

**IS: 25-047**

**Justice Delayed: Strengthening  
Oklahoma's Response to Cold  
Cases and Unsolved Violent  
Crimes**

**Senator Carri Hicks**

# Overview of this study.

- Highlight the purpose: examining effective strategies to address cold cases in Oklahoma.
- Emphasize the importance of learning from other states, including Georgia, and exploring funding and collaboration opportunities.

# IMPLICATIONS OF THE COLEMAN-BAKER ACT FOR THE OK STATE FAIR MURDERS

Presenter: Dorian



Lisa Pennington

# “Where’s Our Justice?”



Cheryl Genzer

“It is sickening to us that in this country your children can be senselessly murdered, the killers identified by officials, and yet *nothing can be done*.

This is unacceptable to us, and should be to every law-abiding citizen.

For this reason we have persisted after more than a decade of rejection and absurdity, enduring the horrible knowledge that while our daughters lie in their graves, their killers continue to mock our justice system by literally **GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER.**

Rocky & Charlet Pennington  
Parents of Lisa & Cheryl

## Investigators attribute GBI cold case unit to solving the 2001 killing of Tara Baker



**Maya Homan**

Athens Banner-Herald

May 13, 2024

Updated May 14, 2024, 7:19 a.m. ET



Law enforcement agents on Monday attributed the new cold case unit of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation as the key to solving the 23-year-old killing of [Tara Louise Baker](#) in Athens.

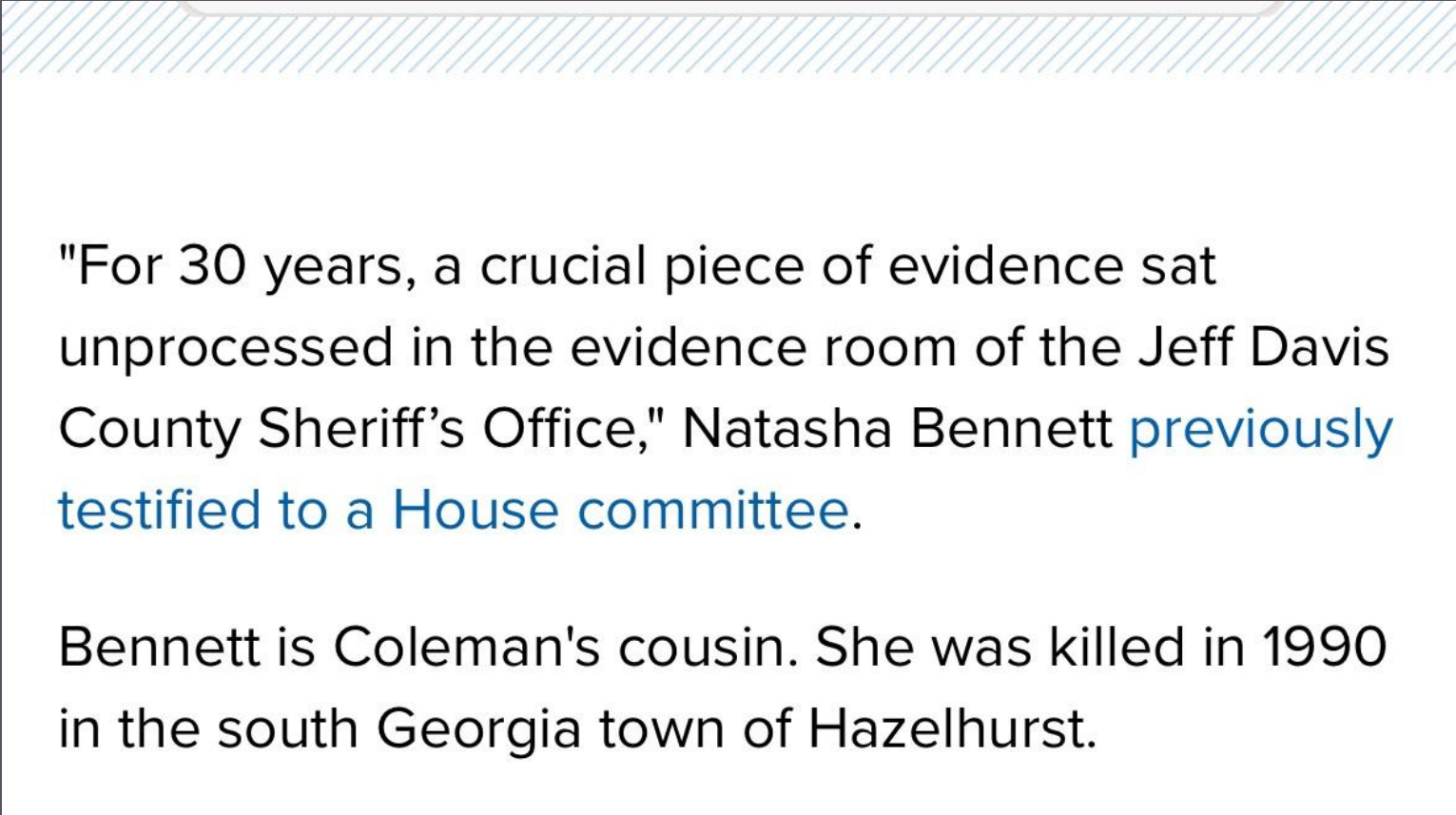
Baker was a first-year student at the University of Georgia law school when she was [slain on](#)



Hosey declined to cite specific new evidence that came to light during the investigation, or disclose whether the case was connected to Faust through modern technology.

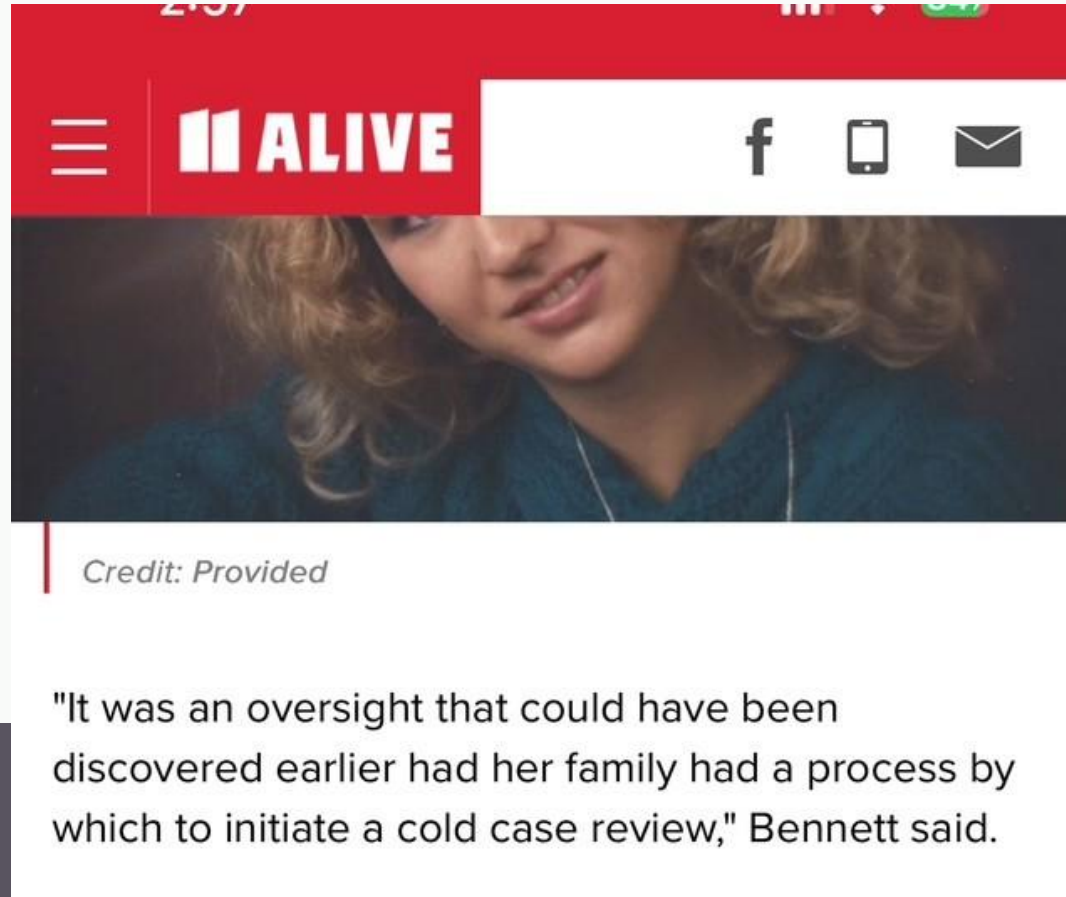
"What I will say as far as the details ... that got us here today is everything was reviewed, whether it be interviews, forensic evidence, whatever the case may be, and then I will stop with that for now," he said.





"For 30 years, a crucial piece of evidence sat unprocessed in the evidence room of the Jeff Davis County Sheriff's Office," Natasha Bennett [previously testified to a House committee](#).

Bennett is Coleman's cousin. She was killed in 1990 in the south Georgia town of Hazelhurst.





needs to end once and for all and attention instead be focused on creating an inventory of all items in custody and the condition in which each item is in present day. The case nor the family is well-served by this feigned secrecy and there needs to be an immediate and comprehensive accounting of existing physical evidence in the case.

The following is a list of items recovered with the bodies at the burial site, as testified to by Larry Balding and Joyce Gilchrist:

**For LISA PENNINGTON:**

- One envelope containing scalp
- One envelope containing pubic hair
- One envelope containing a right fingernail
- One sack with a sweater
- One sack with a bra
- One sack containing a full set of scalp hair
- One envelope containing the bullet found lodged in the cranial vault
- One spoon ring
- One yellow plastic watch
- One gold-colored ring with two clear stones and one empty setting
- One puzzle ring

**For CHERYL GENZER:**

- One envelope with scalp hair
- One envelope containing pubic hair
- One envelope containing left fingernails
- One chain
- One sack containing a shirt
- One sack containing a bra
- One sack containing a full set of scalp hair
- One envelope with bullet jacket and metal fragments taken from skull
- One envelope with bullet jacket and fragments from crime scene.

Remarkably, public officials, EACH OF WHOM IS EMPLOYED BY AND ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF OKLAHOMA COUNTY, have made statements like these to the Penningtons:

"We have better things to do than look for your daughters." (Missing Persons, Police Dept.)

"We know who killed your girls, but there is nothing we can do." (District Attorney's office)

"Just wait about 15 years, and someone will confess." (Attorney General's office)

"Your case has been screwed up from the beginning." (Former police chief)



**Oklahoma has over 1,000 unsolved homicide cases, with notable cases and resources available for further investigation.**

### **Overview of Unsolved Homicides**

In Oklahoma, there are approximately **2,304 unsolved murders** as of the latest updates. This figure represents a significant portion of the total homicides that have occurred in the state since 1980, with around **11,922 murders** recorded during that time frame. The Oklahoma Cold Cases website serves as a comprehensive database, documenting over **1,000 unsolved homicide cases** along with missing persons and unidentified individuals. ↪ 2

Another great resource is Project: Cold Case, who, in partnership with the Murder Accountability Project, produced a comprehensive list of all of the unsolved homicides in each state from 1980–2019. According to this list, there were around 11,922 murders in Oklahoma during that nearly 40-year time frame. Looking further into this, roughly 9,618 of those same homicides have been solved during that same time frame, leaving law enforcement with approximately 2,304 unsolved murders in Oklahoma as of the website's most recent update.

In addition to Project: Cold Case's unsolved homicide statistics webpage, their website is also home to a database of nearly 25,000 unsolved cases from across the U.S., in



# THE OKLAHOMAN

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2023 3 OKLAHOMAN.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



## 'IT HAS BEEN HELL'

Family, friends want case reopened for sisters who went missing after fair trip

Jack Murrey *Journalism & Media*

This time of year generates excitement about visiting the Oklahoma State Fair and enjoying its midway games, rides and furry friends. • But for family and friends of Cheryl Genner and Lisa Pennington — sisters who were first married after attending the fair one night 35 years ago — the arrival of each year's fair only brings memories they would rather forget. • Haunting questions remain about the case family and friends hope can still be resolved.

They are hoping their questions might be answered with help from the Interstate Visitor Family Rights Act, a federal bill signed into law in August that enables family members of qualifying and case number victims to request additional reviews using the latest available technology.

Recent survivors from the Oklahoma State Fair 2013 investigation will use that technology what kinds



Rocky and Charlotte Pennington are looking for their own daughters, Cheryl Genner and Lisa Pennington, in the 1980s. Photo by Jack Murrey.

See CASE, Page 1A

## Ban on mask rules nixed

Court finds bill infringes on schools' local control

Nuria Martinez-Rodriguez

The Oklahoman  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Oklahoma Supreme Court struck down the governor's initiative over school mask mandates in an opinion issued Tuesday, ruling in favor of parents and teachers who challenged a state law that at one point effectively blocked existing requirements to prohibit masks.

The court decided a similar provision in another bill that would have required school health consultants to

See MASKS, Page 1B

## Tribes urge lawmakers to act on jurisdiction

Supreme Court decision poses sovereignty issues

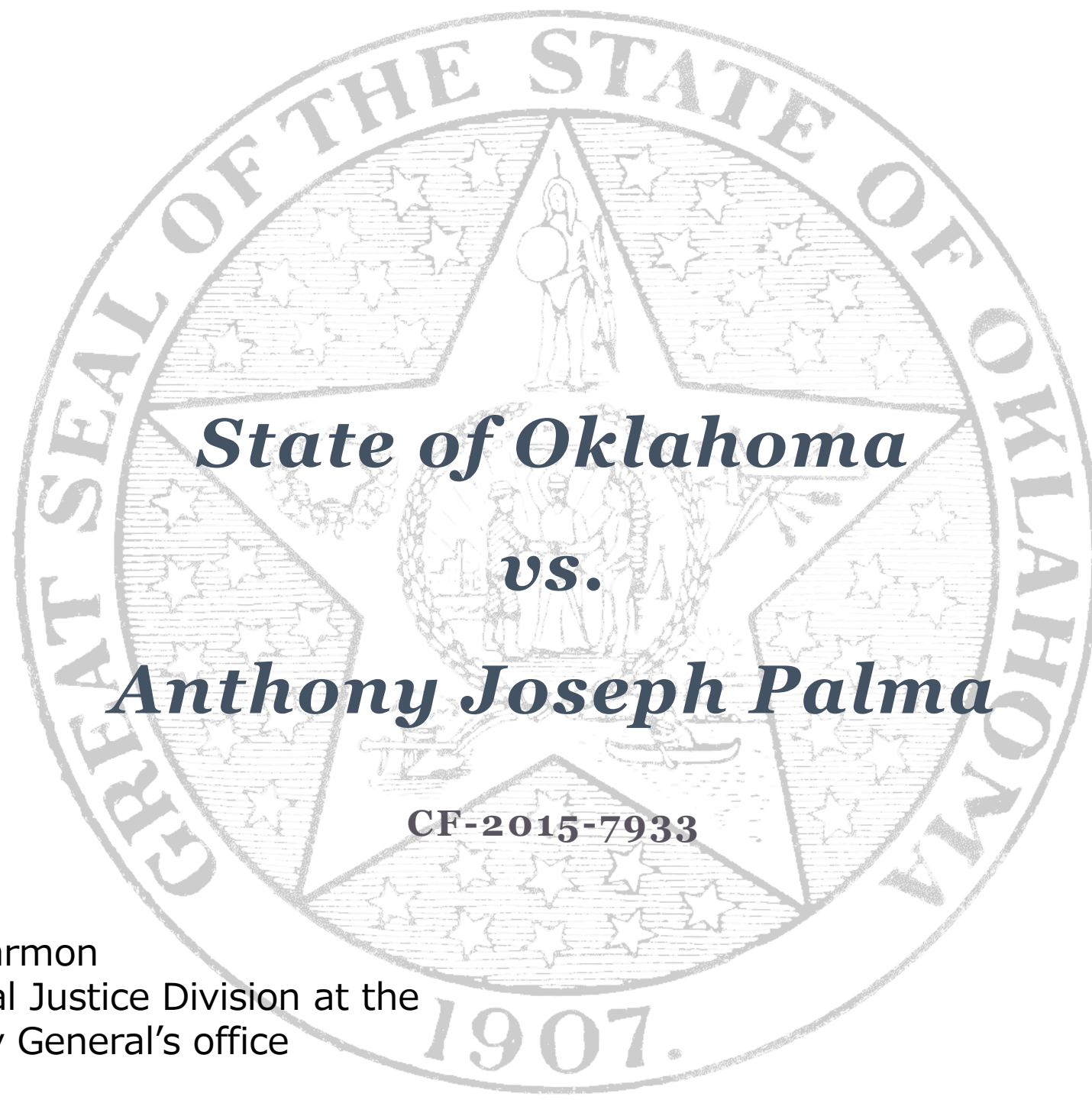
Chris Coates

The Oklahoman  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Tribal leaders, key members of Congress and a top Biden administration official said Tuesday that legislation may be necessary to clarify state, tribal and federal jurisdiction on Indian reservations in the wake of a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in an Oklahoma case.

Bryan Newland, the assistant secretary for Indian Affairs at the Interior Department, said tribes around the country have expressed confusion and concerns about conflicts over jurisdiction since the high court's ruling in June that the state of Oklahoma can prosecute non-Native Americans accused of crimes against Native

See TRIBES, Page 1A



***State of Oklahoma***

***vs.***

***Anthony Joseph Palma***

**CF-2015-7933**

Presenter: Jimmy Harmon  
Chief of Criminal Justice Division at the  
Attorney General's office



# OSBI COLD CASE UNIT

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Lt Jenny Virden

Special Agent Francia Thompson

Special Agent Jim Skelton

Special Agent Tammy Ferrari

Investigative Analyst Terri Crawford



# Mission Statement

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To speak for those who cannot speak for themselves by seeking answers and justice for victims and their families.





# COLD CASE UNIT

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- Unit started Nov. 1, 2018
- Current CCU cases

# DUTIES

## AGENTS:

- Interview suspects & witnesses
- Locate evidence
- Establish chain of custody
- Coordinate with Prosecutors

## CRIMINALISTS:

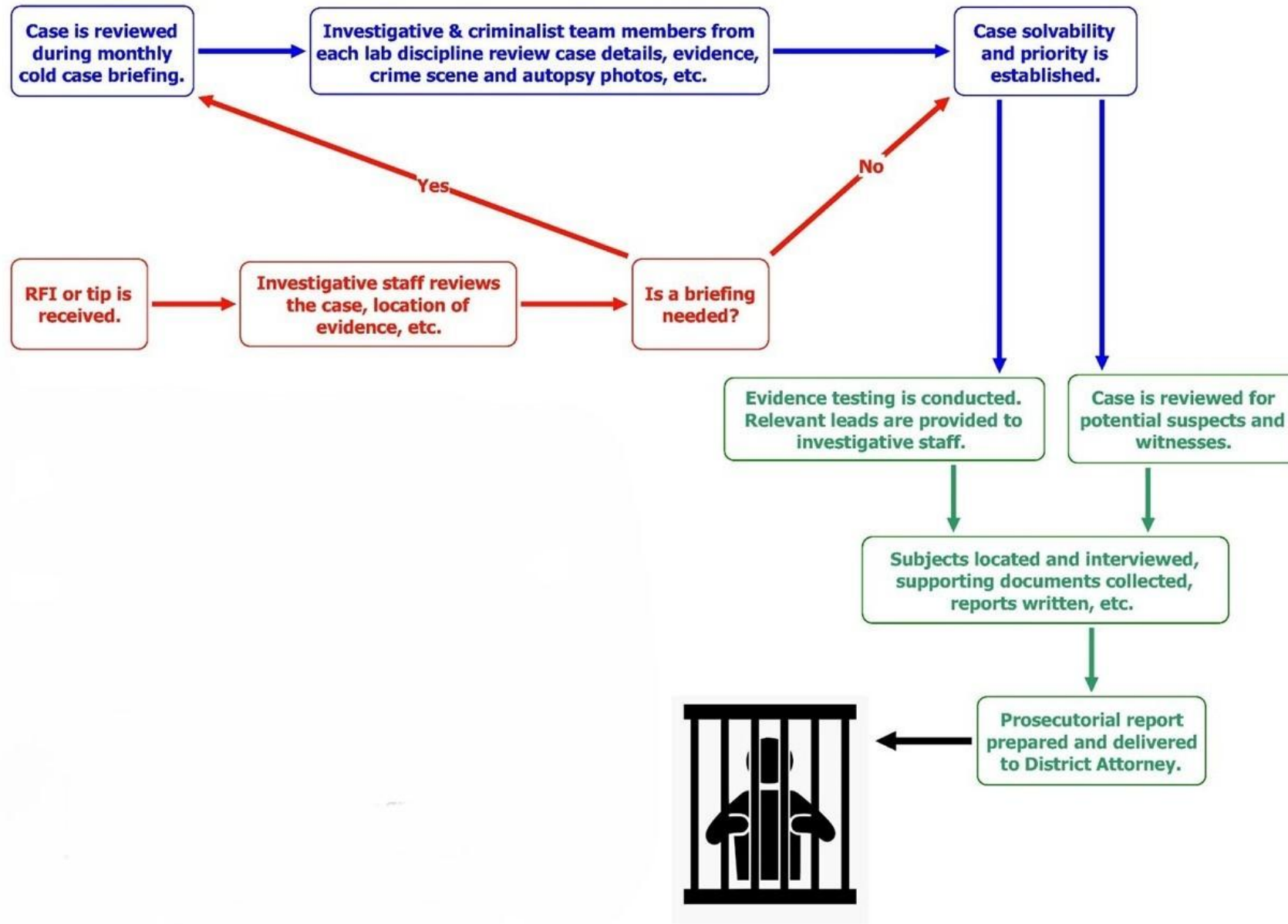
- Conduct additional analysis
- Coordinate with other labs
- Assist in the evaluation of a case and its solvability

## ANALYST:

- Assemble case information, lab reports and completes a work up on all parties involved in the case... living or dead



# COLD CASE UNIT PROCESS



# KEYS TO SUCCESS

Dedicated personnel and resources

Time to immerse into case

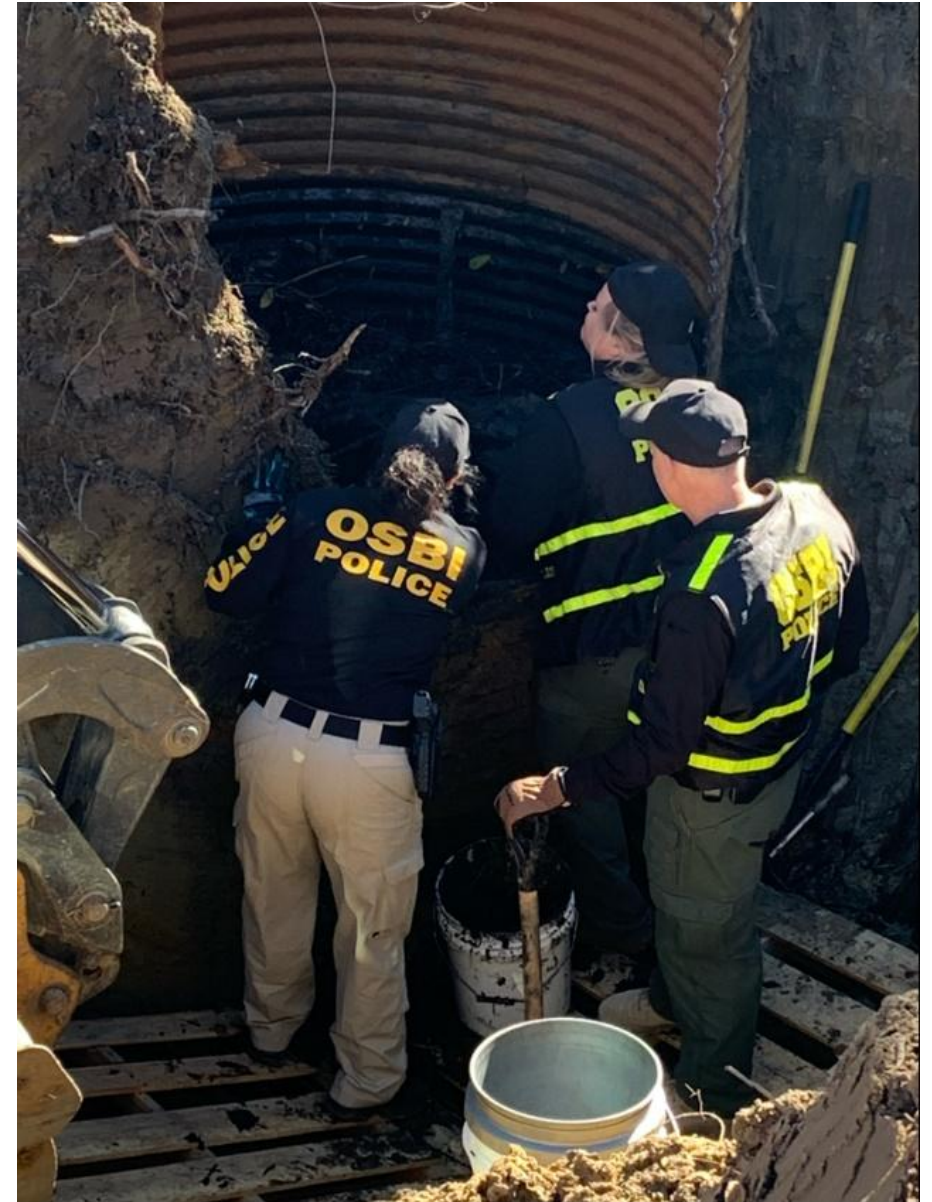
Actionable leads by Criminalists

Excellent communication between Investigative and Criminalist personnel

Support of command staff

Previous review of cases meant evidence was located and ready to be tested.

Participation in ViCAP





# CHALLENGES

- Lost or degraded evidence
- Chain of custody
- Witness memory / dementia
- Suspects or witness deceased
- Jurisdiction issues
- Statute of limitations on non-homicides





# SOLVING COLD CASES

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# BRIEFINGS

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- Cold Case briefings once a month
- Can do one on one reviews with CCU



# EVIDENCE EXAMINATION

- Cold Case Briefings to present the case
- Discuss case with OSBI Criminalists
- Determine what evidence can be examined / re-examined by the OSBI Laboratory
- New Technology (Firearms, DNA, Latent Prints, Trace, etc)





# WHAT OSBI CAN DO FOR REQUESTING AGENCIES

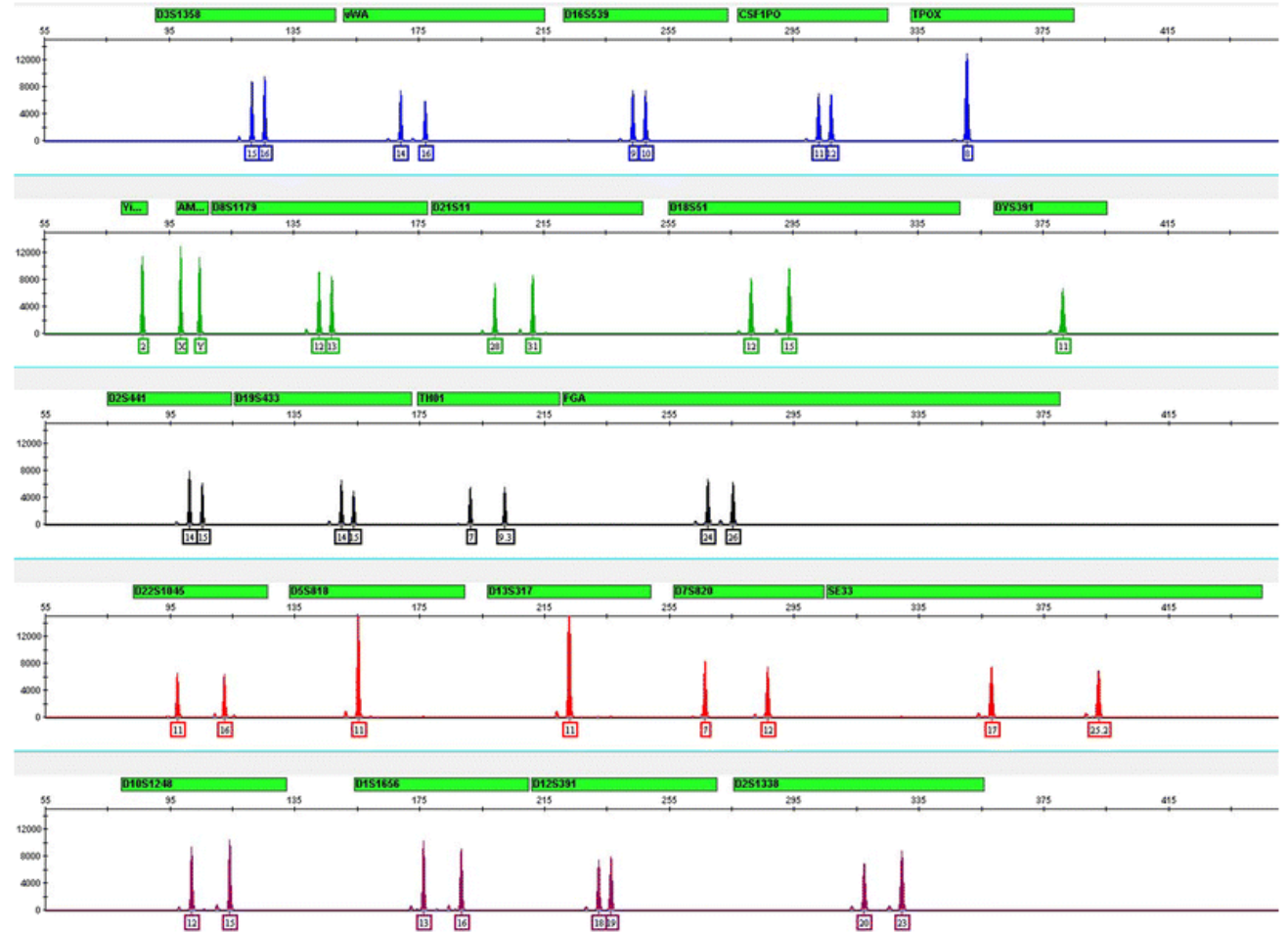
- Identify a cold case to present
- Case evaluation & staffing
- We will work side by side with you
- Help with locating and submitting of evidence
- Locate and decipher OSBI reports
- Investigative and forensic resources





# **FORENSIC RESOURCES**

# Improved Technology

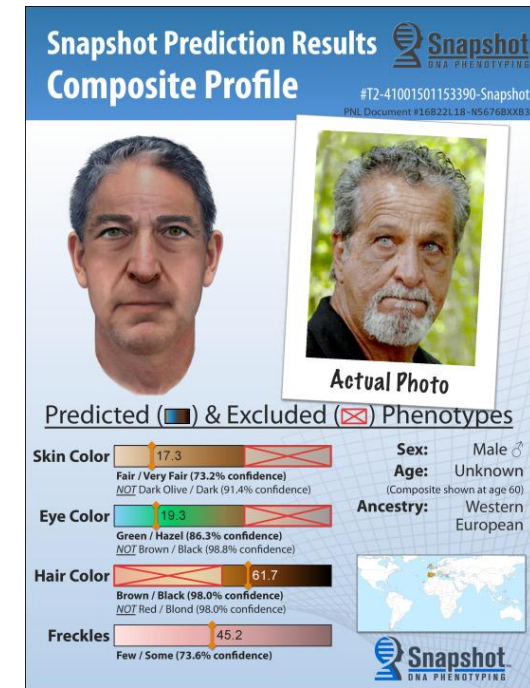
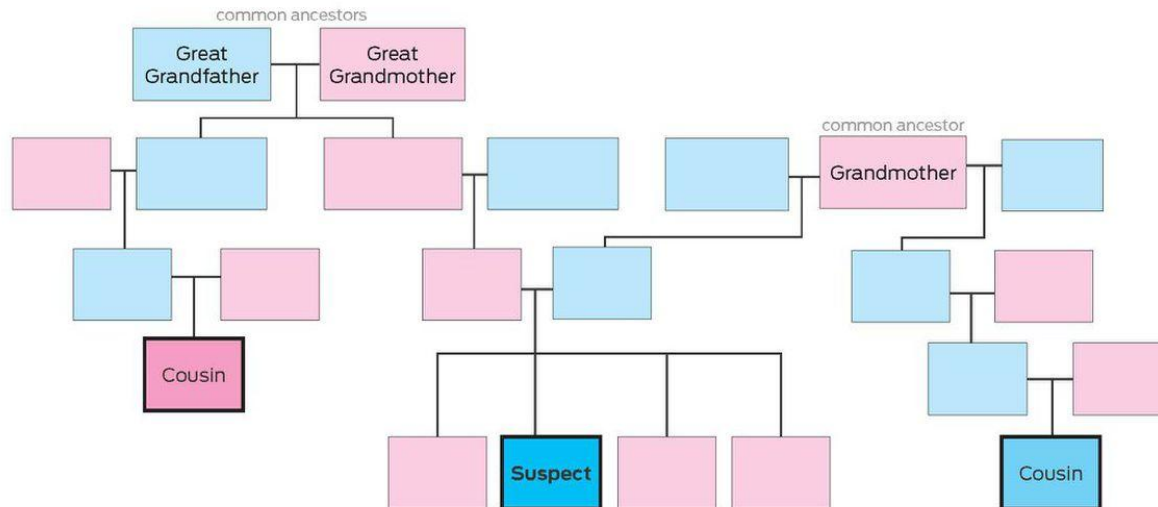


# FORENSIC GENETIC GENEALOGY SEARCHING (FGGS)

- Unsolved violent crime cases
- Unidentified remains



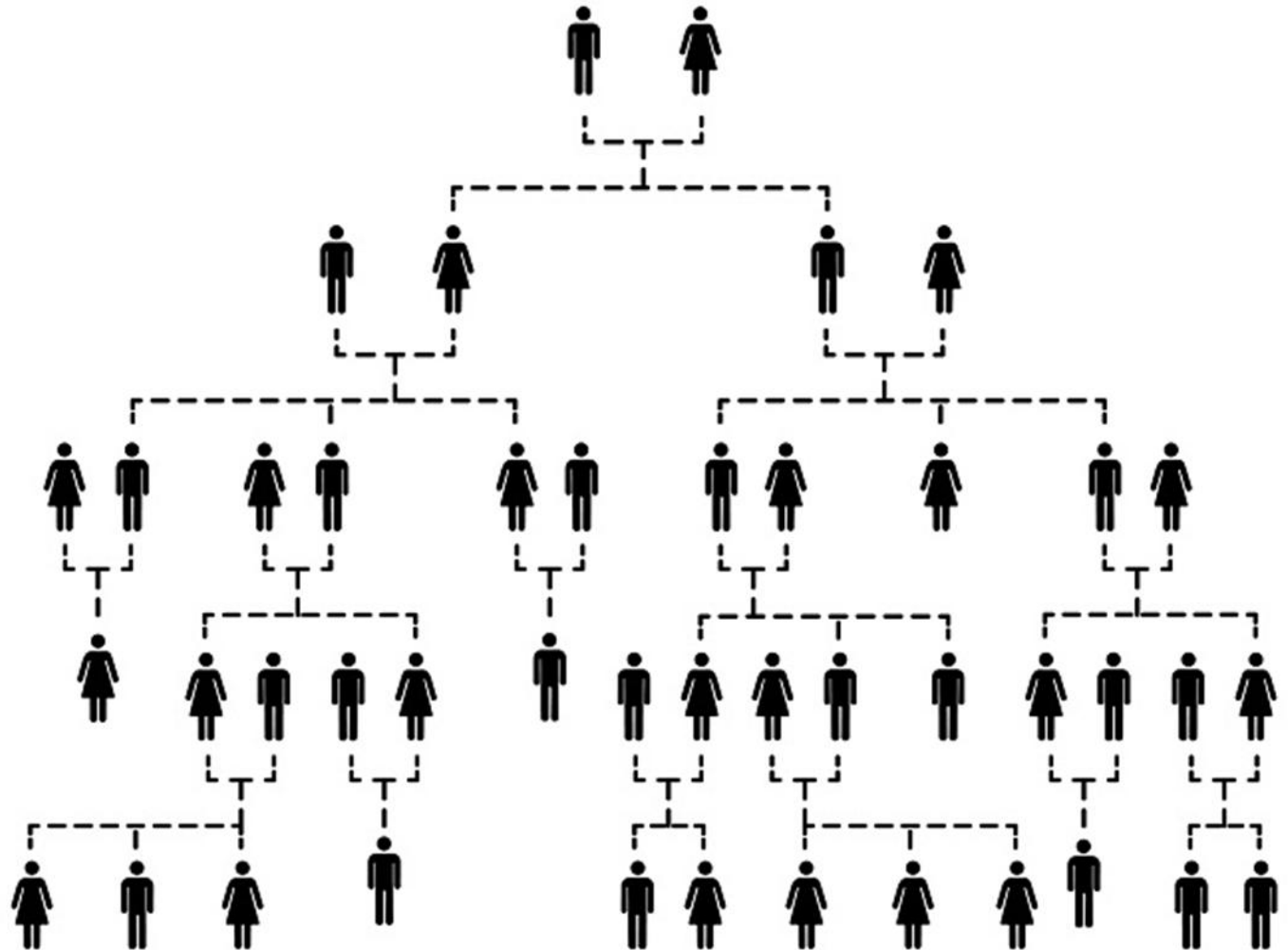
Suspect family tree based on genetic genealogy



# FORENSIC GENETIC GENEALOGY SEARCHING (FGGS)

## DRAWBACKS

- Expensive
- Time consuming
- Leg work to narrow down family tree
- There must be a profile entered into CODIS & enough evidence remaining for genealogy





# Forensic Genetic Genealogy

## IDENTIFIED

- 1994 Serial rapist - Muskogee County
- 1992 Rapist - Oklahoma County
- 1995 Female skull and torso - Caddo County
- 1993 Male infant - Hugo County
- 1995 Male and female - Pittsburg County
- 2008 Female - Cleveland County
- 1987- Female- Garvin County



# Missing and Unidentified Persons

- Francine's Law
  - Have to enter missing person within 30 days into NamUs
  - No waiting period to report
  - Collect and obtain Biometric Data
  - Obtain DNA samples
  - Fingerprint submission
  - Mandatory training
- NamUs
  - Unidentified Persons
  - Missing Persons
  - Unclaimed Persons
- Data and information that can be entered
  - Family reference samples DNA
  - Victim DNA, Fingerprints, Dental records, medical records
  - Investigative information



<https://namus.nij.ojp.gov>





# Missing and Unidentified Human Remains (MUHR) Grant

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# BJA

**Bureau of Justice Assistance  
U.S. Department of Justice**



# Cold Case Playing Cards



**6 of Spades**

**UNSOLVED HOMICIDE**

**Sarah Ida**  
White Female

Sarah Cox was reported missing on July 1, 2001, and was last seen leaving her car at S.W. 119 and May Avenue. Her car was found in the Earlywine Park, which is located on the 7-11 where she worked. She was found dead in a creek bed next to the 1200 block of Frisco. On 4/11/2001, Sarah was disarranged and her clothing was disarranged. Examiner advised she was last seen on 4/11/2001.

**INMATE ACCESS #20**  
**800-522-8017**  
Submit online at [tips@osbi.ok.gov](http://tips@osbi.ok.gov)

**7 of Hearts**

**UNSOLVED HOMICIDE**

**Bobbie Wofford**  
White Female

On November 4, 1999, the skeletal remains of Bobbie Wofford were located at a rural west of Kingfisher in Kingfisher, Oklahoma. Wofford was last seen in the early morning hours of July 5, 1999, at a Convenience Store located at Kingfisher, Oklahoma wearing a white t-shirt and blue denim shorts. Evidence at the scene suggested Wofford was killed during the home.

**INMATE ACCESS #20**  
**800-522-8017**  
Submit online at [tips@osbi.ok.gov](http://tips@osbi.ok.gov)

**8 of Spades**

**MISSING PERSON**

**Keith Butricks**  
White Male

On July 3, 2009, Keith Butricks was reported missing by his family. Keith was last seen on June 29, 2009, leaving a bar on South Van Buren in Enid, Oklahoma.

**INMATE ACCESS #20**  
**800-522-8017**  
Submit online at [tips@osbi.ok.gov](http://tips@osbi.ok.gov)

**6 of Diamonds**

**UNSOLVED HOMICIDE**

**Samuel Sanders**  
White Male

On March 21, 1983, at about 4:15 AM, two suspects broke into the Fairland, Oklahoma, occupied by Samuel Sanders, and granddaughter. Sanders was killed during the home.

**INMATE ACCESS #20**  
**800-522-8017**  
Submit online at [tips@osbi.ok.gov](http://tips@osbi.ok.gov)

**10 of Diamonds**

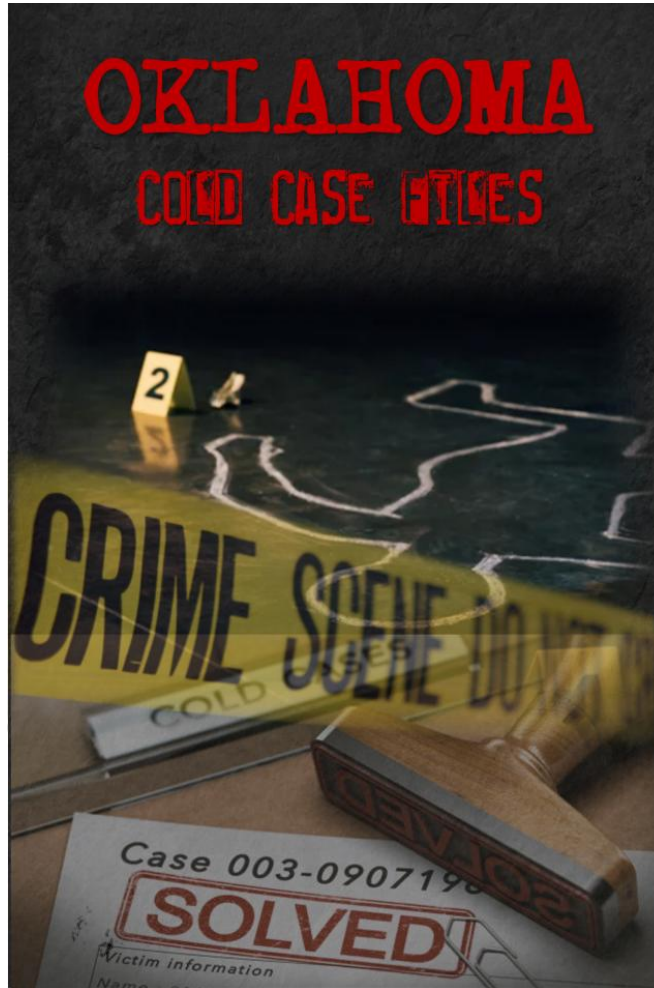
**UNSOLVED HOMICIDE**

**Lloyd C. Morgan**  
White Male

On March 21, 1983, at about 3:00 P.M., a customer approached Lloyd Morgan at his business. Morgan Implements, a farm implement business located on S. Highway 69 in Muskogee, OK. Suspect(s) apparently came into the business and shot him three times in the chest with a small caliber weapon. Morgan was dead to the business. The motive was robbery because the suspect(s) took a few minutes to take the money.

**INMATE ACCESS #20**  
**800-522-8017**  
Submit online at [tips@osbi.ok.gov](http://tips@osbi.ok.gov)

# Cold Cases Website



<https://oklahoma.gov/osbi/services/investigative-services-division/cold-case-files/cold-cases.html>



# RESOLVED

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- Solved cases since November 2018
  - Cold cases
  - Unidentified
- Numerous leads generated through Forensic Genetic Genealogy





# QUESTIONS?

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**Main Number: 405-848-6724**

**E-mail: [cold.case@osbi.ok.gov](mailto:cold.case@osbi.ok.gov)**

**Q&A**

**Next Steps**