



2020 Annual Community Report

Prosecution Success

As the COVID-19 pandemic struck, our backlog of cases grew to unprecedented levels, with 180–200 trials delayed. Despite the caseload, we remained focused on our core duties of prosecuting dangerous crimes, keeping our neighborhoods safe, and standing up for victims. Some notable examples:



State v. Erin Robinson

In Hillsborough's first post-COVID trial, we secured a first degree murder conviction for the death of Raul Ortiz, who was beaten in a fit of jealousy.

State v. Gary Montanez

A jury convicted Gary Montanez of first degree murder for shooting Mike Franck, a bystander who shielded others to protect them from gunfire outside a hookah lounge.

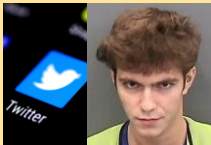


State v. Xavier Whitehead

After a disturbing triple-murder and arson, Xavier Whitehead received multiple life sentences for killing Derek Archie, Haley Stone, and Xavier Greene.

State vs. Graham Clark

Partnering with federal law enforcement, our office is prosecuting Graham Clark, the mastermind of the worldwide Twitter hack and Bitcoin scam targeting figures such as Joe Biden & Elon Musk.



Securing Sentences for 2019 Convictions

Granville Ritchie (left) was given the death penalty for brutally raping and killing 9-year-old Felecia Williams. Darien Pease received a 30-year prison sentence for human trafficking a victim who was 15 years old.



Supporting Victims

Our Victim Assistance Program (VAP) is there for every crime victim—supporting them through pain, mental trauma, financial loss, and the complex court process. In 2020, VAP gave 18 community outreach presentations.

433,920

Victim Notifications

41,171

Victims Assisted

867

Victim Escorts to Court
by Counselors

163

Worthless Check
Victims Assisted



Adapting to COVID-19

As COVID-19 impacted our community, our office collaborated with our partners to keep the wheels of justice moving. Examples of rapid changes we implemented to adapt to these conditions while efficiently using taxpayer dollars included:

- Coordinated regular stakeholder meetings to plan response
- Shifted to remote work, designing entirely new workflows
- Maintained mission-critical in-person court hearings
- Received community donations of masks and sanitizer
- As reopening approached, limited in-office staff on rotation
- Widely publicized safety protocols for courthouse reopening

Groundbreaking Data Dashboard

In a major new step forward for transparency, our office became one of the first in America to launch a public Data Dashboard. Working with criminologists from Florida International University and Loyola University in Chicago, this multi-year project creates a 21st Century blueprint for tracking data and measuring prosecutorial success.

How will these 23 indicators, with more added in the coming months, help us fulfill our public safety mission?

Transparency builds trust.

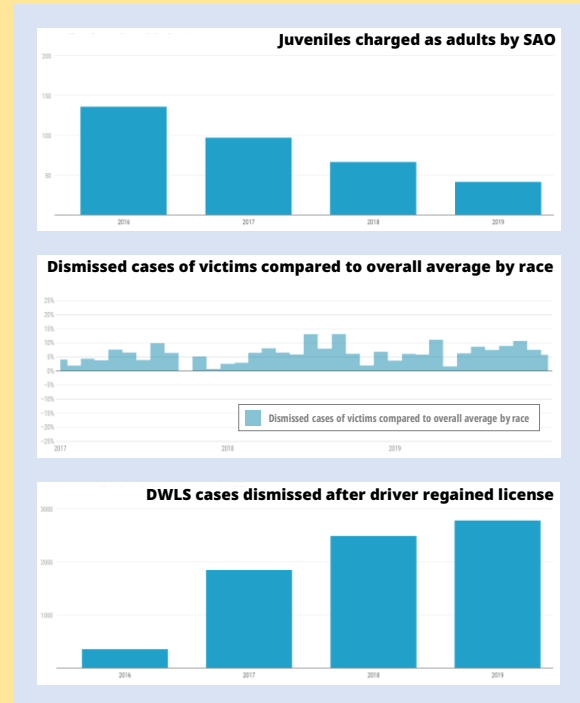
Now, more than ever, we need to make sure everyone—from every neighborhood and every background—can have trust in their justice system.

Reforms must rely on data.

We all know parts of our justice system are out-of-date. Tracking data lets us try new ideas, then see the resulting data to know whether they're working.

This effort borrows some of the best ideas from the business world. We are digging into the data, even the data that's not so pretty, to understand whether we are achieving our desired results and delivering for our customers—the public.

The MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge funded the work in four prosecutor's offices nationwide. Together, the effort has led to a set of Prosecutorial Performance Indicators, or PPIs. The PPIs look beyond old measures of success (such as conviction rate & length of sentences) to measure the metrics that matter in a 21st Century prosecutor's office: actual crime reduction, supporting crime victims, success of diversion programs, achieving consistency and fairness, minimizing racial disparities, and efficiently using limited resources.



Conviction Review Unit Success

The Conviction Review Unit (CRU) investigates and identifies plausible claims of innocence on behalf of convicted defendants. Since it began in late 2018, the CRU has reviewed nearly 300 petitions, maintaining the integrity of our work.

This year, the CRU's work exonerated Robert DuBoise, who was serving a life sentence for a murder he did not commit. After an 11-month investigation into his 37-year-old case, the CRU—in tandem with the Innocence Project—uncovered DNA evidence that cleared his wrongful conviction. Today, Robert DuBoise lives freely as an innocent man.

“Wrongful convictions threaten public safety, putting an innocent person behind bars while the actual person who committed the crime goes free.” - Hillsborough State Attorney Andrew Warren

DuBoise's conviction was based largely on bite mark evidence, which has been discredited by modern science. As a result, our office is actively reviewing all past convictions that relied heavily on bite mark evidence.

Steering Low-Risk Drug Users Toward Treatment

Launched in October, our Drug Education and Treatment Reducing Recidivism (DETRR) policy aims to help low-risk drug offenders get treatment and rehabilitation rather than jail time. DETRR embraces the well-established medical principle that, for offenders who suffer from substance abuse, treatment is more likely to reduce repeat offenses and increase public safety compared to a punishment-centered approach. And because more than 80% of crimes are tied to drugs and alcohol, DETRR is designed to reduce overall crime in our community.

Level 1 – Marijuana / Cannabis Possession (30 grams or less)

Substance abuse treatment encouraged

Level 2 – First-Time Drug Possession (other than marijuana)

Substance abuse treatment required

Level 3 – Low-Risk Repeat Offender

Full range of treatment required (substance abuse & mental health treatment, social services, etc.); defendant may be sent to higher-level Drug Court instead

If offenders complete a prescribed drug treatment or education program and stay arrest-free for six months, the drug possession charge will be dismissed.

Each level is available only once per person, and DETRR is *not allowed* for drug dealers, violent offenders, or anyone deemed high-risk.

Expanding Juvenile Civil Citations

Instead of an arrest that stays with a child forever, the Juvenile Arrest Avoidance Program (JAAP) holds a youth accountable via a Juvenile Civil Citation. In September, JAAP expanded and is now eligible for nearly every first-time misdemeanor charge. Parental consent is no longer required, and when an arrest of a child under 12 is being considered, a supervisor must be contacted.



“We want to do all we can to make a child’s first encounter with the justice system their last.” - Hillsborough State Attorney Andrew Warren



Using Problem-Solving Courts

We elevated the Chief of Problem-Solving Courts to our Executive Committee, recognizing the importance of these innovative research-based and results-driven efforts.

Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) continues amid COVID-19

Directly addressing issues that veterans face in the court system, VTC served approximately 144 veterans in 2020.

Mental Health Court (MHC) expands its effective program

MHC expanded, giving more people access to this proven way to reduce repeat offenses. MHC’s very close supervision, treatment, and support for needs like jobs and housing were previously available only to select low-level offenders. MHC now includes people who may face prison time but would likely exit prison still facing the mental health struggles that led to their crime in the first place. A grant is funding the new post-adjudication expansion.

Drug Court begins tailoring treatment for better outcomes

A Risk Assessment Tool now defines the specific support a person needs—addiction treatment, anger management, and family counseling are examples—during and after Drug Court, which is a research-based court that holds people accountable for crime while getting them on the right track.

Targeting Drunk Driving

Data shows our **Reducing Impaired Driving Recidivism (RIDR)** program, launched in 2018, is working. RIDR aggressively targets impaired driving, ordering sanctions like alcohol monitoring devices and DUI education for first-time, non-aggravated offenders.

30 out of 1,000

Typical number of DUI drivers who reoffend

2 out of 1,000

Number of participants in RIDR who reoffended

George Floyd: Responding to a National Moment

Following George Floyd's murder, we were more committed than ever to addressing racial injustice within our office and our community. Our first step was to listen. With input from a wide range of voices, we created our Action Steps for Fairness and Engagement, partnering with local leaders and grassroots groups to ensure our Tampa Bay community is heard and their ideas for reform become reality.



Action Steps for Fairness and Engagement

We developed these steps in collaboration with members of Hillsborough County's Black community to address racial injustice, increase transparency, and pursue greater equality in our criminal justice system.

Racial Justice Work Group

Created a focused working group with representatives from the community and State Attorney's Office to identify important community issues related to racial injustice and develop consistent responses to address them.

Use of Deadly Force Review

Expanding outreach efforts to reach more groups and provide more clarity each time the State Attorney's Office reviews whether criminal charges are appropriate in a case involving a use of deadly force by police or civilians.

Community Engagement

Growing community connections by encouraging staff engagement and considering community involvement in staff evaluations and promotions. State Attorney Warren will continue monthly and quarterly meetings with community groups, including the Hillsborough Branch of the NAACP, faith leaders, and the public at large.

Minority Prosecutor Recruitment

Taking additional steps to recruit a staff that reflects our community by formalizing our ongoing support of the National Black Prosecutors Association and seeking partnerships with law schools at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Better Sentencing Analysis

Investing in tools and research to evaluate sentences and plea arrangements, aiming to ensure people with similar crimes and similar criminal histories are not receiving vastly different consequences.

Racial Justice Work Group

Leaders from across Hillsborough County's Black community began sitting down with prosecutors in 2020 to tackle tough, systemic issues in our justice system.

The group's ongoing purpose is to identify important community issues linked to racial injustice and develop consistent case-by-case decisions that address these inequities. The group studies criminal justice data, examines actual cases, and develops meaningful policy recommendations for turning ideas into action.

The group will also expand upon our existing efforts to decriminalize poverty, address bail reform, and expand effective diversion programs that steer people away from the criminal justice system.

The 16-person Work Group includes:

- Members of the faith community
- Grass-roots organization leaders
- Mentors for at-risk youth
- Returning citizens
- Prosecutors



"If you don't have a place where people can share their feelings, we're never going to get to a solution." - Stanley Gray, Urban League of Hillsborough Co.

Balancing Criminal Looting vs. Peaceful Protests

On May 30, a terrible night in Tampa, rioters and looters overran sections of the city, damaging dozens of businesses and endangering countless law enforcement officers. Following that night, our office filed more than 265 criminal charges against 120 different people. While our office prosecuted those criminals, we worked to protect the rights of peaceful protestors—declining to charge cases where the evidence showed no sign of violence and the person’s intent was only free speech. We will not tolerate taking advantage of protests to commit crimes for personal gain or cause destruction.

“If you’re out to peacefully protest, you can expect support from our community. But if you’re out to hurt, destroy, or steal—you can expect to be held accountable under the law.” - Hillsborough State Attorney Andrew Warren

Internal Response to Protests

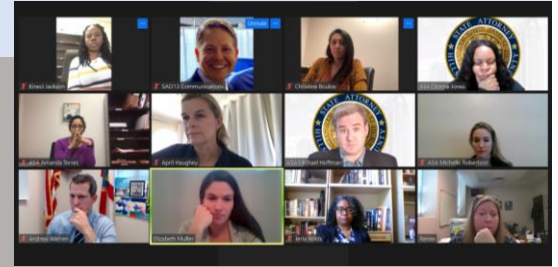
Recognizing our unique role in the justice system, our attorneys and support staff created their own initiatives to address concerns over racial injustice and further build on our culture of self-improvement and awareness.

Racial Justice Work Group

More than two dozen attorneys engage on difficult topics of race and prosecution in our office and in our community

Criminal Justice Reform Discussion Group

In discussions sparked by documentaries and academic studies, this group explores how to make reforms a reality

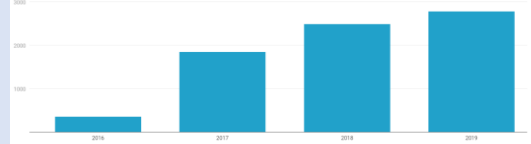


Tampa Bay’s First Voting Rights Docket

History was made as the first Hillsborough Voting Rights Docket was successfully put into action this year. The Voting Rights Docket aims to help citizens regain their voting rights and reintegrate into society, fulfilling the promise of Florida’s Amendment 4. Eligible citizens now had a clear path for a judge to make an important declaration: old fees and court costs that the person could not afford to pay would not stop them from exercising their right to vote.

On Tuesday, June 2, 10 citizens who completed their prison time had their cases reviewed, officially taking the first steps toward regaining their voice and their vote. Disenfranchised voters make up more than 10% of Florida’s voting-age population, and these steps are crucial to restoring their constitutional rights. After a September appeals court ruling led to a pause in Voting Rights Docket proceedings, partners in Hillsborough are exploring new ways to restore rights.

DWLS cases dismissed after driver regained license



Decriminalizing Poverty

For years, criminal charges for Driving While License Suspended (DWLS) have been a “poverty trap.” Low-level nonviolent DWLS charges often lead to people losing their jobs, their housing, and community connections.

Since 2017, we have prioritized traffic safety. We actively prosecute DWLS cases that stem from actual driving violations. But when a license was suspended only for financial issues such as late payments, we give the driver a chance to pay overdue fines and restore his or her license. This way, we can hold the driver accountable, fix the underlying problem, and not set the driver into a downward spiral of poverty and incarceration.

Our data shows this approach is significantly reducing this “poverty trap” and decriminalizing poverty. In 2019, about 41% of DWLS cases were resolved because a driver became licensed again—in 2016, that figure was just 4%.

**Message from
State Attorney
Andrew H. Warren**



When it comes to delivering justice with transparency, our office didn't take our foot off the gas during the pandemic.

Between our groundbreaking Data Dashboard, releasing more information faster on Use of Deadly Force cases, studying racial disparities in our office and sharing the results, and forming our Racial Justice Work Group, I'm committed to expanding justice and safety in our community in an open way.

More than ever, we must do all we can to ensure everyone in our community can trust our work, our motives, and our commitment to equal justice for all.

Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence

Our office worked to reverse worrying data showing abuse victims suffered in silence during the pandemic.

- **Disarming Domestic Abusers (DDA)** Prosecutors continue to seek rulings to take guns away from abusers.
- **Victim advocates never wavered** Counselors shifted to remote work to maintain services for victims in need.
- **"We Are Open" Campaign** With The Spring of Tampa Bay, we spread the word that help for survivors never closes.



Team SAO 13



Janae Thomas was named one of the Tampa Bay Business Journal's "40 Under 40," took the oath as a JAG officer in the U.S. Air Force Reserve & joined the New Leaders Council—*all while pursuing her PhD.*



Jinny Warren spends her holidays placing wreaths on veterans' graves with Wreaths Across America and gives countless volunteer hours to Meals on Wheels of Tampa and several other vital charity causes in our community.

Mary Castillo earned the Bob Thomas Star of Philanthropy Award from Friends of Joshua House, honoring her years of



volunteer work for abused & neglected kids. Mary started volunteering in middle school and now raises money with an annual Christmas party.

Community Engagement



SAO Business Academy

In innovative sessions, business leaders see how our office sustains community, increases tourism, and sparks growth through public safety.

Strawberry Festival Parade

Members of Team SAO13 proudly walked in this historic parade through Plant City, connecting and celebrating with neighbors.



Team SAO13 Diaper Drive

Office staff donated nearly 2,400 items to the Junior League of Tampa's Diaper Bank, beating our goal by 30%.

- Florida State Fair & Strawberry Festival game inspection
- Safer Stronger Hillsborough volunteer recognition breakfast
- Meet with youth of G3
- Black History Month recognition ceremony
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day parade
- CEOs in Schools