Special Victims Unit

CITY & COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

October 2026

Context on Special Victims Unit (SVU)

- **Established in 2011:** SFPD created the Special Victims Unit to consolidate specialized investigations focused on crimes involving vulnerable victims
- **Centralized investigative function:** SVU brings specialized investigators together to manage complex cases, follow active leads, coordinate supporting units, develop warrants, and carry cases through adjudication or until they become inactive
- **Core focus areas:** Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, Elder Abuse / Neglect, Human Trafficking, Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC), Domestic Violence Stalking, Sex Offner Unit (290)
- **Evolving mandate:** SVU's scope has changed over time as SFPD has reorganized investigative functions. **Financial Crimes and Missing Persons moved in 2025**, narrowing SVU's organizational footprint around special-victim investigations

Actions We Are Taking

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

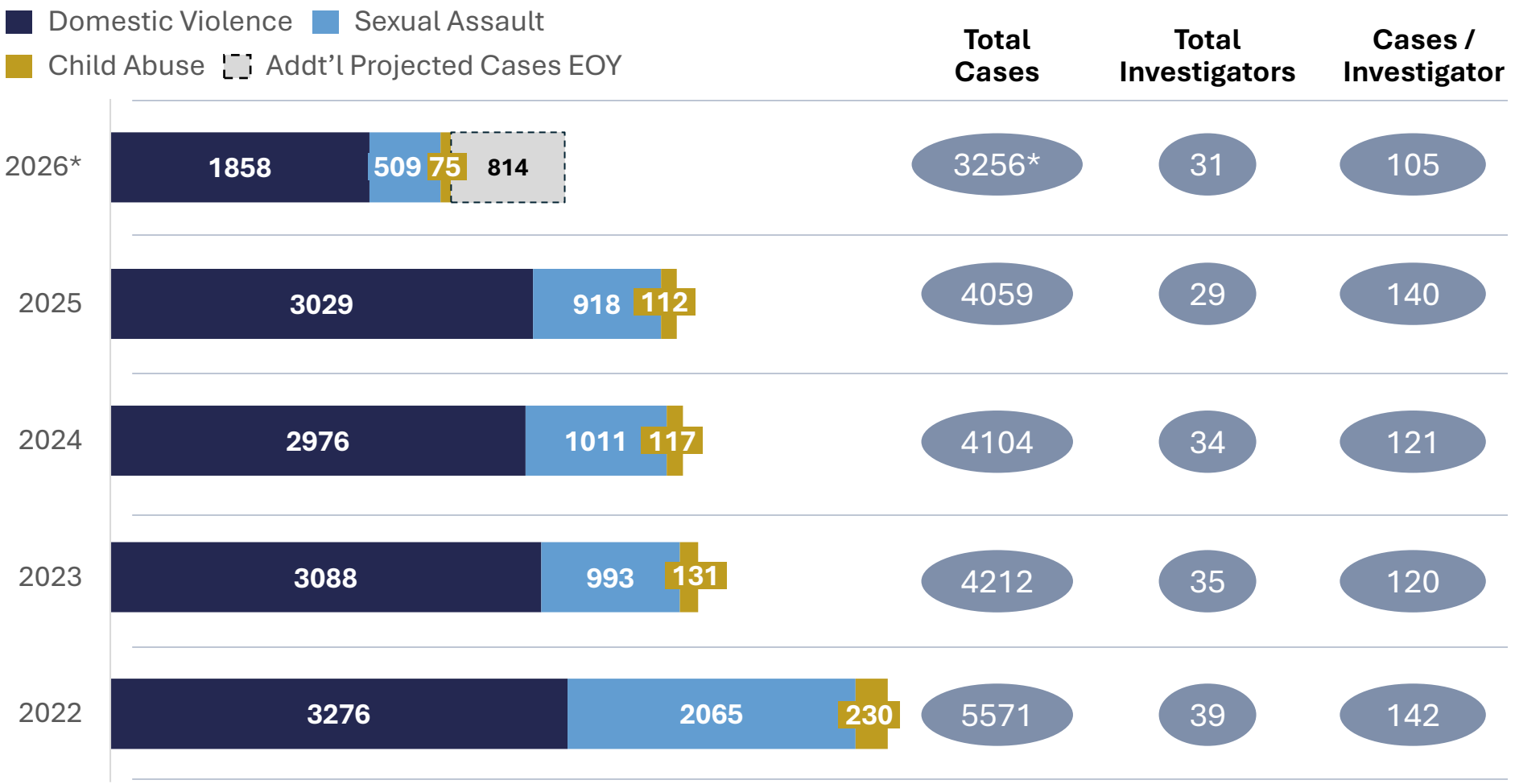
How We Will Measure Success

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

Staffing

DATA AS OF SEPT 2026

Reported Cases by Top SVU Investigative Fields



*Adjusted for full year

Total Cases per Investigator for Top Investigative Fields has **<u>decreased</u> from 142 cases / investigator in 2022 to 105 cases / investigator in 2026**

Case Activity Status for Investigations

DATA AS OF SEPT 2026

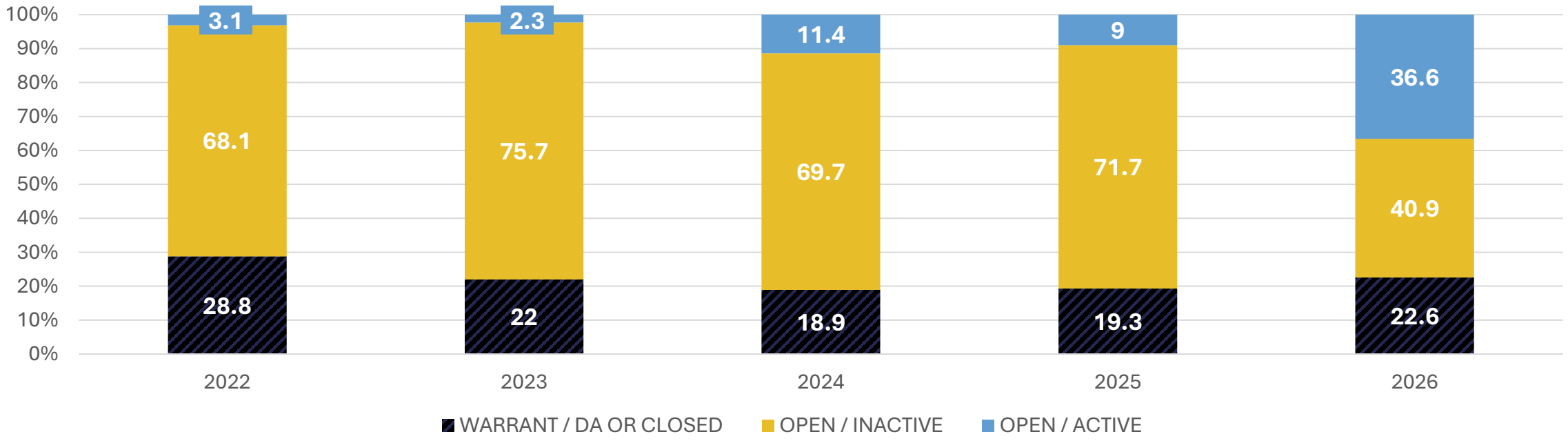
Status	Definition
OPEN / ACTIVE	**There are investigative steps still available.** The case remains active while investigators are pursuing viable leads, evidence, or investigative tools
OPEN / INACTIVE	**Available investigative avenues have been exhausted for now.** The case remains open and can be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

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

Case Activity for Sexual Assault Cases

DATA AS OF SEPT 2026

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



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

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

Our goal is a system that victims can trust, investigators are equipped to succeed in, and that delivers justice for survivors while continuously learning and improving