regarding organized crime, gang-related, and domestic violence cases. Trained advocates provide survivors of crime with referrals to social service agencies that offer emergency shelter placement, transitional and permanent housing, food and clothing. The advocates also work closely with local housing authorities, welfare agencies, Social Security offices and school districts to ensure that the victim/witness is fully and successfully integrated into the new living environment.

Unit staff continued to enhance the Victim-Witness Advocacy Unit’s portal on the Office’s general website during the calendar year. The Victim-Witness portal is colorful, interactive, user-friendly, visually-appealing, and easily understood by those who access the pages. The website content includes: information on the amendments to the Crime Victims’ Bill of Rights, notification process, the crisis reaction, the criminal justice process, information on how to obtain a temporary/final restraining domestic violence order, tips for witness testimony and V.I.N.E. (Victim Information Notification Everyday).

In the revised structure and format of the website section, the information is arranged alphabetically by victim’s crime type. Unit staff also developed a digital application that delivers information about local support services available to Essex County crime victims via a desktop, smart phone, and/or tablet. Crime victims will be able to enter the service needed and a zip code and receive agency information in their area. The app is equipped with agency locations, hours of operation, services provided and fees (if applicable), maps of walking and driving routes, parking areas near the agency where the crime victim is seeking services, and links to New Jersey Transit bus and train schedules for public transportation information. The app is scheduled to launch in February 2019.

Further, the Victim Witness Unit conducted 29 community outreach forums throughout 2018. Approximately 200 community residents, including high school and college
students, received information on the services provided through the Victim-Witness Advocacy Office.

Finally, Unit staff also organized the Office’s annual “Christmas Holiday Toy Drive” to assist needy families, many of which were assisted by the Victim-Witness Advocacy Unit, in December 2018. Approximately 650 toys, board and video games, dolls, electronics, balls, and clothing items were collected and distributed to fourteen social services agencies who, in turn, distributed toys to those in need residing in Essex County.