

# BRAVE JUSTICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>02</b>	<b>MESSAGE FROM MELINDA KATZ QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY</b>
<b>04</b>	<b>BRAVE JUSTICE ANNUAL REPORT 2023 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>SECTION I PAVE THE WAY: DRIVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY</b>
<b>34</b>	<b>SECTION II SAFER STREETS: ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY</b>
<b>62</b>	<b>SECTION III TWO-WAY STREET: RESTORING FAIRNESS AND CONFIDENCE</b>
<b>72</b>	<b>SECTION IV ON THE BLOCK: BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS</b>
<b>94</b>	<b>SECTION V LEAD WITH A STEADY HAND: STEERING POLICY INTO PRACTICE</b>
<b>104</b>	<b>SECTION VI IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND HELPLINES</b>



## A MESSAGE FROM DISTRICT ATTORNEY

# MELINDA KATZ

My top priority is to create safety in our streets and equity in our courtrooms. I first took office four years ago, at a time when longstanding concerns about fairness undermined confidence in our criminal justice system. We faced an unprecedented series of challenges, from the overhaul of our bail and discovery laws, a global pandemic, civil unrest, and increased crime that seemed to unravel the social fabric of our city, state, and nation.

My office faced these challenges head on, as we implemented new programs and policies to keep our neighbors safe, defend the rights of all our residents, and give the people of Queens County the District Attorney's office they deserved. The ***Brave Justice Annual Report 2023*** highlights some of the many accomplishments and noteworthy operations of the office as we continue to create safe streets in an equitable borough.

**Pave the Way** – We continued to pave the way toward a more perfect system, one in which we processed a record number of arrests and arraignments, closely evaluated and expedited cases to just resolutions, and reviewed past convictions with a new perspective to ensure justice is served.

**Safer Streets** – Our quality of life is directly impacted by crime in our communities; we should be able to enjoy our neighborhoods without fear. The office focused on the drivers of crime in our streets, holding violent criminals and recidivists accountable. Our focus has produced impressive results: whereas shootings declined 25 percent in the city, in Queens they are down 34 percent; and murders, down 12 percent citywide, have declined by 39 percent in Queens.

**Two-way Street** – Restoring fairness and confidence in our system is a two-way street. A crucial component is to explore alternative dispositions and paths of diversion from jail. We search for appropriate dispositions for young offenders, evaluate potential adverse immigration issues, and support the victims and witnesses of crime.

**On the Block** – One measure of success is the trust the community has in this office, and in 2023 we continued to earn that trust from those whose lives depend on us doing our jobs well. Through a community-based approach to prosecution, we are out in Queens neighborhoods, connecting with individuals and partnering on the issues affecting our daily lives.

**Lead with a Steady Hand** – I chose a highly effective leadership team that shares my commitment to lead this borough through the changes needed. Assistant District Attorneys are held to the highest ethical standards, are regularly trained, and are leaders in their fields. I am proud of all their accomplishments.

As we look forward to the new year and a new term, we will continue to rise to meet challenges head on. I am truly honored to serve as Queens County District Attorney. Together, we can achieve ***Brave Justice***.

In friendship,



## INTRODUCTION

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The **Brave Justice Annual Report** details the operations and accomplishments of the Queens County District Attorney's Office (QDA) during 2023, the fourth year of District Attorney Katz's first term as the chief law enforcement officer for the county of Queens. Under her leadership, QDA advanced the District Attorney's mission of providing Queens communities with *Brave Justice*, by improving both safety in the streets as well as fairness in our criminal justice system.

## SECTION I

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PAGE 14

### PAVE THE WAY: DRIVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

In 2023, the effects of the pandemic lessened and QDA's workload and accomplishments increased. Under DA Katz's leadership, the office:

- Processed a record number of arrests;
- Conducted more arraignments;
- Presented more cases to the Grand Jury for consideration;
- Conducted an increased number of court appearances; and
- Conducted almost 7 times the number of trials in 2023 than in 2020.

Assistant District Attorneys are assigned to riding programs and are available 24/7 to assist our law enforcement partners with investigative needs, to serve our communities, and to respond to thousands of notifications. This year, these requests included:

- 153 homicide crime scene visits;
- 125 responses to sexual assault, elder assault, child abuse; and
- 810 search warrants and cell site warrants prepared (85 prepared on homicide-related cases.)

The office makes itself accessible in a variety of ways. While the office has a 24-hour hotline, DA Katz established several helplines to keep an open line of communication between the office and victims or witnesses, including:

- Hate Crimes Helpline to report bias-motivated crimes;
- A 24/7 Domestic Violence Helpline to assist in connecting individuals to safety planning measures;
- Elder Fraud Helpline to report the financial exploitation of seniors;
- Immigration Helpline to assist immigrants in navigating the criminal justice system;
- Animal Cruelty Helpline to report concerns regarding animal welfare;
- Housing and Worker Protection Helpline to report workplace safety, wage theft, predatory lending and crimes involving real estate including deed theft.

On day one of her administration, District Attorney Katz created the Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU), the first of its kind in Queens.

During the DA's first four years in office, the CIU has accomplished the following:

- 244 cases have been submitted to CIU for review;
- 16 convictions have been vacated based on evidence pointing to innocence or other fundamental errors;
- 18 active investigations are pending;
- 64 submissions have been reviewed and closed; and
- 86 cases were dismissed based on the unreliability of NYPD detectives who were later convicted of various crimes including perjury.

Queens experienced a slight increase in major crimes in 2023, driven by an increase in automobile larcenies, felony assaults, and robberies. Hate crimes also increased 40% in Queens, including a significant spike in anti-Jewish hate crimes.

However, there were notable decreases in the following crimes, with Queens often leading the city in the greatest number of declines. According to December 31, 2023 NYPD statistics, the year-to-date comparisons of index crimes from 2022 indicate:

- Shooting incidents are down 25% overall in the city while Queens shootings are down 34%;
- Murders are down 12% in the city and are down 39% in Queens;
- In Queens, burglaries have decreased by 6%; rapes have decreased by 5%.

Under DA Katz's leadership, we are sharing discovery files in record numbers:

- We have reviewed approximately 1.7 million discovery files in 2023;
- We have reviewed over 82,000 body worn camera videos.

New York is the only state in the country that links discovery compliance with speedy trial. This linkage results in the dismissal of thousands of cases across the state, including sex crimes, assaults, driving while intoxicated offenses, thefts, and crimes of domestic violence and continues to negatively impact cases across all New York criminal courts.

- In 2023, as compared to 2022, there was a decrease in dismissals of misdemeanor and non-violent felony cases.
- Dismissals on violent felony cases increased; over 1,500 violent felony cases were dismissed in 2023.
- Overall, dismissals occurred much more frequently than they had before the unprecedented change in the discovery laws.

All arrests are closely evaluated to ensure appropriate and consistent charging decisions are made. In an effort to address racial disparities and systemic injustices, DA Katz declined to prosecute:

- Approximately 13% of all violation arrests;
- 5% of misdemeanor arrests and 6% of felony arrests.

As the arrests have increased, the time from arrest to arraignment has increased slightly in 2023. Nonetheless, QDA continued to have the second lowest complaint sworn time and arrest to arraignment time in the city.

Consistent with District Attorney Katz's belief that a person's financial resources should not determine whether they remain in jail pending trial, the office continued to assess and review every bail qualifying offense as required under the current law.

From the period between January 1 through December 15, 2023:

- 37,183 cases were arraigned,
- of which, approximately 8,344 cases were bail or remand eligible.

The following indicates our requests and the court's orders on these bail or remand eligible cases:

- We requested bail in over 64% of cases, and the court ordered bail in 35% of cases;
- Supervised release was requested in approximately 18% of cases and was ordered by the court in almost 32% of cases;
- We requested ROR in approximately 9% of cases, and the court ordered ROR in 25% of cases;
- We requested remand in 8% of cases, while the court ordered remand in approximately 3% of cases.

While bail laws limit the instances when bail may be set, Assistant District Attorneys asked the court for supervised release more in 2023 than ever before. Additionally, office policy is to seek remand instead of excessive cash bail because remand status is income neutral.

In 2023, we experienced a more than 25% recidivism rate on those defendants who were out in the community on a pending non-bail eligible crime docket in Queens.

District Attorney Katz has implemented many policies designed to change the landscape of pretrial incarceration. On day one, DA Katz focused on reducing the jail population and breaking the cycle of crime by:

- Utilizing alternatives to incarceration;
- Making fair and just plea agreements;
- Providing more opportunities for rehabilitation and redemption from past violations; and
- Declining to prosecute certain low-level violations.

As of December 12, 2023:

- 5,570 people were detained citywide;
- 806 defendants were held on a Queens case;
- Queens detainees accounted for 13.2% of the people detained at Rikers Island, even though the county accounts for 27% of New York City's population;
- 95% of the 428 held on pre-trial bail were charged with serious felony crimes;
- 99% of the 378 held on remand were held on a serious felony crime including homicide, assault, or a firearm possession charge.

## SECTION II

PAGE 34

### SAFER STREETS: ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY

District Attorney Katz's top priority is keeping the streets of Queens safe. This includes working to uphold New York's gun licensing and New York's Extreme Risk Protection Order statutes. DA Katz joined fellow district attorneys in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan and New York State Attorney General Letitia James in amicus briefs supporting the laws.

In 2023, the office continued to prioritize getting illegal guns out of our neighborhoods, parks and streets and made notable strides to stem the tide of gun violence. While shootings have decreased 25% across the city, in Queens, shootings have decreased 34%. Additionally, murders have decreased about 12% in the city, but declined 39% in Queens.

Under DA Katz's leadership, the office fights the gun plague on the streets and in the courts. The progress is evident; while shootings declined, cases charging weapons possession increased.

In its third year, the Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau (CSIB) initiated investigations into violent criminal offenses and gun trafficking and assisted prosecutors with analysis of social media intelligence, complex digital evidence, ballistic evidence analysis, expert testimony, and statistical data.

QDA leads New York City in the total number of ghost gun recoveries. Since May 2021, CSIB ghost gun investigations have led to the recovery of hundreds of firearms, firearm components, and lethal firearm accessories:

- 340 Total Firearms;
- 229 Ghost Guns (Handguns, Assault Weapons, Machine Guns);
- 850 High-Capacity Magazines;
- 250 Firearm Lower Receivers;
- 42 Silencers;
- 10 Rapid-Fire Modification Devices;
- Six 3D Printers; and
- Approximately 112,000 Rounds of Ammunition.

The Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau has contributed to the declining murder rate and decrease in shootings in Queens with the takedown of three major long-term gang violence investigations in February and March of 2023 which resulted in the arrest and prosecution of 23 defendants in the Astoria and Woodside housing developments and 33 defendants from various gangs in Southeast Queens. QDA and NYPD also seized more than 100 firearms in a trafficking ring that stretched to Cincinnati, Ohio and is believed to have connections to Ghana, via New York City cargo ports.

Additional bureaus and units highlighted in this report also focus on tackling violent crime in Queens County:

- Career Criminal and Major Crimes Bureau – prosecutes recidivist violent felons who are subject to enhanced sentencing based on their extensive criminal histories.
- Supreme Court Trial Division – responsible for the prosecution of much of the county’s felony dockets, including many of the shootings and illegal gun possession cases, from inception to disposition. In 2023, Queens continued to lead the city in the number of gun suppression hearings held, the number of pre-indictment dispositions, pleas, and trials on cases involving guns.
- Forensics – supports the forensics investigation and litigation related to nearly all criminal prosecutions of the office. In 2023, they facilitated the testing of approximately 475 firearms for DNA analysis and many of those firearms for microscopic ballistic analysis related to criminal possession of a weapon and shooting cases.

Other bureaus and units highlighted in this report:

- Public Corruption Bureau – investigates and prosecutes crimes committed by public servants and other public officials and investigates allegations against civilians who attempt to subvert the integrity of public servants by offering bribes.
- Domestic Violence Bureau – seeks to end domestic violence and eliminate the stigma attached to being a domestic violence survivor.
- Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit – investigates and prosecutes all crimes against animals, including the gross neglect and abandonment of pets, the intentional abuse, injuring, torturing, and killing of wild and companion animals, and organized dogfighting and gamecock fighting.
- Special Victims Bureau – investigates and prosecutes felonies involving sex crimes against adults and children, physical abuse of children, and violence against the elderly. In 2023, the bureau handled approximately 70 sex offender registration hearings on convicted sex offenders and 320 child sexual assault forensic interviews.
- Major Economic Crimes Bureau – focuses on large-scale financial crimes, including drug trafficking, insurance fraud, illegal gambling, money laundering, and extortion and loan sharking operations.
- Cyber Crime Unit – investigates and prosecutes technology-facilitated crimes against adults and children, including cases involving cryptocurrency and non-fungible tokens (NFTs), account hacking, identity theft, inappropriate digital content, and online predatory behavior toward minors.

The Homicide Bureau is responsible for investigating and prosecuting all homicide cases in Queens County. As of December 31, 2023, homicides in Queens County were at the lowest rate since 2018. The bureau also consists of two units:

- Vehicular Homicide Unit – oversees the investigation of all deaths, whether pedestrian, cyclist, or motorist, that result from contact with a motor vehicle. Total deaths caused by vehicular collision increased by 27%, from 70 deaths in 2022 to 89 deaths in 2023.
- Cold Case Unit – investigates Queens County’s oldest and most challenging unsolved homicide cases. In 2023, the unit indicted a defendant for the 1992 death of a 15-year-old victim.

## SECTION III

PAGE 62

### TWO-WAY STREET: RESTORING FAIRNESS AND CONFIDENCE

Restoring fairness and confidence is a two-way street. Not only must violent criminals be held accountable, but past convictions must be reviewed to ensure that there was a just outcome. DA Katz created the Conviction Integrity Unit in 2020 to reinvestigate and resolve credible claims of actual innocence or wrongful conviction.

The Juvenile Prosecutions Unit serves as a resource for all Adolescent Offender (“AO”) cases and oversees the prosecution of Juvenile Offender (“JO”) cases in the Supreme Court Youth Part.

Juvenile offenders are 14- to 15-year-olds charged with violent felonies and 13-year-olds charged with murder in the second degree. In 2023, we saw:

- A total of 91 juvenile offender arrests, and of those, 86 were charged and arraigned.
- 50 cases were removed to Family Court and the remaining 36 were prosecuted in the Youth Part.

Under New York’s Raise the Age law, adolescent offenders are 16- and 17-year-old defendants who have been charged with committing a felony. Most non-violent felony cases are removed to Family Court. As of December 15, 2023:

- There were a total of 528 Raise the Age arrests, a 34% increase from 2022.
- 488 cases were sent to arraignments and 89% of those cases were removed to Family Court.

The Appeals Bureau, the FOIL and Civil Litigation Unit, and the Immigration Unit make up the Appeals and Special Litigation Division.

- The Appeals Bureau – handles all the office’s post-conviction litigation, which includes primarily responding to defendants’ briefs in the Appellate Division and post-conviction motions in the Supreme Court.
- FOIL and Civil Litigation Unit – handles requests under the Freedom of Information Law and responds to inter-agency and law enforcement requests for records on specific cases as well as subpoenas for records or testimony in civil litigation. In 2023, the unit responded to over 500 FOIL requests.
- Immigration Unit – operates as an office-wide resource for all immigration issues affecting defendants, victims, and witnesses.

The Rehabilitation Programs and Restorative Services Bureau is a crucial component of DA Katz's strategy to increase alternative dispositions and paths of diversion from jail. The bureau consists of the Diversion and Alternative Sentencing Unit and the Crime Victims Advocate Program which combine to provide services to crime victims, witnesses, survivors, and defendants charged with criminal offenses. The bureau is responsible for:

- Pre-Arrestment Diversion Programs for misdemeanors – including Project Reset and the Far Rockaway Community Justice Center;
- Specialized Court Parts – including Queens Mental Health Court, DWI Court, and Veterans Court;
- Diversion Programs – cases are referred from throughout the office, including the Felony Trial, Career Criminal and Major Crimes, Domestic Violence, Special Victims, and the Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureaus.
- Crime Victims Advocate Program – their sole focus is supporting victims and witnesses of crime.

## SECTION IV

PAGE 72

### ON THE BLOCK: BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout her first term, DA Katz has focused on a community-based approach to prosecution, which emphasizes the relationship between the office and the residents of Queens County. An individual's first contact with the office should be at a community event where they learn about the resources of the Queens District Attorney's Office, not in the courtroom or in the aftermath of a tragedy.

The Community Partnerships Division, made up of the Community Engagement Unit, Civic Awareness Unit, and the Youth Empowerment Unit, seeks to fill that role and works with civic and non-profit organizations, develops programs, sponsors, and co-sponsors events, and engages with every neighborhood throughout Queens County. In 2023, the division has been more active than ever as they:

- Participated in 770 public events;
- Hosted quarterly meetings for ten Community Advisory Councils, to keep the office abreast of on-the-ground neighborhood issues and concerns;
- Reached approximately 11,000 young people through programs led by the Youth Empowerment Unit.

DA Katz strongly believes that we cannot prosecute our way out of crime. Many bureaus in the office participate in community events to spread awareness of the ways to prevent crime and encourage reporting. Those bureaus include:

- Hate Crimes Bureau: Queens is known as the "World's Borough," and world events have an impact on daily life in the borough. In response to a spike in hate crimes, DA Katz held safety briefings with members of the Jewish Community Advisory Council and special guest U.S. Attorney Breon Peace. The District Attorney also met for the first time in-person with the South Asian/Indo-Caribbean Advisory Council.

- **Human Trafficking Bureau:** Human trafficking is a crime committed in plain sight and the bureau provides extensive community outreach, education and information aimed toward preventing and identifying trafficking in our communities.
- **Frauds Bureau:** The bureau works to educate seniors and the entire Queens community by hosting presentations on the details of scams and frauds being perpetrated in order to prevent any possible victimization.
- **Auto Crime Unit:** Car thefts have increased across New York State, particularly in Queens County. The Auto Crime Unit works with law enforcement partners to deter and crack down on car thefts and seeks to educate the public on steps to safeguard their vehicles.
- **Housing and Worker Protection Bureau:** Deed theft and wage theft are significant concerns throughout the borough, and the Housing and Worker Protection Bureau seeks to educate residents on recent housing and labor scams and how to avoid becoming a victim.

Illegal cannabis shops have proliferated this year. The rise of unregulated and untested cannabis flower and gummies packaged to look like brand-name candy are cause for concern. Since November 2022, the Queens District Attorney's office has engaged in joint enforcement operations that have resulted in:

- The prosecution of 134 individuals for felony-level charges related to the sale and/or possession of cannabis or controlled substances; and
- The initiation of dozens of eviction proceedings to permanently remove the illegal proprietors from their retail locations.

In 2023, concerns increased regarding safety on our public transit systems. We must have confidence in utilizing transit, the lifeblood of our economy, and DA Katz has advocated for elevating a misdemeanor assault against a rider to a Class D violent felony whenever the attack occurs within the public transit system.

To address the rise in shoplifting and harassment in our local stores, the Queens Merchants Business Improvement Program was instituted in partnership with the NYPD and community stakeholders. It is designed to combat the problem of repeat shoplifting and the threats directed at customers and store staff. The program expanded borough wide:

- 290 stores are registered with the program;
- 228 individuals have been served trespass notices; and
- 17 individuals have been arrested for returning to the locations from which they were banned.

Drug overdoses continued to plague our communities in 2023. Of the 309 fatal overdoses in Queens County, approximately 74% of those deaths involved fentanyl or fentanyl derivatives. Virtually every neighborhood in the borough has been affected by an overdose.

# SECTION V

PAGE 94

## LEAD WITH A STEADY HAND: STEERING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

A top-tier team assists DA Katz with running the office day-to-day. This team includes Chief Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Naiburg and Chief of Staff Wendy Erdly, who was appointed to the position in April 2023.

In 2023, the District Attorney created the Special Prosecutions Division, headed by Executive Assistant District Attorney Joyce Smith. This newly created division is comprised of the Domestic Violence Bureau, Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit, Special Victims Bureau, and the Juvenile Prosecutions Unit.

QDA staff is held to the highest ethical and moral standards placed upon prosecutors. The Litigation Training Department works to ensure all Assistant District Attorneys and support staff are exceeding those standards, including the 34 new prosecutors DA Katz welcomed to the office in 2023. The department is responsible for tiered career training and continuing legal education that includes:

- Monthly and weekly office-wide trainings that address issues specific to individual divisions and bureaus;
- Orientation Training;
- Felony Assistant and Grand Jury Training; and
- Interactive Trial Advocacy Training.

QDA staff have brought their expertise throughout the state, country, and the world in 2023. From classrooms in Queens County, to domestic violence conferences in Louisiana, to forensic science trainings in Tokyo, Japan, the staff of the Queens District Attorney's Office are sought-after experts on a variety of topics.

The *Brave Justice Summer Internship Program*, in its fourth year, had law and undergraduate students from 25 different law schools and 8 different colleges participate. The 8th Annual Mock Trial Competition took place entirely in-person for the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak. A total of 64 second-year law students representing 16 law schools from across the country competed in the competition and were evaluated by seasoned prosecutors and defense attorneys.



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# SECTION I

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## PAVE THE WAY: DRIVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

<b>COURT ACTIVITY</b> .....	<b>16</b>
PRE-INDICTMENT NEGOTIATIONS AND DISPOSITIONS . . .	16
GRAND JURY PRESENTMENTS . . . . .	18
RIDING STATS AND HELPLINES . . . . .	18
<b>CONVICTION INTEGRITY UNIT</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>TRACKING CRIME</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>DISCOVERY</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>CASELOADS, DISPOSITIONS AND DISMISSALS</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>ARRESTS AND ARRAIGNMENTS</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>BAIL</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>BAIL AND GUN VIOLENCE</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>RECIDIVISM</b> .....	<b>29</b>
RECIDIVISM ON WEAPONS CASES . . . . .	31
<b>JAIL POPULATION</b> .....	<b>32</b>

# COURT ACTIVITY

As Queens County’s chief law enforcement official, DA Katz continually demonstrates her deep commitment to tackling crime and violence while ensuring justice and fairness in the process. Her staff remains committed and resilient in response to a growing workload.

Under DA Katz’s leadership in the last year of her first term, the office **processed record numbers of arrests, conducted more arraignments, and managed increased activity in most areas, including grand jury indictments, court appearances, and trials conducted.**

(AS OF 12/15/23)

109

TRIALS CONDUCTED

1,856

GRAND JURY  
INDICTMENTS

44,739

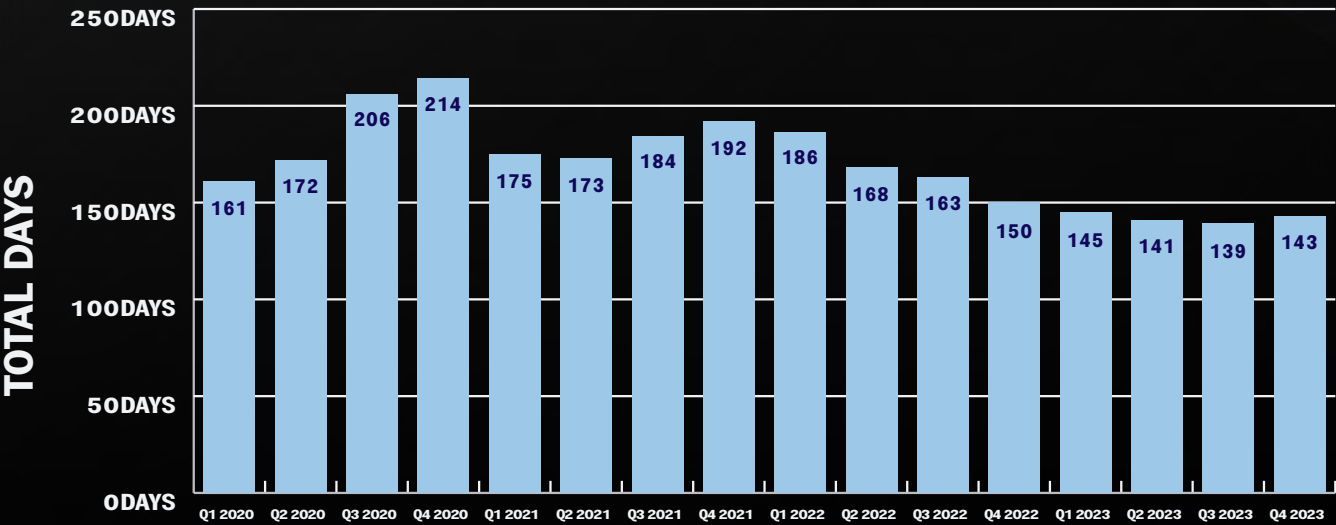
ARRESTS  
PROCESSED

# PRE-INDICTMENT NEGOTIATIONS AND DISPOSITIONS

In 2023, the office improved with shorter time frames from case inception to disposition than in the preceding three years.

## AVERAGE CASE AGE 2020 - 2023

(AS OF 12/15/23)



## COURT ACTIVITY 2020 - 2023

(AS OF 12/15/23)

2020 - 2023 COURT ACTIVITY	FULL CALENDAR YEAR			AS OF 12/15/23
	2020	2021	2022	2023
ARRESTS PROCESSED	28,925	31,859	37,786	44,739
CRIMINAL COURT ARRAIGNMENTS CONDUCTED	21,718	27,869	32,384	37,183
GRAND JURY INDICTMENTS	855	1,413	1,592	1,856
HOMICIDE RELATED INDICTMENTS	40	51	44	45
SUPERIOR COURT INFORMATIONS	374	392	380	342
DISCOVERY FILES REVIEWED	1,043,233	1,801,446	1,681,065	1,730,454
INDIVIDUALS OFFERED SERVICES FROM THE CRIME VICTIMS ADVOCATE PROGRAM	4,073	3,564	2,594	2,931
COURT APPEARANCES				
CRIMINAL COURT	75,448	121,212	142,563	165,604
SUPREME COURT	24,092	25,592	34,931	35,034
TRIALS CONDUCTED	17	22	88	109
DISPOSITIONS	18,119	33,871	31,970	35,502

NOTE: THE CATEGORIES ABOVE ARE ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENT TIME PERIODS. FOR INSTANCE, THE ARREST YEAR, INDICTMENT YEAR, AND DISPOSITION YEAR ARE BASED ON THE DATES OF ARREST, INDICTMENT, OR DISPOSITION. SO, ONE SHOULD NOT INFER, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT 44,739 ARRESTS PROCESSED IN 2023 REPRESENT THE VERY SAME CASES THAT HAD INDICTMENTS OR DISPOSITIONS.

GRAND JURY PRESENTMENTS

Under DA Katz’s leadership, Assistant District Attorneys presented more felony cases for grand jury consideration than in each of the preceding three years.

INDICTMENTS	FULL CALENDAR YEAR			AS OF 12/15/23
	2020	2021	2022	2023
CASES	732	1,018	1,376	1,555
DEFENDANTS	848	1,403	1,595	1,856

RIDING STATS AND HELPLINES

DA Katz is committed to keeping our neighborhoods safe and ensuring that staff responds swiftly to assist law enforcement with investigative needs and to connect with victims and witnesses as early as possible.

153

HOMICIDE  
CRIME SCENE  
VISITS

125

RESPONSES RELATED  
TO SEXUAL ASSAULT,  
ELDER ASSAULT,  
AND CHILD ABUSE

810

SEARCH WARRANTS  
AND CELL SITE  
WARRANTS PREPARED

OF WHICH

85

WERE FOR  
HOMICIDE  
RELATED CASES

(DATA AS OF 12/15/23)

In addition to our 24 hour Hotline, DA Katz has established a number of **helplines**, including:

- Hate Crimes Helpline to report hate and bias-motivated crimes;
- Immigration Helpline to assist immigrants in navigating the criminal justice system;
- 24/7 Domestic Violence Helpline to assist in connecting individuals to safety planning measures;
- Consumer Fraud Helpline to report on scams, fraud and economic crimes;
- Elder Fraud Helpline to report the financial exploitation of seniors;
- Animal Cruelty Helpline to voice concerns as to the welfare of an animal;
- Housing and Worker Protection Helpline to report workplace safety, wage theft, predatory lending and crimes involving real estate including deed theft.

*Telephone numbers can be found on page 104.*

## CONVICTION INTEGRITY UNIT

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On day one of her administration, District Attorney Katz created the Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU), the first of its kind in Queens. The CIU is vital not only for restoring justice to the innocent but for restoring trust between the criminal justice system and the communities we serve. In addition to traditional fact-finding investigations, the unit utilizes cutting-edge forensic technology to ensure confidence in past convictions. Additional information on the CIU can be found on page 64.

244

TOTAL CASES SUBMITTED TO THE  
CIU FOR REVIEW

16

CONVICTIONS WERE  
VACATED BASED ON EVIDENCE OF  
INNOCENCE OR FUNDAMENTAL  
ERRORS

18

ACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS ARE  
CURRENTLY PENDING

64

SUBMISSIONS HAVE BEEN REVIEWED  
AND CLOSED

86

CASES WERE DISMISSED BASED  
ON THE UNRELIABILITY OF NYPD  
DETECTIVES WHO WERE LATER  
CONVICTED OF VARIOUS CRIMES  
INCLUDING PERJURY

# TRACKING CRIME

Queens experienced a slight increase in certain crimes in 2023, driven by an increase in automobile larcenies, felony assaults, and robberies. Additionally, hate crimes increased in Queens and there were more crimes committed within our transit system.

Compared to 2022, however, there were very notable decreases in the following crimes, with Queens often leading the city in the greatest number of declines:

- Shooting incidents are down 25% overall in the city while Queens shootings are down 34%;
- Murders are down 12% in the city and are down 39% in Queens;
- In Queens, burglaries have decreased by 6%; rapes have decreased by 5%.

As per NYPD data (12/31/23)

## BOROUGH BREAKDOWN OF ARRESTS, POPULATION AND FUNDS PER RESIDENT

ALTHOUGH THE DISPARITY IN FUNDING IS DECREASING, QUEENS CONTINUES TO RECEIVE THE LEAST AMOUNT OF CITY FUNDING PER RESIDENT AND PER ARREST.

COUNTY	QUEENS COUNTY	KINGS COUNTY	NEW YORK COUNTY	BRONX COUNTY	RICHMOND COUNTY
2022 ARRESTS*	41,253	53,953	48,982	45,655	8,745
POPULATION**	2,278,029	2,590,516	1,596,273	1,379,946	491,133
PS CITY FUNDS PER RESIDENT***	\$35	\$41	\$88	\$72	\$39
PS CITY FUNDS PER ARREST***	\$1,942	\$1,953	\$2,879	\$2,169	\$2,186
*AS PER NYPD CRIMINAL JUSTICE BUREAU ARREST DATA AS OF DECEMBER 2022					
**AS PER US CENSUS BUREAU QUICKFACTS (POPULATION ESTIMATES, JULY 2022)					
*** FY25 NOVEMBER BUDGET					

# DISCOVERY

Early disclosure of evidence is an essential part of a fair system. However, the present framework is resulting in unintended consequences of delays and dismissals that often prevent the administration of fair and timely justice in our criminal justice system. As the numbers below indicate, we continue to share discovery files in record numbers, while prioritizing felony cases and cases where defendants are incarcerated.

## 82,403

BODY WORN CAMERA VIDEOS REVIEWED

## 1,730,454

DISCOVERY FILES REVIEWED

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE		FULL CALENDAR YEAR						AS OF 12/15/23	
		2020		2021		2022		2023	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
VIOLENT FELONY									
INDICTED	COC FILED	692	73.36%	816	76.69%	941	72.50%	589	56.20%
	COC NOT FILED	250	26.54%	248	23.31%	357	27.50%	459	43.80%
NON-VIOLENT FELONY									
INDICTED	COC FILED	168	43.19%	219	51.65%	328	54.49%	245	47.39%
	COC NOT FILED	221	56.81%	205	48.35%	274	45.51%	272	52.61%
MISDEMEANOR									
	COC FILED	1,047	6.79%	2,802	13.35%	4,190	17.42%	3,632	13.47%
	COC NOT FILED	14,362	93.21%	18,183	86.65%	19,858	82.58%	23,334	86.53%

## CASELOADS, DISPOSITIONS AND DISMISSALS

---

Early in 2020 and at the start of the pandemic, the office experienced a gradual yet steady increase in pending cases. During this difficult time, the speedy trial clock was tolled on this rising number of cases by executive order. Once these orders were lifted in early 2021, the speedy trial clock began running on thousands of cases. As a result, dismissals of cases increased across the state.

The burden of producing all related material within a short period of time, as mandated by the new discovery statutes, is so great that cases are often dismissed as a result. While we work tirelessly to comply with the new discovery laws, there are occasions when certain material is unavailable. Even when such unavailable material is inconsequential to the case, when there is no prejudice suffered, when all other information has been turned over to the defense within applicable time frames, a case may be dismissed. Notably, no other state in the nation requires such extensive disclosure of every related item that New York law now mandates.

As a rule, the speedy trial clock will not stop until we are in compliance with the new rules and a statement of readiness for trial is filed. New York is the only state in the country that links discovery compliance with speedy trial. This linkage results in the dismissal of thousands of cases across the state, including sex crimes, assaults, driving while intoxicated offenses, thefts, and crimes of domestic violence, and continues to negatively impact cases across all New York criminal courts.

In many of these cases, the practical effect of the statutes is that no court ever reviews the merits of the charges. Not only are victims deprived of their day in court — or any measure of justice — but critical orders of protection in both family and non-family matters are dismissed, denying victims the protection that they need. Perhaps more importantly, no one is held accountable.

The absence of any adjudication deprives those defendants in need of services from receiving the help that they need. Our daily experience tells us that defendants, knowing that the prosecution cannot meet the often-unrealistic burdens of the statute, find no incentive to participate in any program or seek any relief from what may be causing them to recidivate.

---

***The pre-trial dismissal percentage rate for misdemeanors more than tripled from 2019 to 2021 and more than doubled for felonies.***

***In 2023, as compared to 2022, there was a decrease in dismissals of misdemeanor and non-violent felony cases, but dismissals on violent felony cases increased; over 1,500 violent felony cases were dismissed in 2023. Overall, dismissals of cases occur much more frequently than they had before the unprecedented change in the discovery laws.***

***When thousands of criminal cases brought in our courts are not heard at all, and no adjudication of the merits takes place, we simply do not have a fully functioning justice system.***

---

## DISPOSITION BREAKDOWN

MISDEMEANOR AND VIOLATION	FULL CALENDAR YEAR								AS OF 12/15/23	
	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
PLEA TO MISDEMEANOR	2,768	8.40%	240	1.86%	348	1.34%	1,243	5.01%	1,807	6.88%
PLEA TO VIOLATION	14,614	44.33%	3,631	28.19%	3,118	11.97%	4,871	19.98%	6,721	25.58%
PLEA TO OTHER	31	0.09%	12	0.09%	25	0.09%	21	0.09%	20	.08%
ACD	7,729	23.45%	3,777	29.32%	3,854	14.79%	5,420	22.23%	7,235	27.52%
DISMISSALS	7,774	23.49%	5,217	40.50%	18,701	71.79%	12,809	52.55%	10,473	39.85%
TRIALS	80	0.24%	4	0.04%	5	0.02%	12	0.05%	23	.09%
TOTAL	32,966	100%	12,881	100%	26,051	100%	24,376	100%	26,279	100%

NON-VIOLENT FELONY	FULL CALENDAR YEAR								AS OF 12/15/23	
	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
PLEA TO NON-VIOLENT FELONY	919	19.37%	183	8.93%	284	7.37%	277	8.11%	361	8.03%
PLEA TO MISDEMEANOR	1,618	34.10%	539	26.29%	821	21.30%	748	21.89%	1,065	23.70%
PLEA TO VIOLATION	1,616	34.06%	882	43.02%	1,442	37.42%	968	28.33%	1,416	31.51%
PLEA TO OTHER	1	0.02%	0	0.00%	1	0.03%	0	0.00%	1	0.02%
ACD	255	5.37%	200	9.76%	564	14.63%	317	9.28%	449	9.99%
DISMISSALS	304	6.41%	245	11.95%	742	19.25%	1,103	32.27%	1,190	26.48%
TRIALS	32	0.67%	1	0.05%	0	0.00%	4	0.12%	12	0.27%
TOTAL	4,745	100%	2,050	100%	3,854	100%	3,417	100%	4,494	100%

VIOLENT FELONY	FULL CALENDAR YEAR								AS OF 12/15/23	
	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
PLEA TO VIOLENT FELONY	895	28.30%	326	20.40%	571	18.18%	600	14.75%	500	11.54%
PLEA TO NON-VIOLENT FELONY	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	395	9.71%	425	9.81%
PLEA TO MISDEMEANOR	637	20.15%	296	18.52%	501	15.96%	644	15.83%	520	12.00%
PLEA TO VIOLATION	891	28.18%	545	34.11%	919	29.27%	721	17.72%	871	20.10%
PLEA TO OTHER	0	0.00%	1	0.06%	2	0.06%	3	0.07%	5	0.12%
ACD	196	6.20%	134	8.39%	340	10.83%	319	7.84%	413	9.52%
DISMISSALS	406	12.84%	284	17.77%	790	25.16%	1,314	32.29%	1,526	35.20%
TRIALS	137	4.33%	12	0.75%	17	0.54%	73	1.79%	74	1.71%
TOTAL	3,162	100%	1,598	100%	3,140	100%	4,069	100%	4,334	100%

## ARRESTS AND ARRAIGNMENTS

As part of DA Katz's commitment to the fair administration of justice, all arrests are closely evaluated to ensure **appropriate and consistent charging decisions** are made.

In the final year of her first term, DA Katz continued to address racial disparities and declined to prosecute approximately 13% of violation arrests, 6% of misdemeanor arrests, and 5% of felony arrests.

The number of arraigned cases is nearing pre-pandemic numbers, with a total of over 37,000 cases arraigned in 2023.

DECLINE TO PROSECUTE	FULL CALENDAR YEAR												AS OF 12/15/23		
	2019			2020			2021			2022			2023		
	TOTAL ARRESTS	DECLINE TO PROSECUTE	%	TOTAL ARRESTS	DECLINE TO PROSECUTE	%	TOTAL ARRESTS	DECLINE TO PROSECUTE	%	TOTAL ARRESTS	DECLINE TO PROSECUTE	%	TOTAL ARRESTS	DECLINE TO PROSECUTE	%
VIOLATIONS	445	36	8%	190	38	20%	161	25	16%	161	22	14%	228	30	13%
MISDEMEANORS	26,507	851	3%	15,376	908	6%	17,422	982	6%	20,226	719	4%	24,558	1,424	6%
FELONY	16,268	843	5%	13,493	935	7%	14,522	834	6%	17,562	787	5%	19,640	960	5%
TOTAL	43,220	1730	4%	29,059	1,881	6%	32,105	1,841	6%	37,949	1,528	4%	44,426	2,414	5%

ARRAIGNMENTS	FULL CALENDAR YEAR								AS OF 12/15/23	
	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
VIOLATIONS	1,145	2.95%	474	2.20%	542	1.90%	709	2.20%	698	1.88%
MISDEMEANORS	30,463	78.39%	15,446	71.10%	20,969	75.20%	24,041	74.30%	26,966	72.52%
NON-VIOLENT FELONY	4,294	11%	2,959	13.60%	3,170	11.40%	3,720	11.50%	5,000	13.45%
VIOLENT FELONY	2,961	7.61%	2,847	13.10%	3,200	11.50%	3,891	12.00%	4,519	12.15%
TOTAL	38,863	100%	21,726	100%	27,881	100%	32,361	100%	37,183	100%

## TOP 5 COMPLAINT CHARGES (AS OF 12/15/23):

- **PL 120.00-1** – ASSAULT 3RD DEGREE
- **PL 155.25** – PETIT LARCENY
- **VTL 511(1)(A)** – OPERATION WHILE LICENSE OR PRIVILEGE IS SUSPENDED OR REVOKED; AGGRAVATED UNLICENSED OPERATION
- **PL 145.00-1** – CRIMINAL MISCHIEF 4TH DEGREE
- **PL 220.03** – CRIMINAL POSSESSION OF A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE 7TH DEGREE

## TOP 5 PRECINCTS FOR TOTAL ARRAIGNED CASES (AS OF 12/15/23):

- 103RD PRECINCT
- 109TH PRECINCT
- 110TH PRECINCT
- 113TH PRECINCT
- 115TH PRECINCT

QDA MAINTAINED THE  
**SECOND LOWEST COMPLAINT SWORN TIME  
 AND ARREST TO ARRAIGNMENT TIME**  
 IN THE CITY.

## 2023 COMPLAINT/ARRAIGNMENT TIME

(AS OF 11/30/23)

	CITYWIDE AVERAGE	QUEENS COUNTY	KINGS COUNTY	NEW YORK COUNTY	BRONX COUNTY	RICHMOND COUNTY
COMPLAINT SWORN TIME	13:28 HOURS	11:52 HOURS	15:08 HOURS	11:57 HOURS	15:30 HOURS	11:27 HOURS
ARREST TO ARRAIGNMENT	23:21 HOURS	22:00 HOURS	23:48 HOURS	24:02 HOURS	25:45 HOURS	16:52 HOURS

## PERCENTAGE OF CASES ARRAIGNED WITHIN 24 HOURS

(AS OF 11/30/23)

	CITYWIDE AVERAGE	QUEENS COUNTY	KINGS COUNTY	NEW YORK COUNTY	BRONX COUNTY	RICHMOND COUNTY
2022	71.24%	75.95%	74.23%	65.38%	59.75%	88.70%
2023	60.97%	67.89%	59.82%	58.43%	46.29%	87.23%

## BAIL

DA Katz took office on January 1, 2020, the same day New York's bail reform took effect. The District Attorney immediately went to work, not only to ensure that bail requests conformed with the new laws, but to ensure that requests were consistent with her belief that a person's financial resources should not determine whether they remain in jail pending trial.

Under the new bail laws, most misdemeanors and non-violent felony charges are no longer bail eligible. Since its initial effective date, the laws were amended three times to reflect growing concern for community safety. Notably, the number of bail eligible offenses was expanded, most recently to include certain gun offenses. Additionally, amid concern regarding repeat offenders arrested while they were released on a pending case, the circumstances in which bail may be set on otherwise non-bail eligible offenses were expanded.

While our new bail laws are certainly a step in the right direction, the experience and insight over the past four years confirm that further amendments are required to ensure both fairness and safety of our communities. District Attorney Katz recognizes that the only way to ensure that all defendants are treated fairly while also ensuring that our neighborhoods remain safe is to take finances out of the securing order equation and allow for the consideration of community safety.

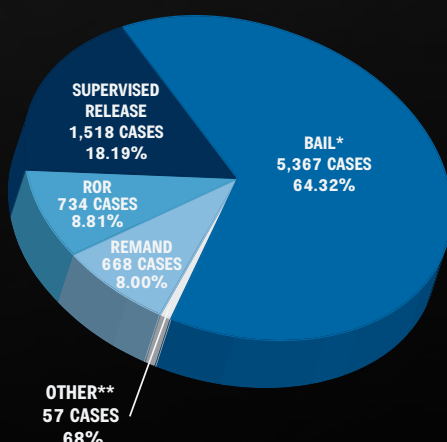
New York, unlike most states in the nation and the federal justice system, does not allow its judges to consider public safety when setting a securing order. Judges should be permitted discretion to detain those small number of individuals who are a threat to the safety of our communities regardless of the crime charged.

Under the District Attorney's guidance, we continue to assess and review every bail qualifying offense as governed by current law. **From the period between January 1 through December 15, 2023, 37,183 cases were arraigned, of which there were approximately 8,344 cases that were bail eligible.** The charts below outline the office's requests and the judicial determinations made on those bail eligible cases.

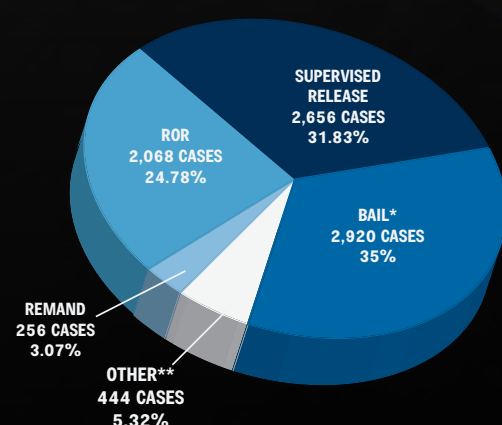
### 2023 BAIL REQUESTS AND ORDERS

(AS OF 12/15/23)

#### BAIL REQUESTS



#### COURT ORDERS



\*BAIL INCLUDES BAIL WITH ELECTRONIC MONITORING REQUESTS.

\*\*OTHER INCLUDES ELECTRONIC MONITORING REQUESTS AND CPL 730 MENTAL HEALTH EXAM REQUESTS.

DA Katz strongly believes a person's financial situation should not determine whether they are held in jail on a pending case. Her vision is a criminal justice system that does not penalize the poor or favor the wealthy. To that end, all defendants are treated fairly and in a non-discriminatory way, while we are ever mindful of protecting the communities we serve.

In 2023, the office continued to increase its use of supervised release over release void of any conditions or supervision.

NON-MONETARY RELEASE	FULL CALENDAR YEAR						AS OF 12/15/23	
	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
SUPERVISED RELEASE	645	12.96%	1,394	25.47%	2,125	29.49%	2,656	31.83%
ROR	1,844	37.06%	2,055	37.55%	2,185	30.33%	2,068	24.78%

DA Katz's policies work to keep violent drivers of crime and repeat offenders off our streets. Because remand is income neutral, Assistant District Attorneys are directed to ask for remand instead of excessive amounts of cash bail.

SECURING ORDERS ON BAIL QUALIFYING OFFENSES	FULL CALENDAR YEAR						AS OF 12/15/23	
	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
REMAND	94	1.89%	190	3.47%	241	3.34%	256	3.07%
BAIL	1,268	25.48%	1,338	24.46%	2,369	32.88%	2,920	35.00%
RELEASE	2,489	50.02%	3,449	63.02%	4,310	59.82%	4,592	56.61%
OTHER	1,125	22.61%	495	9.05%	285	3.96%	501	5.32%
TOTAL	4,976	100%	5,472	100%	7,205	100%	8,269	100%

## BAIL AND GUN VIOLENCE

Committed to fighting gun violence and holding shooters accountable, DA Katz is focused on the drivers of crime in our neighborhoods.

### COMPARING SECURING ORDERS ON CRIMINAL POSSESSION OF A WEAPON CASES DURING DA KATZ'S FIRST TERM

ASK (CPW)	TOTAL		FULL CALENDAR YEAR						AS OF 12/15/23	
			2020		2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
REMAND	451	17.81%	45	8.50%	115	18.08%	148	22.02%	143	20.61%
BAIL	1,886	74.49%	417	78.70%	481	75.64%	483	71.88%	505	72.77%
SUPERVISED RELEASE	108	4.27%	17	3.20%	20	3.14%	33	4.91%	38	5.47%
ROR	87	3.43%	51	9.60%	20	3.14%	8	1.19%	8	1.15%
TOTAL	2,532	100%	530	100%	636	100%	672	100%	694	100%

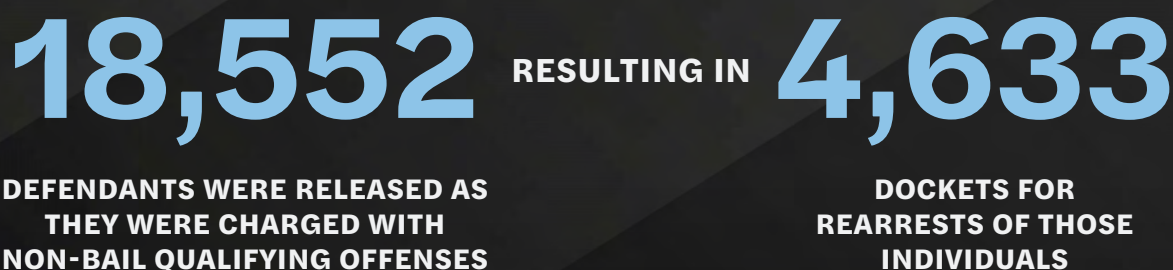
ORDER (CPW)	TOTAL		FULL CALENDAR YEAR								AS OF 12/15/23	
			2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
REMAND	156	5.45%	6	1.70%	14	2.70%	34	5.44%	46	6.99%	56	7.99%
BAIL	1,819	63.56%	234	65.20%	302	58.20%	398	63.68%	432	65.65%	453	64.62%
SUPERVISED RELEASE	363	12.68%	0	0.00%	48	9.20%	94	15.04%	108	16.42%	113	16.12%
ROR	524	18.31%	119	33.10%	155	29.90%	99	15.84%	72	10.94%	79	11.27%
TOTAL	2,862	100%	359	100%	519	100%	625	100%	658	100%	701	100%

# RECIDIVISM

DA Katz recognizes that if an individual is a threat to community safety because there is a strong likelihood that they will commit new crimes while they are released on a pending case, then they should not be on our streets; if they are not, they should not have to sit in jail awaiting trial because they cannot afford the bail amount ordered.

**Community safety must be part of the conversation and judges should be permitted discretion to detain those small number of individuals who are a threat to the community, regardless of the crime charged.** If an individual is remanded, a detention or remand review should occur within a few days of such order to serve as an additional safeguard for fairness.

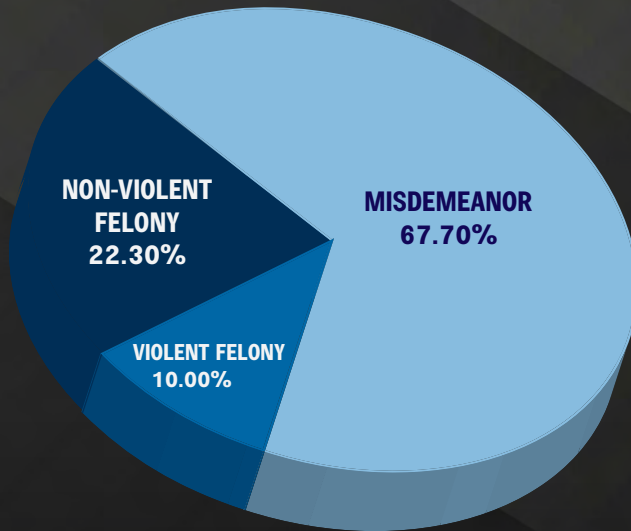
Permitting judges to openly discuss a defendant's risk of reoffending and the safety of our communities will go a long way in preventing further crime as we move forward. **There was an approximate 25% recidivism rate for individuals released on charges where judges were not able to set bail under the new bail laws.** An examination of rearrest data for 2023 reveals the following:



**THIS IS A 25% RECIDIVISM RATE.**

It is noteworthy that the recidivism data furnished in this report was drawn in circumstances where another case was pending; if an individual was convicted on the earlier case that case is no longer considered pending. Thus, even if such conviction occurs shortly before a new arrest, that would not be captured by the data. Also, the time frame to determine if the individual was rearrested was confined to a six-month period; extending the rearrest period beyond six months from an initial case would certainly increase recidivism rates. The recidivism data also does not capture instances where a crime was committed but no arrest was made. Lastly, this recidivism data only includes arrest and rearrest cases occurring in Queens County; if an individual was rearrested in any of the other four boroughs, or elsewhere in the state or country, that information is not captured in this data.

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE 4,633 REARREST DOCKETS REVEALS



VIOLENT FELONY  
**10.00%**  
OF THE TOTAL  
REARREST DOCKETS

NON VIOLENT FELONY  
**22.30%**  
OF THE TOTAL  
REARREST DOCKETS

MISDEMEANOR  
**67.70%**  
OF THE TOTAL  
REARREST DOCKETS

The recidivism data includes the following crimes which are, except under limited circumstances, no longer bail or remand eligible.

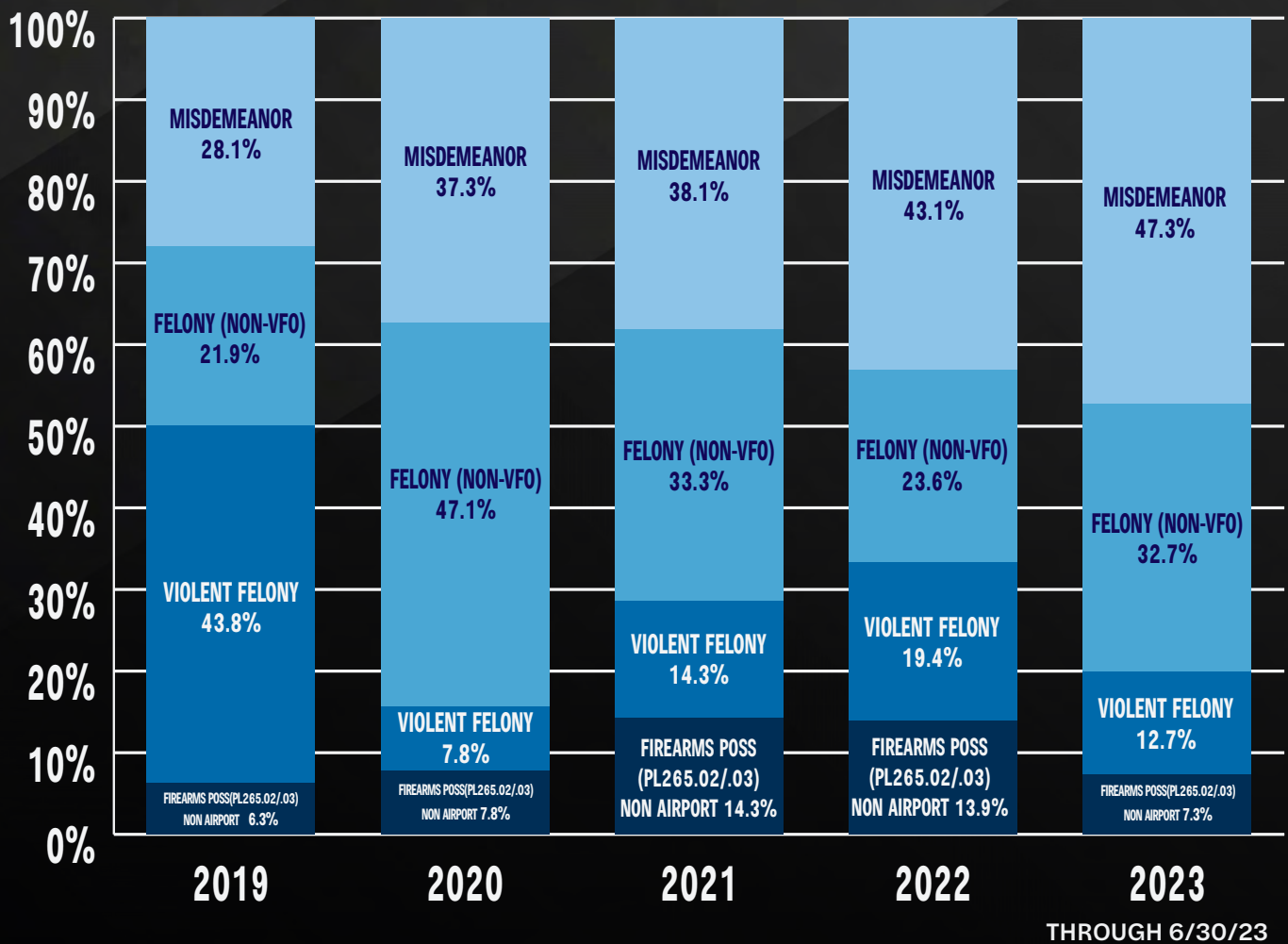
- Robbery 2nd Degree (aided)
- Robbery 3rd Degree
- Burglary 2nd Degree (not dwelling)
- Burglary 3rd Degree
- Assault 3rd Degree
- Stalking
- Menacing
- Criminal Mischief (all degrees)
- Arson 3rd Degree, 4th Degree, 5th Degree
- Grand Larceny 2nd Degree, 3rd Degree, 4th Degree
- Petit Larceny

## RECIDIVISM ON WEAPONS CASES

When a defendant is out on a pending criminal possession of a weapon case, the following chart indicates the classification of the new arrest. Rearrests on felony charges have increased since last year.

### RECIDIVISM BY ARRAIGNMENT YEAR

TOTAL RECIDIVISM RATE WITHIN A SIX-MONTH PERIOD OF  
NON-INCARCERATED DEFENDANTS



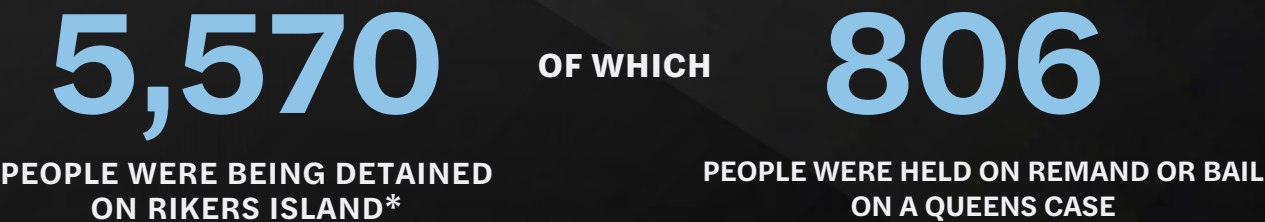
# JAIL POPULATION

District Attorney Katz has implemented many policies designed to change the landscape of pretrial incarceration. On day one, DA Katz focused on reducing the jail population and breaking the cycle of crime by utilizing alternatives to incarceration, making fair and just plea agreements, and providing more opportunities for rehabilitation and redemption from past violations. As part of DA Katz’s mission to address disparities and systemic injustice, she has declined to prosecute certain low-level violations and other offenses, such as marijuana violations and loitering for the purpose of engaging in prostitution, even before the laws were changed in New York.

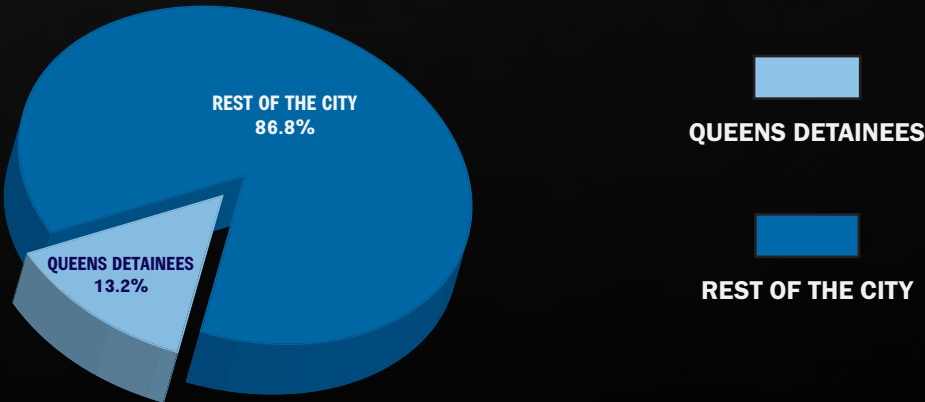
Additionally, until the criminal justice system removes finances from the securing order equation entirely, the office will continue to painstakingly scrutinize every request for bail. Every case is carefully reviewed to determine if remedial action can be taken to effectuate a defendant’s release from Rikers Island without jeopardizing community safety. The office makes every effort to expedite incarcerated individuals’ cases in conjunction with the court and the defense bar.

The substantial majority of those being held pre-trial were arrested for serious violent felony cases and a court has determined that these individuals were at risk of not returning to court. The highest percentage of these individuals were awaiting trial for homicide, forcible sexual acts—including cases with child victims, possession of loaded operable guns, assault causing life threatening or other permanent injury, and fugitives from another state.

AS OF DECEMBER 12, 2023:



THUS, QUEENS DETAINEES ACCOUNTED FOR LESS THAN 13.2% OF THE TOTAL RIKERS ISLAND POPULATION, EVEN THOUGH THE COUNTY ACCOUNTS FOR MORE THAN 27% OF NEW YORK CITY’S POPULATION



*\*Includes incarcerated individuals within Rikers Island and other correctional facilities within NYC.*

## TOTAL IN JAIL FOR QUEENS RELATED MATTERS

As of December 12, 2023, 806 defendants continued to be held on a Queens case, with 428 held on pre-trial bail and 378 remanded to Rikers Island.

95% of those held on pre-trial bail were charged with a felony crime. 99% of defendants were remanded on a felony.

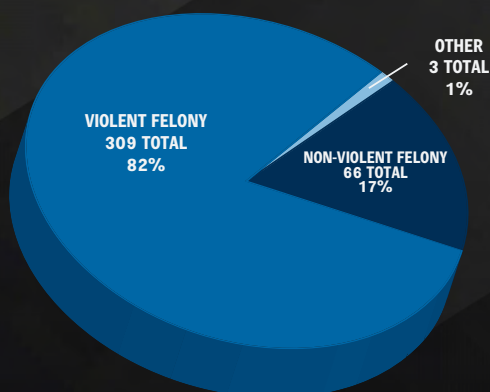
The charts below illustrate the classifications of the crimes with which the defendants held in on bail or remand are charged:

# 806

DEFENDANTS WERE  
HELD ON A QUEENS CASE

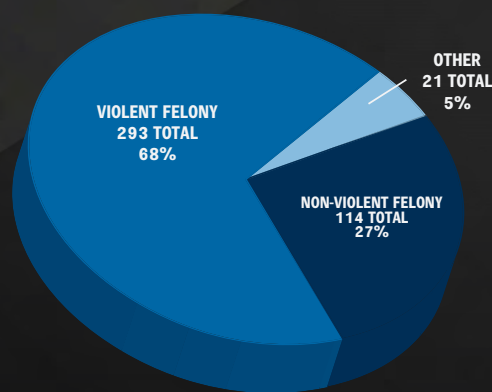
## REMAND 378

DEFENDANTS WERE REMANDED  
WITH 99% CHARGED WITH A FELONY



## BAIL 428

DEFENDANTS WERE HELD ON PRE-TRIAL BAIL  
WITH 95% CHARGED WITH A FELONY



TOP 8 COMPLAINT CHARGES (REMAND)	NUMBER	PERCENT
PL ARTICLE 125. HOMICIDE ETC.	141	37%
PL ARTICLE 265. FIREARMS/DANGEROUS WEAPONS	57	15%
PL ARTICLE 120. ASSAULT ETC.	45	12%
PL ARTICLE 160. ROBBERY	32	8%
PL ARTICLE 140. BURGLARY ETC.	26	7%
PL ARTICLE 220. CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES	21	6%
PL ARTICLE 130. SEX OFFENCES	14	4%
PL ARTICLE 105. CONSPIRACY	11	3%

TOP 8 COMPLAINT CHARGES (BAIL)	NUMBER	PERCENT
PL ARTICLE 160. ROBBERY	117	27%
PL ARTICLE 120. ASSAULT ETC.	59	14%
PL ARTICLE 140. BURGLARY ETC.	53	12%
PL ARTICLE 265. FIREARMS/DANGEROUS WEAPONS	53	12%
PL ARTICLE 220. CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES	34	8%
PL ARTICLE 125. HOMICIDE ETC.	33	8%
PL ARTICLE 215 OTHER RELATED TO JUD. PROC	26	6%
PL ARTICLE 155. LARCENY	20	5%





# SECTION II

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## SAFER STREETS: ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY

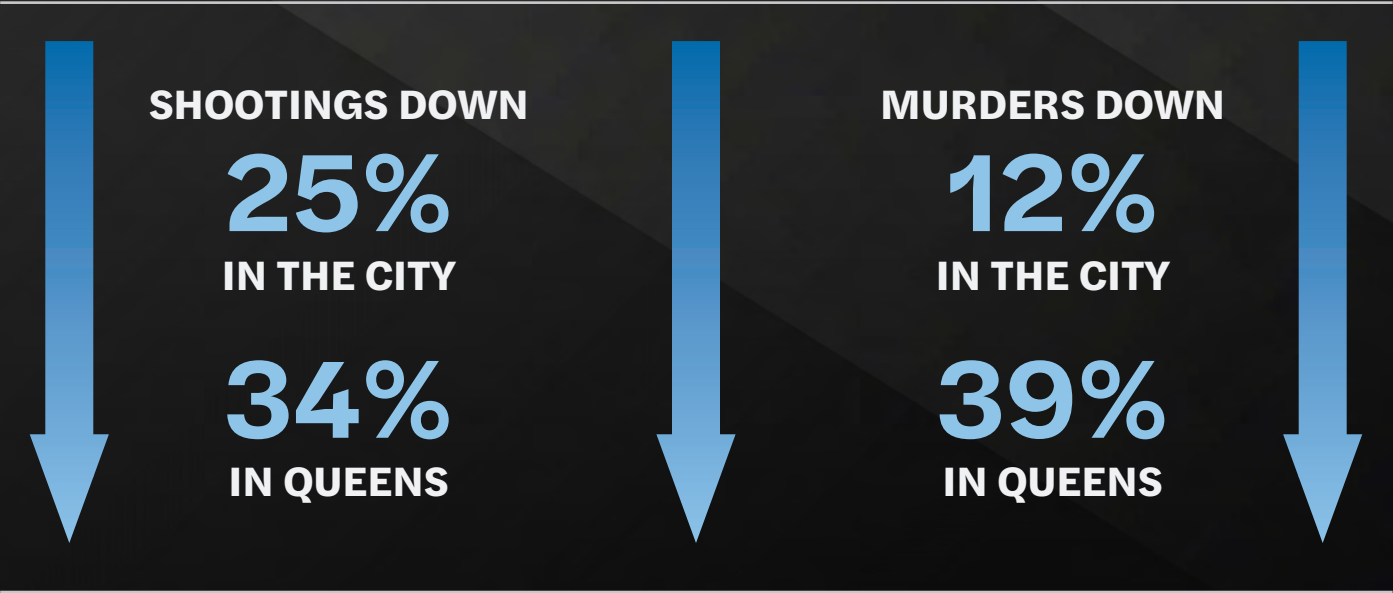
- GUN VIOLENCE . . . . . 36
- CRIME STRATEGIES AND INTELLIGENCE . . . . . 38
- VIOLENT CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES . . . . . 40
- CAREER CRIMINAL AND MAJOR CRIMES . . . . . 43
- SUPREME COURT TRIAL DIVISION . . . . . 44
- FORENSICS . . . . . 46
- PUBLIC CORRUPTION . . . . . 47
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE . . . . . 48
  - ANIMAL CRUELTY . . . . . 49
- SPECIAL VICTIMS . . . . . 50
- MAJOR ECONOMIC CRIMES . . . . . 51
- HOMICIDE . . . . . 52
  - VEHICULAR HOMICIDES . . . . . 53
- COLD CASE UNIT . . . . . 56

# GUN VIOLENCE

District Attorney Katz’s top priority is keeping the streets of Queens safe. Earlier in the year, District Attorney Katz joined fellow district attorneys in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan to uphold New York’s gun licensing statute. The data is clear: **stricter gun laws are linked to fewer gun deaths.**

Additionally, New York’s **Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO), or “Red Flag” law**, prevents individuals who show signs of being a threat to themselves or others from legally purchasing or possessing a firearm. Amid legal challenges to the law, DA Katz joined three amicus briefs in support of this law, which is being defended in court by New York State Attorney General Letitia James.

In 2023, the office continued to prioritize getting illegal guns out of our neighborhoods, parks and streets and made notable strides to stem the tide of gun violence. Under DA Katz’s leadership, the office fights the gun plague on the streets and in the courts. Through the hard work and collaboration of police, prosecutors, elected officials, and community leaders, the year closed with **a decline in shootings both across the city and in Queens.**



## NUMBER OF SHOOTING VICTIMS COMPARISON BETWEEN 2022 AND 2023

(AS OF 11/27/2023 YTD)\*

CITYWIDE	QUEENS COUNTY	BRONX COUNTY	KINGS COUNTY	NEW YORK COUNTY	RICHMOND COUNTY
-27.8%	-39.66%	-29.65%	-30.54%	-27.19%	-14.71%

\*NYPD COMPSTAT 2.0

Utilizing every tool at our disposal, the office continues to do everything we can to stem the out-of-state flow of guns and get illegal weapons off our streets. The progress is evident; while shootings declined, cases charging weapons possession increased.

CASE TYPE (TOP COUNT ONLY)	FULL CALENDAR YEAR				AS OF 12/15/23
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
CRIMINAL POSSESSION OF A WEAPON (2ND AND 3RD DEGREES)	398	555	662	714	781
SHOOTINGS (NYPD DATA)	43	51	63	65	35

Over 70% of defendants charged with criminal possession of a weapon are under the age of 35.

AGES OF DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH CPW	FULL CALENDAR YEAR						AS OF 12/15/23	
	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
UNDER 18	28	5.05%	33	4.98%	36	5.00%	41	5.25%
18-25	252	45.41%	285	43.05%	269	37.70%	260	33.29%
26-35	151	27.21%	206	31.12%	235	32.90%	255	32.65%
36-45	73	13.15%	95	14.35%	98	13.70%	146	18.69%
46-55	30	5.40%	33	4.98%	49	6.90%	59	7.56%
56-65	15	2.70%	8	1.21%	23	3.20%	16	2.05%
OVER 65	6	1.08%	2	0.31%	4	0.60%	4	0.51%
TOTAL	555	100%	662	100%	714	100%	781	100%

## CRIME STRATEGIES AND INTELLIGENCE

In 2023, the third year since District Attorney Katz created a Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau (CSIB) within the office, additional resources were added to increase the number of intelligence analysts and detectives assigned to the bureau as well as cutting-edge law enforcement tools. Public safety in Queens County has improved by focusing on proactively reducing and preventing violent criminal offenses and gun trafficking. In addition to initiating proactive investigations, CSIB assisted prosecutors and investigators in hundreds of cases regarding the analysis of social media intelligence, complex digital evidence, ballistic evidence analysis, expert testimony, and statistical data.

For the third year in a row, CSIB's successful investigation and prosecution of numerous ghost gun manufacturers and traffickers has resulted in the Queens District Attorney's Office **leading all of New York City in the total number of ghost gun recoveries**. The office has emerged as a national subject matter expert in personally manufactured firearms. CSIB has made breakthroughs in dismantling the "Polymer Pipeline" – the source of unregulated personally made firearms that has become an ever-expanding threat to public safety. Through CSIB's cutting edge work, District Attorney Katz continues to prosecute individuals **purchasing, building, and 3D printing illegal firearms in Queens County**.

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Since May 2021, these investigations have resulted in the arrests of over  
**30 ALLEGED GHOST GUN MANUFACTURERS**  
including the state's first prosecution of an international ghost gun trafficker

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Since May 2021, CSIB Ghost Gun Investigations have led to the recovery of hundreds of firearms, firearm components, and lethal firearm accessories:

- 340 Total Firearms;
- 229 Ghost Guns (Handguns, Assault Weapons, Machine Guns);
- 850 High-Capacity Magazines;
- 250 Firearm Lower Receivers;
- 42 Silencers;
- 10 Rapid-Fire Modification Devices;
- Six 3D Printers; and
- Approximately 112,000 Rounds of Ammunition.

The multi-agency **Gun Violence Strategies Partnership (GVSP)** was formed in 2021 to focus on the drivers of crime and violence. DA Katz has assigned senior members of her Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau to inform the GVSP and participate in the joint effort to combat gun violence. Representatives from over 25 city, state and federal agencies meet at GVSP each business day to discuss recently arrested defendants accused of gun violence or possession of firearms. They share intelligence between agencies to allow prosecutors to present all available information to judges to ensure that the drivers of violence are held accountable after a new gun arrest.

# DISTRICT ATTORNEY KATZ LAUNCHES STATE'S FIRST PROSECUTION OF INTERNATIONAL GHOST GUN TRAFFICKING OPERATION

PRESS RELEASE – APRIL 2, 2023

District Attorney Melinda Katz announced the indictment of a Queens man and his associate in Texas, charging them with assembling ghost guns and selling the untraceable firearms in New York City and Trinidad. The case is the first prosecution in New York State of an international ghost gun trafficking operation. The investigation was conducted by the district attorney's Crime Strategies and Intelligence Unit, a leader in ghost gun seizures.

District Attorney Katz said: "Ghost gun trafficking is a burgeoning cottage industry. We are seeing individuals with no criminal history assembling and selling ghost guns to supplement their legal income. It is a deeply troubling trend that threatens to make an already pervasive gun violence problem much worse. It is why this investigation and our efforts to go after ghost gun makers are so important."

Defendant A, 27, of St. Albans, and defendant B, of Conroe, Texas, face a raft of charges, including conspiracy in the fourth degree; 159 counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree; and 159 counts of felony manufacture, transport, disposition and defacement of weapons and dangerous instruments and appliances. Additionally, defendant A is charged with seven counts of attempted criminal sale of a firearm. In total, the indictment includes more than 600 felony counts.

A second, 28-count indictment charges defendant A with criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree, reckless endangerment in the first degree, criminal possession of a firearm, and seven counts of unlawful possession of pistol ammunition, among other crimes. Defendant A faces up to 22 years in prison, if convicted; defendant B faces up to seven years. According to the charges:

- Defendant A was identified in June as an online purchaser of ghost gun parts, which are unserialized, making the fully assembled guns untraceable. The initial investigation revealed that he ordered enough components to build up to 45 ghost guns. On July 15, a search warrant for his St. Albans residence was executed wherein a ghost gun and some additional accessories were recovered.
- The firearm recovered was matched to a shots-fired incident in St. Albans that occurred 13 days before it was seized July 2

at his residence. The incident was captured on video surveillance, providing sufficient evidence to charge defendant A with this crime in addition to possessing the ghost gun in his residence.

- A financial analysis revealed that defendant A also rented a storage locker in Jamaica, Queens, where additional firearm components, including numerous lower receivers, high-capacity magazines, and ammunition, were recovered pursuant to an additional search warrant.
- A forensic analysis of defendant A's cell phone revealed he enlisted a Texas resident, defendant B, to receive delivery of firearm components and ammunition that are prohibited in New York. Defendant B, in turn, shipped the components to defendant A, who paid him approximately \$100 to \$200 per shipment.
- With the necessary components in hand, defendant A assembled ghost guns at a cost of approximately \$500 per weapon. He then sold the guns for between \$1,000 and \$1,800 to individuals in New York City and Trinidad.

As a result of the search warrants executed in connection with this investigation, the following items were recovered:

- One 9-millimeter semiautomatic ghost gun pistol;
- 42 large-capacity ammunition feeding devices, each capable of holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition, some of which could hold more than 50 rounds;
- 14 additional complete ghost gun kits;
- One short barrel rifle conversion kit, which can convert a semiautomatic pistol into an assault weapon; and
- More than 2,700 rounds of ammunition.

As charged in the indictment against defendant A and defendant B, it was the purpose of the conspiracy to obtain, manufacture, possess, transport, and sell firearm components and completed ghost guns in Queens and elsewhere in New York State, as well as Trinidad.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*

## VIOLENT CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES

In 2023, the Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau (VCEB) heightened its efforts toward suppressing violent crime in Queens County and saw significant results after the takedown of two major long-term gang violence investigations in February and March of 2023. The arrest and prosecution of 33 defendants from various gangs in Southeast Queens in March 2023 contributed to a drop in the murder rate and a decrease in shootings in Queens South. Similarly, the arrest and prosecution of 23 violent gang members in the Astoria and Woodside housing developments in February 2023 contributed to a drop in murders and a reduction in shootings in Queens North.

In addition to its **extensive work targeting the drivers of violence** on the streets of Queens County, VCEB works to suppress gun violence **by choking off the supply of firearms altogether**. After several months of undercover operations and wiretaps, three individuals were arrested and prosecuted for trafficking firearms. The QDA and NYPD seized more than 100 firearms, including numerous assault weapons in a trafficking ring that stretched to Cincinnati, Ohio, and is further believed to have connections to the African country of Ghana, via New York City cargo ports.

The fact remains that limiting access to firearms saves lives. DA Katz has made it her number one priority to rid Queens County of dangerous and illegal weapons that wreak havoc and place countless lives at risk. The Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau's sole purpose is to **suppress gang and gun activity** in this borough.

### 23 REPUTED GANG MEMBERS CHARGED WITH CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT MURDER, ATTEMPTED MURDER, RECKLESS ENDANGERMENT AND GUN POSSESSION

PRESS RELEASE — FEBRUARY 14, 2023

DA Katz, joined by Mayor Eric Adams and NYPD Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell, announced that a two-year investigation into gang violence in and around two Queens public housing developments led to the indictments of 23 alleged members of warring subsets of the Crips street gang, one based in the Astoria Houses, the other in the Woodside Houses. The defendants were variously charged with conspiracy, attempted murder, reckless endangerment, and gun possession in connection with a number of violent incidents, including shootouts in broad daylight on busy streets.

District Attorney Katz said: "Warring gangs are not just a threat to themselves, but to all of us. The reckless criminality we saw during the course of this investigation is the kind of lawlessness that has killed law-abiding New Yorkers caught in the crossfire of gang gun violence. I commend the NYPD's Gun Violence Suppression Unit and my Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau for their outstanding work over the course of this long investigation, and I thank them for the important work they do."

Mayor Eric Adams said: "Since day one, public

safety has been our administration's top priority, and that's why we have been working around the clock to stop gun violence and to keep guns and repeat offenders off our streets. This case is another victory in our work to remove New York's most dangerous individuals from our communities. I applaud District Attorney Katz and the brave members of the NYPD for their tireless work bringing these 23 individuals to justice for carrying out these heinous acts that put the lives of New Yorkers, including children, at risk."

The majority of the defendants were arraigned last week on an 85-count indictment charging them with conspiracy to commit murder, attempted murder in the second degree, reckless endangerment, and criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree. If convicted, they could face up to 25 years in prison.

Numerous crimes charged in this indictment arose out of gun fights and shootings that took place in broad daylight, often in the presence of small children.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*

# MILLIONS IN DRUGS AND GUNS SEIZED FROM ABANDONED HOME

PRESS RELEASE — NOVEMBER 1, 2023

DA Katz announced that an individual was indicted on drug and gun charges after a search of an abandoned home in Bellerose uncovered millions of dollars worth of heroin, fentanyl and cocaine and a stockpile of firearms. A contractor hired after the recent sale of the property stumbled upon the stash.

The contractor alerted police, who searched the residence and discovered eight kilograms of heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine and 1.5 million glassine envelopes containing heroin or a mix of heroin and fentanyl, all with a street value between \$10 million and \$11 million. Additionally, several handguns and hundreds of rounds of ammunition were found.

DA Katz said: "One can't even calculate how many lives would have been cut short or ruined by the millions of dollars worth of lethal narcotics and deadly weapons that were found. What we do know for certain is that our families, friends, and neighborhoods are all safer thanks to this massive seizure. We cannot and will not relent in the fight to get drugs and guns off our streets. We will prosecute any and all involved in this deadly trafficking."

NYPD Commissioner Edward A. Caban said: "The NYPD and our law enforcement partners will never waver in our commitment to rid our city of illegal narcotics and the traffickers responsible for putting New Yorkers' lives at risk. At the forefront of our public safety mission is holding accountable anyone who displays the depravity to sell these deadly poisons on our streets. I commend and thank the NYPD officers from the 105th Precinct and our Intelligence Bureau, along with everyone involved at the office of the Queens District Attorney, for their tireless efforts on this important case."

The defendant, 43, of Jamaica, was arraigned October 27 on a 112-count indictment charging him with operating as a major trafficker; conspiracy in the second and fourth degrees; three counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the first degree; four counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the third degree; four counts of criminal possession of a controlled substance in the fourth degree; two counts of criminally using drug paraphernalia in the



second degree; burglary in the first degree; criminal possession of a weapon in the first degree; 26 counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree; 10 counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree; 12 counts of aggravated criminal possession of a weapon; 39 counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree; manufacture, transport, disposition and defacement of a weapon and dangerous instruments and appliance; five counts of attempted criminal possession of a firearm; and unlawful possession of pistol ammunition. If convicted, he faces 25 years to life in prison.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*

***"We cannot and will not relent in the fight to get drugs and guns off our streets. We will prosecute any and all involved in this deadly trafficking."***

***-District Attorney Melinda Katz***



## **33 REPUTED GANG MEMBERS INDICTED ON MURDER, GUN VIOLENCE CHARGES**

*PRESS RELEASE — MARCH 21, 2023*



District Attorney Melinda Katz, joined by NYPD Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell, announced one of the largest gang takedowns in the history of the office, a 151-count indictment brought against 33 alleged gang members, five of whom are charged with murder. The murder charges are for the shooting death of a 14-year-old, gunned down in 2019 by a reputed gang member who mistook him for a rival; and the slaying of another on New Year's Eve 2020. The indictment is the culmination of a nearly three-year investigation into gun and gang violence in and around Baisley Park Houses and nearby communities.

DA Katz said: "Whether it was a young man playing basketball with friends, a schoolteacher walking his dog, or a mother running out for milk for her children, we have seen law-abiding New Yorkers peacefully going about their business killed by mindless gang gun violence. We must do absolutely everything we can to get illegal firearms off of our streets. It is why the work of the NYPD's Gun Violence Suppression Unit and my Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureau is critically important. I commend them for their outstanding work in bringing these extremely violent and dangerous individuals to justice."

The defendants were arraigned on a 151-count indictment variously charging them with conspiracy in the first, second and fourth degrees, murder in the second degree and additional charges. The judge

ordered the defendants, who range in age from 17 to 40, to return to court the second week of May.

At the center of the conspiracy unveiled today is the blood feud between Southeast Queens street gangs Money World and rivals Local Trap Stars and Never Forget Loyalty. While the gang war was set off by a slashing in April 2019, the tensions and violence between the warring factions escalated after the murder of a 14-year-old in October 2019.

Since the 14-year-old's murder, there have been more than 22 shootings, one fatal. The feud has been fueled through social media and rap videos, with both sides bragging about violent exploits and taunting their rivals, including disrespecting deceased family and friends. Some 34 firearms have been recovered pursuant to search warrants and arrests.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*



# CAREER CRIMINAL AND MAJOR CRIMES

The Career Criminal Major Crimes Bureau is responsible for prosecuting **recidivist violent felons** who are subject to **enhanced sentencing** based on their extensive criminal histories. The crimes charged include gun offenses, attempted murder, robbery, burglary, assault, and kidnapping. The bureau is staffed by seasoned Assistant District Attorneys committed to the successful prosecution and enhanced sentencing of these offenders.

## BROOKLYN WOMAN SENTENCED TO 21 YEARS IN PRISON FOR ATTEMPTED MURDER IN CHEESECAKE POISONING OF LOOK-ALIKE

PRESS RELEASE — APRIL 19, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that a defendant was sentenced today to 21 years in prison for poisoning a woman who resembled her with sedative-laced cheesecake and then stealing her identification and other property.

District Attorney Katz said: “A ruthless and calculating con artist is going to prison for a long time for trying to murder her way to personal profit and gain. Thankfully, the victim survived the attack on her life and we were able to deliver justice to her.”

The defendant, 47, of Voorhies Avenue in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, was convicted in February by a jury of attempted murder in the second degree, attempted assault in the first degree, assault in the second degree, unlawful imprisonment in the first degree and petit larceny. The judge sentenced the defendant to 21 years in prison to be followed by 5 years post release supervision.

According to the evidence, on August 28, 2016, the defendant visited the Forest Hills home of the then-35-year-old victim and brought her cheesecake. At that time, the victim and the defendant resembled one another—both had dark hair, the same complexion, and other similar physical traits. Additionally, they were both Russian speakers.

After eating the cheesecake, the victim felt sick and passed out. Her last memory was of seeing the defendant walking around her room. The following day, the victim was discovered unconscious in her bed with pills scattered around her body — as if she



DA Katz was featured on CBS News' 48 Hours to discuss the case of a defendant who was sentenced to 21 years in prison for attempting to kill a woman who resembled her, with poisoned cheesecake, and steal the victim's identity.

had attempted to kill herself. She was taken to a hospital for treatment.

When the victim returned home, she realized that her passport and employment authorization card were missing, along with a gold ring and other valuables. Law enforcement agents with the Department of Homeland Security discovered Phenazepam, a highly potent sedative, in cheesecake residue found on the dessert container. The Drug Enforcement Administration tested the pills found on the floor near the victim and identified the same drug.

The Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation assisted in this case.



## SUPREME COURT TRIAL DIVISION

The Supreme Court Trial Division contains four Felony Trial Bureaus, as well as the Grand Jury Bureau, Felony Conferencing Bureau, Discovery Compliance and Litigation Training. The division is responsible for the prosecution of much of the county's felony dockets from inception to disposition. Assistant District Attorneys investigate and present cases to the grand jury, negotiate pleas and sentences, and conduct suppression hearings and trials. They work very closely with felony problem solving courts, specifically, Queens Drug Court, Queens Mental Health Court, Queens DWI Court, Queens Veterans Court, and Queens Judicial Diversion Court in which defendants with mental illness or substance use illnesses can be placed in community-based treatment programs in lieu of incarceration.

The division successfully works with the court to prioritize cases of violence, particularly armed robberies, to resolve more cases expeditiously and justly. While the division handles a broad spectrum of felony crimes, the bulk of their cases in recent years have involved shootings and illegal gun possession. In August 2021, the courts launched the Gun Violence Fast Track Initiative to address the backlog in gun cases that existed. In 2022, the backlog of gun cases decreased by 92 percent. **In 2023, Queens continued to lead the city in the number of gun suppression hearings held, the number of pre-indictment dispositions, pleas, and trials on cases involving guns.**



# INTERSTATE GUN TRAFFICKING RING DISMANTLED

PRESS RELEASE — NOVEMBER 6, 2023

District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that three defendants were indicted on the heels of a seven-month investigation into gun trafficking that included a series of undercover buys in the parking lot of a P.C. Richard & Son in Astoria and a wiretap on the defendants' phones. The investigation netted 109 illegal firearms and rifles smuggled from the Midwest via the notorious Iron Pipeline, including 20 assault weapons, as well as 139 high-capacity magazines and hundreds of rounds of ammunition.

DA Katz said: "We are fighting the gun plague with all our might and resources, on the streets and in the courts. Through the hard work and collaboration of police and prosecutors, we have seen shootings in 2023 decline 28 percent in the city and 34 percent in Queens. That is of little comfort, however, to the more than 1,000 victims of shootings across the city this year. Through investigations, arrests, and prosecutions, we will continue to do everything we can to shut the Iron Pipeline down once and for all."

"When that day comes," District Attorney Katz added, "all of us will owe a debt of gratitude to the brave undercover officer in this dangerous investigation, and to all those who have risked their lives to help keep us safe."

NYPD Commissioner Edward A. Caban said: "This case underscores some disturbing truths: First, Illegal guns proliferate and circulate in many neighborhoods that still need our help. And second, every day the men and women of the NYPD perform incredibly dangerous work to prevent these firearms from getting into criminals' hands. Every illegal gun taken off the street, every robbery that

is avoided, every shooting that does not occur, and every homicide that never comes to pass, is another realization of the public safety promise we have vowed to fulfill. I commend and thank the NYPD undercover officer who successfully worked this case, our detectives, and our partners in the Queens District Attorney's Office, for their dedication to this critical investigation."

Three defendants – who are all cousins – were indicted by a grand jury on 575 counts charging them with criminal sale of a firearm, criminal possession of a weapon, conspiracy, and money laundering. They each face up to 25 years in prison and are due back in court on November 9.

According to the charges: Police were alerted to the trafficking activity through a confidential tip to DA Katz's office and the NYPD in March 2023. Following an initial investigation and intelligence gathering, five transactions took place between the defendants and an undercover police officer in the parking lot of P.C. Richard & Son in Astoria.

In all, the undercover officer bought a total of 97 firearms, including 17 assault weapons.

During the course of the investigation, called Operation Chainline, the defendants were recorded discussing the purchase, transport, and sale of multiple firearms.

Detectives witnessed two defendants coming out of a Cincinnati townhouse carrying large boxes to a U-Haul truck, corresponding directly with subsequent calls regarding the transportation of guns for sale.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*



## FORENSICS

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DA Katz created a Forensics unit to support nearly all criminal prosecutions on legal and technical forensic issues. Forensics facilitates the presentation of forensic science evidence in the grand jury and at trial; conducts office-wide training regarding DNA, ballistic, and fingerprint evidence; closely collaborates with the Conviction Integrity Unit and the Cold Case Unit; and handles all complex Frye litigation relating to reliability and relevancy of expert witnesses. Additionally, they liaise with the Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) Forensic Biology & Toxicology Laboratories and the New York Police Department Laboratory for all ballistics, latent fingerprint, and trace analysis sections.

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**IN 2023, APPROXIMATELY 475 FIREARMS WERE TESTED FOR DNA ANALYSIS AND MANY OF THOSE FIREARMS FOR MICROSCOPIC BALLISTIC ANALYSIS RELATED TO CRIMINAL POSSESSION OF A WEAPON AND SHOOTING CASES.**

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Microscopic ballistic analysis involves the microscopic examination and comparison of fired ammunition samples (typically fired bullets and spent cartridge cases recovered at crime scenes), in relation to each other and to test fires produced from recovered firearms. Qualified firearms examiners can identify a particular firearm as having fired a specific bullet or cartridge case. Investigators can then connect firearms to shootings, and even one shooting to another. As such, firearms identification evidence is critical to maintaining public safety and to holding shooters accountable.



# PUBLIC CORRUPTION

The Public Corruption Bureau investigates and prosecutes crimes committed by public servants and other public officials. It also investigates allegations against civilians who attempt to subvert the integrity of public servants by offering bribes. In addition, the bureau investigates complaints from the public and works together with the NYPD's Internal Affairs Bureau, and a host of other agencies on the city, state, and federal level, to safeguard the public from corruption.

The Public Corruption Bureau investigates allegations of criminal acts committed by police officers and law enforcement including the use of excessive force; the wrongdoing by licensed, suspended, or disbarred attorneys; the unauthorized practice of law; the criminal impersonation of public officers; instances of election fraud; and perjury.

In 2023, the bureau secured guilty pleas from two attorneys who stole approximately \$8 million from various clients and in another case, they brought charges against an attorney who stole over \$600,000 in escrow funds relating to a real estate transaction involving an elderly client.

## QUEENS MAN INDICTED IN VOTER FRAUD CASE

PRESS RELEASE — DECEMBER 19, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that a defendant was arraigned today on an indictment charging him with falsifying business records, criminal possession of a forged instrument and other crimes for submitting falsified absentee ballot applications for the Democratic primary election in August 2022.

DA Katz said: "Every vote has to count. Election integrity is the foundation of a viable, working democracy. We will vigorously prosecute anyone who threatens in any way to undermine that integrity. To investigate and prosecute anyone for voter fraud takes time and resources I am willing to commit. I thank my Public Corruption Bureau and the Board of Elections for their important work on this case. The integrity of elections will be upheld in this borough."

Board of Elections Deputy Executive Director Vincent Ignizio said: "The Board of Elections in the City of New York is proud to once again have identified and referred an election integrity issue to law enforcement. Our government partners in the Queens District Attorney's Office did an amazing job at investigating this case and bringing it to indictment. Protecting our democracy and the elections process is the responsibility of all Americans – and the Board is grateful to District Attorney Melinda Katz and her staff for all of their efforts in this investigation."

The defendant, 32, of 257th Street in Floral Park, Queens, was arraigned today on a 140-count indictment. The judge ordered the defendant to return to court on January 30, 2024.

The defendant faces up to seven years in prison if convicted. According to the charges: on August 23, 2022, a voter went to his local polling place in Richmond Hill to vote in the Democratic primary election and was told that he would be unable to cast his ballot in person because an absentee ballot had already been requested in his name.

An investigation found the voter's absentee ballot application, with his name, address, and date of birth, was signed and dated August 1, 2022. The application listed the defendant as an authorized representative to pick up the ballot. The voter, however, had not filled out, signed, or submitted the application, and said he had never met the defendant or authorized him to pick up an absentee ballot on his behalf.

The investigation further revealed that on August 8, 2022, the defendant visited the Queens County Board of Elections and dropped off 118 absentee ballot applications, all of which designated him as the individual authorized to pick up the ballots. Of the 118 applications, 32 were approved and the ballots were picked up by the defendant the next day. Law enforcement officials interviewed several of the individuals whose names and personal information were listed in the ballot applications and learned that none of them had themselves submitted the form, much less authorized the defendant to pick a ballot up for them. Following the indictment, the defendant surrendered today to the Queen's District Attorney's Office.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

District Attorney Katz continues to focus on **expanding efforts to end domestic violence and eliminate the stigma attached to being a domestic violence survivor**. In 2023, DA Katz increased the Domestic Violence Bureau's staff in order to continue to build new partnerships, increase community outreach, provide support for survivors, and utilize diversionary programs and education to change abusive behavior.

The Domestic Violence Bureau works closely with Safe Horizon and our partners at the Queens Family Justice Center, including the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. This one stop shop provides survivors the ability to meet with Assistant District Attorneys, an NYPD Domestic Violence Prevention Officer, and access resources, including safety planning, counseling, legal assistance, housing, and financial assistance. To reinforce her message that domestic violence survivors are not alone, DA Katz hosted her **annual Domestic Violence Resources Webinar** in October 2023. The bureau participated in numerous outreach events to spread awareness throughout the borough. The bureau also focused on education and training, hosting law student interns and in 2023, the bureau instructed nearly 700 members of the NYPD on domestic violence prosecutions.

The bureau also places an **emphasis on alternatives to incarceration** as another means to combat intimate partner violence by partnering with the Department of Probation's Interim Probation Domestic Violence Team (QIPDVT). This program seeks to change defendants' abusive behaviors by utilizing a trauma informed approach that combines accountability measures with support. The office also continues to refer domestic violence defendants to the Fortune Society's Abusive Partner Intervention Program, which is the first free program offered in Queens County to address the dynamics and effects of domestic violence. Our office is confident that continued investment in these programs will create **lasting change that will help break the cycle of abuse**.

The office is equally committed to keeping families safe by **holding violent offenders and recidivists accountable**. Utilizing a risk-based approach in the analysis of domestic violence cases, the bureau reviews each individual case for nationally recognized risk factors, including a history of strangulation, threats and access to firearms. ADAs are on call 24/7 to provide support and enhance the most dangerous domestic violence cases.

## HUSBAND SENTENCED TO 25 YEARS FOR HITTING WIFE WITH SUV, STABBING HER IN FRONT OF THEIR CHILDREN

PRESS RELEASE — OCTOBER 6, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that a defendant was sentenced today to 25 years in prison for the attempted murder of his estranged wife, who has been unconscious since he deliberately plowed into her nine months ago with his SUV, then stabbed her in the chest, all in the presence of their three young children.

DA Katz said: "This is one of the most brutal cases we have prosecuted. To tell your children to 'buckle up,' purposefully hit their mother, and then climb over your son to continue your attack with a knife is unconscionable. In holding the defendant accountable and securing a lengthy prison sentence, we hope we have achieved some measure of justice

on behalf of the victim and her loved ones."

The defendant, age 37, of 144th Street in Jamaica, pleaded guilty last month to attempted murder. The judge today sentenced him to 25 years in prison, with five years post-release supervision.

According to the charges, the defendant was observed on security video footage in a sport utility vehicle outside the residence of his estranged wife. Inside the vehicle with the defendant were the couple's three children, ages 6, 9 and 11. The defendant told the children to "keep your seat belt on" and drove the SUV directly into his wife, climbed over his child seated in the front passenger seat and through a window and stabbed his wife in the chest.

## ANIMAL CRUELTY

The Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of all crimes against animals who are voiceless and vulnerable victims in our communities. Ample research shows that there is a **direct link between acts of cruelty to animals and violence toward humans, including family violence and other violent behavior**. Notably, under District Attorney Katz, the Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit was integrated within the Domestic Violence Bureau as DA Katz recognizes the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty. Beloved pets are often used by intimate partner abusers as an effective tool of power and control over their partners and children in the household.

Studies show that approximately 70% of domestic violence survivors with pets reported that their abuser had killed, harmed, or threatened their pets and many felt that they could not leave the abusive relationship for fear that their pets would suffer dire consequences. Animal abuse that occurs in the presence of children in the household can also contribute to the cycle of abuse.

The Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit also investigates and prosecutes the **gross neglect and abandonment of pets, the intentional abuse, injuring, torturing, and killing of wild and companion animals, and organized dogfighting and gamecock fighting**. The unit works closely with the NYPD Animal Cruelty Investigation Detective Squad and the police precinct animal liaisons who investigate allegations of crimes against animals and the ASPCA's team of forensic veterinarians, whose expertise is critical in determining the extent and cause of conditions, injuries, or death of animal victims.

Following convictions for animal cruelty crimes, the unit refers offenders to the NYC Department of Health Animal Abuse Registry as those offenders are required to be listed on the registry for a five-year period. The efforts and convictions obtained by the Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit over the past year have resulted in over a dozen criminal offenders being placed on the registry. Any registrant found to own or possess a companion animal while on the abuse registry is subject to an arrest for additional charges.

As part of the initiative to prevent and address crimes against animals, the unit also participates in public education and training for investigators and prosecutors and has worked to develop alternative sentencing programs geared specifically for animal abusers.



## SPECIAL VICTIMS

The Special Victims Bureau is charged with the investigation and prosecution of felonies involving sex crimes against adults and children, physical abuse of children, and violence against the elderly. The bureau handled approximately **70 sex offender registration hearings** on convicted sex offenders in 2023. Their staff is trained in trauma-informed interviewing and best practices in the forensic interviewing of children and the bureau conducted over **320 child sexual assault forensic interviews**.

The **Queens Child Advocacy Center (QCAC)** is a state-of-the-art child-focused environment where all child sexual and physical abuse cases are handled. The QCAC provides, in a single location, a dedicated and multidisciplinary team who specializes in working with children. This team includes child protective and social services provided through the NYC Administration for Children's Services and Safe Horizon, a pediatrician affiliated with Cohen Children's Medical Center who has extensive training in providing care for abused children, and a squad of NYPD detectives whose sole focus is crimes against children. Working together, these team members reduce the number of interviews a child must undergo and provide children with a path to healing and safety.

### SEXUAL PREDATOR SENTENCED FOR RAPING CHILD RELATIVE

*PRESS RELEASE — AUGUST 21, 2023*

District Attorney Katz announced that a defendant was sentenced to 17.5 years to life in prison for sexually assaulting a child relative over the course of 10 years, beginning when the girl was 4 years old. In a separate case, the defendant has been charged with abusing two other pre-teen girls.

DA Katz said: "This defendant, now a convicted sexual predator, used his access and authority to prey on an innocent child. While we cannot take away the trauma caused by his acts, I hope the prison sentence provides a measure of closure to the young victim, who bravely stepped forward to tell us about the horrors she was forced to endure. My office will pursue full accountability in the separate indictment against the defendant."

The defendant, 39, of Corona, was convicted last month by a jury on charges of predatory sexual

assault of a child and endangering the welfare of a child, leading the judge to sentence him to 17.5 years to life in prison, to be followed by five years post-release supervision. The defendant will also be required to register as a sex offender.

According to the charges and trial testimony, between approximately August 2009 and October 2019, beginning when the victim was 4, the defendant sexually molested and raped the victim on numerous occasions. The abuse occurred inside the defendant's two places of residence in Corona.

In a separate case, the defendant was indicted in 2020 on two counts of sexual abuse in the first degree and two counts of endangering the welfare of a child for abusing another child relative and another young girl. The case is pending.



# MAJOR ECONOMIC CRIMES

The Major Economic Crimes Bureau focuses on **large-scale financial crimes** that are often the foundation of criminal enterprises that plague our communities. The bureau handles a broad array of crimes, including **drug trafficking, insurance fraud, illegal gambling, money laundering, and extortion and loan sharking operations.**

The bureau traces and recovers criminal proceeds so that they can be returned to crime victims and stops the perpetrators from profiting from their crimes. The bureau works in collaboration with various local, state, and federal law enforcement partners to fight crime.

The **Cyber Crime Unit** within the Major Economic Crimes Bureau investigates and prosecutes technology-facilitated crimes against adults and children. These crimes include unique cases involving cryptocurrency and non-fungible tokens (NFTs), as well as account hacking, identity theft, inappropriate digital content, and online predatory behavior toward minors. Experienced prosecutors use all the digital and traditional tools at their disposal to delve into the virtual world we live in today and ensure justice for all victims of crime.

## FAMILIAL DRUG TRAFFICKING RING DISMANTLED

PRESS RELEASE – DECEMBER 14, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that 11 defendants were arraigned on drug and gun charges following a 15-month investigation into a sprawling drug trafficking organization that reached from Jamaica to suburban Suffolk and Westchester Counties and involved several members of the same family. The investigation included a series of undercover drug buys inside a Jamaica park and wiretaps on defendants' phones.

The investigation, including search warrants executed at seven residences and three vehicles, resulted in the seizure of one and a half kilograms of heroin laced with fentanyl; more than 10,000 glassines of heroin; four kilograms of cocaine; and more than 250 vials containing crack cocaine; eight guns, including an assault weapon stashed in a hidden compartment in a storage shed; and \$140,587 in cash.

DA Katz said: "Those who peddle poison are on notice. There is no higher priority for my office than to rid our communities of drugs and guns. This type of 'family business' will simply not pay. We will not relent in our efforts to dismantle trafficking rings and bring to justice those who put countless lives at risk by running open air drug markets. I'd like to thank members of my Major Economic Crimes Bureau, the NYPD, Yonkers and Suffolk County Police Departments and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service for their great work on this case."

Six of the defendants were arraigned in Supreme Court on December 7 and five additional defendants were arraigned in Criminal Court on December 6. According to the charges: in August 2022, a joint investigation by the Queens District Attorney's office

and the NYPD's Queens South Violent Crimes Squad was launched into a drug trafficking operation centered on Major Mark Park on Hillside Avenue between 173rd and 175th streets. A total of 26 buys of heroin and cocaine took place among undercover police officers and four of the defendants, resulting in the seizure of drugs with a street value of \$4,030. All of the heroin contained some fentanyl.

During the course of the investigation, called "On The Mark," multiple communications among the defendants were recorded on wiretaps discussing the purchase, sale and possession of drugs, possession and supply of firearms and various acts of violence perpetrated by one of the defendants in order to protect their place of "business."

On December 4 and 5, law enforcement officials conducted search warrants at seven residences in Queens, Suffolk, and Yonkers. Police officers also conducted search warrants on three vehicles allegedly being used to store and deliver drugs and weapons.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*



## HOMICIDE

The Homicide Bureau is responsible for investigating and prosecuting all homicide cases in Queens County. The bureau's Assistant District Attorneys are divided into two groups, "riders" and trial assistants. ADAs assigned to the riding program are available 24 hours a day to respond to the scene of every Queens County death by homicide, deaths caused by vehicular collisions, or any other death in which criminal conduct may have played a role. The riders also assist NYPD detectives in investigating each homicide by taking statements, interviewing witnesses, drafting search warrants and other court orders as needed. Each year, riders respond to thousands of notifications for assistance and inquiries on behalf of the office. The trial assistants work together with riders, after a homicide arrest is made, in presenting the case to a grand jury and if an indictment is handed down, the trial assistant takes the case from there and handles the trial. There are two specialized units within the Homicide Bureau: the Vehicular Homicide Unit and the Cold Case Unit.

**As of December 31, 2023, homicides in Queens County were down 34.2% as compared to the same period in 2022. This is the lowest number of homicides in Queens County since 2018.**



*\*QDA data sourced from OCME*

## LONG ISLAND MAN SENTENCED FOR MURDER OF PREGNANT GIRLFRIEND

PRESS RELEASE – NOVEMBER 29, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that a defendant was sentenced today to 25 years to life in prison for the October 2020 murder of his pregnant girlfriend. The defendant abandoned her body on the side of the Horace Harding Expressway in Bayside.

DA Katz said: "We asked for the maximum sentence because of the brutality of the crime and the defendant's remorseless discarding of the lifeless body of his girlfriend, the woman who was soon to be the mother of his child. The sentence does not bring her back, but it achieves justice in her memory."

The defendant, 33, of Rochelle Court in Uniondale, was convicted by a jury on November 14 of murder in the second degree and sentenced today to 25 years to life in prison.

According to the charges and trial testimony: on October 23, 2020, at about 2:50 a.m., the defendant drove the victim's white Dodge Challenger to a location near 216-07 Horace Harding Expressway. The victim was in the front passenger seat. At approximately 3:30 a.m., the defendant got out of the car and went toward the backseat, where his

girlfriend was now sitting. At approximately 3:38 a.m., when a light inside the vehicle illuminated, the victim could be seen moving around. At approximately 4:36 a.m., the defendant exited the vehicle, dragged the victim's lifeless body out of the car and left her on the sidewalk. He got back in and drove away.

At around 6:00 a.m., an MTA bus driver saw the victim on the ground. She was unresponsive, a pair of gray sweatpants wrapped around her neck. Emergency responders arrived on the scene and pronounced her dead. The medical examiner determined that the victim died from asphyxia due to compression of the neck.



## VEHICULAR HOMICIDES

The investigation and prosecution of vehicular homicides is a high priority for DA Katz. The Vehicular Homicide Unit oversees the investigation of all deaths, whether pedestrian, cyclist, or motorist, that result from contact with a motor vehicle. Specially trained ADAs are **on call 24/7** to be notified by the NYPD of all collisions involving serious physical injury or death. These ADAs then respond to the scene and work hand-in-hand with the NYPD on each investigation to make sure that motorists who break the law and cause harm to others are held accountable.

As an office, we continue to enhance the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of vehicular homicides with our work on the DWI Taskforce and the New York City Traffic Safety Board, and **we work closely with our partners in the NYPD, Department of Transportation, and related agencies to improve traffic safety.**



## LONG ISLAND WOMAN CONVICTED OF AGGRAVATED MANSLAUGHTER IN HIT AND RUN THAT KILLED NYPD DETECTIVE

PRESS RELEASE — OCTOBER 31, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that a defendant was convicted today of aggravated manslaughter for driving drunk and slamming into an NYPD detective stationed at a highway roadblock. Detective Anastasios Tsakos suffered catastrophic injuries and was pronounced dead a short time after he was struck by the defendant on the Long Island Expressway in 2021.

DA Katz said: “Her license had been suspended, her blood alcohol level was at nearly twice the legal limit, and she had smoked marijuana. The defendant had absolutely no business being behind the wheel. Her selfish decision-making and recklessness led to a horrific, senseless tragedy that left Detective Tsakos’ widow to raise their two young children without their father. We are grateful for the jury’s verdict and hope it brings at least some measure of solace to the detective’s loved ones.”

According to the charges and trial testimony: on April 27, 2021, at approximately 12:30 a.m., Tsakos, a member of the NYPD highway patrol, responded to the scene of a fatal car crash on the eastbound side

of the Long Island Expressway at the entrance ramp to the Clearview Expressway. At approximately 1:45 a.m., Tsakos and his partner set up a roadblock that included traffic cones and a marked police vehicle to divert traffic around the crash scene. Tsakos was standing beyond the roadblock at approximately 1:57 a.m. when the defendant sped through the traffic cones in a 2013 Volkswagen Passat and hit him. Tsakos was thrown into the air, landing some 170 feet away on the highway’s shoulder. His left leg was severed from the knee down. Tsakos was rushed to a nearby hospital where he died from his injuries.

The defendant sped away, drove onto the sidewalk, put her car into reverse and hit a police cruiser.

She had bloodshot and watery eyes, slurred speech, and had a blood alcohol content of .15, well above the legal maximum threshold. She told police she smoked marijuana and drank wine earlier in the day. Records indicated that her license was suspended.



DA Katz, in an opinion piece written for the *New York Law Journal*, recommends that New York becomes a leader on the issue of **impaired driving** by passing legislation that would lower the blood alcohol limit.

## **LOWER NEW YORK'S BAC LIMIT NOW TO SAVE LIVES**

BY MELINDA KATZ

PUBLISHED ON APRIL 4, 2023

As the Queens County District Attorney, too frequently I sit with devastated families whose lives have been changed forever by the selfish, irresponsible actions of impaired drivers.

My efforts to console them and promises to seek justice feel completely inadequate when I know that we can and must be doing so much more to address the scourge of drunk driving. Drinking and driving is a risk to the driver, the passengers and everyone else on the road.

We all know that drinking and driving is deadly. The imperative to not drive while drunk has been drilled into the public's consciousness for decades. But unfortunately, fatal crashes where at least one driver is impaired by alcohol persist at an alarming rate. In 2020, 11,654 people needlessly died in these types of accidents in the United States, which equates to one death every 45 minutes.

Tragically, every year for the past 25 years, nearly one-third of all fatal car crashes have involved drunken drivers. Clearly, the admonition to "drink responsibly" too often falls on deaf ears. And we can only expect that the recent legalization of marijuana, along with the alarming trend of more unlicensed and suspended drivers getting behind the wheel, will make matters worse.

But a driver's license is not optional. And driving sober is not merely a suggestion. These laws are meant to keep a 4,000-pound machine from killing or grievously injuring others. Unfortunately, though, our current drunk driving laws do not do enough to keep us safe.

In 2013, the federal National Transportation Safety Board issued a report that recommended lowering the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit for driving from .08 percent to .05 percent. And with good reason.

Studies show that most adult drivers are too impaired to drive safely with a BAC of .05 percent because, even at that level, crucial driving skills

— like coordination, and the ability to steer, track moving objects, and effectively respond to emergency situations — are diminished.

But a decade after the NTSB's recommendation, only Utah has enacted legislation implementing this standard and it did so in 2018. No other state has stepped up even though a .05 limit is the norm in the industrialized world outside the United States and the law in nearly 100 countries.

A new study conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration used data from Utah to confirm what we already should have known—that stricter BAC limits save lives.

Indeed, according to the NHTSA study, Utah has experienced a nearly 20 percent reduction in its fatal car crash rate. Another study suggests that, if the entire country followed Utah's example, we could reduce fatal alcohol-involved crashes by 11 percent, potentially saving 1,800 lives each year and preventing thousands of serious injuries.

New York should become a leader on this issue. Last December, Mayor Eric Adams announced that his administration would urge passage of legislation that would establish a BAC limit of .05.

I agree with the mayor that legislation to this effect is long overdue. The knowledge that the legal limit is substantially lower will undoubtedly be an effective deterrent to intoxicated driving. And it should also discourage drivers from trying to "guess" whether they have downed too much to safely drive.

I'm sure most people would agree that few—if any—victims are more innocent than those that are killed or injured by impaired drivers. But we are not powerless to reduce the number of these tragedies; we just need the political will. I urge all New Yorkers to support common-sense legislation lowering the BAC limit to .05.

*-Melinda Katz is the Queens County District Attorney.*

## TEEN DRIVER AND PARENTS CHARGED IN GRUESOME COLLISION THAT KILLED 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL

PRESS RELEASE — DECEMBER 5, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that a teenage driver and his parents have been charged in connection with the death of a 14-year-old girl who was a passenger in a car sheared in half after crashing at more than 100 miles an hour into a parked UPS truck on a busy Queens thoroughfare. The victim was ejected from the BMW and shortly afterward pronounced dead at the scene on North Conduit Avenue near 160th Street in Jamaica.

The unlicensed 16-year-old driver of the BMW, a gift from his father, is charged with manslaughter and reckless driving. While his junior license allowed him to drive when accompanied by a licensed driver at least 21 years of age, the defendant was alone in the car with the victim at the time of the May 17 crash. Prior to the fatal collision, in November 2022, witnesses from the defendant's school began seeing him regularly driving the same BMW to and from school unaccompanied by an adult. He was ticketed in November 2022 for driving without a license and driving while using a portable electronic device. His name is being withheld because of his age. His parents are charged with endangering the welfare of a child and permitting unlicensed operation.

DA Katz said: "We will argue that the horrific car crash that took the victim's young life was the result of recklessness and negligence, not only on the part of the minor behind the wheel, but the adults who put him in the driver's seat."

The now 17-year-old, of Springfield Gardens, was arraigned today on charges of manslaughter in the second degree; three counts of assault in the second degree; assault in the third degree; reckless endangerment in the second degree; endangering the welfare of a child; reckless driving; driving in excess of the maximum speed limit; unsafe lane change on a roadway laned for traffic; making an unlawful turn; two counts of operating a motor vehicle with a tinted window; operating or driving a motor vehicle without a license; and operating a motor vehicle in violation of a restricted permit

or license. He faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted. His parents also of Springfield Gardens, each face up to a year in prison. The judge ordered the defendants to return to court on February 5.

According to the charges: on May 17, at approximately 6:38 pm, the defendant was driving a red 2005 BMW 325i westbound on North Conduit Avenue near 160th Street at a speed calculated at 101 miles per hour. The posted speed limit was 30 miles per hour. The teenager lost control of the vehicle when attempting to move from the left-center lane to the right-center lane and crashed into the back of a parked UPS truck. After hitting the truck, the BMW spun across the roadway and struck a tractor-trailer traveling westbound. As a result of the initial collision, the victim was ejected from the front passenger seat of the BMW into the back of the truck. She suffered severe head trauma and was pronounced dead at the scene.

As a UPS employee was getting into his truck the BMW collided with the back of it, throwing the employee to the ground. He was taken to a local hospital where he was treated for a large hematoma to his leg, a laceration to his face and a bruise to his chest. He has not returned to work since the incident and will require surgery to repair a torn muscle in his shoulder.

At the hospital where he was being treated for minor injuries, the defendant explained to police that he had picked the victim up at her home and was taking her to his grandmother's house. His father, who was with his son at the hospital, told police that while the BMW was registered in his name, he had bought the vehicle for his son and that the car was his son's.

Three weeks after the fatal crash, on June 7, the father told the car's insurer that his son had driven the BMW approximately twice with him in the vehicle and that his son was a good driver.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*

**POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS**

## COLD CASE UNIT

The Cold Case Unit is the first unit ever in Queens County dedicated entirely to investigating and solving the borough's oldest and most challenging unsolved homicide cases. The unit uses groundbreaking forensic testing and cutting-edge investigative techniques to examine unsolved crimes to bring long-awaited justice to victims and their families.

This year the unit indicted a defendant on the charge of murder in the second degree for the 1992 death of a 15-year-old victim, who was found naked and strangled in her Far Rockaway home. The victim was found by her mother in a bathroom shared by two apartments in their multi-family home. After a painstaking investigation led by the NYPD and our office, there was a break in the case. The District Attorney's office and the NYPD requested that the New York City Medical Examiner's office test for DNA under the victim's preserved fingernail clippings. The test resulted in DNA evidence that linked the defendant to the crime. The case is currently pending prosecution in Supreme Court.

Additionally, the office continues to utilize the \$535,000 federal grant\* awarded in 2022 to enhance cases and potentially resolve unsolved homicides where DNA of a suspect has been identified, thereby decreasing the number of cold cases awaiting prosecution.

*\*This project was supported by Grant No. 15PBJA-21-GG-04370-DNAX awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.*

## OPINION: QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S COLD CASE UNIT SOLVES BACKLOG OF CASES, BRINGS CLOSURE FOR FAMILIES

BY MELINDA KATZ

POSTED ON MAY 11, 2023

The family of Nadine Slade sat in a Queens courtroom on May 1 to witness an event that came nearly 31 years to the day after the 15-year-old was murdered in Far Rockaway. A defendant had finally been arrested and will face justice thanks to the diligence of investigators digging through old homicide files and unexplored forensic evidence.

The loss of a loved one to a brutal and senseless act of violence brings unimaginable, relentless pain to families whenever and wherever it occurs. But it should go without saying that unsolved murders do not just affect the murdered victim and their families; they impact friends, neighbors, coworkers and the community for years to come.

The emotional strain and unique grief that comes from not having answers for who committed the most serious of crimes and being unable to seek justice in a court of law is unimaginable. And that sense of unease and frustration can infiltrate

entire communities, and result in distrust of law enforcement or, even worse, the sense that police and prosecutors simply don't care enough to solve



Queens Daily Eagle/Jacob Kaye

these crimes — which can, in turn, lead to less cooperation from those most affected by violent crime. That is why it is so crucial for the criminal justice system to recognize the importance of bringing closure to these cases.

To address this, I created the first Cold Case Unit at the Queens County District Attorney's Office. The unit is dedicated to investigating and closing Queens' oldest and most challenging unsolved homicide cases. Our goal is to provide justice for all crime victims and their families, no matter when the crime was committed and no matter how long it takes. We want the community to know that we will never stop fighting for justice for those who can no longer speak or fight for themselves.

The Cold Case Unit is comprised of an experienced team of assistant district attorneys, detective investigators and support staff who have systematically begun to sift through an enormous backlog of unsolved cases.

Thankfully, the number of homicides in Queens has declined dramatically in recent years. Still, an unacceptably high number of unsolved murder cases persists due to past decades of violence. Homicides in Queens first surpassed 100 in 1970 and remained in the triple digits for nearly 30 years, peaking at 341 in 1992. In 2022, there were 72 homicides in the borough and there are still approximately 2,200 Queens cold case murders.

The goal of the Cold Case Unit is to give each of these cases a fresh look, to bring them up to current investigative standards, and to ask for community support and involvement, whenever appropriate. Not only do we look to test evidence that has never been tested, but we also look for evidence that we may be able to test based on advancements in technology.

In some cases, evidence that was once considered unsuitable for forensic testing or that yielded inconclusive results, may now provide supportive evidence in an investigation. This can allow for the identification of suspects that were not on anyone's radar or supply definitive proof of guilt where evidence was previously too uncertain to form the basis of a prosecution.

Often the forensic testing involves evidence that produces a DNA profile, but it can also come from advancements in latent print and other technology. In addition, the increasing number of DNA profiles contained in national databases and familial DNA testing can produce not only investigative leads, but also solve cases. Forensic genetic genealogy — the process of identifying human remains or a suspect through family members who voluntarily submit their DNA to genealogy databases — has also been a

game changer for solving cold case homicides.

I am pleased to report that the Cold Case Unit has already achieved notable results.

Last year, advancements in modern technology and forensics allowed us and the NYPD to solve and successfully prosecute a 45-year-old homicide case using forensic genetic genealogy. Martin Motta was arrested for the 1976 murder of an 81-year-old World War I veteran, George Clarence Seitz. Motta killed, dismembered and then buried Seitz's remains under a concrete slab in a Queens backyard. His remains were unearthed in 2019 based on a tip from a witness.

A DNA profile that was developed could not identify the deceased man in any local, state or national databases. My office then sought the assistance of the FBI and Othram, a private forensic laboratory in Texas, to generate leads as to the unknown victim's identity. Othram produced a comprehensive genealogical profile from the skeletal remains using advanced DNA testing. That profile was given to the FBI, which then developed leads that were turned over to my office and the NYPD.

Those leads enabled us to identify the victim and his identity, in turn, allowed us to find additional witnesses. This was the first successful prosecution of a case using forensic genetic genealogy in New York City. The case we built was so solid that Motta ultimately pled guilty in exchange for a 20-year prison sentence.

The arrest in Nadine Slade's murder came after the Cold Case Unit reviewed the case and, working with the NYPD, asked the New York City Medical Examiner's office to test for DNA under the victim's preserved fingernail clippings. The results linked the defendant to the crime, resulting in an indictment. Unfortunately, not every case can be solved forensically or by using advanced technology. Thus, the unit also focuses on interviewing — or reinterviewing — any potential witnesses, as well as reaching out to family members and friends of the victim and engaging the community. To this end, the office has developed a social media template that highlights the details of individual cold cases. On the anniversary of the victim's death, we post that information on the office's social media sites and on our public webpage to engage the public in these investigations and hopefully to obtain leads.

Today's technology coupled with increasing successes nationwide in solving cold cases has empowered investigators and prosecutors to endeavor to solve the unsolvable and begin to decrease the daunting cold case backlog.

*-Melinda Katz is the Queens County District Attorney.*

**IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION  
PLEASE CALL 1-800-577-TIPS  
VISIT: [CRIMESTOPPERS.NYPDONLINE.ORG](http://CRIMESTOPPERS.NYPDONLINE.ORG)  
DOWNLOAD AND USE THE CRIME STOPPERS APP: CS-NYC  
TIPS ARE CONFIDENTIAL**



**ROMEO EINSTEIN ACUNA**  
**AGE 49**

On September 24, 2002, at approximately 8:40 pm, Romeo Einstein Acuna was found stabbed to death inside his home at 78-11 35th Avenue in Jackson Heights, Queens.



**HELEN BROCK**  
**AGE 54**

On Thursday, August 2, 1984, Helen Brock was the victim of a home invasion where she was shot and killed inside of 78-04 220th Street in Bayside, Queens.



**LESLIE BALOGH**  
**AGE 46**

On May 3, 2013, at 1:45 am, Leslie Balogh was shot and killed in the vicinity of 31-48 137 Street in Fushing, Queens.



**MARISHA CHEONG**  
**AGE 24**

On February 16, 2013, the body of Marisha Cheong washed up at the shoreline of Rockaway Boulevard and Bayside Avenue in Breezy Point with her hands bound behind her back. She had been reported missing on December 20, 2012.



**CLEOPATRA BARLOW**  
**AGE 47**

On May 25, 1994, at approximately 10:30 pm, Cleopatra Barlow was shot and killed in the vicinity of 145-37 230th Place in Rosedale, Queens.



**JOHN DALTON**  
**AGE 56**

On June 21, 2005, Rose Gilbert and John Dalton were found stabbed and bludgeoned to death inside of 42-09 47th Avenue in Sunnyside, Queens.



**STEVIE BATES**  
**AGE 19**

On September 18, 2020, the remains of Stevie Bates were found buried in the vicinity of 80-97 Cypress Avenue in Ridgewood, Queens. Stevie was last seen on April 28, 2012, at approximately 8:50 am inside the Port Authority Bus Terminal.



**CHARISSE NELSON DAVENPORT**  
**AGE 21**

On September 9, 2003, at approximately 9:00 pm, four family members were brutally stabbed to death in their own home at 109-22 139th Street in Jamaica, Queens: Charisse Nelson Davenport, James Armstead (79), Robert Armstead (73) and Hattie Morris (81).



**HOPE BLAKELY**  
**AGE 23**

On October 28, 1989, at 7:30 am, Hope Blakely was found stabbed to death at the corner of 132nd Street and 92nd Avenue in Richmond Hill, Queens.



**CHRISTINE DIEFENBACH**  
**AGE 14**

On February 7, 1988, Christine Diefenbach was found bludgeoned to death near 89th Avenue and 121st Street in Richmond Hill, Queens.



**MICHILOLOMO**  
AGE 20

On Saturday, August 13, 2011, at approximately 3:24 am, Michilene Digirolomo was shot and killed in the vicinity of 107-48 160th Street in Jamaica, Queens.



**ANTHONY HILTON**  
AGE 22

On May 19, 2011, at approximately 11:35 pm, Anthony Hilton AKA Billz was killed in a drive-by shooting at the intersection of 120th Road and Lucas Street in Jamaica, Queens.



**JOHN JEFF**  
AGE 21

On Saturday, August 15, 2020, at approximately 3:00 am, New York City Correction Officer John Jeff was shot and killed at the corner of Ridgedale Street and Defoe Street within the 113th Precinct.



**MAURICE JOHNSON**  
AGE 24

On March 8, 2012, at approximately 12:06 am, Maurice Johnson was found shot to death in the vicinity of 172-44 133rd Avenue in Rochdale, Queens.



**ROSE GILBERT**  
AGE 56

On June 21, 2005, Rose Gilbert and John Dalton were found stabbed and bludgeoned to death inside of 42-09 47th Avenue in Sunnyside, Queens.



**EILEEN LAWLOR**  
AGE 51

On March 28, 1996, at 3:30 pm, Eileen Lawlor was found stabbed to death inside the basement of 28-08 35th Street in Astoria, Queens.



**DANIEL GUNTHERIE**  
AGE 19

On June 1, 2010, at approximately 2:30 am, Daniel Gunthrie was shot and killed outside of 108-62 167th Street in Jamaica, Queens.



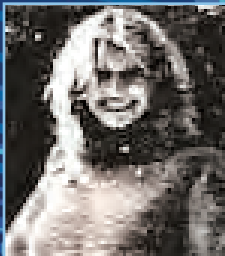
**JAYME LODER**  
AGE 23

On July 12, 2000, Jayme Loder was assaulted and stabbed to death inside her apartment located at 82-09 135th Street in Briarwood, Queens.



**JERWAINE GORMAN**  
AGE 34

On April 29, 2015, at approximately 12:34 pm, Jerwaine Gorman was shot and killed inside his vehicle which was parked in front of 114-25 167th Street in Jamaica, Queens.



**BRIDGET MANDERSON**  
AGE 24

On June 4, 1979, aspiring model Bridget Manderson was struck in the head and killed by a cinder block thrown from the roof of 7-25 166th Street in Whitestone, Queens.



**NOEL HIDALGO**  
AGE 58

On December 4, 2013, at approximately 3:30 pm, the body of Noel Hidalgo was found beaten to death inside 108-08 Jamaica Avenue in Richmond Hill.



**MANUEL MAYI**  
AGE 18

On March 29, 1991, Queens College honor student Manuel Mayi was attacked by a group who chased him through the streets of Corona, Queens and then mercilessly beat him to death with a baseball bat.



**JAMES MINOR**

AGE 35

On March 24, 2013, at approximately 9:30 am, James Minor was found shot to death inside of 119-30 146th Street in Jamaica, Queens.



**BRAHM RISHI PRASAD**

AGE 26

On November 14, 2010, at approximately 4:00 am, Brahm Rishi Prasad was stabbed and killed outside Otro Rollo Tropical nightclub at 29-40 Northern Boulevard in Long Island City, Queens.



**DEMIKA MOORE**

AGE 25

On July 23, 2010, at approximately 10:30 pm, the body of Demika Moore was found in an alleyway near 178-11 Leslie Road in Jamaica, Queens.



**ROSARIO PRESTIGIACOMO**

AGE 64

On February 10, 2009, at approximately 2:15 pm, Rosario Prestigiacomo was found stabbed to death inside his own home at 2031 Green Avenue in Ridgewood, Queens.



**PRISCILLA PIMENTEL**

AGE 24

On November 24, 2006, at approximately 1:30 pm, Priscilla Pimentel was found stabbed to death inside of a bathtub with her hands bound behind her back at 102-09 87th Avenue in Richmond Hill, Queens.



**JAMES RODRIGUEZ**

AGE 32

On March 26, 1992, at approximately 9:00 pm, New York City Hospital Police Captain James Rodriguez was shot and killed entering the lobby of 91-10 32nd Avenue in Jackson Heights, Queens.



**SHAWN PLUMMER**

AGE 18

On July 13, 2012, at approximately 2:45 pm, Shawn Plummer was shot and killed on Seagirt Boulevard between Beach 30th and Beach 28th Streets in Far Rockaway, Queens.



**ANDRE SAUNDERS**

AGE 32

On January 11, 2009, at approximately 4:32 pm, Andre Saunders was shot and killed on the south west corner of 160th Street and 109 Avenue in South Jamaica, Queens.



**NESHAWN PLUMMER**

AGE 16

On August 30, 2015, at approximately 9:00 pm, Neshawn Plummer was shot and killed in the vicinity of 25-18 Seagirt Avenue in Far Rockaway, Queens.



**DENISE SHEEHY**

AGE 16

Denise Sheehy went missing from the vicinity of 48-16 46th Street in Woodside, Queens on July 7, 1970. She was last seen wearing blue shorts, a red & white top, and white clog sandals. At the time, she was 5'3" and weighed approximately 103 pounds.



**TIVELL SMALLING**  
AGE 26

On March 19, 2016, at approximately 1:50 am, Tivell Smalling was shot and killed inside the doorway of the basement apartment located at 120-82 131st Street in South Ozone Park, Queens.



**DENNIS WALTER**  
AGE 21

On May 12, 2012, at 12:30 pm, Dennis Walter was shot and killed inside of 107-19 171st Place in Jamaica, Queens.



**ANTONIA STASSI**  
AGE 29

On September 28, 1999, at approximately 11:54 am, Antonia Stassi was found stabbed to death at 48-04 Broadway in Astoria, Queens.



**IAN WELCH**  
AGE 19

On January 14, 1990, at approximately 2:20 am, Ian Welch was shot and killed while sitting inside his vehicle (1985 Cadillac) outside of 166-19 120th Avenue in Jamaica, Queens.



**LEAH TAGLIAFERRI**  
AGE 32

On April 6, 2002, Leah Tagliaferri was found dead, strangled with a scarf tied tightly around her neck inside her own home at 61-20 43rd Avenue in Woodside, Queens.



**LESLIE ZARET**  
AGE 17

In the early morning of August 17, 1974, the body of Leslie Zaret was found near Public School 203 in the vicinity of 53-11 Springfield Blvd in Bayside, Queens.



**DASHAWN TAYLOR**  
AGE 31

On October 9, 2018, at approximately 12:30 pm, Dashawn Taylor was shot and killed outside of 119-32 171 Street in Jamaica, Queens.



**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE REMAINS**  
AGE 16-19

On April 18, 1994, unidentified female remains were found at 130th Avenue and 176th Street, Queens. If you have any information as to the identity of the victim, please contact the 113th Pct. or Queens South Homicide Squad.



**SOFIA VALE**  
AGE 34

On April 14, 1995, the body of Sofia Vale was found stuffed in the trunk of a stolen car which had been set on fire outside of 139-15 91st Avenue in Jamaica, Queens. Sofia was last seen being dropped off at her home on April 9, 1995, at 3:30 am in the vicinity of 2111 La Fontaine Avenue in the Bronx.



**UNIDENTIFIED MALE REMAINS**  
AGE 20-30

On April 12, 2014, unidentified male remains were found at 72-36 43rd Avenue, Queens. If you have any information as to the identity of the victim, please contact the 110th Pct. Squad.



**EFRAIN VARGAS**  
AGE 24

On Sunday, January 29, 2017, at approximately 3:30 pm, Efrain Vargas was found stabbed to death inside his own apartment located at 89-29 91st Street in Queens.



# SECTION III

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## TWO-WAY STREET: RESTORING FAIRNESS AND CONFIDENCE

<b>CONVICTION INTEGRITY UNIT . . . . .</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>JUVENILE PROSECUTIONS . . . . .</b>	<b>65</b>
RAISE THE AGE AND ADOLESCENT OFFENDERS. . . . .	65
THE 3-PRONG TEST . . . . .	65
<b>APPEALS AND SPECIAL LITIGATION DIVISION . . . . .</b>	<b>66</b>
APPEALS BUREAU. . . . .	66
SEALING CONVICTIONS . . . . .	67
FOIL AND CIVIL LITIGATION UNIT . . . . .	67
IMMIGRATION UNIT . . . . .	67
<b>REHABILITATION PROGRAMS AND RESTORATIVE SERVICES BUREAU . . . . .</b>	<b>68</b>
DIVERSION AND ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING UNIT . . . . .	69
SPECIALIZED COURT PARTS AND POST-ARRAIGNMENT DIVERSION PROGRAMS . . . . .	70

## CONVICTION INTEGRITY UNIT

DA Katz established the Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) in 2020. This significant step was one of the key reforms spearheaded by DA Katz **to ensure that our criminal justice system is fairer and more responsive** to the needs of our community. The CIU reinvestigates and resolves credible claims of actual innocence, wrongful conviction, or other circumstances of a case which undermines the District Attorney's confidence in a just outcome. This process is afforded to all convicted persons regardless of the nature of the offense, whether there was a trial or plea bargain, and whether they are represented by an attorney. The work of the Conviction Integrity Unit also serves a vital law enforcement function for both victims and public safety, because if the wrong person is convicted, the actual perpetrator has not been brought to justice.

During District Attorney Katz's first term and at the close of 2023, **244 cases have been submitted** to the CIU for review. The review process may be initiated through several methods, including a request from a convicted person or attorney, community member, or through our own initiative. **Claims are investigated based on their factual merit, without regard to procedural barriers to legal review.** CIU investigations consider evidence that was not part of the trial record. Where appropriate, the CIU will work collaboratively with defense counsel or the convicted person to conduct a thorough investigation and just resolution of the case.

After a thorough investigation by a team of experienced prosecutors and detectives, **the CIU has thus far vacated 16 convictions** based on evidence pointing to innocence or other fundamental errors that had been overlooked through the ordinary judicial process. **In 2023, the CIU vacated three wrongful convictions based on newly discovered evidence.** At a hearing in August, Armond McCloud and Reginald Cameron were exonerated of convictions relating to a 1994 Lefrak City murder when evidence established that they had falsely confessed. Both young men confessed after being interrogated for many hours by a detective who is now known to have elicited prior false confessions in the infamous Central Park Five case. Another man, Earl Walters, was exonerated when new fingerprint testing identified other men as the perpetrators of the 1992 kidnappings for which Walters was convicted. Collectively, these three men unjustly served more than 55 years in prison.

In addition to individual exonerations, the CIU has addressed systemic problems that go to **the reliability and fairness of convictions obtained by the office in the past.** As part of an ongoing assessment, the CIU has reviewed convictions obtained by New York Police Department officers who were later convicted of various crimes including perjury, falsifying evidence and other serious offenses committed while they were on the job. Where the essential witness in a case is a law enforcement officer that has been convicted of crimes which irreparably impair their credibility, the office cannot stand behind a criminal conviction. Vacating and dismissing these cases is both constitutionally required and necessary to **ensure public confidence in our justice system.** Eighty six convictions have been reversed in this ongoing review.



# JUVENILE PROSECUTIONS

In 2023, District Attorney Katz enhanced the office's work with adolescent offender "AO" and juvenile offender "JO" defendants by expanding the Juvenile Prosecutions Unit. This department serves as a resource for all cases involving AO and JO defendants throughout the office and serves as a liaison to the New York City Law Department and Queens County Family Court. Juvenile Prosecutions is now comprised of several attorneys, one of whom is dedicated to the Supreme Court Youth Part. The expansion of Juvenile Prosecutions **has improved their ability to manage cases, streamline court processes, and better assist with JO and AO cases throughout the office.**

JOs are 14- to 15-year-olds charged with certain violent felonies and 13-year-olds charged with murder in the second degree. JO cases are heard in the Supreme Court Youth Part unless they are removed to Family Court.

As of December 15, 2023, there was a total of 91 juvenile offender arrests, which is a 93% increase from last year. Eighty-six of these cases were charged and arraigned and 50 of these cases were subsequently removed to Family Court. We prosecuted the remaining 36 in the Youth Part. The most common charges in these remaining cases were robbery, attempted murder, and assault.

## RAISE THE AGE AND ADOLESCENT OFFENDERS

Under New York's Raise the Age law, adolescent offenders are 16- and 17-year-old defendants who have been charged with committing a felony. Misdemeanor cases are sent directly to Family Court and are not reviewed by our office. Most non-violent felony cases are removed to Family Court. Violent felony cases are reviewed by the Supreme Court Youth Part presiding judge. To retain a violent felony in the Supreme Court Youth Part, the judge must review the affidavits and determine if one of the factors in the 3-prong test is present. Generally, if none of the 3 factors is present, the violent felony case is removed to Family Court.

## THE 3-PRONG TEST

During the course of the crime, the adolescent offender:

1. Caused significant injury to the complainant, or
2. Displayed a firearm, rifle, shotgun, or deadly weapon, or
3. Engaged in unlawful sexual intercourse, oral sexual conduct, anal sexual conduct, or sexual contact as defined in Penal Law section 130.00 with the victim.

If the Youth Judge determines the 3-prong test was not met, the District Attorney may file a motion to retain the violent felony based on 'Extraordinary Circumstances' within 30 days of the decision.

As of December 15, 2023, there was a total of 528 Raise the Age arrests in Queens County, a 34% increase from 2022. Of those arrests, 488 were sent to arraignments and 89% of those cases were then removed to Family Court.

**Like other counties across New York, Queens has seen an uptick in violent felony and firearm cases committed by adolescent offenders.**

## ADOLESCENT OFFENDER CASES THAT WERE REMOVED TO FAMILY COURT

90%	83%	81%	89%
2020	2021	2022	2023

## APPEALS AND SPECIAL LITIGATION DIVISION

The Appeals and Special Litigation Division is composed of the Appeals Bureau, the FOIL and Civil Litigation Unit, and the Immigration Unit, a position District Attorney Katz created in 2020.

### APPEALS BUREAU

The Appeals Bureau handles all the office's **post-conviction litigation**, which includes primarily responding to defendants' briefs in the Appellate Division and post-conviction motions in the Supreme Court.

Some of the significant convictions that the Appeals Bureau successfully defended in 2023 include:

***People v. Demetrious Blackwell*** — the appellate court affirmed the defendant's convictions for Murder in the First Degree, Attempted Murder in the First Degree, and Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree for shooting a gun at two police officers while they were on anticrime patrol in Queens Village in an unmarked vehicle, killing Officer Brian Moore. Defendant was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

***People v. Elvin Heskey*** — the appellate court affirmed the lower court's designation of the defendant as a level three sex offender, the highest designation. The charges stemmed from a 2016 conviction in federal court for Transportation of Child Pornography after defendant was found in possession of thousands of images and videos of children, some as young as six months old, engaging in sexual acts.

***People v. Juan Tirado*** — the appellate court affirmed defendant's convictions for Course of Sexual Conduct Against a Child in the Second Degree, Endangering the Welfare of a Child, and Sexual Abuse in the Third Degree after defendant sexually abused the complainant for several years starting when the complainant was 11 years old.

***People v. Matthew Stockfeder*** — the appellate court affirmed defendant's convictions for Assault in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Fourth Degree after he stabbed one of his housemates. The defendant was a student at St. John's University, and the victim was a recent graduate.



## SEALING CONVICTIONS

A significant function of the Appeals Bureau is to respond to motions to seal convictions under section 160.59 of the Criminal Procedure Law that allows for sealing of ten-year-old, non-violent convictions under certain circumstances. In coming years, with the [passage of the Clean Slate Act in 2023](#), the sealing of many convictions will be automatic.

In 2023, the courts sealed 55 convictions with no objection from DA Katz, freeing those applicants of the encumbrance of decades-old, non-violent convictions.

## FOIL AND CIVIL LITIGATION UNIT

The FOIL and Civil Litigation Unit handles requests under the Freedom of Information Law and responds to inter-agency and law enforcement requests for records on specific cases as well as subpoenas for records or testimony in civil litigation.

In 2023, the unit [responded to over 500 FOIL requests](#), providing the public with access to thousands of pages of documents.

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In 2023, the FOIL and Civil Litigation Unit responded to over

# ***500 FOIL REQUESTS***

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## IMMIGRATION UNIT

The Immigration Unit operates as an office-wide resource for all immigration issues affecting defendants, victims, and witnesses. As the [immigrant population continues to expand](#) in Queens County and in the New York City area, immigration impacts many matters across the Queens District Attorney's Office.

As QDA's certifying official for U and T non-immigrant visas, in 2023 the Immigration Unit certified and reviewed the greatest number of applications since the pandemic era. Over 300 certifications were made for current and former cooperating victims of qualifying criminal activity.

The Immigration Unit provides on-call assistance to all prosecutors throughout the office on policy considerations, open court matters, appellate matters, as well as training to incoming prosecutors. As for open court matters, the Immigration Unit participates in conferences for plea negotiation, provides case specific written analysis for cases being handled by the Appeals and Special Litigation Division, and directly assists appellate prosecutors in post-conviction motion practice.

The District Attorney continues her initiative to provide relief for transformative individuals whose immigration status was fatally affected through a guilty plea from a time when the overall justice system did not consider immigration. Applications are reviewed on a case-by case basis.

## REHABILITATION PROGRAMS AND RESTORATIVE SERVICES BUREAU

The Rehabilitation Programs and Restorative Services Bureau continues to serve people engaged with the criminal legal system in myriad ways. **Providing services to crime victims, witnesses, survivors, and defendants charged with criminal offenses**, the bureau continues to expand its offerings, and collaborations with stakeholders and community-based organizations.

Throughout 2023, the **Crime Victims Advocate Program (CVAP)** has been actively involved in community events, trainings, and workshops. They are committed to raising awareness of trends in various communities and learning more about the needs of victims, witnesses, and survivors of crime. Staffed by licensed social workers, mental health counselors, advocates, and application assistants, CVAP has been proactive in providing resources to walk-in clients; they ensure that victims have access to the information and assistance they require during challenging times. CVAP advocates accompany victims to onsite law enforcement interviews with NYPD and forensic interviews with Assistant District Attorneys and escort witnesses to court to testify during trial.



## DIVERSION AND ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING UNIT

The **Diversion and Alternative Sentencing Unit** is responsible for managing opportunities for arrested persons to **participate in treatment and community-based resources**.

### PROJECT RESET

Project Reset, a citywide initiative and project of the Center for Justice Innovation, is utilized to engage participants prior to arraignment. Clinically trained staff work with participants to explore challenges that may have led to their misdemeanor arrest and discuss strategies to avoid future involvement with the legal system. In March 2023, the bureau implemented a new daily screening and referral process with a goal to increase the number of referrals and successful participants, resulting in favorable outcomes for the participants and fewer cases on the arraignment court calendar. As of November 30, 2023, nearly 250 people have successfully completed the program.

### FAR ROCKAWAY COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROGRAM

Arrested persons are also referred to Community Court in both the Far Rockaway Community Justice Center and a second location in Jamaica, allowing more defendants access to programming. The Center provides restorative-justice-based solutions to local crime that positively addresses the justice needs of the victim, offender, and the Rockaways community. Community-led hearings allow people to repay their community, maintain their dignity, and learn new skills that can help them lead more successful lives. In 2023, the office referred 13 cases to the program and 11 have completed programming.

### YOUNG NEW YORKERS AND MOMA AT PSA 1: ART DIVERSION

Young New Yorker's (YNY's) Re-imagining and Recreating Experiences (R.A.R.E.), is a new five (5) week arts-immersed program, offered in a group-setting for young adults ages 18-24. This arts-based diversion program offers young adults an opportunity to explore time, space, energy, and community, through the transformative practice of art. YNY's teaching artists use the power of art to help participants visualize the racial, social, and economic implications of their arrest, further contextualizing the circumstances influencing the decisions leading to their current charge. The R.A.R.E. program also takes a deeper dive into personal and community safety, mindfulness and need-based decision making. Participants learn from leading artists in the field of contemporary arts and use their voices to develop a culminate art piece to display in a public exhibition at the commencement of program, with our community partners, MoMA PS1. The program is free for participants. Metro Cards, meals, and refreshments are provided for each session, and all sessions are in-person at MoMA PS1, a long-standing contemporary art institution in Queens County. In 2023, seven defendants from Criminal Court participated in and successfully completed the program.

### QUEENS COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER | CENTER FOR JUSTICE INNOVATION

Our Diversion and Alternative Sentencing Unit continues to work diligently with the Criminal Court Bureau to identify cases for services, which includes a clinical assessment for needed resources and individual counseling. As of November 30, 2023, staff referred more than 950 cases for services.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community Service is also an integral part of the District Attorney's commitment to alternative dispositions. In 2023, more than 850 defendants were referred to community service and more than 450 defendants successfully completed their service mandates.

## SPECIALIZED COURT PARTS AND POST-ARRAIGNMENT DIVERSION PROGRAMS

The bureau is also responsible for **10 specialized court parts and calendars involving a program disposition**. The Queens County District Attorney's Office has diverted cases into programming since 1987, and formally entered into agreements with specialized court parts as they were created.

### QUEENS MENTAL HEALTH COURT

Operating since 2005, the Queens Mental Health Court (QMHC) seeks to improve the wellbeing of justice-involved individuals living with mental and behavioral health issues by linking them with court-supervised, community-based treatment. Its goals include improving public safety and the quality of life for people living with mental illness. More than 340 people have successfully graduated from the program. **In 2023, 21 individuals disposed of their criminal cases in QMHC, and 16 participants successfully completed their treatment mandate and graduated from the court part.**

### QUEENS DWI COURT (QDWI)

Queens Criminal Court DWI offers defendants with their first felony driving while intoxicated (DWI) offense, the opportunity to receive treatment under close court supervision for a minimum of one year as an alternative to incarceration and/or a felony conviction. If the defendant voluntarily agrees to enter the program, they must plead guilty to both the felony and a misdemeanor DWI charge and sign a document agreeing to abide by the treatment plan and the rules of the program.

Participation in the program requires the defendant to wear a SCRAM Alcohol and Location Monitoring System bracelet for 90 days, refrain from driving, and be on interim probation for the year. If the defendant successfully completes the program the felony charged is dismissed and they are sentenced to the misdemeanor. Since 2010, the retention rate for defendants placed on a monitoring device through conditional dispositions is 93%. The successful completion rate for those defendants who are placed on a monitoring device through conditional disposition is 92%. Since program inception, we have processed over 4,500 defendants.

### QUEENS VETERANS COURT AND QUEENS MISDEMEANOR VETERANS COURT

The Queens Veterans Court and Queens Misdemeanor Veterans Court provides treatment opportunities to people that have served our country in the armed forces. Substance misuse and mental health problems may stem from service in combat zones and can be exacerbated as veterans return to civilian life. Both the felony and misdemeanor Veterans Courts offer a solution by connecting veterans to appropriate services with mandated court supervision. In 2023, District Attorney Katz worked with NYPD to ensure we learn at the time of arrest whether the defendant served in the military. The Diversion and Alternative Sentencing Unit proactively screens NYPD paperwork and clinical information is gathered to determine the next best steps to resolve pending criminal charges when arrested persons identify as having served in the military. **From January 2020 through December 2023, 21 people graduated from the felony Veterans Treatment Court and approximately 50 people graduated from the Queens Misdemeanor Veterans Court.**

### COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

The bureau works with Treatment Alternatives for Safer Communities (TASC) to facilitate specialized programming for people with substance misuse or mental health needs. In 2023, the bureau facilitated 123 alternative dispositions, of which 61 were dispositions to mental health treatment. **Approximately, 140 graduations from programming occurred, which includes 53 mental health graduates.**

## SUPREME COURT: DIVERSION AND ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING UNIT

The unit handles a revolving caseload of nearly 600 felony cases for screening, assessment, and program placement. Cases are referred from throughout the office, including the Felony Trial, Career Criminal and Major Crimes, Domestic Violence, Special Victims, and the Violent Criminal Enterprises Bureaus.

## GUN DIVERSION PROGRAM

In March 2022, DA Katz launched the Gun Diversion program. The office continues to pursue the drivers of gun violence while simultaneously ensuring that appropriate offenders are afforded interventions and rehabilitative services. This gun diversion initiative aims to steer those charged with gun possession into a program using a restorative approach. This program engages participants to understand the harm caused to the community and address traumas and/or community conditions leading to possession of a firearm. Participants interact with clinical professionals and culturally competent credible messengers during the 12-month-long program.

The office has reviewed 421 cases for eligibility and 27 participants enrolled in the program. In 2023, 22 participants successfully graduated from the program. The bureau works closely with the Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau to vet candidates and assessments are coordinated with The Fortune Society. Regular case conference meetings are scheduled with The Fortune Society and the Department of Probation to foster good communication and manage expectations.

## CRIME VICTIMS ADVOCATE PROGRAM

From January 1, 2023, through December 15, 2023, the CVAP offered services to almost 3,000 individuals providing safety planning and supportive counseling in over 1,900 sessions. The office's advocates also supported 55 families of homicide victims, with emotional support, connection to services, and application assistance. Examples of services provided to survivors of homicide include referrals to grief counseling, group counseling, NYCHA Emergency Transfer – Section 8, and assistance with emergency funeral expenses through the Office of Victim Services.

The following chart contains data points gathered on services provided to crime victims:

CRIME VICTIMS ADVOCATE DATA	FULL CALENDAR YEAR			AS OF 12/15/23
	2020	2021	2022	2023
INDIVIDUALS OFFERED CVAP SERVICES	4,786	3,831	2,520	2,931
CONTACTS/FOLLOW-UPS MADE	9,696	9,536	9,981	9,647
PERSONAL ADVOCACY	1,818	2,410	2,318	4,673
COUNSELING SESSIONS	2,033	1,782	695	1,938
HOMICIDE FAMILIES SUPPORTED	135	98	66	55
CAB LINE DATA	1,955	2,621	3,998	5,775



# SECTION IV

## ON THE BLOCK: BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

<b>COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS DIVISION . . . . .</b>	<b>74</b>
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UNIT . . . . .	75
CIVIC AWARENESS UNIT . . . . .	76
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCILS . . . . .	76
OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS . . . . .	77
GUN BUYBACK PROGRAM. . . . .	77
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT UNIT . . . . .	78
<b>HATE CRIMES . . . . .</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>HUMAN TRAFFICKING . . . . .</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>FRAUDS . . . . .</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>AUTO CRIME . . . . .</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>HOUSING AND WORKER PROTECTION . . . . .</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>CLOSING ILLEGAL CANNABIS SHOPS . . . . .</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>SAFETY IN OUR PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM. . . . .</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>QUEENS MERCHANTS</b>	
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM . . . . .	89
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS & POLICY . . . . .	89
OVERDOSE CRISIS: COMMUNITIES IN NEED . . . . .	90
PROFESSIONALS OUT IN THE COMMUNITY . . . . .	93

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS DIVISION

DA Katz's **community-based approach to prosecution** has garnered wide-ranging exposure. Whether hosting representatives from national or international prosecution offices, or as a panelist on a national stage, DA Katz has welcomed the opportunity to share her rationale and method for partnering with the community. One of DA Katz's top priorities has been to re-imagine the relationship between the office and the residents of Queens County. The first contact that an individual has with this office should not be in a courtroom or in the face of tragedy, but rather at a community event where they learn about the resources available at the Queens District Attorney's Office.

Toward this goal, the reimagined and enhanced Community Partnerships Division takes a multi-faceted approach, providing opportunities for individuals to make a positive contribution to Queens County so that crime never becomes an option. This Division reaches out to civic and non-profit organizations, develops programs, sponsors and co-sponsors events, and engages with every neighborhood throughout the borough of Queens, with the goal of reducing crime and promoting justice for all.

Community Partnerships participated in over

# 770 Public Events



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UNIT

The Community Engagement team is charged with carrying out DA Katz's community-based approach to prosecution. The team has expanded the reach, access, and exposure of the office to the community under DA Katz's leadership.

The unit's Community Response Team (CRT) coordinators are assigned to the **eight community boards, sixteen precincts and Public Service Area 9** which serves the New York City Housing Authority developments. The CRT coordinators attend and participate in all precinct community council, community board, and civic association meetings and many of their events. In addition to attending these meetings, the CRT works closely with Queens community stakeholders – including religious leaders, elected officials, organizations, district and civic leaders, police precinct Commanding Officers, Neighborhood Community Officers and precinct community council presidents, housing tenant association leaders, the Queens Chamber of Commerce, and the NYPD's Community Affairs officers, among others.

Community members often convey to the CRT that they welcome the involvement of the District Attorney's office and that it is now viewed as a partner and stakeholder in the community - something they never imagined and have never seen before.



## CIVIC AWARENESS UNIT

The Civic Awareness Unit coordinates the District Attorney's Community Advisory Councils, oversees the Office of Immigrant Affairs, and operates all office-sponsored events, from criminal justice programs to cultural celebrations. To cultivate new external partnerships, the unit strategically spearheaded several initiatives in 2023 including [a gun buyback program](#) as well as community-based celebrations of Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage, Diwali, LGBTQ+ Pride, Women's History Month, and informational webinars on human trafficking, consumer protection, and domestic violence. The unit additionally coordinated commemoration ceremonies in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and Veterans Day in partnership with a series of community-based organizations and cure violence groups.

## COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCILS

More than 610 residents, business owners and civic and religious leaders participate on the ten Community Advisory Councils, helping the office stay abreast of neighborhood issues and concerns in real time. The Advisory Councils, which meet quarterly, receive presentations from subject matter experts within the office as well as special guest speakers, followed by questions and answers from the membership. Existing meetings have successfully led to a wider awareness of the work and resources available to the public from our office. The membership of each council varies from 40 to 90 individuals, and we are constantly evolving to meet community needs.

### THE CURRENT COUNCILS INCLUDE:

- African American Advisory Council (61 members)
- Asian American Pacific Islander Advisory Council (63 members)
- Clergy Advisory Council (54 members)
- Jewish Advisory Council (65 members)
- Labor Advisory Council – Building and Construction Trades (60 members)
- Labor Advisory Council – Social Services (58 members)
- Latino Advisory Council (60 members)
- LGBTQ+ Advisory Council (62 members)
- South Asian/Indo Caribbean Advisory Council (86 members)
- Veterans Advisory Council (40 members)



## OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

The Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) **assists immigrants whether they are victims of crimes or need assistance with other services** such as housing, labor issues and civil matters. OIA helps bridge the connection to the NYPD, to report crimes and navigate the criminal justice system. In 2023, OIA issued over 300 U-Visa certifications.

OIA trains all new Assistant District Attorneys, newly hired NYPD officers assigned to Queens precincts, and provides direct community outreach by presenting at schools, faith-based institutions, street festivals and fairs, and other agency community events.

OIA also handles all U-Visa and T-Visa certification requests and information for the office.

U-Visa certification is a law enforcement certification that a person was a victim of one of the designated crimes on the USCIS I-918 U Non-immigrant, Supplemental B form and was fully cooperative with law enforcement on the prosecution of their matter regardless of the outcome.

T-Visa certification (I-914 Supplemental B, Declaration of Law Enforcement Officer for Victims of Trafficking in Persons) is a law enforcement certification that a person was a victim of either labor, human or sex trafficking and was fully cooperative with law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of their matter regardless of the outcome.

OIA's message is simple and to the point: Know Your Rights. **A victim of a crime is a victim regardless of immigration status, language spoken, gender identity or religious beliefs.**

## GUN BUYBACK PROGRAM

As part of our office's ongoing efforts to combat gun violence in Queens County, DA Katz has sponsored numerous gun buyback programs since 2020. In partnership with the New York Police Department, the New York State Attorney General, local community groups and neighborhood churches, the District Attorney invited members of the community to surrender an operable firearm – with no questions asked. These initiatives are 100 percent anonymous and empower members of the community to help the Office of the Queens District Attorney ensure community safety.

DA Katz frequently notes that every gun surrendered during a gun buyback program represents a potential tragedy averted, and a potential life saved. To date, **there have been nine gun buyback programs and over 460 guns have been taken off the streets of Queens County.**



## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT UNIT

The Youth Empowerment Unit has reached approximately **11,000 young people** throughout Queens County in 2023. The unit's programs are designed to teach young people to think critically and communicate effectively, empowering them in making sound decisions when faced with challenges and obstacles.

### LEGAL EXPLORERS

The Legal Explorers Program aims to expose high school students to a broad range of career options within the legal profession including, but not limited to, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, police officers, as well as other professions involved in the criminal justice system. The Legal Explorers Program seeks to cultivate curiosity and inspire youth participants as they embark on their journey of professional development. The Legal Explorers Program maintained **an average of 50 participants during the 2023 academic year.**



Our Summer Leadership interns worked on a beautification project in Astoria with the help of the NYPD's Community Affairs team and Socrates Sculpture Park.

### STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Student Advisory Council is designed to facilitate constructive discussions among high school students regarding legal matters and contemporary issues, while simultaneously fostering the development of their oral advocacy skills. Participants in this intensive program were selected by their school's faculty to meet regularly throughout the academic year. **In 2023, there were approximately 28 regular participants in the Student Advisory Council.**

### SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SYEP)

In the summer of 2023, our office hosted SYEP participants. This **6-week program**, funded by the Department of Youth and Community Development, gives young people between the ages of 16 to 24 the opportunity to enhance their office skills while gaining exposure to the criminal justice system. These participants learned office etiquette, research, and interpersonal skills, improving their marketability to secure jobs for the future.

### QDA C.A.M.P. (COMMUNITY ACTION MENTORSHIP PROGRAM)

The QDA Summer Leadership Internship Program is a comprehensive **6-week paid internship initiative** designed to provide Queens youth with an immersive experience into the diverse roles and duties within law enforcement by **exploring career opportunities and cultivating real-world skills.** During the summer of 2023, participants had the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with various law enforcement professionals. Furthermore, the participants made valuable contributions toward the enhancement of the Astoria housing community's senior citizen and children's center. They engaged in activities such as painting, mulching, and improving the quality-of-life and overall aesthetics of these facilities. This engagement provided participating members with the opportunity to **actively contribute to Queens County through community service projects.**

## HOPE AND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Hope and Leadership Academy program provides topic-based instruction to middle and high school students, facilitated by a variety of organizations including: the Queens District Attorney's office, credible messengers, NYPD Options program, and other law enforcement agencies. The program's mission is to equip young people with effective strategies **to promote positive choice and career-based exposure**. Guest presenters utilize professional experiences and skills to mentor and advise students in conflict resolution practices, social responsibility, fostering respect for all, and promoting a positive trajectory in life through courtroom visits and classroom presentations. **Building Healthy Relationships, Cyberbullying, Internet Safety, Hate Crimes and Gang Violence Prevention, and Human Trafficking are among the topics covered in the program.** During the academic year of 2023, the Hope and Leadership Academy program successfully organized and delivered approximately **140 presentations** across Queens County, effectively reaching an audience of nearly 11,000 young adults.

## SATURDAY NIGHT LIGHTS (SNL)

In partnership with the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development and the New York Police Department, the office supports this **recreational programming** for young people on Saturday evenings which focuses on youth development and violence prevention. The program is **designed to provide a safe space for youth to enjoy athletics and keep them off the streets**. Our staff actively engages with pre-teens and teenagers, which helps to improve relationships among our youth, law enforcement, and our communities. Currently, there are 26 SNL sites operating across the borough.

## VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

The District Attorney strongly believes that we cannot prosecute our way out of crime. As part of that effort, District Attorney Katz previously allotted approximately \$3 million dollars in grant funding to twenty-eight community-based organizations to provide meaningful programs and wrap-around services. The programs and services are aimed at providing viable safe spaces for critical conversations and opportunities to choose a path toward education and employment. At the conclusion of the grant's term, we were pleased to announce that **approximately 14,450 youth participants, from twenty-eight community-based organizations, had the opportunity to improve their skills relevant to their personal and professional development.**

In addition to promoting youth-led initiatives and creating equitable opportunities to uplift traditionally underserved communities, these funds enabled local organizations to improve community building initiatives. As a result, participants actively engaged in workshops on cinematography, podcasting, and respect-for-all; gained practical skills in carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work; enhanced their resume writing and interview capabilities; applied STEM principles, including coding, through Scratch and HTML/Java courses; studied journalism, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship; prepared for upcoming SAT exams for college; and more.



The Youth Empowerment Unit, Community Affairs officers from the NYPD's 103rd Precinct, and The Greater Queens Chapter of the Links engaged 8th graders in a discussion about positive interactions with law enforcement at PS/IS 116.



The Youth Empowerment Unit, along with the NYPD Community Affairs and NYC 100 Strong, hosted an Inspired to Learn give away for the children at The Discovery School for Inquiry & Research STEAM Magnet School PS 201.

# HATE CRIMES

DA Katz formed a dedicated Hate Crimes Bureau in 2020, becoming one among a few offices in the nation to have a bureau exclusively dedicated to preventing, investigating, and prosecuting crimes motivated by bias against a person’s race, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or gender. Queens County is home to the **most diverse population in the nation**, and as such it is often referred to as the "World’s Borough." It is this amazing diversity that is our greatest strength and makes our borough so vibrant. But because of this diversity, there are also some who will unfortunately seek to weaken and divide us by perpetrating cowardly bias crimes.

Hate crimes harm not just the individual victim but the community as a whole. As of December 3, 2023, according to NYPD data, while citywide there was a slight decrease of 5% in the number of hate crimes from the record high number in 2022, **hate crimes in Queens increased over 40%** from the same period in 2022. Indeed, while there was an increase across most categories, there was a significant spike in the number of anti-Jewish hate crimes. In response, DA Katz held a safety briefing with members of the Jewish Community Advisory Council and special guest U.S. Attorney Breon Peace. The District Attorney also met with the South Asian/Indo-Caribbean Advisory Council for its first in-person gathering.

The bureau combats these hate-motivated offenses by **actively engaging with the community to prevent these crimes and encourage reporting**. Additionally, the bureau provides aid and support for the victims, devises innovative treatment and alternative sentencing programs for appropriate offenders, and rigorously investigates and prosecutes these cases. The office operates **a helpline for hate crime tips** and encourages members of our community who are victims or witnesses of an incident to report it.

There are times when a crime may be perceived to be bias-motivated, but legally it does not rise to the level of a chargeable hate crime under state law. Regardless of the circumstances or motivation, unprovoked attacks will not be tolerated; perpetrators will be held to account for the appropriate charges and face permissible penalties. In 2023, the Hate Crimes Bureau **secured 22 indictments and successfully brought to trial three felony cases**.

## NYPD STATS FOR QUEENS AS OF DECEMBER 3, 2023 BY MOTIVATION

MOTIVATION	2022	2023	PERCENT CHANGE
ASIAN	6	9	50%
BLACK	10	11	10%
ETHNIC	0	9	
GENDER	2	3	50%
HISPANIC	5	5	0%
JEWISH	23	53	130%
MUSLIM	6	3	-50%
RELIGION	16	5	-69%
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	16	19	19%
WHITE	2	4	100%
TOTAL	86	121	41%

## MAN CHARGED WITH MANSLAUGHTER AS HATE CRIME IN DEADLY ASSAULT AFTER FENDER BENDER

PRESS RELEASE — OCTOBER 31, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that a defendant was arraigned today on an indictment charging him with manslaughter and assault as hate crimes in the death of a 66-year-old victim, whom he is accused of attacking after a fender bender in Kew Gardens.

During a dispute that preceded the fatal beating, the defendant is accused of repeatedly referring to the victim as “turban man.” The victim was wearing a turban as part of his Sikh religious practice.

DA Katz said: “This is a case of a fender bender immediately escalating to hateful language and then brutal, deadly violence. We will show in court that it was a rage inflamed by hate that led to this senseless tragedy. The defendant will have to answer to some very serious charges. I want to thank my office and the NYPD for thoroughly investigating this crime.”

The defendant, 30, of Jamaica, was charged in a 20-count indictment with manslaughter in the first degree as a hate crime; manslaughter in the first degree; assault in the second degree as a hate crime; assault in the second degree; two counts of aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle in the third degree; two counts of operating or driving a motor vehicle without a license; leaving the scene of an incident without reporting; three counts of operating a motor vehicle or permitting it to be operated in this state without having in full force financial security; three counts of operating, driving or parking a motor vehicle without proper license plates; operating or driving a motor vehicle with improper plates; reckless endangerment in the second degree; unlawful fleeing a police officer in a motor vehicle in the third degree; reckless driving; and stopping, standing or parking a vehicle within 15 feet of a fire hydrant. If convicted, the defendant faces up to 25 years in prison.

According to the charges, on October 19, at approximately 11:50 a.m., the victim was driving a blue Toyota on the Van Wyck Expressway that collided with a black Ford Mustang driven by the

defendant. Immediately following the collision, the victim and defendant pulled over in front of 87-34 Van Wyck Expressway in Kew Gardens to assess the damage. A witness observed the defendant get out of his car and approach the victim, who remained seated in his vehicle, and engage in a verbal dispute with the victim.

During the dispute, the witness heard the defendant say, in sum and substance, “No police, no police.” The witness also heard the defendant repeatedly refer to the victim as “Turban man.” While arguing angrily with the victim, the defendant told the victim that he was not going to allow him to go home and did not want him to call the police.

According to witness testimony and video surveillance, the defendant reached into the victim’s car and grabbed the victim’s cell phone. The victim got out of his car and followed the defendant, who appeared to be holding two phones. The pair appeared to argue. The victim eventually recovered his phone.

As the victim was walking back to his car, the defendant punched him three times in the head and face. One of the punches caused the victim’s turban to come flying off his head. As a result of the blows, the victim fell backward to the ground, the back of his head hitting the pavement. The victim suffered a brain injury and was taken to a hospital. He died the next day. After striking him, the defendant got into his car and drove away.

The day after the assault, October 20, at approximately 1:30 p.m., an NYPD officer saw the defendant sitting in his car on 111th Avenue in Jamaica. The car was a black Ford Mustang that had scratches and a small dent on the rear driver’s side quarter panel. The defendant was unable to produce a valid driver’s license or insurance. A review of DMV records showed his driver’s license was suspended. He was taken into custody.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*



## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Human Trafficking Bureau (HUTB) combats sex and labor trafficking by aggressively prosecuting traffickers and all felonies involving commercial sexual exploitation and buyers of sex. As prosecutors work to hold offenders accountable in court, DA Katz and her staff are equally committed to helping their victims. HUTB implements a victim-centered and trauma informed approach that connects survivors of trafficking to meaningful services to assist them in escaping their exploitation. The bureau provides extensive community outreach, education and information aimed toward preventing and identifying trafficking in our communities.

Human trafficking is a crime that is often hidden in plain sight. Queens is especially vulnerable as it is home to two major airports and a large immigrant community. The office's efforts are geared toward arming the community with the knowledge to identify trafficking. Also, the office empowers those who are vulnerable and at risk to trafficking to recognize the tactics used to recruit. At the same time, we provide victims with the information necessary to seek help from our office or others.

In 2023, the HUTB secured a total of 24 felony convictions; 13 were for sex trafficking and rape charges relating to the trafficking of women and underage children. Of these trafficking convictions, 8 were for the crimes of Promoting Prostitution or Sex Trafficking of a Child.

Additionally, this year the bureau trained incoming NYPD recruits on tools to identify and respond to victims of human trafficking. The Human Trafficking Bureau also conducted training for NYPD detectives on how to investigate cases of human trafficking.

Prostitution is not a victimless crime when teenagers are forced into the sex trade by criminals. These are very real victims that are often physically harmed by perpetrators who pocket the cash they make in these sex-for-money transactions. In two separate cases this year, three men are now serving lengthy terms of incarceration for coercing girls to have sex with strangers.



DA Katz joined Governor Hochul for the signing of a legislative package to extend protections against human trafficking.

## QUEENS MAN SENTENCED FOR SEX TRAFFICKING TEENAGE GIRL ONE OF FOUR DEFENDANTS INDICTED FOR SEX TRAFFICKING OF A CHILD, PROMOTING PROSTITUTION

PRESS RELEASE – JANUARY 5, 2023

DA Katz announced that a defendant was sentenced today to 10 years in prison for sex trafficking of a child after forcing a 14-year-old girl to have sex with strangers for cash at a hotel in Jamaica, Queens. The victim was rescued from a home in Brooklyn, where she was forced to reside with her traffickers, when police searched the location as part of another investigation.

District Attorney Katz said: "I'm committed to getting sex traffickers out of our borough. Young women are exploited by predators and that is the reason I have put resources, investigators, and a Human Trafficking Bureau behind combatting these crimes. Thanks to the work of my team, the first of four defendants who trafficked this 14-year-old girl will now be sentenced to 10 years. I will not relent in seeking justice for the victims of human trafficking."

Having pleaded guilty in November to sex trafficking of a child, the defendant, 30, of 105th Avenue in Jamaica, was sentenced today to 10 years in prison to be followed by 5 years post-release

supervision. The defendant will also be required to register as a sex offender upon his release.

According to the charges, the defendant and a co-defendant met the victim in January at the hotel in Jamaica and refused to let her leave until she agreed to participate in sexual acts in exchange for money and hand over 30 percent of the proceeds.

The victim was forced into taking nude photographs which the defendants then posted as online prostitution advertisements.

After engaging in sexual acts with strangers and providing a portion of the proceeds to the defendants, the defendants accused the victim of stealing from them and forced the victim to continue working to

pay back the money she was accused of stealing.

The victim was rescued on January 23, 2022, when police entered a home in Brooklyn as part of a separate investigation. The victim resided in the house against her will with two of the co-defendants.

All four defendants were indicted on 15-counts of sex trafficking of a child, promoting prostitution in the first degree, and other crimes in September.

*"I'm committed to getting sex traffickers out of our borough. Young women are exploited by predators and that is the reason I have put resources, investigators, and a Human Trafficking Bureau behind combatting these crimes."*

*-District Attorney Melinda Katz*

## FRAUDS

The Frauds Bureau investigates and prosecutes crimes related to financial schemes, such as investment scams, trademark counterfeiting, and tax revenue collection. Within the bureau is the **Elder Fraud Unit** which prosecutes financial exploitation of the elderly. In recent years, senior citizens have been targeted by a variety of scams including romance, grandparent, and lottery scams. The bureau **works to educate seniors and the entire Queens community** by hosting presentations on the details of scams and frauds being perpetrated in order to prevent any possible victimization. In 2023, they **participated in 33 events consisting of 7,152 attendees throughout Queens.**

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***33 events consisting of  
7,152 attendees throughout Queens***

## AUTO CRIME

2023 brought an increase in car thefts across New York State. Here in Queens, these thefts can have a significant impact on the quality of life for those who live and work in the borough. According to NYPD data, grand larceny of automobiles increased almost 33% in the Queens North precincts and approximately 16% in Queens South precincts.

Whether it is the theft of cars and car parts, the use of stolen identities to obtain cars from local dealerships, or car scams which deprive residents of their hard-earned money, these crimes are a burden on our community. District Attorney Katz's Auto Crime Unit uses a variety of innovative legal and investigative techniques to combat these crimes at every level, from the thieves and dismantlers on our streets to those running sophisticated criminal organizations.

The office works with local law enforcement partners to deter and crack down on these crimes, but preventative measures are important. DA Katz recommends taking the necessary steps to safeguard your vehicle:

- Never leave your keys or key fobs inside the car;
- Never leave your car running, even if you're stepping out for "just a second;"
- Take the time to close and lock all windows and doors when you park;
- Park in well-lit, well-trafficked areas, whenever possible;
- Never leave valuables in your vehicle, especially if they can be seen from outside.

# HOUSING AND WORKER PROTECTION

The Housing and Worker Protection Bureau (HWPB) was formed in January 2020 and investigates and prosecutes crimes related to fraudulent real estate schemes, deed and wage theft, unsafe workplace conditions and other forms of illegal exploitation.

In 2023, HWPB conducted over a dozen major investigations into deed theft and fraud, resulting in arrests in multiple cases and over \$1,000,000 in recovered restitution for victims. The bureau has also recovered over \$50,000 in wages stolen from more than 20 employees of a defendant. In addition, **the bureau conducted its first deed fraud related hearing under a newly enacted state law which successfully returned a St. Albans home back to a disabled veteran and his family.** Along with investigations and prosecutions, HWPB participates in events in the community to educate on recent housing and labor scams and how to avoid becoming a victim.



DA Katz spoke with NY1 about strategies homeowners can use to protect themselves from deed theft and fraud, including registering with the New York City Department of Finance ACRIS system for notification any time a document related to their property is registered.

## BROOKLYN MAN SENTENCED FOR STEALING WIDOW'S HOME BY POSING AS HER SON

PRESS RELEASE — NOVEMBER 22, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that a defendant was sentenced for stealing the home of an elderly widow by posing as her son, then selling the property and cashing in more than \$200,000.

The defendant, 43, of Morgan Avenue in Brooklyn, was sentenced yesterday to a term of two to four years in prison. The judge also granted a motion filed by the Queens District Attorney's office, which applied a state statute to argue for immediately restoring the stolen property's deed to its rightful owner, sparing the victim the time and expense of additional legal proceedings in civil court.

DA Katz said: "We will not allow criminals to scheme and scam their way into other people's properties, and we will use every tool available to ensure that victims are made whole. In communities targeted by deed fraudsters, many people do not have the means to hire an attorney to file a civil suit and litigate against deep-pocketed mortgage companies, banks, and title insurers. Our use of this new tactic allows us to provide victims with one-

stop justice."

The defendant pleaded guilty in August to identity theft in the first degree and offering a false instrument for filing in the second degree. According to the charges, in August 2021, the victim received a notification that a new deed, mortgage and other documents had been filed without her knowledge with the New York City Department of Finance for a property she inherited after her father's death in 2011. The home, on Dunlop Avenue in Jamaica, had been empty for several years as the victim

planned to renovate it. An investigation was opened and revealed that the defendant had submitted several documents to falsely represent himself as the sole owner of the property. The documents included phony birth certificates and death certificates identifying the victim as his mother. After claiming ownership of the property, the defendant sold it for \$270,000. After closing, the defendant received a sale proceeds check for \$214,535.64. The defendant took the check to a Bronx check cashing establishment and received \$209,665.69 in cash.

*"We will not allow criminals to scheme and scam their way into other people's properties, and we will use every tool available to ensure that victims are made whole."*

*-District Attorney Melinda Katz*

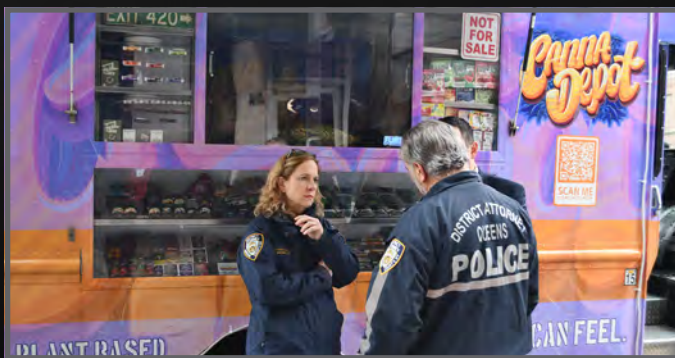
## CLOSING ILLEGAL CANNABIS SHOPS

In 2023, District Attorney Katz made it a priority to **shutter the illegal cannabis smoke shops** that plague our communities and are dangerously close to schools, daycare centers, and places of worship. Shops that sell **unregulated and untested cannabis flower and gummies packaged to look like brand-name candy** are targeting our children. DA Katz is making efforts to permanently close these illegal cannabis smoke shops. Since November 2022, **joint enforcement operations** have resulted in the prosecution of 134 individuals for felony-level charges related to the sale and/or possession of cannabis or controlled substances in Queens County, and the initiation of **dozens of eviction proceedings to permanently remove the illegal proprietors from these retail locations**. In that same time, the following items have been seized from over 138 suspected illegal cannabis dispensaries in Queens County:

- Over 750 lbs. of cannabis edibles, including gummies and candy bars;
- Over 1,000 lbs. of cannabis flower;
- Over 8,500 cannabis vape “pens;”
- Dozens of packages of edible psilocybin, also known as, “magic mushrooms;”
- All of which has an estimated total value of over \$5.5 million.
- We have also recovered loaded firearms, tasers, stun guns and knives from these locations.

The office has also **put landlords on notice** that they must commence eviction proceedings of commercial tenants who are engaged in an illegal trade or business. If the landlord fails to do so, District Attorney Katz will use her civil authority pursuant to the Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law to take over such eviction proceedings, if necessary.

In April, District Attorney Katz **sent a letter to the proprietors of 315 suspected illegal cannabis dispensaries** located in commercial spaces throughout Queens, notifying them that she intends to use the real property statutes where necessary, and to pursue criminal charges, including tax evasion, money laundering, and unlawful sale or possession of cannabis and untaxed cigarettes, where appropriate.



## DISTRICT ATTORNEY KATZ CHARGES OPERATORS OF UNLICENSED MOBILE CANNABIS DISPENSARIES IN ASTORIA AND OZONE PARK

PRESS RELEASE — MAY 5, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced the takedown of three illegal cannabis operations resulting in the arrest of five individuals who were charged in connection with their roles in allegedly operating illegal mobile marijuana dispensaries from two trucks in Astoria, and an illegal smoke shop in Ozone Park located directly across the street from a middle school.

DA Katz said: “Unlicensed sellers are undercutting legal vendors as they are just getting started, denying badly needed tax revenues for essential public services. The illegal outlets also are the focus of numerous community complaints, including for selling hallucinogens and edible marijuana products that have sickened young people and are marketed to children. I congratulate my team for their outstanding work and thank our partners at the New York City Sheriff’s office, NYPD, and DEA for their unwavering commitment to protect and serve.”

New York City Sheriff Anthony Miranda said: “We appreciate the efforts of Queens District Attorney Katz and her staff in continuing to fight against the unlicensed and unregulated cannabis industry. The sale of unregulated products is a health and safety threat to our communities. The sale of cannabis in New York is only legal when sold from licensed dispensaries, all other sales are illegal. My office will continue to work with all of our law enforcement partners to rid the city of the illegal operations.”

United States Drug Enforcement Administration New York Division Special Agent in Charge Frank Tarentino said: “DEA sees drug traffickers disguise edible drugs to look like candy that often get into the wrong hands causing toxic reactions. This case is one example of how DEA continues to enforce drug laws in order to safeguard our communities from overdoses and poisonings. I commend the work of our partners at the NYC Sheriff’s Office, NYPD, and Queens District Attorney’s Office.”

Currently, there are nine licensed adult recreational-use cannabis dispensaries open in New York state, including one in Jamaica. There are 40 state-authorized medical marijuana dispensaries, including three in Queens.

Defendant A, 32, from Jackson Heights, defendant B, 42, from Hempstead and defendant C, 30, from Rego Park were each charged yesterday with criminal possession of cannabis in the third

degree, unlawful sale of cannabis, and unlicensed general vending. The defendants each face up to 364 days in jail if convicted.

According to the charges, defendant A operated an unlicensed mobile cannabis dispensary called “All The Smoke,” on the corner of 30th Avenue and 33rd Street in Astoria. Defendant B and defendant C operated an unlicensed mobile cannabis dispensary called “Canna Depot,” on the corner of Broadway and 34th Street in Astoria.

During the investigation, undercover detectives from District Attorney Katz’s office made numerous controlled purchases of cannabis from each of the trucks on multiple occasions. On May 3, detectives from the District Attorney’s office, along with NYPD officers, executed search warrants at each of the mobile dispensaries.

The following was recovered from the trucks, which were impounded: more than five pounds of cannabis flower, including hundreds of pre-rolled joints, blunts, resin, and oil; hundreds of packages of edible cannabis, such as gummies and candy bars in packaging resembling common consumer candy and snack products with names such as “Nerdz,” “Sno Capz,” “Wonka Bars,” and “Trolli;” and dozens of cannabis vape “pens.”

Additionally, defendant D, 44, of Ozone Park and defendant E, 32, of Ozone Park were charged with criminal possession of cannabis in the first degree and criminal possession of a controlled substance in the fifth degree. If convicted, the defendants each face up to two and half years in prison.

According to the charges, defendant D and defendant E sold cannabis and controlled substances from inside the 101 Deli and Grocery at 92-15 101st Avenue in Ozone Park, less than 200 feet from MS 210, the Elizabeth Blackwell Middle School.

During a joint operation with the DEA, undercover investigators conducted a controlled delivery to the defendants at the 101 Deli and Grocery of a shipping pallet containing cannabis and controlled substances from Los Angeles.

These operations were part of District Attorney Katz’s ongoing efforts to rid Queens of illegal cannabis dispensaries, whether operating out of trucks and vans or brick-and-mortar commercial locations.

*The charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*

## SAFETY IN OUR PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM

DA Katz recognizes that our communities are dependent on our public transit system. It is the lifeblood of our economy and millions of people depend on public transit as a critical factor of life in our city. We must have confidence in utilizing transit and riders on buses and subways must feel safe.

In January 2023, District Attorney Katz authored the following opinion editorial in the *New York Daily News* which supports the idea of elevating a misdemeanor assault against a rider to a Class D violent felony whenever the attack occurs within the public transit system.

### TOUGHER PENALTIES NEEDED FOR ATTACKS AGAINST STRAPHANGERS

BY MELINDA KATZ

POSTED ON JANUARY 29, 2023

The critical importance of our public transportation system to the city's vitality — economic, social, and emotional — cannot be overstated. It is the heart of our great city, circulating its lifeblood — New Yorkers themselves — to and from work and school every day. That vitality, and the city's long-term viability, are in jeopardy if we fail to make the system safe for the millions of New Yorkers who depend on it.

Straphangers know all too well what it is like to be trapped in a moving subway train or bus with a passenger, or group of passengers, hell-bent on menacing and intimidating riders — or worse.

There is nowhere to turn for help. Speaking up or taking action can be dangerous. Riders know the threat of violence is very real, whether because they have been a victim themselves, or have heard of the violent incidents in our transit system reported by the *Daily News* and others.

To protect the women and men who unflinchingly reported for duty during the pandemic and got other essential personnel to their jobs at the height of the health emergency, Gov. Hochul and the Legislature last year expanded the penalties for assault to ensure that every transit worker is protected. This year, on the heels of the often-random violence against riders who depend on the system to survive, it is time to step up penalties for assaults against straphangers.

Under current law, most assaults in the transit system can only be charged as misdemeanors. To charge a felony assault, a weapon must have been used, or the victim has to have suffered an injury that either puts them at risk of dying or results in long-term health problems. Some assaults in the transit system clearly fall into that category. The



vast majority do not. Similar to the protections extended to transit workers, I propose elevating a misdemeanor assault against a rider to a Class D violent felony whenever the attack takes place within the public transit system, whether on a subway car or bus, or at a subway station or bus stop.

The maximum sentence for a misdemeanor conviction is a year. In contrast, a judge can impose a sentence of between two and seven years for a Class D felony. My office stands ready to assist in crafting such legislation and can start by providing a working draft of a bill.

To be clear, just because a more serious charge is available does not mean it should be used in every instance. Not every incident warrants a lengthy prison sentence. Determining what is fair requires considering the nature of the crime, as well as the defendant's circumstances, including whether they have a criminal record. Stiffer sentencing options nonetheless would act as a strong deterrent.

*-Melinda Katz is the Queens District Attorney.*

# QUEENS MERCHANTS BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The District Attorney's office has sought ways to combat the rise in retail theft that many communities around the nation have experienced in the last few years. The Queens Merchants Business Improvement Program was created in partnership with the NYPD and community stakeholders to combat the problem. **The initiative seeks to combat repeat shoplifting and the threats and harassment directed at customers and store staff** by the handful of individuals responsible for many of these disruptions to local businesses.



Participating businesses contact police when an individual engages in disruptive, dangerous, or illegal behavior in their establishment. The responding officers can issue a trespass notice, either in conjunction with an arrest or in lieu of arrest, and warn the individual that their return to the location will result in their arrest.

The program began in Jamaica as a pilot program in June 2021 and its success led to its expansion to Flushing and Astoria. Ultimately, District Attorney Katz **expanded the program borough-wide in August 2023.**

Participants of the program include businesses that are “mom-and-pop shops” as well as large chain retailers. Following the expansion of the program to every precinct in Queens County, **295 stores are now registered with the program**, 284 individuals have been served with trespass notices and 17 defendants have been arrested for returning to the locations from which they were banned.

Additionally, District Attorney Katz made a presentation on the program at the Mayor's Retail Theft Summit on November 8th, which received positive feedback from the participants on its potential to be replicated citywide.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS & POLICY

Having served the public for almost thirty years in several capacities, the District Attorney is keenly aware of the importance of developing and strengthening relationships with outside agencies, all levels of government, and elected officials. District Attorney Katz created the Intergovernmental Affairs & Policy department (IGA&P) to coordinate and strengthen the office's relationships with outside agencies and elected officials on a variety of criminal justice related issues. IGA&P works to improve operational functions and assists with the implementation of new initiatives and protocols.

District Attorney Katz began her esteemed record of public service in 1994 as a member of the New York State Assembly, where she wrote and passed legislation to protect New York's most vulnerable residents. She also served as a member of the New York City Council from 2002 to 2009. In recent years, criminal justice related legislation has grown exponentially. IGA&P monitors and tracks the legislation on city and state levels and assists with drafting bills to better protect and serve the community. They identify and promote the District Attorney's legislative priorities and conduct research on a variety of policy and legislative issues.

District Attorney Katz embraces transparency and upon taking office has increased the amount of information shared with the public. IGA&P serves as editor-in-chief of the District Attorney's *Brave Justice Annual Report*, organizing and analyzing data and providing updated yearly information for publication. This published report outlines the work of QDA, highlights significant achievements, and is relied upon for information throughout the year – by those within and outside of the office.

# OVERDOSE CRISIS: COMMUNITIES IN NEED

Increases in drug overdose deaths continue throughout the city, state, and country. Social isolation and increased availability of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids combine to create a perfect storm that exacerbates the existing opioid crisis.

By mid-December 2023, reports indicate there were 309 fatal overdose cases across Queens County. Those numbers are projected to increase once again as the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner works through a backlog of toxicology reports. In 2022, we indicated at the time of publication that there were 341 suspected drug overdose deaths. After updated numbers were tallied, the total suspected overdose deaths in 2022 reached 507.

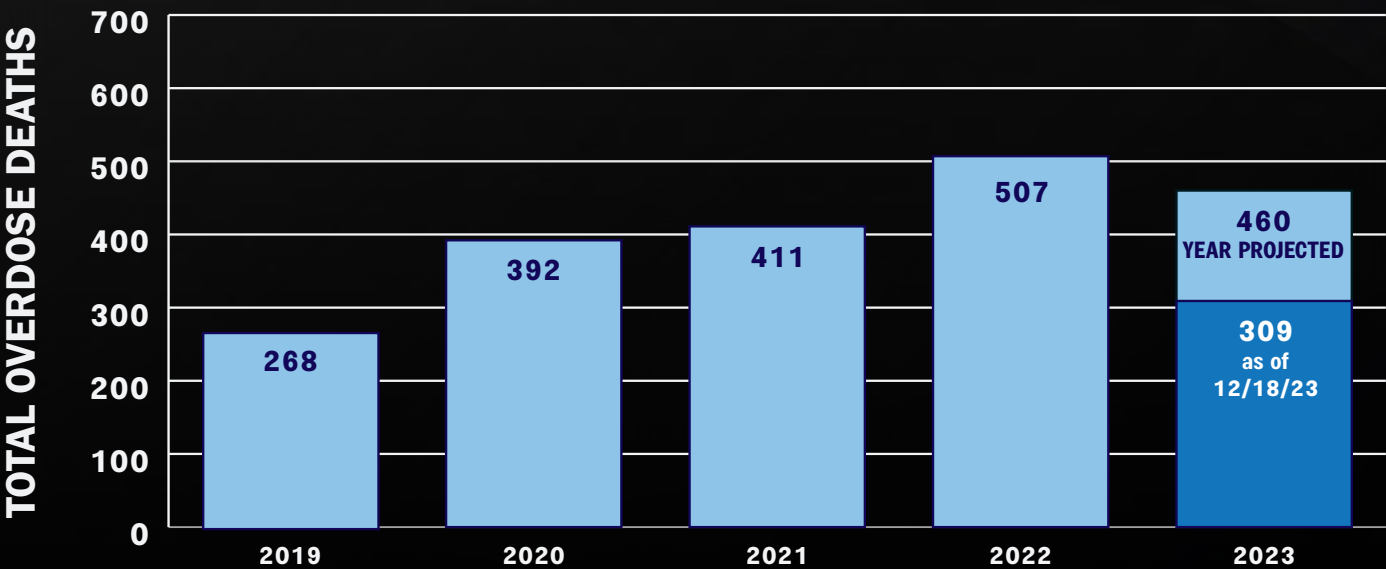
The overwhelming majority of overdose deaths can be attributed to fentanyl. Of the 309 fatal overdose cases across Queens County, approximately 74% of those deaths involved fentanyl or fentanyl derivatives.

Additionally, another dangerous new drug has emerged on our streets this year – xylazine. Also known by its street name “tranq,” xylazine is a veterinary sedative primarily used for large livestock. Xylazine is mixed with fentanyl to cut costs for drug traffickers who are able to use less heroin or fentanyl in the mixture and provide the user with a longer-lasting high. The physical effects of this drug have warranted increased national attention. Those using “tranq” often experience soft tissue injuries resembling open wounds that occur around injection sites; users also may exhibit zombie-like behavior. Xylazine is especially dangerous because it is not an opioid, therefore the administration of an opioid antagonist, such as Narcan, will not reverse the effects of xylazine.

The fentanyl crisis afflicting our city and our country demands that we do everything in our power to **shut down illegal narcotics manufacturers and suppliers and hold the traffickers accountable**. In addition to prosecution, DA Katz is committed to empowering the office to **utilize specialized treatment courts to assist eligible defendants with getting the help they need**. Additionally, the office focuses efforts on building and **maintaining positive relationships in the community to prevent drug use before addiction takes hold**.

## TOTAL NUMBER OF SUSPECTED DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS IN QUEENS COUNTY

SOURCE: NYPD AND OCME DATA



## QUEENS FATAL OVERDOSES

THROUGH DECEMBER 18, 2023, THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 309 CONFIRMED FATAL OVERDOSES THROUGHOUT QUEENS COUNTY, AFFECTING VIRTUALLY EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE BOROUGH.



SOURCE: NYPD AND OCME DATA

## FLUSHING MAN SENTENCED TO 8 YEARS FOR DEALING FENTANYL AND SELLING LOADED FIREARM

PRESS RELEASE — MAY 1, 2023

District Attorney Katz announced that a defendant was sentenced today to eight years in prison for selling more than 1,100 fentanyl pills and a loaded gun to an undercover officer last year. He was also sentenced to a concurrent sentence of one to three years in prison for shooting a man in the leg during a separate incident.

DA Katz said: “For endangering our communities by dealing deadly narcotics and lethal weaponry, this merchant of death is going to prison. We will hold accountable anyone threatening the safety of our neighborhoods.”

The defendant, 19, of 33rd Avenue in Flushing, pleaded guilty last month to criminal sale of a controlled substance in the first degree and assault in the second degree in two separate cases. The judge sentenced the defendant to eight years in prison and five years of post-release supervision. The defendant also pleaded guilty today to criminal possession of a firearm in a separate case and was sentenced to a concurrent sentence of one to three years in prison. As part of

the plea, he was ordered to forfeit \$18,210.

According to the charges: the defendant met with an undercover detective posing as a “buyer” on January 11, 2022. The defendant sold five pills purported to be Percocet to the “buyer.” During a total of 11 transactions at different locations in Queens between January 11 and June 6, 2022, the defendant sold 99 pills purported to be Percocet and 1,010 pills purported to be oxycodone to the undercover “buyer.” Laboratory testing of the seized narcotics revealed that each pill contained fentanyl. During the defendant’s final meeting with the “buyer,” he sold the officer a loaded .22 caliber Smith and Wesson firearm. On March 14, 2022, he shot a 26-year-old rival in the leg during an argument on 90th Street in Jackson Heights. During a court-authorized search of the defendant’s home on August

*“For endangering our communities by dealing deadly narcotics and lethal weaponry, this merchant of death is going to prison. We will hold accountable anyone threatening the safety of our neighborhoods.”*

*-District Attorney Melinda Katz*

31, 2022, investigators recovered two 9 mm semi-automatic ghost guns, a .22 caliber revolver, a PA-15 assault weapon, \$18,210 in cash and an array of ammunition.



# PROFESSIONALS OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

DA Katz's focus on community engagement and empowerment has led to QDA staff presenting at hundreds of public events throughout the borough of Queens. Assistant District Attorneys and support staff have taken their expertise across the borough to meet the public where they are and share their vast knowledge with the communities they serve. The following events capture just a few of the many presentations delivered by QDA staff.



ADA Colin Hicks led a discussion with a group of 7th and 8th graders at Irwin Altman Middle School 172 in Floral Park regarding the effects of peer pressure.



Elder Fraud Coordinator Daren Wilkes and ADA Dimitris Gizas spoke with seniors at Theodora G. Jackson Adult Center in Jamaica about the prevalence of scams targeting the elderly.



As part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Domestic Violence Bureau Chief Mary Kate Quinn and Executive Assistant District Attorney Pishoy Yacoub held a workshop and presentation at St. Mary & St. Antonios Coptic Orthodox Church in Ridgewood.



Youth Empowerment Director Pierre Loiseau, OIA Coordinator Tara-Anne Tiles, ADA Jacqueline Rizk, ADA Kiran Cheema, and Rehabilitation Programs and Restorative Services Bureau Chief Aisha Greene attended a Women's Career Day Panel at Long Island City High School.



Human Trafficking Bureau Chief Jessica Melton presented to high schoolers in partnership with Zone 126, a nonprofit that supports the needs of children from cradle to career in the Astoria, Ravenswood, and Queensbridge area.



Housing and Worker Protection Bureau Chief William Jorgenson gave a presentation to the Young Israel of Queens Valley Senior Center in Kew Gardens Hills about deed theft and predatory lending foreclosure prevention.





# SECTION V

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## LEAD WITH A STEADY HAND: STEERING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

2023 EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP .....	96
2023 EXECUTIVE TEAM AND DIVISIONS .....	96
TRAINING .....	98
QDA EXPERTS LEADING THE NATION .....	99
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY CLASS OF 2023 .....	100
BRAVE JUSTICE SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM .....	101
MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION .....	101
PROFESSIONALISM RECOGNIZED .....	102

## 2023 EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP



### JENNIFER NAIBURG

#### CHIEF ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Chief Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Naiburg has been a prosecutor for over 30 years. Prior to DA Katz's administration, Ms. Naiburg served the office in many capacities: as an accomplished trial lawyer, instructor, manager and innovator.

Since DA Katz took office in January of 2020, Ms. Naiburg has worked tirelessly to fulfill the District Attorney's mission of **Brave Justice** – keeping the communities of Queens safe while helping to implement fairness and equity within the criminal justice system. In addition to her leadership of DA Katz's executive team, Ms. Naiburg serves as an adjunct professor at Cardozo Law School after having taught at Fordham Law School for the preceding ten years.



### WENDY ERDLY

#### CHIEF OF STAFF/ADMINISTRATION

Ms. Erdly was appointed Chief of Staff to the Queens District Attorney's Office in April 2023. She is an attorney and public administration executive with nearly a decade of public service experience. Most recently, Ms. Erdly worked at the New York State Department of Financial Services as the agency's Deputy Superintendent for Cybersecurity. She has also been Special Counsel for Ethics, Risk and Compliance at the New York State Liquor Authority, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. She holds a J.D. from Vanderbilt University Law School and a B.A. from Lafayette College.

## 2023 EXECUTIVE TEAM AND DIVISIONS

The Queens District Attorney's Office is organized by division with each Executive Assistant District Attorney managing bureaus and units as follows:

### JOHN CASTELLANO

#### COUNSEL TO THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

With 40 years of experience in the Queens District Attorney's Office, Mr. Castellano has handled cases at all levels of the state and federal court system. Most recently, he was the Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney and Chief Appellate Counsel for the Legal Affairs Division.

### VINCENT CARROLL

#### COUNSEL TO THE CHIEF ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

In 1976, Mr. Carroll joined the Queens DA's Office and worked in numerous bureaus until 1982, when he became Deputy Chief of the Appellate Division Grievance Committee for the Second and Eleventh Judicial Districts. In 1991, Mr. Carroll returned to the Queens DA's Office and became Counsel to the Chief Assistant in 2002.

## APPEALS AND SPECIAL LITIGATION DIVISION

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### EADA JOHNNETTE TRAILL

#### APPEALS BUREAU

- FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOIL) AND CIVIL LITIGATION UNIT
- IMMIGRATION UNIT

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS DIVISION

---

### EADA COLLEEN BABB

#### CIVIC AWARENESS UNIT

- OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UNIT

#### YOUTH EMPOWERMENT UNIT

## CRIMINAL PRACTICE AND POLICY DIVISION

---

### EADA THERESA SHANAHAN

#### CRIMINAL COURT BUREAU

#### INTAKE AND ASSESSMENTS BUREAU

#### REHABILITATION PROGRAMS & RESTORATIVE SERVICES BUREAU

- CRIME VICTIMS ADVOCATE PROGRAM
- DIVERSION AND ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING UNIT

## MAJOR CRIMES DIVISION

---

### EADA SHAWN CLARK

#### CAREER CRIMINAL MAJOR CRIMES BUREAU

#### FORENSICS

#### HATE CRIMES BUREAU

#### HOMICIDE BUREAU

- COLD CASE UNIT
- VEHICULAR HOMICIDE UNIT

## INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

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### EADA GERARD BRAVE

#### CRIME STRATEGIES AND INTELLIGENCE BUREAU

#### FRAUDS BUREAU

- CRIMES AGAINST REVENUE UNIT
- ELDER FRAUD UNIT

#### HOUSING AND WORKER PROTECTION BUREAU

- REAL ESTATE THEFT UNIT

#### HUMAN TRAFFICKING BUREAU

#### MAJOR ECONOMIC CRIMES BUREAU

- AIRPORT INVESTIGATIONS UNIT
- AUTO CRIME UNIT
- CYBER CRIME UNIT

#### PUBLIC CORRUPTION BUREAU

#### VIOLENT CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES BUREAU

## SPECIAL PROSECUTIONS DIVISION

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### EADA JOYCE SMITH

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BUREAU

- ANIMAL CRUELTY PROSECUTIONS UNIT

#### JUVENILE PROSECUTIONS UNIT

#### SPECIAL VICTIMS BUREAU

- CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
- ELDER ABUSE PROJECT SOCIAL WORKERS

## SUPREME COURT TRIAL DIVISION

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### EADA PISHOY YACOB

#### DISCOVERY COMPLIANCE

#### FELONY CONFERENCING BUREAU

- EXTRADITIONS, RENDITIONS AND PROPERTY RELEASE SERVICES

#### FELONY TRIAL BUREAUS I, II, III, IV

#### GRAND JURY BUREAU

#### LITIGATION TRAINING

## TRAINING

Litigation Training is entrusted by DA Katz to **ensure Assistant District Attorneys act in accordance with the highest ethical and moral obligations assigned to prosecutors.** During her first term as District Attorney, she has enhanced training requirements, including tiered career training and the continuing legal education of the professional staff.

Newly hired Assistant District Attorneys begin their careers with an intensive, six-week **Incoming Orientation Training Program**, designed to prepare new hires to succeed. This training includes lectures and interactive sessions on criminal law and procedure, ethics, and basic courtroom skills.

Our prosecutors continue to receive training throughout their QDA careers, including the Felony Assistant and Grand Jury Training Program, as well as **trial advocacy training** for both misdemeanor and felony assistants. Litigation Training also hosts weekly and monthly office-wide **Continuing Legal Education lectures** on a variety of topics to ensure QDA Assistants stay up to date on the latest and best practices.



First year ADAs were able to participate in a ride-along with an NYPD officer as part of their orientation training.



ADAs visited Queens South's Emergency Services Unit at their home precinct, the NYPD's 113th Precinct in Jamaica, Queens.



As part of orientation training, new ADAs visited prominent Queens landmarks, including the Unisphere in Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

# QDA EXPERTS LEADING THE NATION

The expertise of our staff is frequently sought on a variety of topics at the local, state, national and international levels. ADAs also teach as adjunct professors at universities and law schools.

In 2023, some of the events at which we have participated include:

## **Trace DC** (*Washington, DC*)

Building a Cryptocurrency Investigations Unit. . . . . ADA Scharf

## **Japanese Society of Legal Medicine Annual Conference** (*Tokyo, Japan*)

DNA Testing, Testimony, and Challenges in the United States . . . . . ADA Valerio

## **Speranza Human Compassion Project** (*Harvey, Louisiana*)

First Responders Training: Handling Domestic Incidents . . . . . ADA Scianablo

## **Rockland County Police Academy**

Courtroom Protocols and Procedures . . . . . CADA Naiburg

## **National Association of Extradition Officials** (*St. Petersburg, FL*)

Comity in Extraditions. . . . . ADA DeLuca-Farrugia

## **QDA Hope and Leadership Academy** (*Queens, NY*)

Healthy Relationships and How to Report Human Trafficking . . . . . ADA Melton

## **Queens Borough President's Hate Crime Task Force**

Hate Crimes in Queens . . . . . ADA Brovner

## **New York State Intelligence Summit** (*Bolton Landing, NY*)

Challenges in Ghost Gun Investigations. . . . . ADA LaCorte

## **2023 International Criminal Law Conference** (*Seoul, South Korea*)

Cooperation Agreements in Plea Bargaining Process . . . . . ADA Yi

## **Division of Criminal Justice Services & New York State Police** (*Nassau County, NY*)

Sexual Offense Trauma-Informed Victim Response Training . . . . . ADA Downing

## **UFT Retiree Social Services** (*New York, NY*)

Elder Fraud Scams: Awareness & Avoidance . . . . . Coordinator Wilkes

## **Rutgers Law Symposium** (*New Jersey*)

Identifying, Investigating, and Undoing Wrongful Convictions. . . . . ADA Benjet

## **New York Prosecutors Training Institute** (*Albany, NY*)

Jury Issues at Trial . . . . . Counsel Castellano

## **National District Attorneys Association**

Fourth Amendment Training: Updates on Search and Seizure Issues . . . . . EADA Yacoub

## **International Homicide Investigators Association** (*Washington, DC*)

Building a Cold Case Unit: Success of Genealogy . . . . . ADA Ross

## ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY CLASS OF 2023

During her fourth year in office, DA Katz appointed 5 new Assistant District Attorneys in the Spring of 2023, and an additional 34 new Assistant District Attorneys in the Fall of 2023. They began with a six-week-long training program, which included courtroom observation, interactive workshops, and hands-on practical experience. The new ADAs visited the NYPD Firearms Training Facility at Rodman's Neck and the NYPD Laboratory where they toured the Controlled Substance Analysis, Firearms Analysis, and Criminalistics sections. The class members also toured the NYPD 113th Precinct in Jamaica, which is home to the Queens South Emergency Services Unit.

Additionally, the new prosecutors toured facilities on Rikers Island to understand the implications that their work has on defendants. They also learned more about alternatives to incarceration during a site visit to Samaritan Daytop Village. On their final day of training, the new ADAs visited some of Queens' most significant sites including the Unisphere in Flushing Meadows Corona Park and John F. Kennedy International Airport.



DA Katz spoke to first year ADAs at the conclusion of their orientation training and congratulated them on beginning their QDA careers.

# BRAVE JUSTICE SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The fourth annual *Brave Justice Summer Internship Program* welcomed 53 law students and 3 college students for an 8-week, full-time internship. The interns represented 22 different law schools and 3 colleges. Many of them were bilingual – speaking a total of 8 different languages – American Sign Language, French, German, Hebrew, Korean, Malayalam, Spanish, and Ukrainian.

The interns received hands-on training and presentations from senior staff and guest speakers on a variety of topics including legal research and writing, motion and discovery practice, crime scene visits, and witness interviews. Some had the opportunity to join in court appearances pursuant to the student practice order. The interns visited the NYPD Police Academy where they saw firsthand the rigorous training cadets undergo to become police officers. They also received practical training on direct and cross examinations which culminated in mock suppression hearings. After the mock hearings, they heard invaluable feedback from intern managers and other staff.



DA Katz spoke to college and law students of the Brave Justice Summer Internship Program during a softball game at Forest Park, Kew Gardens.

## MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION

DA Katz convened the 8th Annual Mock Trial Competition from March 3 – March 5, 2023. New York Supreme and Criminal Court judges from Queens and Brooklyn presided as second-year law students from 16 law schools across the nation competed in two preliminary rounds, quarterfinals, semi-finals, and a final round. They were evaluated by seasoned prosecutors and defense attorneys who gave feedback and a culminating score after each round. The all-female team from Rutgers University School of Law won the competition after a final round with Drexel University Thomas R. Kline School of Law.



The all-female team from Rutgers University was comprised of Livie Ruhl, Elizabeth Weinman, Paula Echeverria and Melanie Zelikovsky.



Second-year law students studied a fact pattern and presented evidence to the court for each round of the competition.

## PROFESSIONALISM RECOGNIZED



**RICHARD A. BROWN**  
**PROSECUTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD**

The Richard A. Brown Award is annually presented to an ADA who demonstrates distinguished professionalism, unwavering integrity, legal ingenuity and acumen, and a steadfast dedication to the pursuit of justice. DA Katz presented the fourth annual award to Brian Hughes, Deputy Chief of the Special Victims Bureau.



**THOMAS E. DEWEY AWARD**

The Thomas E. Dewey Award is presented to an outstanding prosecutor who has exhibited high ethical standards and a strong record of achievement in each of New York City's five DA's offices and the Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. This year's award was presented to Senior Deputy Bureau Chief Peter McCormack III of the Homicide Bureau.



**JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH AWARD**

This year, DA Katz presented the first Jewish American Heritage Month Award. The very first recipients of the award were Rabbi Michael S. Miller, CEO Emeritus of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York and Chief Assistant District Attorney Jennifer L. Naiburg.



**ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AWARD**

The annual Rookie of the Year award is presented to an outstanding member of the previous year's incoming class of ADAs. This year's award was presented to two members of the Class of 2022, ADA John Margolies and ADA Abigail Neuviller.



**MEMORIAL DAY AWARD**

DA Katz honored Specialist Frederick W. Gundel Jr. of the US Army, Master Sergeant Allan P. Wallace of the US Army, Sergeant Major Jim Trainor of the US Army Reserves and QDA's own Corporal ADA Edan Benmelech of the US Marine Corps during a ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Elmhurst Park.



**HISPANIC HERITAGE AWARD**

In recognition of the achievements of the Hispanic community, DA Katz presented awards to Senior ADA Richard LaRosa of the Appeals and Special Litigation Division, Administrative Manager Clara Ortiz of the Intake & Assessments Bureau, Fresco's Grand Cantina and Luis Gomez Alfaro of Leleu & Associates LLC at a ceremony in Jackson Heights.



## ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE AWARD

In celebration of the contributions of the Asian American Pacific Islander community, DA Katz honored two outstanding organizations – The Flushing Chinese Business Association and The Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc., as well as QDA staff members ADA Rosemary Chao, Bureau Chief of Felony Trial Bureau I, and Harleen Kaur, Unit Supervisor in the Diversion and Alternative Sentencing Unit.



## OUTSTANDING INVESTIGATOR AWARD

DA Katz presented the Outstanding Investigator Award to ADA John Castellano, counsel to the District Attorney, for his successful argument before the state Court of Appeals on a leading case involving shaken baby syndrome. The award was part of Babies and Toddlers, Inc.'s annual conference where legal, healthcare, and law enforcement professionals involved in investigations and prosecutions of harm to very young children are provided training.



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH AWARD

In celebration of Black History Month, DA Katz presented a leadership award to Section Chief Assistant District Attorney Eva Cooper and Supervising Paralegal Karean McKellar-Thurston in honor of the central history and achievements of African Americans in this country. Also honored were Dr. Maria Hubbard of the Greater Bethel Community Development, Derrick Shareef of Shareef's Martial Arts Academy, and Kevin Livingston, founder of 100 Suits for 100 Men. A special in memoriam award was presented to the family of ADA Alexis Celestin.



## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION

To commemorate the strides women have made throughout history, Public Corruption Bureau Chief Khadijah Muhammad-Starling was honored by DA Katz at the annual Women's History Month Celebration event. Additionally, women from the Queens community were also honored, including Reverend Dr. Margaret Elaine M. Flake of Greater Allen AME Cathedral of New York, Dr. Laura Cohen, Executive Director of the Kupferberg Holocaust Center at Queensborough Community College, Rosemary Lopez, Executive Director of the AIDS Center of Queens County, and Jennifer Martin, Director of Schwartz Bros.-Jeffer Memorial Chapels and Parkside Memorial Chapels.



## PRIDE AWARD

DA Katz co-presented the annual Pride Award with Queens Borough President Donovan Richards to Deputy Bureau Chief of Felony Conferencing ADA George J. Deluca-Farrugia, CUNY LGBTQIA+ Consortium, Colectivo Intercultural TRANSgrediendo, Therese Rodriguez, Eddie Valentin, and posthumously to Jim Diego.



## VETERANS DAY AWARD

DA Katz paid tribute to those who have served and sacrificed for our nation at a ceremony for Veterans Day where she honored Corporal Joseph Bellacicco of the US Marine Corps, Sergeant Dr. Noah Angeles of the US Army Reserve, Captain Josh Ralph of the US Army Reserve, and Corporal/QDA Detective Nicholas Walker of the US Marine Corps.

## OFFICE CONTACTS

### CALL THE QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

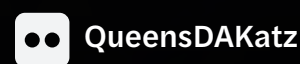
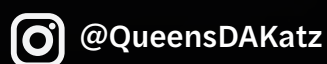
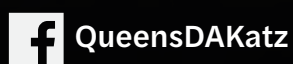
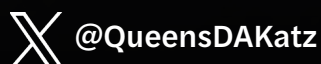
General Number .....	718.286.6000
24 Hour Hotline .....	718.286.6580
Animal Cruelty Helpline.....	718.286.6622
Case Information .....	718.286.6000
Community Partnerships.....	718.286.6400
Communications .....	718.286.6315
Consumer Fraud Helpline .....	718.286.6673
Cyber Crime Unit .....	718.286.6673
Crime Victims Advocate Program.....	718.286.6812
Domestic Violence 24/7 Helpline .....	718.286.4410
Elder Abuse Project Social Worker.....	718.286.6562
Elder Fraud Helpline.....	718.286.6578
Gang Violence.....	718.286.7045
Hate Crimes Helpline.....	718.286.7010
Housing and Worker Protection Helpline .....	718.286.6673
Human Trafficking Bureau.....	718.286.6548
Immigration Helpline .....	718.286.6690
Intergovernmental Affairs & Policy .....	718.286.6506

*The Queens District Attorney's Office does not report immigration status and we do not tolerate any actions intended to interfere with or retaliate against potential crime witnesses.*

### EMAIL THE QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

General Information.....	Info@QueensDA.org
Conviction Integrity Unit .....	CIU@QueensDA.org
Crime Victims Advocate Program.....	CVAP@QueensDA.org
Elder Abuse.....	ElderAbuse@QueensDA.org
Elder Fraud .....	ElderFraud@QueensDA.org
Hate Crimes Bureau.....	HateCrimes@QueensDA.org
Housing and Worker Protection Bureau .....	HousingWorkerProtection@QueensDA.org
Human Trafficking .....	HumanTrafficking@QueensDA.org
Office of Immigrant Affairs .....	OIA@QueensDA.org
Work at the Queens DA's Office .....	Career@QueensDA.org

**Visit our website at [www.queensda.org](http://www.queensda.org)**







**MELINDA KATZ**  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**