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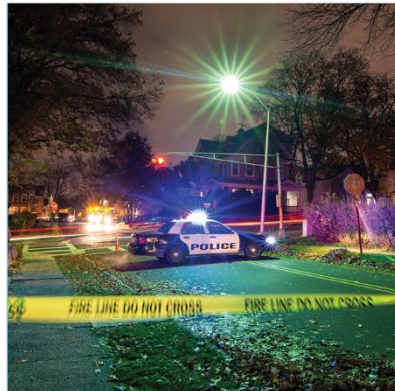
National Case Closed Project

Response to Fatal and Nonfatal Shootings Assessment

Final Report

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Riviera Beach (FL) Police Department

RTI INTERNATIONAL

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Executive Summary

The Riviera Beach Police Department (RBPD) serves the City of Riviera Beach, Florida, which is in the northeastern part of Palm Beach County. Detectives in RBPD's Strategic Investigations Division (SID) are responsible for investigating homicides and nonfatal shootings in the city. In 2023, all eight homicides that occurred in Riviera Beach were the result of gun violence.

In 2024, RBPD applied for and was accepted to the National Case Closed Project (NCCP), an initiative led by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and conducted in partnership with RTI International that is designed to support law enforcement agencies in improving their response to fatal and nonfatal shootings. As part of this initiative, a project team comprising criminal investigators, forensic scientists, researchers, prosecutors, and victim services experts assessed RBPD's policies and practices related to their initial response to, and follow-up investigation of, fatal and nonfatal shootings. The assessment included a review of RBPD policies, a review of fatal and nonfatal shooting case files, on-site observations of facilities and equipment, and personnel interviews within RBPD personnel and personnel within external partner agencies including prosecutors and leaders of community organizations.

The assessment team found that personnel at RBPD are dedicated, take initiative, and work hard to improve the lives of the people they serve. Interviews with people from every level of the agency, as well as with external partners and community leaders, revealed a sense that RBPD has made many recent positive changes under its new leadership.

Having identified both strengths to build on and areas in protocols and operations that could be improved, the recommendations in this report are intended to directly support RBPD and its relevant partners in improving their response to fatal and nonfatal shootings and thereby improving their clearance rates for these offenses.

Key assessment findings and recommendations include:

- **Policies and Procedures**. This report provides recommendations for ensuring that written policies and procedures adequately provide guidance for those involved in violent crime investigations. This includes developing a comprehensive, user-friendly manual for investigating homicides and nonfatal shootings, as well as ensuring that written policies establish clear expectations for the roles and responsibilities of each unit.
- **Agency Resources and Workload**. Recommendations include reviewing current vacancies and personnel to see if additional people (including civilian positions) can be assigned to help with violent crime investigations, ensuring that detectives are assigned to work the types of cases for which they have the training and experience, establishing a rigorous process for selecting detectives into SID and requiring supervisors to conduct regularly scheduled formal case reviews with detectives.
- **Investigator Training**. In addition to various recommendations that focus on basic investigator training for all new detectives, advanced and targeted training on homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations are encouraged for SID detectives and their supervisors.
- **Case File Documentation**. Maintaining detailed and consistent case files is important not just for improving investigations but also for helping supervisors conduct case reviews and for sharing information with prosecutors. This report provides recommendations that focus on improving case file documentation and standardization.

- **Investigating Fatal and Nonfatal Shootings**. To improve the effectiveness of investigations, recommendations focus on developing and using a standard case checklist of investigative tasks, ensuring that detectives respond to every nonfatal shooting scene, holding weekly violent crime meetings, and developing and following up with witnesses.

- **Victim and Family Advocacy**. RBPD has an in-house Victim Advocate Unit that is dedicated to protecting the rights and dignity of crime victims. Recommendations in this area focus on developing policies to guide the Victim Advocate Unit, ensuring that victim advocates are promptly notified about every nonfatal shooting, ensuring that detectives follow up with victims and their families, and strengthening the response to intimidation.

- **Physical and Digital Evidence**. The assessment team consistently heard positive feedback regarding RBPD's Crime Scene Unit (CSU), and it appears that RBPD has a strong working relationship with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) Crime Lab. Additionally, every RBPD Crime Scene Investigator is trained and certified to perform their own National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) entries, which significantly reduces delays in investigations involving firearms. This report provides recommendations for building upon this solid foundation, including reviewing CSU shift schedules, strengthening communication between RBPD detectives and PBSO Crime Lab personnel, and expanding upon RBPD's Crime Gun Intelligence Initiative.

- **Crime Analysis.** The assessment team found that RBPD's in-house crime analysts are underutilized in homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations, despite having the skills and desire to provide more substantive assistance. It also appears that there are gaps in sharing pertinent information with analysts. This report includes recommendations for better integrating crime analysts into criminal investigations and facilitating stronger coordination between detectives and analysts.

- **External Partnerships with Law Enforcement Agencies.** Riviera Beach is located in a densely populated area that directly neighbors several other local police jurisdictions. As a result, violent crimes that occur within the boundaries of Riviera Beach often involve victims and suspects from across jurisdictional lines. Notably, RBPD has strong relationships with federal and local partners and frequently coordinates with them in shooting investigations. This report provides recommendations for strengthening formal coordination and information sharing between RBPD and other law enforcement agencies.

- **Case Prosecution**. The RBPD benefits from a good working relationship with the Palm Beach County State's Attorney's Office (PBCSAO). We identified ways to build on this working relationship, better incorporate the United State Attorney's Office in the department's collaborations to address violent crime, and coordinate to better support and protect violent crime victims and witnesses.

- **Community Engagement**. It is clear that under RBPD's new leadership, the department has prioritized and strengthened its community engagement efforts. This is exemplified by the efforts of RBPD's Community Services Division that include spearheading the Inlet Grove beautification initiative, teaching criminal justice classes at the local high school, and participating in the Reclaiming Every City Around Peace (RECAP) initiative. The report provides recommendations for building upon these efforts to further improve community engagement activities by the RBPD.

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1.   Shooting Response Assessment Overview

1.1   Introduction

In 2024, the RBPD applied for and was accepted into the NCCP. The NCCP is an initiative led by the BJA and conducted in partnership with RTI International that is designed to support law enforcement agencies in improving their response to fatal and nonfatal shootings and increasing their clearance rates for these crimes. This report describes the methods used to assess RBPD's response to shootings and provides recommendations for agency changes that are based on findings from the assessment and evidence-informed best practices. The NCCP is funding training and technical assistance for each participating site to support the implementation and evaluation of project recommendations.

RBPD is also participating in Project CLEARS (Community-Law Enforcement Alignment to Resolve Shootings), an initiative supported by Arnold Ventures. The initiative, which is intended to complement the NCCP assessment, allows for a deeper dive into RBPD's community engagement activities. Specifically, Project CLEARS will support additional input from community-based organizations (CBOs) and residents to guide increased community participation in gun violence prevention and response in partnership with RBPD, with a specific emphasis on leveraging CBOs to increase victim and witness participation in crime investigations. Additional information about RBPD's community engagement efforts and the community's perceptions of the department will be included in the separate Project CLEARS report.

1.2   Violent Crime in Riviera Beach

Riviera Beach has a population of about 40,000 residents and is approximately 9.65 square miles. Violent crime rates in Riviera Beach jumped in 2020, as the city saw the number of homicides increase from seven in 2019 to 16 in 2020, and the number of total violent crimes increase from 349 to 431 (Riviera Beach Police Department, 2023). Homicides have gradually declined since 2020, and in 2023 RBPD reported eight homicides, all of which were the result of gun violence. Nonfatal shootings, which RBPD classifies as aggravated assaults in which a victim sustained a gunshot or graze wound, have also decreased since 2020, though not consistently. Nonfatal shootings fell from 36 in 2020 to 15 in 2022, but then increased again to 27 in 2023. In 2023, the agency recovered 210 firearms (Riviera Beach Police Department, 2023). The assessment team was told that most gun violence in Riviera Beach results from conflicts involving gangs and drugs.

RBPD's homicide clearance rate has been erratic in recent years. In 2018, the department reported clearing just 11% of its homicides; in 2020, the clearance rate jumped to 38%. The clearance rate then plummeted in 2021 to just 8%, before rising to 55% in 2022 and 63% in 2023. These relatively low clearance rates motivated RBPD to participate in the NCCP to obtain support in improving its response to fatal and nonfatal shootings. The recent improvement in clearance rates corresponds with recent changes RBPD implemented to improve its violent crime response, which were noted by representatives of RBPD and members of the community.

1.3   Riviera Beach Police Department

RBPD has 120 sworn officers and 79 civilian staff. The agency is divided into four major sections, each of which is led by a major: Strategic Investigations, Road Patrol, Community Services, and Support

Services. The assessment team learned that there have been many changes at RBPD in recent years, including the selection of a new police chief in early 2023.

The responsibility of investigating violent crime falls to the SID. Within SID, there are seven detectives who are loosely divided into working property crimes and crimes against persons, though the assessment team learned that these assignments are fluid and that most of the detectives are or will be cross-trained so they can investigate all types of crimes. At the time of this assessment, there were three detectives and one sergeant assigned to work property crimes, one sergeant who oversees crimes against persons, and five detectives assigned to work crimes against persons (two of whom primarily investigate special victims crimes including sexual assault, domestic violence, and crimes against children). There are no specialized units or detectives dedicated to investigating homicides or nonfatal shootings.

SID also includes the agency's VICE Unit, which comprises a sergeant, two full-time detectives, and one detective who is on a part-time assignment and assists with both VICE and violent crimes investigations. The CSU is also housed within SID and includes five crime scene investigators (CSIs) and an additional CSI who is serving as the acting supervisor.

RBPD formed a Cold Case Unit in 2022 that is staffed by three former federal agents from the FBI and U.S. Secret Service. At the time of this assessment, the Cold Case Unit had inventoried all the department's cold cases. RBPD also utilizes a former State's Attorney 1 day per week to assist detectives and review all probable cause affidavits.

RBPD has a Crime Analysis Unit, which comprises two civilian crime analysts who use data to detect crime patterns and trends. At the time of this assessment, the Crime Analysis Unit was in the process of moving to the RBPD's Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) to create a new Criminal Intelligence Unit. The current supervising crime analyst will lead this new unit.

The agency also has a Community-Oriented Policing Unit, which includes a sergeant and four officers, that focuses on increasing engagement with the community, and a Victim Advocate Unit to offer support, resources, and advocacy for victims of any crime type including both violent and property crimes. The Victim Advocate Unit is a civilian unit composed of a unit supervisor as the lead victim advocate, a lead domestic violence victim advocate, three advocates, and one volunteer. At the time of the assessment, the unit was working to acquire a second volunteer position.

RBPD enjoys many strong relationships with local, state, and federal law enforcement and prosecutorial partners. The agency partners with the PBSO for several of its forensic services, including DNA testing and confirmation of NIBIN hits. RBPD also enjoys a good working relationship with the PBCSAO. RBPD partners with several CBOs, local businesses, schools, units of local government, residents on the Inlet Grove beatification initiative, the Community Redevelopment Area initiatives, and other efforts facilitated by the Community Service Division.

2.   Assessment Methods

The NCCP involves an in-depth agency assessment, conducted by a multidisciplinary team of experts, to understand how each participating site responds to fatal and nonfatal shootings and to identify strengths to build on and gaps to address to improve outcomes in these cases. Following the assessment, RTI

provides customized training and technical assistance to the sites to support them in implementing recommendations to improve their response to shootings. RBPD's assessment was directed at fatal and nonfatal shooting investigations conducted by SID detectives, but data collection took place throughout the agency and some findings may be relevant to other units within RBPD.

The RBPD assessment considered a range of operational and administrative components associated with the investigation of fatal and nonfatal shootings. The assessment was conducted using four methods:

- Review of relevant policies and procedures related to RBPD's response to fatal and nonfatal shootings
- On-site observations of facilities, equipment, and personnel interactions
- Interviews with RBPD personnel and external partners
- Systematic review and data extraction of sample fatal and nonfatal shooting investigative case files

2.1   Policy Review

One component of the assessment was an evaluation of policy to assess whether RBPD's policies (1) guide agency personnel through the response and investigation processes; (2) align with recommended practices in investigations; and (3) are used for agency oversight, accountability, and performance management. RBPD provided copies of all policies, memos, and documented procedures relevant to its violent crime response and investigations. RTI also requested relevant operational procedures, including organizational charts, case assignment processes, and caseload measures.

2.2   On-Site Observation of Facilities and Equipment

The NCCP assessment team conducted systematic observations of facilities and equipment related to RBPD's shooting response while on-site, including through a guided tour of the department.

2.3   Personnel Interviews

Personnel interviews provided the opportunity to gather direct perspectives from individuals who participate in the response and investigation of fatal and nonfatal shootings cases, including staff within RBPD and those from external agencies and organizations. The assessment team identified staff positions for the interviews and coordinated with RBPD to set up these interviews, most of which lasted 30 to 60 minutes and were conducted in person by teams of two interviewers. The team completed interviews using semi-structured interview guides, which are available to RBPD or its partners upon request.

The assessment team first met with RBPD command staff to develop an understanding of how fatal and nonfatal shootings are investigated, from the initial patrol response to case closure. As seen in **Table 2.1, i**nterviews were conducted with SID supervisors and detectives, Road Patrol supervisors and officers, CSU personnel, RBPD crime analysts, RBPD victim advocates, PBSO investigators and Crime Lab personnel, Evidence Unit staff, members of RBPD's Community Service Division, prosecutors from the

PBCSAO,[1] and stakeholders from CBOs. To identify community stakeholders, the assessment team worked with the major of the Community Service Division and other RBPD staff.

Table 2.1.   Personnel Interviews Completed

Agency Affiliation	Role	Number
Riviera Beach Police Department	Command Staff	6
Riviera Beach Police Department	SID Generalized Detectives and Supervisors	5
Riviera Beach Police Department	SID VICE Detectives and Supervisors	3
Riviera Beach Police Department	Crime Scene Unit	2
Riviera Beach Police Department	Crime Analysis and RTCC	3
Riviera Beach Police Department	Victim Advocate Unit	2
Riviera Beach Police Department	Patrol Supervisors and Officers	2
Riviera Beach Police Department	Evidence Unit	1
Riviera Beach Police Department	Community Services Division and Public Information Officer	3
Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office	Crime Lab	2
Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office	Investigators and Supervisors	1
West Palm Beach Police Department	Investigators and Supervisors	2
Palm Beach County State's Attorney's Office	Prosecutors	2
Various Community-Based Organizations	Leaders and Advocates	5

2.4   Case File Review

Finally, the assessment team reviewed a random sample of investigative case files for 25 fatal shooting incidents and 57 nonfatal shooting incidents that were reported to RBPD between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2023. For each case, we recorded over 100 pieces of information about the crime and agency response to understand common features of shootings in Riviera Beach and the types of actions taken by RBPD in response to them. Additionally, while on-site, the NCCP assessment team conducted an in-person case file review with two sergeants in SID to further understand how RBPD investigates shootings and documents its investigations.

3.   Assessment of Policies and Procedures

To be effective, the units that investigate homicides and nonfatal shootings must be governed by strong written policies that provide clear, comprehensive, and up-to-date guidance (Police Executive Research Forum [PERF] and the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2018). The assessment team reviewed RBPD's policies and procedures that are related to homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations. These materials cover topics including the SID, preliminary and follow-up

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[1] Although we attempted to interview prosecutors within the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida, we were unable to get in touch with them.

investigations, crime analysis, community-oriented policing, digital evidence, and victim/witness assistance.

RBPD's Policies #3.50 (Strategic Investigations Division), #3.52 (Case Assignment Criteria), #3.54 (Preliminary Investigations), and #3.55 (Follow-Up Investigations by Detectives) include guidance for patrol officers and detectives with respect to responding to and investigating violent crimes. For example, Policy #3.52 includes the requirement that criminal investigations "will incorporate checklists to ensure critical investigative details are not overlooked," and both Policies #3.54 and #3.55 include actual lists of investigative tasks that detectives should take at the scene and during follow-up investigations. As discussed in the recommendations below, RBPD can use these policies as a solid foundation upon which to create a comprehensive manual for conducting homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations.

3.1   Policies and Procedures Recommendations

The assessment team identified multiple areas where RBPD's procedures governing homicide and nonfatal shootings investigations could be strengthened. Our recommendations include:

3.1.1 *Strategic Investigations Division*

Recommendations	1	**Develop a comprehensive, user-friendly manual for SID that includes all relevant policies, checklists, and other written materials that govern responsibilities related to homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations.** RBPD Policy #3.50 ("Strategic Investigations Division"), which was revised in January 2024, sets forth basic requirements and guidelines related to developing witnesses, collecting and submitting evidence, conducting background investigations into suspects and arrestees, conducting interviews and interrogations, performing post-arrest procedures, notifying victims, and documenting cases. This policy will provide a good start as RBPD develops its comprehensive manual. The purpose of the manual is to provide detailed direction for all units and individuals at RBPD who are involved in fatal and nonfatal shooting investigations, including but not limited to 911 call takers, first officer(s) on the scene, patrol officers and supervisors, detectives and their supervisors, forensics personnel, support units, crime analysts, and victim service professionals. The manual should be organized into clearly marked sections and include a table of contents. It should address both the initial response and the follow-up investigation and should include specific duties and responsibilities for each member involved. It should also include an investigative checklist of basic tasks that officers and detectives must consider or complete when investigating each crime type, similar to the checklists in RBPD's Policies #3.54 and #3.55 but with additional details and instructions. The manual and checklists should address topics that include but are not limited to: • Timelines and specific duties and responsibilities for each member involved in these investigations, including step-by-step instructions for investigators at each phase. • Protocols for case assignment and scheduling, including detective callout to scenes. • The initial incident response, including actions taken by the 911 call taker, first officer(s) on the scene, lead investigator, supervisors, and other departmental units. Instructions should cover canvassing for physical evidence and videos at the scene. • Protocols for next-of-kin notification, which should be trauma informed and victim centered. • Policies and protocols related to the follow-up investigation, including but not limited to attending autopsies, following up with witnesses, taking witness and suspect statements, and recovering and submitting physical and digital evidence.

- Specific guidelines for engaging with victims and families, including procedures for developing a communication plan, developing timelines for initial and follow-up communications, providing case status updates, making required notifications and contacts with victims and their families, documenting contacts with victims and their families, and collaborating with RBPD victim advocates. Procedures should require detectives to inform victims' families about the victim advocate position and provide the advocate's contact information.
- Policies for communicating and sharing information with internal units (e.g., patrol officers, crime analysts, forensics personnel, digital evidence personnel, victim advocates) and external partners (e.g., prosecutors, crime labs, task forces, and community and victim advocacy groups).
- Case documentation and case file requirements.
- The use of traditional and social media, including protocols for releasing video footage to the public.
- Policies and protocols for investigating specific types of homicides and nonfatal shootings, including mass shootings, infant deaths, suspicious deaths, officer-involved shootings, and cold cases.
- Investigating cold cases.
- Mandated case reviews, including the timeline and expectations for review.
- Supervisor duties and responsibilities.
- Sample forms, reports, warrants, and other documents with guidance on how to complete them.

The NCCP team can provide RBPD with sample policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to help implement this recommendation and create a manual that is consistent with best practices, departmental regulations, and state and federal laws. In developing this manual, it is important to obtain input from detectives, supervisors, attorneys, and all other stakeholders. This will help ensure that the manual correctly addresses all necessary aspects and improves buy-in from necessary stakeholders.

2 **Provide each detective with a copy of the manual upon joining SID.**

All SID staff should receive a copy of the manual and any other relevant procedures and be trained on their contents. The goal of the manual is to serve as a resource to facilitate a comprehensive, thorough, and consistent investigative process and to provide clear guidance for agency expectations and accountability. RBPD staff involved in homicide or nonfatal shooting investigations but who are not part of SID (e.g., patrol officers) should also be given access to the manual.

3 **Regularly review and update the manual and other procedures every 3 to 5 years to ensure they are up to date.**

To ensure a regular review and update process, it should be clarified who at RBPD will be responsible for overseeing this process, including when it occurs in the calendar.

4 **Document the process for selecting and promoting detectives in written policies.**

Currently, this process is not defined in RBPD policy.

Recommendations	5	**Include supervisory review requirements and guidelines in the SID policies and manual.** Neither Policy #3.53 (Accountability for Investigations) nor Policy #3.55 (Follow-Up Investigations by Detectives) address supervisory review of cases. As discussed more in Section 5.1.2 (Personnel Selection and Supervision), Policy #3.50 (Strategic Investigations Division) states only that supervisors shall conduct weekly verbal reviews. The requirements and guidelines for conducting formal supervisory review of cases should be included in SID policies and manuals. Recommendation 20 provides details for what supervisory reviews should include and the purpose they serve.

3.1.2   *Crime Scene Response/Crime Scene Unit*

Recommendations	6	**Develop a set of procedures and a Quality Manual to guide the work of the CSU.** The assessment team learned that the CSU does not currently have a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to govern its work. This is a gap that must be addressed immediately. RBPD can look to the PBSO's Crime Lab policies as a guide when creating its own CSU directives. PBSO's Crime Lab manual is publicly available on the PBSO website: https://www.pbso.org/inside-pbso/crime-lab/crime-laboratory-manuals.
	7	**Supplement the current Policy #2.16 (Crime Scene Responsibilities) with a policy that specifically addresses responsibilities at the scene of homicides and nonfatal shootings.** The policy must address the responsibilities of patrol officers and supervisors, SID detectives and supervisors, CSU personnel, victim advocates, and any others who respond to these scenes. It should also address duties and responsibilities related to canvassing, evidence collection, identifying and handling witnesses and suspects, and working with victim advocates. (See Section 5.4.1, Initial Crime Scene Response, for more information on recommended practices when responding to homicide and nonfatal shooting scenes.)

3.1.3   *Crime Analysis and Criminal Intelligence Policies*

Recommendations	8	**Develop written directives to guide the new Criminal Intelligence Unit and update Policy #2.1 (Crime Analyst Function) to reflect the current duties and responsibilities of crime analysts.** The assessment team learned that RBPD is in the process of moving its crime analysts into the RTCC to create a new Criminal Intelligence Unit. RBPD should develop written policies to guide this unit and govern the collection and use of criminal intelligence. The department should also update its current Policy #2.1 (Crime Analyst Function) to reflect the current roles and responsibilities of RBPD's crime analysts. Section 5.7.1 (Crime Analysis Unit) of this report describes the current crime analyst duties, as well as recommendations for expanding these duties to further integrate crime analysts into investigations.

3.1.4   *Training Policy*

Recommendations — **9**	**Develop a comprehensive training policy to include specific assignments for detectives investigating homicides, nonfatal shootings, and other crimes against persons.** RBPD has a Training/Specialized Unit policy that was published in June 2022. The policy is general to all specialized units within the department and is brief in nature. It only recommends/mandates two areas of training for all detectives: interviews and interrogations, and advanced report writing. RBPD must develop a comprehensive training policy that requires detectives investigating crimes against persons to receive, at a minimum, a basic detective training course, advanced detective course, and interview and interrogations course. The policy must require detectives who investigate homicides to attend a homicide investigations course, and interview and interrogations course. (See Section 5.2 (Detective and Supervisor Training) for more details on recommended trainings.)

3.1.5   *Other Policies*

Recommendations — **10**	**Strengthen Policy #3.12 (Information Sharing Provisions).** RBPD has a policy that "encourages" information sharing and offers general guidance. This policy should be revised to ensure that soliciting input and assistance from both within RBPD and from external partners is a mandatory step in the investigative process. The revised policy should incorporate the information-sharing protocols recommended in Section 5 of this report, including: • Recommendation 38 (holding an internal weekly violent crime meeting) • Recommendation 39 (strengthening information-sharing protocols between detectives and patrol officers) • Recommendation 63 (improving communication between RBPD detectives and PBSO Crime Lab personnel) • Recommendations 69 and 70 (sharing information with crime/intelligence analysts) • Recommendation 74 (strengthening formal coordination with local law enforcement agencies)
11	**Develop a policy governing the use of social media in criminal investigations.** Social media can be a useful tool for gathering intelligence and information in criminal investigations. However, monitoring social media accounts or using undercover accounts to gather information can raise concerns about privacy and freedom of speech. Therefore, agencies like RBPD that use social media in criminal investigations should develop policies and SOPs that set forth guidelines, requirements, and prohibitions involving its use. The NCCP team can help RBPD identify research and sample policies to provide guidance when developing this policy.

Recommendations	**12**	**Develop a policy to address interviews of suspects and witnesses at police facilities.** RBPD's Policy #3.32 (Field Interview) addresses the field interview of suspects. Although this is an important policy that RBPD should retain, the department should also ensure that it has a comprehensive policy for interviewing suspects and witnesses at a police facility. This policy should include the following: • An advisement against patrol officers conducting field interviews of homicide suspects. Instead, these interviews should be left to detectives. • A requirement that detectives make every effort to interview significant witnesses for homicide and nonfatal shooting cases at the police facility. At a minimum, witnesses should be interviewed in person, with phone interviews being the last resort (see also Recommendation 41). • Requirements and guidelines for recording suspect and witness interviews. • How to document interviews. Even when an interview is recorded, the detective should complete a report summarizing the important aspects of the interview. Documentation should also be addressed in the current RBPD Policy #3.32 (Field Interview). The NCCP can provide RBPD with sample policies to help implement this recommendation.
	13	**Update Policy #3.94 (Eyewitness Identification).** The following changes would strengthen Policy #3.94 so that it is better aligned with research and best practices: 1.3—Physical Line-Ups: • This section simply states, "The Palm Beach County State Attorney's Office does not require the use of or rely solely on physical lineups for eyewitness identification." Although this may be true, if RBPD does use or intend to use physical lineups, then this policy needs to include the specific requirements, guidelines, and prohibitions associated with this practice. • The policy should require that, if at all possible, the lineup should be conducted by an independent administrator who does not know the suspect's identity (i.e., "double-blind" administration). This is a best practice recommended by the U.S. Department of Justice (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs, 2017). The policy should also state that if blind administration is not possible, then the administrator should take all reasonable precautions to avoid giving any unintentional cues to the witness (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2016). 1.4—Show-Ups • The use of show-ups has been criticized by many criminal justice experts as being too suggestive, and some police agencies have reduced this practice. However, the science involving the accuracy of show-ups is still unresolved, and some agencies find that they are useful in quickly identifying and capturing potentially dangerous suspects (National Policy Institute, n.d.).

		• Given the uncertainty of the research in this area, as well as the benefits and disadvantages to using show-ups, the assessment team recommends that RBPD take an approach similar to the model policy set forth by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), which allows for show-ups but includes this language: "The use of show-ups should be avoided whenever possible in preference to the use of a lineup or photo array procedure. However, when circumstances require the prompt presentation of a suspect to a witness, the following guidelines shall be followed to minimize potential suggestiveness and increase reliability" (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2016).
		• RBPD should then review its guidelines for show-ups and ensure they aligned with the IACP model policy.
		1.5.B—Conducting the Photo Array
13		• The policy should require blind administration of the photo array (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs, 2017). The policy should also state that if this is not possible, then the administrator should take all reasonable precautions to avoid giving any unintentional cues to the witness (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2016).
		The revised Policy #3.94 should include specific instructional language for detectives to use with witnesses prior to conducting the lineup, show-up, or photo array. The IACP model policy includes language that RBPD can use as an example. RBPD's Policy #3.94 should also require detectives to document the exact words used by witnesses when completing their reports.
		RBPD should further review research and sample policies on eyewitness identification to ensure that its policy is aligned with best practices. The NCCP team can provide RBPD with the materials and information needed to help implement this recommendation.

4. Case File Review Findings

By reviewing and coding the investigative case narratives for a sample of fatal and nonfatal shootings, the assessment team was able to evaluate certain aspects of shootings in Riviera Beach; RBPD's response to these shootings, including its initial response and follow-up investigations; and case outcomes. Case narratives for a random sample of 16 fatal shooting incidents, 57 nonfatal shooting incidents, and 9 incidents involving both a fatal and nonfatal shooting were provided to RTI for the years 2018–2023. Because agencies typically prioritize murder investigations over nonfatal shooting investigations and may apply distinct resources to this crime type, we grouped the cases involving both a fatal and nonfatal shooting with cases involving only a fatal shooting and compared them with incidents involving only a nonfatal shooting.

RTI and RBPD had a data use agreement in place that met the data security standards of both RTI and RBPD, and RTI adhered to this agreement when storing and accessing case files for review and analysis. Members of the assessment team reviewed the case narratives to understand RBPD's response to each type of shooting and to extract more than 100 variables on the shooting and agency response from each case. *Tables 4.1* and *4.2* provide summary statistics for key attributes related to the crime and agency response, respectively, which were extracted from the case file data. We collected key information from the case narratives using a set of predetermined data metrics. The data collection instrument and codebook used to code investigative case files are available to RBPD or its partners upon request. Table 4.1 provides RBPD with an understanding of the types of shootings reviewed by the NCCP team, while Table 4.2 provides RBPD with an understanding of its response to these shootings.

Table 4.1.   Incident Characteristics, by Type of Shooting

Incident Characteristic	Shooting	
	Nonfatal	Fatal
Total number of cases reviewed	57	25
Number of guns fired		
1	33 (58%)	11 (44%)
2	10 (18%)	9 (36%)
More than 2	4 (7%)	4 (16%)
Unknown	10 (18%)	1 (4%)
Type of gun used[a]		
Handgun	45 (79%)	22 (88%)
Rifle	5 (9%)	8 (32%)
Shotgun	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Unknown	9 (16%)	0 (0%)
Median number of rounds fired	6.5	8.0
Location of shooting		
Street/outdoors	44 (77%)	15 (60%)
Inside residence	5 (9%)	4 (16%)
Inside vehicle	4 (7%)	3 (12%)
Other	2 (4%)	3 (12%)
Unknown	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
Number of victims		
1	45 (79%)	14 (56%)
2	9 (16%)	3 (12%)
More than 2	3 (5%)	8 (32%)
Unknown	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Victim sex[a]		
Male	49 (86%)	23 (92%)
Female	14 (25%)	8 (32%)

(continued)

Table 4.1. Incident Characteristics, by Type of Shooting (continued)

Incident Characteristic	Shooting	
	Nonfatal	Fatal
Victim race[a]		
Black	55 (96%)	23 (92%)
White	2 (4%)	2 (8%)
Hispanic	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Median victim age (years)	27	25
Number of suspects at end of investigation		
1	30 (53%)	11 (44%)
2	7 (12%)	4 (16%)
More than 2	2 (4%)	1 (4%)
Unknown	18 (32%)	9 (36%)
Final suspect sex[a]		
Male	34 (60%)	17 (68%)
Female	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
Final suspect race[a]		
Black	33 (58%)	16 (64%)
White	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Hispanic	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Median final suspect age (years)	25	20
Primary relationship between victims and offenders		
Current/former intimate partner	4 (7%)	1 (4%)
Family member	1 (2%)	1 (4%)
Friend/acquaintance	15 (26%)	8 (32%)
Stranger	9 (16%)	4 (16%)
Rival gang/clique member	0 (0%)	3 (12%)
Other relationship	3 (5%)	1 (4%)
Unknown	25 (44%)	7 (28%)
Primary motive for shooting		
Domestic abuse	3 (5%)	1 (4%)
Rivalry over lover	5 (9%)	3 (12%)
Conflict over money	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

(continued)

Table 4.1. Incident Characteristics, by Type of Shooting (continued)

Incident Characteristic	Shooting	
	Nonfatal	Fatal
Drug-related	2 (4%)	1 (4%)
Gang-related	1 (2%)	3 (12%)
Robbery	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Shot inadvertently or in self-defense	1 (2%)	2 (8%)
Other motive	12 (21%)	7 (28%)
Unknown motive	33 (58%)	7 (28%)
Clearance status		
Open/inactive	32 (56%)	16 (64%)
Cleared by arrest or exceptional means	25 (44%)	9 (36%)

[a] Response options are not mutually exclusive so values may sum to greater than 100%.

Table 4.2. RBPD Response Characteristics, by Type of Shooting

Incident Characteristic	Shooting	
	Nonfatal	Fatal
Total number of cases reviewed	57	25
Number of patrol officers who responded to scene		
1–4	8 (14%)	1 (4%)
5–9	16 (28%)	9 (36%)
10+	25 (44%)	11 (44%)
Unknown	8 (14%)	4 (16%)
Number of detectives who responded to scene		
0	19 (33%)	0 (0%)
1	15 (26%)	2 (8%)
2	8 (14%)	4 (16%)
3	4 (7%)	6 (24%)
4	3 (5%)	4 (16%)
5+	0 (0%)	2 (8%)
Unknown	8 (14%)	7 (28%)
CSI processed scene		
No	6 (11%)	0 (0%)
Yes	51 (89%)	25 (100%)
Type of evidence collected at scene[a]		

(continued)

Table 4.2. RBPD Response Characteristics, by Type of Shooting (continued)

Incident Characteristic	Shooting	
	Nonfatal	Fatal
DNA/bodily fluids	40 (70%)	24 (96%)
Latent prints	20 (35%)	21 (84%)
Pattern evidence	1 (2%)	1 (4%)
Trace evidence	2 (4%)	2 (8%)
Suspect firearm	13 (23%)	7 (28%)
Bullets	32 (56%)	20 (80%)
Casing	46 (81%)	24 (96%)
Clothing	36 (63%)	24 (96%)
Electronics	15 (26%)	17 (68%)
Digital	23 (40%)	20 (80%)
Drugs	6 (11%)	9 (36%)
Vehicle	5 (9%)	1 (4%)
Other evidence	11 (19%)	10 (40%)
Victim statement obtained		
No or not applicable	6 (11%)	18 (72%)
Yes	51 (89%)	7 (28%)
Victim participated/cooperated in investigation during initial response		
No or not applicable	23 (40%)	19 (76%)
Yes	34 (60%)	6 (24%)
Number of third-party witnesses		
0	17 (30%)	1 (4%)
1	16 (28%)	8 (32%)
More than one	20 (35%)	15 (60%)
Unknown	4 (7%)	1 (4%)
Witness statement obtained		
No or not applicable	24 (42%)	3 (12%)
Yes	33 (58%)	22 (88%)
Witness participated/cooperated in investigation during initial response		
No or not applicable	28 (49%)	4 (16%)
Yes	29 (51%)	21 (84%)

(continued)

Table 4.2. RBPD Response Characteristics, by Type of Shooting (continued)

Incident Characteristic	Shooting	
	Nonfatal	Fatal
A suspect identified at time of response		
No	30 (53%)	11 (44%)
Yes	27 (47%)	14 (56%)
Suspect identification at time of response[a]		
Police identified	9 (16%)	5 (20%)
Victim or witness identified	17 (30%)	10 (40%)
Other identification	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Unknown identification	1 (2%)	1 (4%)
Identifying information on a suspect vehicle at time of response		
No	35 (61%)	11 (44%)
Yes	22 (39%)	14 (56%)
Number of days until first detective activity		
0	29 (51%)	23 (92%)
1	2 (4%)	1 (4%)
2	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
3+	7 (12%)	0 (0%)
Unknown	17 (30%)	1 (4%)
Investigator(s) contacted victim(s)		
No or not applicable	16 (28%)	18 (72%)
Yes	41 (72%)	7 (28%)
In person	35	7
Not in person	6	0
Victim participated/cooperated in investigation after initial unwillingness to		
No or not applicable	57 (100%)	25 (100%)
Yes	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Detective contacted third-party witnesses identified at scene		
No or not applicable	37 (65%)	7 (28%)
Yes	20 (35%)	18 (72%)
In person	18	18
Not in person	2	0

(continued)

Table 4.2. RBPD Response Characteristics, by Type of Shooting (continued)

Incident Characteristic	Shooting	
	Nonfatal	Fatal
Witness participated/cooperated in investigation after initial unwillingness to		
No or not applicable	57 (100%)	25 (100%)
Yes	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Initial leads on motive		
No	27 (47%)	8 (32%)
Yes	30 (53%)	17 (68%)
Confidential informant(s) came forward with information		
No	55 (96%)	25 (100%)
Yes	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
Specialized unit(s) helped with investigation[a]		
Fugitive	3 (5%)	4 (16%)
Active Criminal Enforcement Unit	4 (7%)	0 (0%)
Gang/Narcotics	0 (0%)	3 (12%)
Real Time Task Force	3 (5%)	6 (24%)
Intelligence/Fusion	0 (0%)	2 (8%)
Crime analysis	1 (2%)	4 (16%)
Crime lab	27 (47%)	13 (52%)
Victim advocate	4 (7%)	3 (12%)
Other	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
External resources/partners helped with investigation[a]		
Federal law enforcement	16 (28%)	13 (52%)
Local/state law enforcement	28 (49%)	14 (56%)
Regional fusion/intelligence center	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Community-/faith-based organization	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Public tip line	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Technologies used in investigation[a]		
Hidden recording device	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
License plate reader	9 (16%)	7 (28%)
Facial recognition	0 (0%)	2 (8%)
Social network data	2 (4%)	9 (36%)
Gunshot detection	28 (49%)	11 (44%)

(continued)

Table 4.2. RBPD Response Characteristics, by Type of Shooting (continued)

Incident Characteristic	Shooting	
	Nonfatal	Fatal
Firearm/toolmark identification	32 (56%)	21 (84%)
Gun trace	14 (25%)	11 (44%)
Digital data	2 (4%)	12 (48%)
Video data	11 (19%)	1 (4%)
IMSI-catcher	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Cell phone location	1 (2%)	6 (24%)
Vehicle computer data	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Social media Investigated		
No	52 (91%)	14 (56%)
Yes	5 (9%)	11 (44%)
Search warrant executed		
No	46 (81%)	10 (40%)
Yes	11 (19%)	15 (60%)
Community group/leader asked to help with investigation		
No	57 (100%)	23 (92%)
Yes	0 (0%)	2 (8%)
Investigator made further contact with patrol officer(s) who responded to scene?		
No	55 (96%)	25 (100%)
Yes	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
Suspect interviewed by an investigator		
No	42 (74%)	17 (68%)
Yes	15 (26%)	8 (32%)
Suspect confessed to the crime		
No	51 (89%)	23 (92%)
Yes	6 (11%)	2 (8%)

[a] Response options are not mutually exclusive so values may sum to greater than 100%.

As can be seen in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, the sample of fatal and nonfatal shooting cases reviewed by the NCCP team differed in characteristics related to both the incident and RBPD's initial response and follow-up investigation. For example, compared with nonfatal shooting incidents, fatal shooting incidents were more likely to involve multiple firearms, victims, and suspects, as well as have more shots fired on average. Importantly, these differences in incident characteristics were small relative to the observed differences in RBPD's response to nonfatal shootings compared with fatal shootings.

For instance, from 2018 through 2023 when these incidents took place, RBPD's crime scene response appears to have been less robust for nonfatal shootings compared with fatal shootings. Specifically, in 19 (33%) of the 57 nonfatal shootings, no detective responded to the scene. When a detective did respond to the scene, it was typically a single detective (26%). Alternatively, among the 25 fatal shootings, in no case did a detective not respond to the scene, and the most frequent number of detectives who responded to the scene was 3 (24%). Additionally, CSIs processed the scene in 100% of the fatal shooting incidents but did so in only 89% of the nonfatal shooting incidents. Finally, in 23 (92%) of the 25 fatal shootings, a detective began working on the case within 24 hours of the report. This was the case in only 29 (51%) of the nonfatal shooting incidents, and in 12% of the nonfatal shooting cases, a detective did not begin working on the case until 3 or more days had passed after incident was reported.

In addition to the findings described in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, for each case we recorded (1) the investigative components that seemed to have contributed to case clearance for those cases that were cleared and (2) the investigative components that may have produced new investigative leads if they had received additional investigative attention.

Among the 9 fatal shootings that were cleared by an arrest or by exceptional means, participation by a witness or surviving victim in the police investigation seemed to have contributed to case clearance in 8 of the cases. In 7 of the 9 cases, audiovisual evidence contributed to case clearance. In 4 cases, information on the suspect's vehicle played a role in case clearance. Finally, cell phone data, social media intelligence, and a fast response to the crime scene played a role in case clearance in 3 cases each. Among the 25 nonfatal shooting incidents that were cleared by arrest or by exceptional means, the factors that frequently contributed to case clearance included victim or witness participation in the investigation (n = 21), a fast response to the crime scene (n = 16), information on a suspect's vehicle (n = 9), audiovisual data (n = 8), and the collection and analysis of ballistic evidence (n = 6).

Regarding the investigative components that appeared to hold promise for producing new investigative leads but that did not seem to have been sufficiently pursued by investigators, the most common component across shooting types was further victim or witness follow-up. Specifically, the site assessment team believed that 33 (58%) nonfatal shooting incidents and 14 (56%) fatal shooting incidents would have benefited from additional interviews with surviving victims or witnesses. Additionally, the site assessment team felt that appealing to the public for information would have benefited 27 (47%) nonfatal shooting cases and 13 (52%) fatal shooting cases. In addition to these activities, further suspect follow-up (26% of nonfatal shootings and 45% of fatal shootings), additional evidence collection or use during the follow-up investigation (32% of nonfatal shootings and 32% of fatal shootings), and the use of a victim advocate (25% of nonfatal shootings and 28% of fatal shootings) appeared to be additional promising investigative activities that may have generated new leads if they had been pursued by investigators. Among the nonfatal shooting cases, the site assessment team also believed that the use of additional technologies in the investigation would have made a difference in 13 cases (23%), while in 8 (32%) of the fatal shooting cases, the site assessment team believed that the use of one or more additional specialized support units could have advanced the investigation.

Together, these findings point to both strengths and weaknesses in RBPD's response to fatal and nonfatal shootings, which should be interpreted alongside findings in Section 5, which are based on personnel interviews and on-site observations. For example, across both shooting types, the case file

analysis makes clear that RBPD effectively utilizes external partnerships and technologies to solve cases. Additionally, RBPD consistently utilizes crime gun intelligence in shooting investigations, as a suspect's firearm, bullets, and casings were often collected during these investigations and RBPD applied technologies to trace crime guns and analyze ballistic evidence in most of these cases (see Table 4.2). However, this review also suggests that investigators could have conducted more extensive follow-up with victims, witnesses, and suspects in these cases, and the site assessment team felt that additional evidence collection or use during the follow-up investigation would have benefited close to a third of both fatal and nonfatal shooting cases.

One notable finding, as mentioned above, is that RBPD appears to investigate fatal shootings more intensely than nonfatal shootings. This is a common finding among police departments across the country. However, given the serious nature of nonfatal shootings, and how this offense relates to fatal shootings in terms of promoting retaliatory violence and having shared offenders, the department would benefit from applying additional resources to this crime type. One way of doing that is to enhance the crime scene response to nonfatal shooting incidents. Research has found that both a faster (Blanes i Vidal & Kirchmaier, 2018) and more robust (Wellford et al., 2019) crime scene response is positively associated with case clearance. In fact, a fast crime scene response seemed to have contributed to case clearance in 3 of the 9 cleared fatal shootings and 16 of the 25 cleared nonfatal shootings that we reviewed. Additionally, the findings that fatal shooting incidents were more likely than nonfatal shooting incidents to (a) result in the collection of casings (96% to 81%, respectively) and (b) include witness statements (88% to 58%, respectively) (see Table 4.2) may demonstrate the value that a robust crime scene response has on evidence collection at the scene.

In Section 5, we discuss findings from our site assessment, including findings discussed here and findings from interviews with agency personnel, personnel within partnering organizations, and community representatives; site observations; and a review of agency policies and other documents.

5.   Findings from Site Visit

5.1   Agency Resources and Workload

5.1.1   *Staffing and Organization*

Staffing Challenges

Like many police departments across the country, RBPD faces staffing challenges. For example, at the time of this review, RBPD had three vacant detective positions and 11 open positions for patrol officers. It would be useful for RBPD to have additional sworn and civilian personnel to assist with violent crime investigations, including additional civilian staff to help with crime analysis and crime scene processing. Filling these positions would strengthen the department's investigative capabilities, reduce employee burnout, and ensure there is time for personnel to attend necessary trainings and court appearances.

Recommendations	**14**	**Review current staffing and vacancies to determine whether additional personnel could be assigned to help with violent crime investigations.** If funds are available from the city, filling the current vacancies and hiring additional sworn and civilian personnel should be a priority. If hiring additional personnel is not immediately feasible, RBPD should determine whether there are any personnel who could be reassigned to help with violent crime investigations. The NCCP team can support RBPD in making these determinations. One strategy used by several police departments is to expand the use of civilian staff to provide detectives with greater technical support. For example, some departments have "investigative aides" who are embedded within the violent crime detective bureaus to assist with administrative and support duties, such as writing warrants, making follow-up phone calls, processing phone calls, and running Internet searches. Civilian staff can also be trained to perform some criminal intelligence tasks, such as conducting open-source investigations using social media.

Organizational Structure of Strategic Investigations Division

Homicides and nonfatal shootings in Riviera Beach are investigated by SID detectives. There are no specialized squads or detectives who are solely dedicated to investigating homicides or nonfatal shootings. Within SID, detectives are divided into working property crimes and crimes against persons, though the assessment team was told that these assignments are fluid and that most of the detectives are or will be cross-trained to investigate all types of crimes. Crimes against persons can include homicides, nonfatal shootings and other aggravated assaults, suspicious deaths, sex crimes, robberies, and overdoses. Patrol officers typically handle simple assaults.

At the time of this assessment, there were three detectives and one sergeant who were primarily assigned to work property crimes, and five detectives and one sergeant who were primarily assigned to crimes against persons, with two of these detectives primarily investigating special victims crimes. SID also has two part-time employees who assist with investigations, including a former State's Attorney who works 1 day per week to review all probable cause affidavits and act as an unofficial legal advisor. SID is overseen by a major and a captain.

Each case is assigned a lead detective and a backup detective, who provides assistance. The other SID detectives are on hand for support. Detectives work 8-hour shifts, with coverage from 7 a.m. to 12 a.m. 7 days per week. In keeping with the on-call system, roughly half of the detectives are on call on any given day. The SID sergeants are responsible for assigning cases and monitoring detective caseloads, and interviewees consistently said that their caseloads were manageable and well-balanced.

The assessment team learned that in the past, SID detectives were more generalized (working all types of cases), but in recent years there was a movement toward greater specialization (e.g., only working property cases and not crimes against persons). However, several interviewees said that vacancies in SID are causing the pendulum to swing back toward generalization, and that detectives are increasingly being expected to work multiple types of cases.

Although there are undoubtedly benefits to generalization in investigations, especially in the context of staff shortages, the assessment team consistently heard that the current state of generalization and variability in responsibilities in SID has caused confusion about current and future roles and responsibilities. This ambiguity about detectives' roles and responsibilities creates several challenges. For

one, detectives are being assigned (or have been told they will be assigned) to work homicides and nonfatal shootings despite lacking the training, experience, or desire to investigate these types of cases. Additionally, uncertainty about what kinds of cases they will be expected to work is resulting in frustration and burnout among detectives. Recommendation 15 is designed to address this issue.

Recommendations	**15**	**Take steps to ensure that detectives are assigned to work the types of cases for which they have the training, experience, and interest.** Ideally, SID would be divided into two separate and distinct squads—one to investigate property crimes and the other to investigate crimes against persons—and the detectives who investigate violent crimes would be among those with the most experience in the unit. This structure would be the most beneficial to RBPD when it comes to avoiding generalization, reducing detective uncertainty and frustration, and strengthening homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations. However, the assessment team understands that staffing challenges and concerns about detective turnover make it difficult to avoid generalization and that detectives may have to be prepared to investigate homicides and nonfatal shootings even if that is not their normal assignment. Therefore, all detectives must be properly cross-trained to investigate homicides and nonfatal shootings. Recommendations 23 and 24 discuss the trainings that detectives should receive to prepare them to investigate homicide and nonfatal shooting cases. Regardless of how SID is structured, there needs to be consistency with respect to expectations about the types of cases detectives will be required to work. The ambiguity and inconsistency regarding case assignments will result in frustration and have a negative impact on investigations.
	16	**Bolster the investigative response to nonfatal shootings.** As discussed in Section 4, the case file analysis revealed that despite being severe forms of violence that likely have multiple overlaps with fatal shootings, including shared offenders, nonfatal shootings appear to receive a less robust police response compared with fatal shootings. Although this is common in police departments across the country, RBPD should take steps to enhance its response to nonfatal shootings. The NCCP team can assist RBPD in doing so. Possible strategies include: • Assigning a certain number of SID detectives to specialize in nonfatal shootings as is currently done with special victims crimes, preferably in a way that allows each investigator to concentrate on 10 to 12 new nonfatal shooting cases each year. RBPD may wish to consider combining homicides and nonfatal shootings in these specialized positions. • Reducing resources directed to less serious forms of property crime and redirecting them to nonfatal shooting cases. • Reassigning some SID detective responsibilities to other personnel to allow them to direct greater attention to nonfatal shooting investigations.

VICE Unit

RBPD maintains a VICE Unit that comprises a sergeant, two full-time detectives, and one detective who is on a part-time assignment and assists with both VICE and violent crimes investigations. Unlike other SID detectives, who are physically located at police headquarters, VICE detectives work at an off-site maintenance building. The VICE Unit primarily responds to investigations involving drugs, guns, gambling, prostitution, and related offenses, though it was noted that personnel in the unit may spend around 25% of their time assisting with violent crime investigations by providing surveillance, sharing information, and investigating crime guns. The assessment team learned that VICE detectives frequently help SID detectives write and execute search warrants in homicide cases. Interviewees explained that

this is because many of the detectives working homicide cases are inexperienced, making the VICE detectives better equipped to handle this task more efficiently. (See Recommendations 23 and 76 for details on training for writing search warrants.)

Recommendations	17	**RBPD should rethink the position of VICE detectives and their role in violent crime investigations.** Given the importance of investigating violent crimes, RBPD may want to reexamine the value of vice cases and determine whether VICE detectives might be better used working violent crime cases, including homicides and nonfatal shootings. If so, RBPD may consider disbanding the VICE Unit and reassigning its personnel to SID. Colocating VICE detectives with SID detectives may also introduce opportunities for more experienced detectives to educate those who are less experienced and may increase overall information sharing between the two units. Regardless, RBPD should refrain from having any members perform undercover drug buys while simultaneously publicly assisting with homicides and other violent crime investigations, as this practice could be unsafe in a small city like Riviera Beach.

5.1.2   *Personnel Selection and Supervision*

Detective Selection

At RBPD, based on the union contract, the process of selecting detectives begins when a vacancy notice is posted. Applicants' resumes, qualifications, and case jackets are reviewed, and then applicants complete an interview with a panel that includes representatives from Human Resources. Applicants must have completed a certain period of service prior to being promoted to detective, though there is not currently a specific time frame for eligibility. The assessment team learned that detectives receive a 5% pay increase upon promotion and that the position of detective is largely viewed as desirable at RBPD.

Recommendations	18	**Establish a rigorous, formal process for selecting SID detectives, particularly those who are responsible for investigating homicides, nonfatal shootings, and other violent crime.** The process and metrics for selecting detectives into these positions should be standardized and put into an SOP. See Recommendations 1 and 4 in Section 3.1 (Policies and Procedures Recommendations). The NCCP team can assist RBPD with identifying effective processes used by similar departments.
	19	**Take steps to attract and retain dedicated and experienced detectives to SID.** There are numerous recruitment and retention strategies and practices and the effectiveness of each can depend on the context of the organization and position. The NCCP team is available to work with RBPD to identify an evidence-based strategy and practices to improve the recruitment and retention of shooting investigators and their supervisors. RBPD could survey personnel to better understand which elements would make investigating violent crime a more desirable position and could incorporate patrol officers into investigations to increase interest.

Leadership and Supervision

The assessment team consistently heard positive feedback about RBPD's new leadership team during interviews with personnel throughout the department and with members of the community. Interviewees said that the Chief of Police and commanders were working to make useful changes and that improvements in police services and operations were already being recognized.

SID is supervised by a captain, a major, and two sergeants (one who oversees property crimes and the other who oversees crimes against persons). The first-line supervisors (sergeants) have the most direct interaction with detectives and therefore play a significant role in ensuring that investigations are comprehensive, thorough, and consistent.

The assessment team found that the SID sergeants are well-respected and are doing a good job in terms of case management and monitoring detective assignments. However, the assessment team also learned that the fluid nature of assignments in SID (with detectives sometimes working both property and persons crimes) can sometimes make it difficult for them to know which sergeant they should answer to. This makes it even more important for SID to have a consistent structure and organization as discussed earlier in Recommendation 15. SID supervisors also have little to no investigative experience, which makes it difficult for them to give sound advice or direction on a case (see Recommendation 24 for more details on supervisor training). Additionally, the two SID sergeants are responsible for going into the records management system (RMS) daily to review every report submitted by any RBPD member (not just detectives), including both noncriminal incidents and criminal offenses and reports already reviewed by a patrol sergeant, to ensure the case is classified correctly and to determine if it requires a detective to perform any follow-up. This task takes up valuable time and could likely be performed by a civilian staff member.

One important leadership tool for sergeants is holding regular case reviews with the detectives on their team. Case reviews give detectives an opportunity to explain to supervisors why cases are not solved, what efforts they made or failed to make, and what resources or information they may need to solve a case. In this way, case reviews are critical for determining whether cases are being properly investigated, discussing ongoing investigative strategies, and identifying potential leads.

RBPD's Policy #3.52 (Case Assignment Criteria) speaks indirectly to case reviews. It requires detectives to prepare a monthly report, or "stat sheet," and submit it to their supervisors for "case/activity accountability." Additionally, Policy #3.50 (Strategic Investigations Division) requires SID supervisors to meet with detectives "as frequent as necessary . . . on a weekly basis" to review assigned investigations and that "all tasks assigned or requested of the investigator regarding their cases will be issued verbally, as a 'routine case review' by the Supervisor." The policy states that "the supervisor will utilize the 'routine case review' method to follow-up in order to ensure that each investigation is being properly pursued."

Interviewees said that these reviews do indeed happen, and that sergeants and detectives typically meet frequently (sometimes daily, sometimes every other day, sometimes weekly) to discuss open cases and identify potential areas for follow-up. These actions represent a solid foundation for case reviews that SID can build upon to ensure that SID detectives receive complete and consistent case reviews.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2" style="writing-mode: vertical-rl">Recommendations</td><td>20</td><td>

Expand upon the current "routine case review" practice and implement a formal, systematic case review process between sergeants and detectives.

Supervisors should continue to meet frequently and informally with detectives to discuss ongoing cases and check in on the detective's progress. However, this practice should be supplemented with a more formal, systematic case review.

A case review involves a thorough review of the entire case file, along with a conversation with the detective to determine which tasks have been addressed and which ones are outstanding, to brainstorm leads and prioritize any potential next steps, and to ensure that all investigative work has been documented. Simply asking a detective to give an update on the status of an investigation is not a case review.

For example, the case review protocol may require that a sergeant ensure the following steps have been taken at the end of 15 days following a case assignment:

- Previous investigative steps have been completed.
- Unresolved investigative steps are modified for completion.
- Further investigative steps are prioritized.
- All pertinent locations have been canvassed.
- Further inquiry has been made about any evidence not yet processed (e.g., firearms, fingerprints, trace evidence).
- Available outside resources and partnerships (e.g., community, federal, task forces) have been utilized to the appropriate degree.
- All witness interviews and other investigative efforts have been documented.
- Contact has been made with the victim's family and friends to update them on the case.

The primary goal of a case review is to ensure that all investigative leads are addressed and documented and that a thorough investigation has been completed. A secondary goal is to hold detectives accountable and ensure they are following protocol. Case reviews will also help identify training needs for individual detectives and possibly the entire unit. All case reviews should be well-documented and include details on the investigative plan of action.

Sergeants should conduct an official case review within 30 days of a case being assigned. After 60–90 days, open cases should also receive a thorough review by the SID captain and be presented to all detective personnel and command staff. This will allow for additional ideas and help command staff really understand the investigative capabilities and needs.

The assigned lead detective should continue the practice of submitting the monthly "stat sheet" per Policy #3.52, which should be used as part of the case review process. The stat sheet should document the facts of the case and all investigative steps that were taken. Once the detective completes the report, an in-person meeting should be scheduled to include the assigned detective, their sergeant, and possibly the SID major. The entire case package should be reviewed at that time to ensure that it is complete. The case review should include the supervisor's signature, date and time of the review, and comments or suggestions.

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<tr><td>21</td><td>

Strengthen the performance review process to include metrics that assess whether detectives are conducting thorough investigations. All RBPD members, including SID personnel, should have at least an annual performance review.

Evaluations for detectives should be designed to measure whether they are performing all the necessary investigative tasks, conducting thorough follow-up, properly documenting investigative tasks and findings, and meeting the needs of victims and their families. Supervisors should be trained on how to conduct these assessments. Performance metrics and the evaluation process should be documented in policies and SOPs.

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<table>
<tr><td>22</td><td>**Reduce the case classification responsibilities of SID sergeants.**
The SID sergeants are currently responsible for going into the RMS each day to review every report (incidents as well as criminal offenses) to determine if a case is classified correctly and whether it needs a detective to perform any follow-up. This task should be performed by civilian staff. SID sergeants should only be responsible for reviewing relevant criminal offense cases.</td></tr>
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5.2 Detective and Supervisor Training

It is critical that investigative units are staffed with experienced and knowledgeable detectives. If detective bureau personnel lack experience in investigating violent crimes, this puts detectives in a difficult position and will likely make it harder for them to clear cases successfully.

The assessment team learned that several SID detectives have retired or left RBPD in recent years. As a result, there are detectives and supervisors assigned to work homicides and nonfatal shootings who have little to no experience investigating violent crimes in general and shootings specifically. Despite this lack of experience, the detectives and supervisors interviewed by the assessment team demonstrated a strong commitment to their work, a willingness to learn, and a desire to be effective in their roles. Training will therefore play a critical role in preparing them for success.

All new detectives, regardless of their assigned unit, should receive basic investigations training that provides the knowledge and skills needed to work general investigations (Carter, 2013; Police Executive Research Forum [PERF] and the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2018). The training can help ensure that detectives selected into a detective bureau are well-versed in fundamental investigative techniques. Detectives who investigate, or who may potentially investigate, homicide and nonfatal shooting cases should receive additional advanced training in the skills and techniques necessary to work complex violent crime cases.

The assessment team learned that there is no standardized, consistent training for RBPD detectives. Some detectives have attended a homicide investigations course, while some have yet to attend a basic investigations class. It appears that in previous years all detectives were required to take a homicide course, but this is no longer the case. Additionally, the lack of experienced detectives in SID means that there are no seasoned investigators for new detectives to shadow, which makes on-the-job training a challenge. Some interviewees said that the bulk of their training has been on the job, but that they were not assigned to training detectives, so they relied on asking supervisors or other detectives for direction.

It is critical that all detectives receive basic investigations training upon joining SID. Given that all current SID detectives may potentially be called upon to serve as lead investigators on a homicide or nonfatal shooting case, regardless of their lack of experience, it is particularly crucial for all SID detectives to receive additional advanced training in these areas.

Required trainings recommended below should be mandated in a comprehensive written training policy (see Recommendation 9 in Section 3 of this report).

Recommendations	**23**	**Ensure that all new detectives and detective supervisors attend a basic detective training course.** The training must be consistent for all new detectives and should cover all aspects of an investigation, including at a minimum: • Crime scene response, management, and processing • Evidence recovery and submission • Report writing • Writing and executing warrants (this is particularly important at RBPD, given that the assessment team learned VICE detectives are currently helping write warrants for inexperienced detectives) • Investigative follow-up actions • Case prosecution • Courtroom procedures • Relevant laws and RBPD policies
	24	**Ensure that detectives who investigate homicides and nonfatal shootings, as well as their supervisors, receive advanced training in investigating these types of cases.** This training should be consistent and required for all detectives who may potentially be called out to investigate a homicide or nonfatal shooting, regardless of their current assignment. Specialized in-service training should cover topics that include but are not limited to: • Using advanced interview and interrogation techniques • Understanding crime scene response and management • Making next-of-kin notifications • Developing witnesses • Performing interviews and interrogations • Conducting follow-up investigations • Performing forensic analysis of seized evidence • Using digital evidence from cell phones, laptops, tablets, and other devices • Using social media in investigations • Understanding how crime analysis can assist in investigations • Using network analysis to identify linkages between individuals or groups • Understanding constitutional law • Prosecuting a homicide or nonfatal shooting case • Using recordings made in jail or prison • Investigating deaths involving infants • Performing mass casualty investigations • Using advanced DNA methods Palm Beach State College offers a Criminal Justice Advance Training Academy that includes several relevant courses, including classes on death and homicide investigations and violent crime investigations. The assessment team learned that several detectives have attended these courses, which could provide a valuable resource for other SID detectives who need training in these areas. The NCCP team is available to support RBPD in identifying other training opportunities. Regardless of who provides the training, the key is that it is consistent for all investigators and their supervisors and that it is aligned with RBPD policies and practices.

25	**Implement a shadow training program with the PBSO SID supervisors and detectives.** PBSO has offered to allow RBPD detectives and their supervisors to embed within the PBSO's Violent Crime Unit and shadow PBSO detectives to gain investigative experience. The assessment team strongly recommends that RBPD take advantage of this opportunity. The program should start with the SID sergeants, who ideally would take turns shadowing the VCU for 1 month. If that length of time is unfeasible, then at the least the sergeants should be called in to shadow a homicide case for a few days. Eventually, all RBPD detectives should participate in the shadowing program. RBPD should take advantage of this opportunity given the limited investigative experience within SID.
26	**Make every effort to place newly promoted detectives in a property crime or nonviolent investigative assignment during their training period, with more experienced detectives then transitioning to work homicides and nonfatal shootings after the training period is completed.** This will help give hardworking and dedicated detectives the tools and experience they need to effectively investigate violent crimes. Some police agencies have also found success with providing opportunities for patrol officers and investigators in other squads (e.g., VICE) to be temporarily detailed to assist with homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations. This gives personnel the chance to gain experience and allows supervisors to evaluate the person's abilities and traits.

5.3   Case File Documentation

The assessment team identified some areas for improvement with respect to homicide and nonfatal shooting case file documentation. For example, several interviewees said that reports written by patrol officers lack detailed facts and take too long to receive supervisor approval. From the case file review, it was often unclear from the incident reports whether a detective responded to the scene, when a detective was assigned to the case, and when the assigned detective began working on the case, especially for nonfatal shooting cases. Additionally, case files can be located in various places—in the Records Department, on the detectives' shared drive, in the RMS, among other places—which can lead to problems if all versions are not being consistently updated. Maintaining detailed and consistent case files is important not just for improving investigations but also for helping supervisors conduct case reviews (see Recommendation 20) and for sharing information with prosecutors (see Section 5.9).

Recommendations		
	27	**Adopt the "Murder Book" model, which was developed by the Los Angeles Police Department, as a standardized method to capture and retain case information.** A structured Murder Book concept would ensure standardized organization and reporting, which is critical in managing major investigations and prosecutions. Shooting investigations organized consistently based on a standardized protocol also promotes efficiency and accountability. The Murder Book should include a table of contents, a chronology section, and consistent organizational protocols. All recordings of witness interviews, photographs, and other digital evidence should be properly labeled, identified, and stored. A standardized Murder Book can also be easily scanned and digitized for copying and sharing with prosecutors. Another benefit of a uniform Murder Book is accountability. A supervisor or command staff can easily review a book that has all information under consistent tabs, allowing them to review the important reports as opposed to having to review all documents.

	28	**Include requirements for proper case documentation and case file checklists in the policy manuals governing fatal and nonfatal shooting investigations.** Policies should include a case file checklist that lists each report, note, and other documentation that should be included in a comprehensive case file. The checklist should also state the order in which documents should be filed. Supervisors should be required by policy to review the files at scheduled times (e.g., 1 week, 1 month) to ensure that detectives are adhering to the checklist and completing all required tasks. RBPD should work with the District Attorney's Office and U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) when determining the information that must be documented in case files. The importance of case file documentation should be reinforced during training. Policy should also mandate that the Murder Book be kept up to date with all related documents.
	29	**Update the RMS to allow easier supervisor review of a case file.** The assessment team learned that the RMS currently only shows unnamed documents related to a case. RBPD has the ability to name the documents, which would make it easier for a supervisor to review only the key documents instead of having to review each one.
	30	**Take steps to strengthen the process for writing and approving reports.** The importance of writing detailed reports should be emphasized in initial and ongoing training, both for patrol officers and for detectives. Supervisors should be held responsible for promptly reviewing and approving reports to avoid delays in uploading the reports into RMS.

5.4   Investigating Fatal and Nonfatal Shootings

This section explores how fatal and nonfatal shootings are investigated by RBPD and provides recommendations for strengthening practices through every stage of the investigation.

One finding that emerged from interviews and the case file review was that there is no standardized, consistent investigative checklist for detectives and patrol officers to use, and for supervisors to review, when working homicides and nonfatal shooting cases. This checklist, which is described in greater detail in Recommendation 1 in Section 3.1 (Policies and Procedures Recommendations), will help ensure that critical tasks are being performed throughout the duration of an investigation.

Recommendations	**31**	**Develop and use a standard case checklist of basic investigative tasks for detectives to follow when conducting fatal and nonfatal shooting investigations.** The checklist should provide a detailed, step-by-step description of actions to be taken at each stage of the investigative process (Police Executive Research Forum [PERF] and the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2018). More details about what items to include in the checklist can be found in Recommendation 1 in Section 3.1. (Policies and Procedures Recommendations). Supervisors should hold detectives accountable for completing the checklist. The checklist form should include room for the detective to note when the task was completed and the reason for not completing any unfinished tasks. Supervisors should use the case checklist as the primary basis to conduct supervisory case reviews at specific intervals throughout the investigation. The case review should include the supervisor's signature, date/time of review, and comments or suggestions. The checklist should include confirmation that victims and their families were provided with information about their rights and expectations for assistance (National Crime Victim Law Institute, 2021). The NCCP team can support RBPD in developing this checklist.

5.4.1 Initial Crime Scene Response

Patrol Response to Crime Scenes

Patrol officers are typically the first to arrive at a shooting scene. Tasks that patrol officers should perform at the scene include but are not limited to securing the scene, checking if the suspect(s) is still present, attending to victims, conducting a preliminary canvass of the scene, attempting to identify witnesses, preserving evidence, and looking for surveillance cameras.

The assessment team found that the Patrol response to fatal and nonfatal shooting scenes appears to be efficient and effective. Interviewees said that patrol officers typically respond to the scene and/or to the hospital, depending on where they are dispatched. At the scene, officers will secure the scene, locate and render aid to the victim, communicate with first responders when it is safe for them to move in, locate and hold witnesses for detectives, canvass the area, attempt to gather preliminary information from victims and witnesses, preserve evidence and look for cartridge casings and/or firearms, look for surveillance cameras, and maintain a crime scene log for every point of entrance.

Interviewees said that patrol supervisors also respond to homicide and nonfatal shooting scenes and are usually in charge of managing the scene. Once detectives arrive, they take over the scene and are typically briefed by the patrol supervisor, rather than by individual officers.

The patrol supervisor on-scene also determines whether to call the CSU to respond. The assessment team learned that RBPD's CSIs always respond to homicide scenes and to nonfatal shooting scenes that involve a person being hit or property damage occurring. In other types of cases where a CSI is not called to the scene, the patrol officers are responsible for collecting evidence. The assessment team learned that patrol officers typically do a good job collecting evidence, though occasionally officers have labeled all cartridges collected from the scene as being the same type, even though they were not. If there is a recurring problem with how officers collect evidence, CSU will notify the patrol supervisor, address it during a roll call training, or reach out to the officer directly and offer guidance. CSIs also sometimes have newer officers shadow them on the scene to learn more about collecting evidence.

Recommendations		
	32	**Ensure that the written procedures that govern homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations include detailed directions for all units and individuals who are responding to the scene.** RBPD's Policy #2.16 (Crime Scene Responsibilities) and Policy #3.54 (Preliminary Investigations) provide some guidance on the tasks that patrol officers, detectives, and supervisors must perform at the scene of a homicide or nonfatal shooting. However, these directives should be expanded to include more details and checklists of each step that should be completed at the scene. Recommendation 1 in Section 3.1 (Policies and Procedures Recommendations) includes additional details.

33	**Continue having new patrol officers shadow CSIs to learn more about on-scene evidence collection.** CSIs typically don't respond to low-level property crimes (e.g., theft from auto) or to shootings when no one was hit or no property damage occurred. Instead, patrol officers process the scene in these cases. RBPD should continue the practice of having new officers shadow CSIs at crime scenes to learn more about collecting and processing evidence. Even though patrol officers will not be processing homicides or nonfatal shooting scenes (as CSIs respond to all of these), it is still good practice for officers to be comfortable with handling evidence.

Detective Response to Crime Scenes

The assessment team learned that RBPD takes an "all-hands-on-deck" approach to its homicide response, with the SID captain, major, and sergeants, as well as all available detectives, responding to the scene of every homicide. Whichever detective is in the area and presently working will arrive at the scene first and become the lead detective for the case. Interviewees said that detectives who are on call during the homicide will typically respond to the scene within 15–30 minutes, with other detectives arriving within 40–60 minutes. Interviewees said that when a homicide occurs outside of regular hours, detectives are first called in to meet at the office and receive assignments prior to heading to the scene.

Upon arrival at the homicide scene, the lead detective gets a briefing from the patrol sergeant. Detectives then take over the on-scene tasks such as locating and interviewing witnesses, canvassing the neighborhood for videos and witnesses, getting statements from surviving victims, and broadcasting any available suspect or vehicle information. Detectives typically try to bring any eyewitnesses into the station for interviews. The lead detective assigns the time-sensitive, on-scene tasks to other responding detectives and officers. After the initial response, the detectives meet at the station and debrief, then meet again the following day to discuss next steps.

For nonfatal shootings, the patrol captain typically makes the decision whether to call detectives to the scene. Among the 57 nonfatal shooting incident reports we reviewed, a detective did not respond to the scene in 19 (33%) of the cases (see Table 4.2). Notably, documentation was too poor in 8 (14%) of the cases to determine whether a detective responded to the scene (see Section 5.3). Interviewees said that detectives are more likely to respond to shootings involving serious injuries, that are more complex, or that have a cooperative victim. If the detectives do respond, their role at the scene is the same as described above for homicide cases. If detectives are not called to the scene, patrol officers are tasked with conducting the preliminary investigation. A detective is then assigned to the case for the follow-up investigation.

Recommendations	34	**Ensure that a detective responds to each nonfatal shooting scene, including those that occur during off-duty hours.** The assessment team learned that there are times when no detectives respond to a nonfatal shooting scene, leaving the initial investigation to be conducted by patrol officers. Detectives should have valuable training on interviewing potential witnesses and using physical and digital evidence in investigations and are thus an important asset to have at the scene of these serious crimes, even if a victim or witness may initially appear hesitant to participate in the investigation. Therefore, RBPD should explore options for ensuring that at least one detective is always available to respond to a nonfatal shooting scene, regardless of when it occurs. This would allow an on-duty detective to respond to all shootings and ensure the crime scenes are handled properly and thoroughly investigated. Section 5.1. of this report discusses various recommendations that would help ensure that a detective responds to every nonfatal shooting scene. The NCCP team can further assist RBPD in formulating an approach for implementing this recommendation.
	35	**Consider developing a systematic process for triaging nonfatal shooting cases for investigations.** RBPD should consider using a set of research-based solvability factors to prioritize nonfatal shooting cases for more thorough investigations. Although interviewees said that RBPD currently uses an informal system to assess solvability and determine which cases to assign for investigation, it would be useful if this process was consistent, grounded in research, and documented in written policy. • SID sergeants should be trained on how to use the solvability factors to assess cases. Patrol officers/supervisors and dispatchers should be trained on how to elicit and report information that addresses these factors. • More severe forms of violence should receive greater investigative priority than less severe forms.
	36	**Take steps to ensure a prompt detective response to homicide and nonfatal shooting scenes.** A timely response by detectives to the homicide scene has been associated with an increased likelihood that the case will be solved (Wellford & Cronin, 1999). Additionally, a prompt response will help ensure that victims and witnesses are not being asked to wait around at a scene before the detective responds, which may harm participation in the case and trust in RBPD. RBPD should ensure that the detective on call is able to respond to the homicide scene as quickly as possible. This includes having the on-call detectives respond directly to the scene, rather than first reporting to the office.
	37	**Consider reducing the number of detectives who respond to homicide scenes.** Some interviewees said the current practice is for all available detectives to respond to a homicide scene. Although it is important for detectives to respond to homicide scenes, requiring every detective to respond in every case may lead to burnout among detectives. RBPD may want to experiment to identify a detective response that balances effectiveness in the investigation with detective well-being and job satisfaction.

5.4.2   Follow-Up Investigation

There are several aspects to a follow-up investigation. Many of these—such as utilizing physical and digital evidence, performing crime analysis and other intelligence tasks—are covered in detail in other sections of this report. This section will focus on two key elements of an ongoing investigation: internal communication and developing witnesses.

Internal Communication and Coordination

Collaboration and communication between various investigative units within a police agency can be critical to an effective shooting investigation (Wellford, 2018). Members of different units may have pertinent information to share about suspects, witnesses, or leads, and this vital intelligence may fall through the cracks without strong information-sharing protocols in place.

With the exception of external partners such as prosecutors and the PBSO Crime Lab, most personnel involved in homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations are located within close proximity to one another at the RBPD headquarters. This is a positive thing, as co-location helps to foster communication between detectives, patrol officers, crime analysts, CSIs, the RTCC, and others who may have information to share about a case. It appears that this type of informal communication and collaboration is prevalent among SID detectives, which is commendable.

However, the assessment team also recommends ensuring that formal information-sharing mechanisms are in place, especially with respect to communications between detectives and other RBPD members. For example, it can be useful for detectives to hold a weekly violent crime meeting that includes participants from inside and outside the department. The goal of these meetings is to discuss the city's most serious crimes and ongoing violent crimes cases. Interviewees said that detectives do hold some regular detective meetings, but this process could be formalized and expanded.

Recommendations	38	**Implement an internal weekly violent crime meeting.** SID should hold a weekly violent crime meeting to discuss the city's most serious crimes. Each murder, nonfatal shooting case, and any other prioritized violent crime that occurred during the preceding 7 days should be presented by the lead detective(s) and then discussed among the group to gain information and intelligence, develop leads, and ensure that detectives have the resources and support necessary to move their investigations forward. Participants in the meeting should include SID detectives and sergeants, SID command, CSU personnel, crime analysts, patrol representatives, prosecutors, and other local and federal partners. If an investigation is potentially related to another jurisdiction, that agency should also be invited to attend. When appropriate, additional guests such as medical examiners, CSI experts, or community group leaders could be invited to discuss their area of expertise.

The assessment team also recommends that RBPD strengthen its formal information-sharing mechanisms between detectives and patrol officers beyond the initial briefing at the crime scene. Interviewees said that if officers learn information on the street that is relevant to a case, they will typically write a supplemental report, notify their sergeant, and send the lead detective an email notifying them of the supplemental report. However, this requires the patrol officers to know about ongoing violent crime investigations being handled by detectives, which is not always the case. For example, the assessment team learned that it is possible for officers to come in after a day off and not even know about a homicide that occurred in their absence. Instead, officers typically only receive information about ongoing homicide and nonfatal shooting cases through the receipt of Hot Sheets, which are blast notifications prepared by detectives that include updated information about a case (e.g., a DNA warrant, suspect's photo ID or nickname). Interviewees said that detectives also occasionally attend roll calls to discuss ongoing cases, though not on a regular basis.

Recommendations	**39**	**Strengthen formal information-sharing protocols between detectives and patrol officers beyond the initial crime scene response.** Examples of ways to strengthen coordination between detectives and patrol include: • Ensure detectives attend roll calls on a regular basis to share information about ongoing homicide and nonfatal shooting cases. This is actually a requirement of RBPD Policy #3.52 (Case Assignment) which states: "Members of the Detective Division will periodically attend Patrol Division briefings and/or shift training days in order that criminal information of mutual interest to both divisions should occur at least once a week or as situations dictate." A detective should be mandated to attend roll call after every homicide in order to brief officers and request assistance. This should occur even in closed cases, as patrol officers should be aware of potential retaliation factors. • Continue having detectives conduct trainings at roll call on investigative tasks such as interviewing and crime scene processing. • Consider having officers receive the daily Significant Incident Report, which could help facilitate the flow of information toward officers regarding critical incidents and investigations. The Significant Incident Reports include information about all incidents, radio calls, major crimes, and focused patrols. • Require detectives to follow up with patrol officers who submit a supplemental report in a case for which they are the lead. This step should be part of the investigative checklist (see Recommendation 1) and case review process (see Recommendation 20).

Developing Witnesses

Interviewees within RBPD said that it can be challenging to obtain the participation of witnesses and surviving victims in a shooting investigation, especially if the victim or witness fears for their safety or is exposed to possible criminal liability.

Trust between police agencies and the communities they serve is particularly important when it comes to earning participation from victims and witnesses in investigations. Without strong police-community relationships, it can be difficult to motivate members of the public to report violent incidents, participate in investigations, testify in court, and engage in the criminal justice process (Wellford & Cronin, 1999). As discussed more in Section 5.10 (Community Engagement), RBPD appears to have strong existing relationships with several CBOs that work with victims and witnesses of violent crime. Many recommendations in this section address how RBPD can further leverage these relationships to strengthen its ability to encourage victim and witness participation in investigations.

In addition to forging strong community trust and relationships, when developing witnesses, it is important for detectives to acknowledge and consider the trauma that crime victims and witnesses have experienced. A trauma-informed approach will lead to better interactions between law enforcement and victims/witnesses, which may improve cooperation, increase victim/witness sense of safety and feelings of trust, and elicit more information for investigative purposes.

It is also critical that detectives dedicate sufficient efforts to following up with potential witnesses and engaging them to earn their participation in the case. This means showing persistence, repeatedly contacting potential witnesses, following up in person when at all possible, and treating all witnesses and victims with dignity and respect.

Additional recommendations for strengthening services provided to victims/witnesses, which can in turn help facilitate increased cooperation, are discussed in Section 5.5 (Victim and Family Advocacy) of this report. The NCCP team can assist RBPD with identifying methods for improving the likelihood that surviving victims and witnesses in shooting cases participate in police investigations.

Recommendations	40	**Require detectives to contact victims of nonfatal shootings in person and make every effort to gain their participation in these violent crime investigations.** Experience shows that detectives have a much better chance of gaining victim participation with a face-to-face encounter, as opposed to contact over the phone. Based on the case files we reviewed, it appears that when detectives contact victims and witnesses during the follow-up investigation, the contact is most often in person.
	41	**Conduct witness interviews in person at a police facility whenever possible, rather than over the phone. Consider implementing a policy requiring the assigned detective to conduct in-person interviews of all victims and witnesses in fatal and nonfatal shooting cases.** In-person interviews at a police facility are more effective at gaining participation, obtaining information, and assessing credibility than interviews conducted outside a police facility. If detectives are unable to interview the witness at the police facility, an in-person interview in a location outside the facility is also an acceptable option. Telephone interviews with witnesses should be done only as a last resort.
	42	**Provide more specific guidance and requirements regarding detectives' engagement with victims and families.** Protocols should contain developing a communication plan with victims, including timelines for initial contact, follow-up, and case status updates; requiring notifications and contacts with co-victims and families; documenting contacts with co-victims and families; and working with RBPD's victim advocates. In addition, as part of standard procedure, detectives should inform victims' families about the victim advocate position and provide the advocate's contact information.
	43	**Consider a required training for all law enforcement personnel (both sworn and civilian) who interact with victims and witnesses about how trauma impacts the brain and body, which in turn affects a victim/witnesses' ability to recall details of an event or to communicate about an incident.** Training will allow law enforcement personnel to better understand the behaviors of individuals perceived as "difficult" victims and witnesses, which may be related to trauma. Consider an additional required training for all investigators about trauma-informed interviewing techniques.
	44	**Consider building the capacity of community groups to serve as intermediaries, or "civilian buffers," between witnesses/victims and RBPD.** It is important to recognize the unique role that community groups can play in soliciting actionable information about shooting incidents. Consider ways to develop and implement more formal approaches, in partnership with community groups, to allow community groups to grow their role as intermediaries in this area.
	45	**Develop a protocol for RBPD and its partners to better identify, record, and respond to acts of victim/witness intimidation. Tracking levels of witness intimidation over time would support RBPD's crime prevention and investigation strategies and allow practices meant to combat the crime to be evaluated.** • Use existing tools that were developed for practitioners to develop protocols to identify and respond to victim/witness intimidation and to promote victim/witness

safety. Review the following resource: https://aequitasresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Benchmarks-for-Progress.pdf ☐ (AEquitas, 2014).

- Increase identification of potential victim/witness intimidation by:
  - Educating law enforcement, prosecutorial personnel, and victim-/witness-serving personnel about the various forms of intimidation.
  - Educating victims/witnesses about the various forms of intimidation and manipulation they may encounter and how and to whom it should be reported.
  - Checking in regularly with victims/witnesses. Be alert for signs of intimidation, such as increased apprehension or anxiety and increased reluctance to speak with law enforcement.
- Ensure the collection and documentation of evidence related to victim/witness intimidation by:
  - Instructing victims/witnesses on how to preserve evidence of intimidation or harassment (including online and social media evidence).
  - Ensuring that communication on a victim/witness's personal device or computer is properly documented and collected according to departmental procedures.
  - Developing a process and point of contact to ensure that all instances of victim/witness intimidation are shared with and documented by RBPD, including the type of intimidation act or threat that was committed and how the instance was identified by RBPD or another reporting agency.

46	**Conduct a formal inventory of community-based and community-serving organizations and convene leaders of community groups to discuss ways to develop and implement strategies to address the recommendations in this section.** Community groups can assume some of the work and responsibilities in the area of developing and engaging witnesses to alleviate the demand on RBPD to do so, and community groups may be better suited than law enforcement in this area to facilitate community participation in investigations. A formal inventory of community groups involved in gun violence prevention and response or public safety more generally would establish a pool of potential community partners available to assist RBPD with the development of strategies and implementation to address relevant recommendations. Convene community groups to discuss the relevant recommendations in this section and develop strategies. RBPD should formally acknowledge that the police cannot address the issue of gun violence alone and that the community is a necessary partner in the effort and community groups are the experts who hold the knowledge and power to address the issues related to victim and witness participation and engagement.

5.4.3 *Cold Case Unit*

RBPD recently created a Cold Case Unit, which consists of two former FBI agents and one former Secret Service agent. Two members are on contract and one is a volunteer. This team, which reports to an SID sergeant, is in the process of reviewing the department's more than 400 cold cases. They are working in reverse chronological order starting with the most recent cases and are currently up to the year 2005. The assessment team learned that the Cold Case Unit's work recently resulted in the arrest of a suspect in a 10-year-old homicide case.

Solving cold cases not only brings offenders to justice but can also raise morale within a police department, strengthen community trust and satisfaction in the police, and relieve the burden on detectives working active cases. The Cold Case Unit model used by RBPD appears to be working, and the department should continue this effort as long as it continues to see results.

Recommendations	47	**Establish formal policies and procedures for investigating cold case homicides.** Cold case policies should cover topics that include: • <u>Cold case investigative training</u>. Cold case investigators and their supervisor should complete specialized training on working these challenging cases. • <u>Notification of victims' family and friends.</u> RBPD should develop a trauma-informed protocol for notifying victims' family members and friends when the case is receiving new investigative activity. It is important to recognize that victims' family members and friends may be retraumatized when the case is opened for new investigative work. Care must be given to the notification process. The RBPD notification protocol can be grounded in lessons learned from notifying victims when their sexual assault kits have been tested years after the incident occurred.

5.5   Victim and Family Advocacy

RBPD's Victim Advocate Unit currently comprises three full-time advocates and one volunteer. The unit is in the process of getting another volunteer, and one of the full-time advocates is focused primarily on assisting with domestic violence incidents. The unit is working with RBPD's accreditation manager to develop policies to govern the victim advocates. All members of the unit are civilian staff members and were certified as advocates following a 7-week class. The unit is currently working to be recognized as an official victim advocate agency by the State of Florida. The NCCP team can support RBPD as it develops its Victim Advocate Unit and provide the following recommendations to help the department improve its response.

Recommendations	48	**Develop policies and procedures to guide the Victim Advocate Unit.** The assessment team learned that RBPD is in the process of developing policies for its Victim Advocate Unit. These policies should be based on research and best practices regarding a victim-centered approach to advocacy. Policies should include details about the following: • Required outreach to victims and families and the timelines for those contacts • Topics that should be covered during the initial contacts with victims and their families • The death notification process and the victim advocate's role in that process • Procedures for documenting contacts with victims and their families • Formal reports or information-sharing protocols with detectives • Any required trainings or certifications, which should include specialized training on victim advocacy and trauma-informed death notifications • The process for selecting victim advocates, which should include a background screening if the personnel are co-located with SID and have access to Criminal Justice Information Services and RBPD's RMS • Spontaneous disclosures of case-related activity by victims and their families The NCCP team can provide RBPD with resources to support policy development in addition to resources available from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (https://www.theiacp.org/projects/law-enforcement-based-victim-services-lev 🗗).
	49	**Review existing training provided to advocates, as well as trainings that advocates provide to officers, to ensure trainings are comprehensive and up to date.** The NCCP team can assist RBPD with identifying relevant training topics or curriculums. Resources are also available from the International Association of Chiefs of Police to support departments in training victim advocates (https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/law-enforcement-based-victim-services-template-package-v-training 🗗).

5.5.1 *Advocate On-Scene Response*

RBPD's victim advocates are called to respond to more than 90% of all homicide scenes and are responsible for performing death notifications. Advocates are not necessarily called out for nonfatal shootings, and it is up to the on-scene supervisor to decide whether to have advocates respond to the scene. Although the case file review revealed that only 7% of the nonfatal shooting cases and 12% of the fatal shooting cases included the involvement of a victim advocate, it is possible that this low percentage is due to a lack of documentation about the victim advocate's participation in the case in the incident narrative as opposed to a lack of involvement in the case by a victim advocate. Regardless of whether any advocates respond to the scene of a nonfatal shooting, the lead advocate is supposed to receive notification about the crime immediately so that they can put together a strategic plan for the victim. However, the assessment team learned that this notification sometimes does not occur for several days. Experience shows that a quick response by a victim advocate can be crucial for building trust with the victim and engaging them in the investigation, so RBPD should strive to make the Victim Advocate Unit a close partner in the initial crime response.

At the scene, advocates typically stand outside the crime scene perimeter and assist with surviving victims and loved ones. Advocates are also sometimes called to the hospital to assist with shooting cases. Either at a crime scene or at the hospital, the advocate's role is to provide comfort, give people their contact information, and relay information about referrals and resources they can offer down the road. Interviewees also said that sometimes victims and loved ones will be more willing to talk to the civilian advocates than to officers and detectives, which puts advocates in the important position of serving as a liaison between victims/families and investigators. The advocates can help facilitate conversations between victims/families and detectives and they remain close by in case victims need reassurance.

Recommendations	**50**	**Ensure that the Victim Advocate Unit is notified of every nonfatal shooting case, even if they do not respond to the scene.** Advocates need timely information about an incident so that they can begin working on a strategic plan for the victim and plan their initial outreach. Finding out about the incident a day or two later is too late for an effective response.
	51	**Work toward having an advocate respond to every shooting scene.** Ideally, an advocate should respond to every shooting scene. Immediately following the crime is one of the most traumatic times for a victim, co-victim, or third-party witness. Additionally, it is also the time when a victim or witness may be most likely to share information about what they witnessed with a supportive, trusted representative. By being at the scene, a victim advocate can immediately begin building trust with a victim or witness, which experience shows will increase their likelihood of remaining engaged with detectives and prosecutors throughout the case. To ensure a consistent response: • Both the SID and Victim Advocate Unit policies and procedures should state the circumstances under which a victim advocate should respond to the scene. • Officers and detectives should receive training on the services that advocates can provide at the crime scene. • Contacting the Victim Advocate Unit should be included in the investigative checklist described in Recommendation 1.

52	**Ensure that victim advocates follow a standard practice in their contacts with victims and their families.** During initial contact with the victims and families, the advocate should: • Identify themselves as the victim advocate and clarify that their job is to provide support to victims and families and to look out for victims' rights, interests, and needs. • Clearly state that they are not acting in any investigative capacity. • Inform the victims and families about the laws, statutes, and rules governing disclosure requirements, including the fact that conversations with the victim advocate are not legally confidential and that the victim advocate will be obligated to pass along to detectives anything shared with them that is pertinent to the investigation. • Notify victims/families of their statutory rights, such as the right to obtain information, get case updates, and be part of the investigative process. • Provide the victims and families with introductory information about any available support services and resources. • Facilitate a meeting/conversation between the detectives and the victims. Additionally, consider having a detective accompany the advocate on next-of-kin notifications in case information is learned during the process from victims' family members that needs to be acted on quickly by an investigator.

5.5.2 Advocate Follow-Up and Services

Typically, advocates first reach out to victims by phone, and if a victim does not respond, the advocates send a letter. If there is no response to the letter, officers are sent to perform a welfare check. Advocates accompany the officers to ensure that the victims are not in jeopardy. Advocates review all reports that come in each day to identify any cases that need follow-up. During the review, if the unit identifies anything in a report that needs attention such as additional documentation or follow-up needed, they contact the detective or officer.

The advocates attend court with victims and help connect victims to resources. The assessment team heard that communication could be improved between the State's Attorney's Office and the Victim Advocate Unit so that advocates are aware of court proceeding dates and can attend them. The resources that the Victim Advocate Unit provide include the following:

- **Relocation assistance:** There are few formal funds available for relocation assistance, so the advocates must sometimes use out-of-pocket funds to help victims get background checks and relocated out of town. Interviewees said that it would be useful to have funding for hotel/motel vouchers to keep victims safe and engaged in the legal system.

- **Security cameras and locks:** In the past, the Victim Advocate Unit had funding to provide Ring cameras for victims to use as an added security measure. The unit also had funding to help victims and families change their locks. Interviewees said these were helpful strategies for strengthening victims' sense of security.

- **Transportation services:** Advocates help arrange transportation for victims to shelters at undisclosed locations. Due to liability issues, officers (rather than the advocates) must transport the victims.

- **Food:** Advocates sometimes purchase food out of pocket and deliver it to victims in need.

- **Childcare:** Advocates also help place children in safe locations as needed.

- **Medical referrals:** Advocates can help older people connect with Medicare services.

Recommendations	53	**Ensure that case reports include up-to-date and accurate victim contact information.** The assessment team heard that reports are sometimes missing this key information, which makes timely follow-up challenging. Even if it is not possible to get a current phone number, officers should try to obtain an email address or other means of contacting victims. Having a victim advocate respond to the scene could improve this situation and reduce the burden on officers as well as provide other benefits (see Recommendation 51).
	54	**Strengthen safety measures for victims and witnesses, including relocation assistance.** The assessment team learned that there is little funding for victim/witness protection. RBPD should work toward obtaining funding to improve victim and witness safety, including through the use hotel/motel vouchers, security cameras, and door locks. As ensuring victim and witness safety and legal system engagement is not the sole responsibility of RBPD, RBPD should work with the city government and state prosecutor's office to establish these funds. Additionally, community partner involvement is valuable to understand resident concerns and to promote the services. The NCCP team can support RBPD in implementing measures to protect victims and witnesses and increase their participation in the legal system. Additional measures for protecting victims and families are discussed in Section 5.4.2 (Follow-Up Investigations) of this report.
	55	**Strengthen and expand partnerships with CBOs that provide services and support to victims and families.** RBPD should leverage existing relationships with these organizations to expand its victim advocacy capacity. RBPD should identify areas where it may be possible for partners to assist with or take on some of the advocacy or service work currently provided by RBPD to reduce the demand on the RBPD's capacity or to expand the types of advocacy and services that could be offered to support victims and families and their long-term healing. These partners can also share information about RBPD victim services with residents, which may increase crime reporting and the likelihood of witness participation in crime investigations.

5.5.3 *The Role of Officers and Detectives in Victim Advocacy*

Detectives and officers must play a role in victim and family advocacy. The way law enforcement personnel treat and respond to victims and their families can significantly impact participation in the case, resident perceptions of RBPD, and the quality of an investigation.

At RBPD, officers are supposed to give victims a pamphlet that describes victims' rights and information about the Victim Advocate Unit. The assessment team learned that this step is not always completed and that some officers are referring victims to the PBSO victim services unit, rather than the one at RBPD.

Additionally, it would be beneficial for detectives to stay more closely connected with families after shooting incidents occur. One way of doing this is to conduct more frequent in-person or telephone check-ins with victims in the days and weeks following the incident, both in person and on the phone. Experience shows that this engagement increases the participation of victims and witnesses in both the case under investigation and future crimes where they might have information on the case. Given SID's shortage of detectives, victim advocates or other civilian staff may be able to support detectives in maintaining these relationships or taking over other responsibilities to allow detectives the time necessary to cultivate trust with victims and witnesses.

	56	**Retrain officers on what services the Victim Advocate Unit can provide and on the importance of giving victims the unit's information and victims' rights pamphlet.** This initial contact from officers can help set the tone for how victims and their families view RBPD, which can determine whether they feel comfortable participating in the case.
	57	**In addition to ensuring that officers and detectives receive training on trauma-informed interviewing (see Recommendation 43), take steps to ensure there are more intentional, regularly scheduled check-ins with victims and families by officers and detectives.** This includes conducting in-person and telephone check-ins with victims, co-victims, and witnesses in the days, weeks, and months following the incident.
	58	**Incorporate into written policies and SOPs expectations for detective follow-up and communication with the families of homicide victims and with victims of nonfatal shootings. These expectations should be grounded in a victim-centered approach and emphasize that detectives should treat all victims and families with respect. Policies should also require that all detectives receive training on the duties and capabilities of the victim advocates.** Policies and protocols should require detectives to: • Provide families of homicide victims with an advocate's contact information before and after interviews, and, if possible, have an advocate available before and after interviews for additional victim support (and expand to interviews with victims of nonfatal shootings). • Keep victims and their families informed of the investigation to every extent possible. • Promptly return calls and emails from victims and their families regarding inquiries about the case or status of the investigation. • Proactively reach out to victims and their families at regular intervals (e.g., monthly; victim's birthday), regardless of whether there are any case updates. • Reach out to victims and their families when there is turnover in the assigned victim advocate and detective and provide contact information for the new point(s) of contact. • Meet with the assigned victim advocate at the outset of any case in which an advocate is involved. These steps should also be included in the checklist discussed in Recommendation 1.

(Left margin label: Recommendations)

5.6   Physical and Digital Evidence

5.6.1 *Crime Scene Unit*

The assessment team consistently heard positive feedback throughout the department regarding RBPD's CSU. The CSU comprises six CSIs, one of whom is also the acting supervisor for the unit. All CSIs are civilian staff, and the unit is in the process of transitioning away from a sworn supervisor toward permanent civilian leadership.

Although several RBPD policies relate to the work performed by CSIs, RBPD does not currently have a comprehensive set of policies and procedures governing the CSU. As discussed in Recommendation 6, RBPD should look to the PBSO Crime Lab policies when developing policies and procedures for the CSU. PBSO's Crime Lab manual is publicly available on the PBSO website: https://www.pbso.org/inside-pbso/crime-lab/crime-laboratory-manuals ⬚.

The assessment team learned that all CSIs have the basic training and certifications needed to perform their jobs. All six CSIs are also certified to enter ballistics evidence into NIBIN, which is extremely helpful

in reducing delays related to processing and analyzing firearms evidence. RBPD should continue to emphasize training for CSIs and facilitate advanced training for CSU members when possible.

Recommendations	59	**Consider obtaining forensic accreditation for the CSU.** Forensic accreditation would provide a yearly external review of CSU's policies and procedures. Obtaining it would demonstrate a measure of adherence to standards and good practice for the CSIs. This would also aid in the RBPD interactions with the PBSO Crime Lab, which is accredited.
	60	**Consider incorporating yearly proficiency evaluations for the CSIs.** Yearly proficiency examinations are a common practice for forensic units and allow supervisors to gauge the accuracy and expertise of their employees. This is one of the requirements for forensic accreditation and would need to be enacted prior to applying for accreditation. Without these evaluations, it is difficult and/or subjective for supervisors to evaluate their CSIs.

CSIs will respond to the scene of a homicide or a nonfatal shooting, though they are not typically called out for low-level property crimes or for shootings that did not hit any people or property. The patrol sergeant on-scene determines if CSIs are needed. All CSIs have take-home vehicles and are expected to respond to a scene within 1 hour. If CSIs are not called to the scene, patrol officers are responsible for collecting cartridge cases and other evidence at the scene. All cartridge casings recovered from a scene are entered into NIBIN, regardless of whether a person/property was hit or if a CSI responded.

RBPD has an in-house crime lab where CSIs can photograph evidence, process evidence for latent prints and DNA, and test fire weapons. The RBPD lab is secured and only accessible by the six members of the CSU. As will be discussed below, the PBSO Crime Lab performs many forensic services for RBPD, including confirming NIBIN hits and analyzing DNA and latent print evidence.

One issue that RBPD must address is the CSU shift schedules. The department recently adopted a new schedule that provides CSI coverage 7 days a week from 6 a.m. to 2 a.m. CSIs work four 10-hour days, but there is very little overlap of their schedules. As a result, CSIs are almost always working their shifts alone. This can present several problems. One, it can lead to unsafe conditions when a CSI is working alone in the lab with chemicals and other potentially dangerous materials, as there is no one else in the building with access to the lab if something should go wrong. Additionally, if a CSI is out sick or on vacation, it potentially leaves the CSU with no coverage. RBPD can attempt to call in an off-duty CSI in those situations, but CSIs are contractually permitted to turn down working overtime hours. Working alone also makes it difficult for CSIs to collaborate on cases and develop professionally, and it can lead to burnout.

5.6.2 *Evidence Submission and Storage*

There are two civilian staff members (one supervisor and one technician) who comprise RBPD's Evidence Division, which manages and stores physical evidence. Vehicles are handled by CSIs and are stored off-site at a warehouse. The Evidence Division has written policies and procedures that are publicly accessible. The evidence supervisor is recent to the unit and is preparing to take the test to become a certified evidence technician, and the other member of the unit is already certified.

When an officer collects evidence from a scene, the officer bags the item and prints a voucher that includes details about the item (type, quantity/amount, etc.). The officer places the bagged evidence into a locker in the hallway of headquarters, which is then closed, locked, and inaccessible from the outside. The back of the locker opens into a secured room that is only accessible by Evidence Division personnel, who check the lockers daily to retrieve any items. After confirming that the item matches the description on the voucher, evidence personnel put a barcode on the item, and it is officially in their custody. If there is an error with the voucher, such as a missing field or an incorrect case number, the Evidence Division notifies the submitting officer via an email and copies the officer's sergeant. If the officer does not respond after a few days, they send an email to the officer's captain.

Physical evidence (other than vehicles) is stored in an evidence room at RBPD headquarters. The room is secured using keycard access plus a PIN number, and Evidence Division personnel maintain a sign-in log for anyone who enters. Larger items are housed in storage units located directly outside of headquarters. The assessment team learned that the Evidence Division recently received high scores on an audit of its storage processes and facilities. The auditor reported that the evidence storage room was very organized, neat, and clean, and that it can serve as an example for other agencies. The Evidence Division is also subject to random audits as part of the accreditation process.

As will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.6.3 (PBSO Crime Lab), detectives typically use the PBSO online portal when requesting to submit evidence to the PBSO Crime Lab for further analysis. If the PBSO Lab approves the request, the Evidence Division receives an email notification. Evidence personnel then take the item(s) to the PBSO Crime Lab each Thursday, though items can be brought in sooner if needed. Evidence personnel keep records of when they remove an item to take it to PBSO and when it has arrived at the lab.

The assessment team learned that Evidence Division personnel and SID detectives typically only communicate when a detective incorrectly fills out an evidence submission voucher or when a detective needs to retrieve an item from evidence storage.

| Recommendations | 62 | **Provide refresher training to patrol officers and detectives on how to properly voucher and submit items to evidence.** |
| | | RBPD should have Evidence Division personnel provide additional tutorials, perhaps during roll call, on proper evidence submission. |

5.6.3 *PBSO Crime Lab*

RBPD partners with the PBSO Crime Lab for many services, including analyzing latent prints and biological evidence (e.g., DNA). Interviewees from both RBPD and PBSO said that the two agencies have a strong working relationship and that the PBSO Crime Lab is always open to providing training and assistance as needed. RBPD should maintain this strong relationship and take advantage of training opportunities.

Recommendations	63	**Enhance communication between RBPD detectives and PBSO Crime Lab personnel.**
		Potential strategies include:
		• Inviting PBSO Lab personnel to provide refresher training and demonstrations on how to properly submit case requests, the lab's evidence acceptance policies, and the types of follow-up questions or requests that the lab may have regarding submitted evidence.
		• Inviting PBSO Lab personnel to provide high-level training to RBPD command staff on how the evidence process works and what is needed to make things run more smoothly.
		• Having leaders from SID, CSU, the Evidence Division, and the PBSO Crime Lab work to identify current gaps and areas for improvement, and then brainstorm potential trainings or other ways to address these challenges.
		• Requiring detectives to list their supervisor, rather than Evidence Division or CSU personnel, as the additional point of contact on the DNA Request Form and other submissions to the PBSO Lab. This change will allow detective supervisors to automatically receive communications from the PBSO Lab that contain important case information, status updates, and follow-up questions or information requests that require a timely response.

5.6.4 *Firearms and Ballistics Evidence*

Evidence Processing and NIBIN Entries

The assessment team found that RBPD does an impressive job of processing firearms and entering ballistics evidence into NIBIN in a timely fashion. This fact was evident in both our interviews with RBPD personnel and in our case file review, where we found that a suspect's firearm, bullets, and casings were often collected during fatal and nonfatal shooting investigations and technologies were used to trace crime guns and analyze ballistic evidence in most of these cases (see Table 4.2). This is due in large part to the fact that every CSI is trained and certified to do their own NIBIN entries.

Firearms collected as evidence are taken to RBPD's internal crime lab and assigned to a CSI. The CSI photographs the firearm, processes it for DNA and latent prints, test fires it, and enters the evidence into NIBIN using the BRASSTRAX machine located at the West Palm Beach Police Department (WPBPD).

CSIs can access the machine at WPBPD at any time by using an access card during the day or by making personal requests during overnight hours. Firearms are also entered into the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosive's (ATF's) eTrace system. Interviewees said that this entire process is virtually always completed within 72 hours.

When it comes to firearms and ballistics evidence, there are two services that the PBSO Crime Lab's Firearms section provides for RBPD. One, the PBSO Lab assists with test firing if a firearm does not function as designed when test fired by CSIs in the RBPD lab. Two, the PBSO Lab performs confirmations of NIBIN hits upon RBPD's request, which usually happens if a suspect is being arrested or a case is going to trial. As with requests regarding DNA evidence, any requests for NIBIN confirmations are submitted through the PBSO Crime Lab app portal. Firearms section personnel review the request to ensure it meets the case acceptance requirements and typically make an approval decision with 1 day. Test results are sent to the requesting detective, PBSO Lab personnel, and any agency that is linked to the casing being tested.

According to statistics provided by the PBSO Crime Lab, in 2023 RBPD submitted a total of 23 requests to the Firearms section. Seventeen of these requests were for NIBIN comparisons, which had an average turnaround time of 109 days. Five requests were for NIBIN entries, most likely involving inoperable firearms that RBPD was unable to test. The remaining request was for a serial number restoration.

Recommendations		
	64	**Review the process and requirements for requesting the PBSO Crime Lab to confirm NIBIN hits.** The assessment team learned that RBPD requests confirmations for a fairly low proportion of its NIBIN hits. The department should review its process and requirements for requesting confirmations to ensure that they are consistent. RBPD may also want to consider training personnel on differentiating between cases that need confirmation and those that do not.

Crime Gun Intelligence Unit

RBPD's Crime Gun Intelligence Unit (CGIU) is a new initiative where a CSI and VICE detective from RBPD and an ATF agent from the West Palm ATF Field Office dedicate a portion of their time to working on CGIU cases. The CGIU enters every firearm brought into RBPD into a Crime Gun Log, which is maintained in an Excel spreadsheet. The CSIs then conduct research on things such as the firearm's background, including previous purchasers, NIBIN leads, whether the weapon is involved in a case with charges pending, and if the charges in the case were not filed (and if so, the reason for not filing charges). They also log the firearm's eTrace number and check whether it was tested for latent prints and DNA. Then, they create a packet for the firearm that includes the following: a cover sheet describing a summary of the case; the name of the lead officer involved; where and when the gun was recovered; whether it was associated with a NIBIN lead; whether latent prints and DNA were tested; all relevant reports, including incident reports, crime scene reports, lab reports, eTrace reports; and NIBIN leads and reports from other agencies if applicable. These packets are maintained by CSU and are not yet uploaded into the RMS.

The VICE detective reviews the packet to see if there is a nexus between the firearm and a crime that was either undiscovered or uncharged. If so, the detective works with the State's Attorney's Office to obtain relevant warrants. Interviewees said that around half of the cases brought in connection with the

CGIU's work are against straw purchasers. The ATF is sometimes involved with reviewing packets and determining whether the firearm was associated with any incidents that could involve federal charges.

Open cases that are actively being worked by detectives are not part of the cases that CGIU reviews. However, if the team comes across information that is related to an active case, they will pass it along to detectives. RBPD's crime analysts are not typically involved in the CGIU process, though they have reportedly been helpful when requests are made of them.

| Recommendations | 65 | **Expand the capabilities of the CGIU.**
The assessment team applauds the initiative taken by the CSI who started the CGIU. This person recognized a problem and took steps to solve it, which should be commended. RBPD should build upon this important initiative and expand the CGIU. Strategies may include:
Dedicating someone to work on the project full time, as currently the CGIU work is only a part-time responsibility performed by two RBPD employees. Ensuring that anyone involved with the CGIU, either on a part-time or full-time basis, receive training on crime gun intelligence. Engage RBPD's crime analysts to help with gathering crime gun intelligence. Additional recommendations regarding crime analysts can be found in Section 5.7 (Crime Analysis) of this report. Consider obtaining i2 Analyst's Notebook software as a tool to develop linkage charts, which can help detectives better visualize NIBIN leads and make the information more user friendly. Review the CGIU strategic objectives and outcomes to determine whether greater support could be provided to active shooting investigations, in coordination with crime analysis and the RTCC (see Section 5.7), given the limited staffing in SID. |
| | 66 | **Notify SID investigators of all firearm recoveries and the circumstances under which they were recovered.**
It appears that SID investigators are not notified about firearm recoveries unless it is through a NIBIN lead or if the firearm is known to be directly related to the detective's active case. This can create delays in investigations, so it is recommended that investigators be notified about all firearm recoveries. Information relayed to detectives should include the recovery location, any persons or vehicles related to the firearm, the type of weapon, and caliber. This information sharing can also occur as part of weekly violent crime meetings (see Recommendation 38). |

5.6.5 *Digital Evidence*

According to RBPD personnel interviews and our case file review (see Table 4.2), typical digital evidence used in homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations at RBPD comes from cell phones, social media, video camera systems, and automated license plate readers. Detectives are generally responsible for processing and analyzing digital evidence and for conducting their own social media searches.

One detective from SID is trained to use GrayKey to extract data from cell phones. A sergeant who formerly oversaw the RTCC is also trained in GrayKey. RBPD does not have GrayKey, but detectives are able to access it through PBSO and WPBPD. RBPD also partners with federal agencies for assistance in digital evidence extraction and analysis. For example, the Secret Service provides training on utilizing cell

phone data, and RBPD can take cell phones to the Secret Service's Miami field office to obtain additional forensic analysis.

Recommendations	67	**Develop a set of procedures to standardize the procedure for processing digital evidence.** These procedures should provide clarity on who should perform the various functions related to digital evidence. Consider assigning some of these functions, such as gathering intelligence from social media, to crime analysts and other civilian support personnel who may be able to complete these activities more efficiently. This would allow detectives to have more time to focus on other aspects of their investigations. See Recommendation 69 for additional details on expanding the role of crime analysts in shooting investigations.
	68	**Consider investing in technology for digital and video evidence that would allow investigators to process evidence in-house, which would allow faster turnaround times.** The assessment team learned that, although RBPD can reach out to local partners to assist with digital evidence processing and analysis, relying on other departments does create delays and RBPD requests are naturally placed below that department's needs. RBPD should weigh the costs and benefits of investing in certain technologies for analyzing digital evidence, such as GrayKey. The NCCP team can support RBPD in making these decisions.

5.7 Crime Analysis, the RTCC, and the Criminal Intelligence Unit

At the time of this assessment, RBPD's Crime Analysis Unit was in the process of moving into the RTCC to create a combined Criminal Intelligence Unit. Under this new structure, the unit will be overseen by a civilian crime analyst. The RTCC will continue to provide support to homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations by monitoring closed-circuit television in real time to identify and locate individuals, vehicles, and other information.

The current Crime Analysis Unit has two civilian analysts, one of whom is the supervisor and who will also be supervising the RTCC after the transition. The two crime analysts provide services for the entire RBPD and are not assigned to specific divisions or cases. Training for crime analysts includes a week-long Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) course that is a prerequisite for the FDLE Analyst Academy, which is 6 months long and results in crime analyst certification. The assessment team found that the analysts have received ample training opportunities while at RBPD.

RBPD's crime analysts perform several duties, including but not limited to:

- Providing a weekly statistical report on crime trends. These reports are distributed to all sworn personnel and include items such as year-to-date comparisons of Uniform Crime Reporting Program Part I crimes and ShotSpotter statistics, mapping of arrests and field contacts, and comparisons of violent crime and property crime incident locations.

- Preparing for and running the monthly Compstat meetings. This involves conducting a deep dive into certain issues or crime trends.

- Fulfilling requests for information from RBPD command staff.

- Fulfilling requests for information from other RBPD personnel, including:
  - Providing supervisors with things such as monthly or weekly shift statistics regarding clearance rates
  - Providing officers with statistics and trends from the zones to which they are assigned

- Fulfilling requests for information from members of the public and attorneys. These requests typically relate to crime grids and information from specific areas.

- Providing monthly reports to RBPD Internal Affairs.

- Completing FDLE reports.

- Serving as the administrator for RBPD databases, including RMS-CAD and Mobile Computing (MCT). The supervising analyst is responsible for troubleshooting problems that officers have with the databases, conducting database training for new personnel, spearheading major changes or updates, along with other tasks.

Crime Analysis Role in Homicide and Nonfatal Shooting Investigations

In addition to these duties, the crime analysts also assist SID detectives on cases including homicides and nonfatal shootings. This assistance mostly consists of responding to detective requests for information (e.g., the numbers of calls for service at a location, background information about a suspect). Detectives typically perform their own social media research, though the crime analysts do occasionally help and have performed linkage analysis for criminal investigations. The Crime Analysis Unit does not have its own social media account to use for gathering intelligence.

The Crime Analysis Unit has also recently started responding to homicide cases. A crime analyst will be called out to the scene unless there is an ongoing threat, in which case they will report to RBPD headquarters. This immediate response enables the analyst to start gathering information on leads and provide timely assistance to detectives. Although the NCCP team sees the value of an on-scene analyst response for ensuring analysts have immediate, up-to-date, and complete information to support their work, we advise against this practice in a recommendation below. Importantly, this is assuming that RBPD can ensure personnel in the Criminal Intelligence Unit have access to the necessary information to perform their function effectively without having to physically respond to the scene. The NCCP team can support RBPD in this effort.

Overall, the assessment team found that the crime analysts were severely underutilized in homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations. For instance, the NCCP team's case file review found that crime analysis contributed to 1 (2%) of the 57 nonfatal shooting cases reviewed and 4 (16%) of the fatal shooting cases reviewed, while the RTCC contributed to 3 (5%) of nonfatal shooting investigations and 6 (24%) of fatal shooting cases (see Table 4.2). Although it is possible that their involvement was not documented in the case file narratives, this may also suggest an underutilization of these personnel in investigations, which could be addressed through policies and procedures aimed at increasing the involvement of Criminal Intelligence Unit personnel and resources in shooting investigations.

Our assessment revealed that the analysts have the skills and desire to provide more substantive assistance to detectives, rather than primarily focusing on using data and statistical analysis to support administrative functions. The NCCP team can connect RBPD with departments that are using crime analysts effectively in shooting investigations to support RBPD in identifying how it can optimize the use of its crime analysts.

Take steps to ensure that crime analysts are being effectively utilized in homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations.

RBPD's crime analysts are currently focused primarily on providing statistical support and fulfilling personnel requests for data. However, the analysts have the ability and desire to provide greater assistance to detectives on violent crime investigations. With the right tools and access, analysts could help conduct social media and background research, gather and analyze intelligence, perform linkage analysis on cases, create linkage charts using an analysis of NIBIN hits, among other tasks. Having the analysts more involved in cases would also help free up detectives to focus on other aspects of their investigations.

Strategies for better integrating crime analysts into homicide and nonfatal shootings include:

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- Requiring SID detectives to consult with the Criminal Intelligence Unit at the outset of homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations. This step should be included in the SID policy manual and the investigative checklist detailed in Recommendation 1.
- Inviting crime analysts to officer and detective trainings and roll calls to present information about their roles, their capabilities, and ways they can assist with investigations.
- Inviting a crime analyst to attend all case briefings and weekly violent crime meetings so they can share information including how they could support an investigation and stay abreast of what is going on with investigations.
- Reassuring detectives that it is safe to share information with crime analysts and encouraging them to be more transparent and open about case information.
- Ensuring that crime analysts get access to all up-to-date homicide and nonfatal shooting case files. Although they can access the case files in RMS, these files are not always updated with supplemental reports. Crime analysts should have access to the detectives' working files.
- Revising Policy #2.1 (Crime Analyst Function) to more accurately reflect the current and expanded duties of crime analysts.

End the practice of having a crime analyst physically respond to the crime scene.

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It seems that the Crime Analysis Unit felt that an on-scene response was the best or only way to obtain the information they needed to perform their duties, but RBPD should establish a different method of providing Criminal Intelligence Unit personnel with timely information on a case that does not require them to leave their workstations, where they will be most effective. This may require additional training and education efforts and possibly new role assignments. Regardless, this process should be written into policy and included on relevant checklists. A crime analyst should be most effective at their workstation accessing databases, camera footage, social media information, and more, not traveling to the crime scene to obtain relevant information. Section 5.7 includes additional recommendations for enhancing the role of crime analysts and the Criminal Intelligence Unit in RBPD's shooting response, which also requires frequent communication between crime analysts and patrol officers, SID detectives, and other relevant RBPD personnel.

Ensure that the Crime Analysis Unit (now the Criminal Intelligence Unit) has the personnel, training, and tools it needs to effectively perform its duties and assist with investigations.

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Given that Crime Analyst Unit and RTCC are in the process of merging, it is an opportune time to review the personnel, training, and technological needs of this combined unit.

- Personnel: Hiring additional personnel would be helpful for expanding the role of analysts in homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations. One other challenge to consider is that this will be the first time RBPD's RTCC is run by a civilian, so additional sworn officers may be needed to provide support for things such as obtaining video footage from inside a private home.

		• Training: Both new and current personnel must receive specific training on the skills and tasks needed to help with these types of complex violent crime investigations. Training should include topics such as the systematic analysis of NIBIN hits, linkage analysis, social network analysis of intelligence and data on gang members and other violent crime suspects, and how to leverage the ATF NIBIN Enforcement Support System analytic tool. • Tools & Technology: RBPD should work with the new Criminal Intelligence Unit to create a list of technology needs and then do its best to find funding to invest in these critical tools. Crime analysts currently mostly use open-source data, and it could be useful for them to gain access to tools like Cobwebs web intelligence platform, LexisNexis, and/or i2 Analyst's Notebook. As addressed in Recommendation 68, it would also be useful for RBPD to invest in technologies for analyzing digital evidence, which the Criminal Intelligence Unit could use.
72	**Consider reassigning the function of police database administrator from a crime analyst.** The job of troubleshooting databases such as RMS-CAD and MCT, and of training new personnel on their use, should not fall to the supervisory crime analyst (who is also now managing the RTCC). Reassigning this role would help free up this position to perform crime analysis and other tasks related to investigations.
73	**Expand the Criminal Intelligence Unit's external partnerships.** RBPD should reexamine the department's relationship with the state Fusion Center to ensure that this partnership is being leveraged to its full capacity. Additionally, the new Criminal Intelligence Unit should consider holding monthly meetings with RTCCs and analysts from area agencies to facilitate better information sharing.

5.8   External Partnerships with Law Enforcement Agencies

5.8.1   *Federal Law Enforcement Partners*

RBPD participates in tasks forces with numerous federal law enforcement agencies, including the ATF, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Secret Service, and the U.S. Marshal's Office. These partnerships are helpful in part because some firearms cases may be able to move forward at the federal level even if they are not charged under state law. Federal law enforcement agencies also sometimes provide specialized services to RBPD, such as the Secret Service's assistance with cell phone forensics or the U.S. Customs and Border Protection offering RBPD use of a drug testing machine. Based on the case file analysis, a federal law enforcement partner contributed to 28% of the 57 nonfatal shootings we reviewed and 52% of the 25 fatal shootings we reviewed (see Table 4.2), which suggests relatively frequent collaborations compared with other local police departments.

5.8.2   *Local Law Enforcement Partners*

Riviera Beach is located in a densely populated area and directly neighbors several other local police jurisdictions. As a result, violent crimes that occur within the boundaries of Riviera Beach often involve victims and suspects from across jurisdictional lines. It is therefore critical for RBPD to work closely with local agencies such as PBSO and WPBPD when investigating homicides and nonfatal shootings. As one interviewee said, "We may have boundaries, but criminals don't." Based on our case file analysis, RBPD does work closely with local law enforcement partners in its shooting investigations. Specifically, a local law enforcement agency contributed to 49% of the nonfatal shooting cases reviewed and 56% of the fatal

shooting cases reviewed. This relatively frequent collaboration compared with other local police departments was mentioned in personnel interviews as well.

PBSO serves all of Palm Beach County, which has a population of 1.5 million and includes 23 separate municipal police departments (Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, n.d.). PBSO has 1,566 sworn law enforcement personnel and 1,905 civilian support staff, and 20 violent crime detectives who work homicides and nonfatal shootings (Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, n.d.). As discussed earlier in Section 5.6 (Physical and Digital Evidence), the PBSO Crime Lab provides several forensics services for RBPD, including DNA analysis and NIBIN confirmations. Interviewees said that PBSO is good about sharing information and that communication between the two agencies has been improving in recent years.

RBPD also has a good relationship with WPBPD. Detectives from both agencies serve on federal task forces together, have access to each other's ShotSpotter data, and often informally share information regarding the high number of crossover cases between the two jurisdictions. WPBPD also uses a Microsoft Teams app that other law enforcement personnel can access, including at least one RBPD detective, to post information and share intelligence about various cases.

Interviewees said that all Palm Beach County law enforcement agencies use the same radio system. Therefore, RBPD's radio channels can be patched into those of PBSO, WPBPD, and other neighboring agencies. There is a memorandum of understanding in place with other agencies in the region that allows RBPD to have 911 dispatch call and request help directly from PBSO. The assessment team learned that much of the information sharing between RBPD and other local agencies is via the Hot Sheets that contain identifying information (e.g., about the suspects, vehicles) that RBPD is trying to locate.

Interviewees noted that despite the good relationships between RBPD and other local law enforcement agencies, it would be useful for the partners to develop more official mechanisms for coordination and information sharing.

| Recommendations | 74 | **Strengthen formal coordination and information sharing between RBPD and other local law enforcement agencies, particularly PBSO and WPBPD.**

The assessment team learned that many victims and suspects involved in crimes that occur in Riviera Beach reside in neighboring jurisdictions. Additionally, interviewees said that criminal gangs often cross jurisdictional borders to commit homicides and nonfatal shootings. Although RBPD has good relationships and informally shares information with PBSO, WPBPD, and other local agencies, these efforts should be formalized and automated, which the NCCP team can support.

Strategies for strengthening formal coordination and communication include:

• Holding a monthly meeting for violent crime detectives from RBPD, PBSO, WPBPD, and other bordering agencies to discuss crossover crimes and habitual offenders.

• Adopting and regularly using the Microsoft Teams app used by WPBPD to share information and intelligence regarding homicides, nonfatal shootings, gang activity, and so forth.

• Requiring detectives to reach out to PBSO and WPBPD violent crime detectives at the outset of any homicide and nonfatal shooting investigations that might involve gang activity or suspects/victims from other jurisdictions. This step should be |

> included in the SID policy manual and the investigative checklist detailed in Recommendation 1.
> - Implementing a training program through which new RBPD detectives and SID supervisors shadow PBSO detectives (discussed in Recommendation 25).
> - Developing a task force with neighboring law enforcement agencies to work together on gang-involved homicides and nonfatal shootings.
> - Examining how to best utilize the state Fusion Center for sharing information about violent crimes (discussed in Recommendation 73).
> - Regularly sharing regional crime analysis and intelligence products (e.g., social network analyses; NIBIN linkage maps) through RBPD's Criminal Intelligence Unit and corresponding units within PBSO and WPBPD.

5.9   Case Prosecution

Although the NCCP team typically assesses agency partnerships with both state and federal prosecutors' offices, in this case, the NCCP team was unable to get in touch with the USAO for the Southern District of Florida after multiple outreach efforts to different personnel within the agency, including those provided by RBPD and PBCSAO. Therefore, we are unable to fully assess RBPD's working relationship with the USAO. Given statements from interviewees both within RBPD and PBCSAO, it appears that there is room to grow the partnership between RBPD and the USAO and between PBCSAO and the USAO, including how the three organizations coordinate their response to fatal and nonfatal shootings. Although we do not provide formal recommendations related to RBPD's partnership with USAO, we do suggest that RBPD work with the USAO and PBCSAO to identify ways to ensure the three organizations maintain strong partnerships and good working relationships and coordinate closely to ensure an effective and efficient response to shootings, including both at the investigation stage and during prosecution. In any large city, the USAO should be a key partner in the law enforcement response to and prosecution of shootings, and a good working relationship and strong collaboration between these three agencies is likely to result in improved community safety in Riviera Beach.

5.9.1 *District Attorney's Office*

The PBCSAO has approximately 100 criminal prosecutors. The seven prosecutors dedicated to homicide cases have a good deal of experience, although some are newer to the agency. Nonfatal shooting cases may be assigned to several prosecutors, while the most serious cases typically go to a chief who has more experience.

Individual prosecutors handling homicides and nonfatal shooting cases tend to enjoy a good working relationship with RBPD, although the assessment team heard that the quality of the working relationship depends on the detective that prosecutors are working with, rather than being agencywide (the NCCP assessment team also heard from RBPD interviewees that relationships with PBCSAO can depend on the prosecutor assigned to the case). PBCSAO interviewees said that although there are good detectives investigating shooting cases, high turnover and a lack of consistent, quality training can have an impact on cases. Thus, additional training for detectives related to investigations, search and seizure fundamentals, and search warrant and report writing would likely be helpful in interactions between SID detectives and PBCSAO prosecutors. PBCSAO provides such training to other departments and has offered to provide training to RBPD, but the department appears to have not taken advantage of this offer.

Interviewees within PBCSAO explained that communication between the agencies is good and that RBPD involves the prosecutors early on in cases. This helps the prosecutors advise on next steps, review search warrants, and assess case strength. RBPD provides prosecutors with a physical filing packet as well as shares case information via evidence.com, which is easily accessible to prosecutors. However, interviewees said that depending on the detective, case information is not always complete, and requests are often necessary to obtain missing information (see Section 5.3 and Recommendation 20 on instituting supervisory case reviews, which could address this issue). For example, sometimes police reports from officers with agencies outside of Riviera Beach that assisted in a shooting investigation are missing. Collection of such reports would be the responsibility of the RBPD lead detective on the shooting case. Concerns were also expressed about a lack of archiving digital media evidence.

Additionally, interviewees said that the Riviera Beach community has had a longstanding mistrust of the local legal system, including a lack of trust in RBPD's and PBCSAO's ability to keep a participating victim/witness safe from intimidation or retaliation. It is a small community with limited resources, which makes it difficult for the legal system to fully protect and support witnesses to earn their participation in the legal system. PBCSAO typically does not get involved in witness protection, leaving this to RBPD. As mentioned in Recommendations 54 and 77, the protection and support of crime victims and witnesses should be the responsibility of the broader system of local government, including the City of Riviera Beach, RBPD, PBCSAO, and likely other organizations such as Palm Beach County, local law enforcement agencies in the county, and community organizations like the Riviera Beach Police Foundation, not just RBPD. However, given RBPD's stake in victim and witness participation in shooting investigations in Riviera Beach, and its initial response to crime victims, RBPD is well situated to lead the effort to bring stakeholders to the table to identify funding, resources, and a program to better protect and support crime victims in the Riviera Beach area.

Recommendations		
	75	**The RBPD, PBCSAO, and USAO should improve communication and coordination in the response to fatal and nonfatal shooting cases.** Fortunately, RBPD and PBCSAO enjoy a good working relationship with close coordination. However, the USAO, a valuable partner in the violent crime response in many large cities, seems to be missing from this relationship. RBPD should work with PBCSAO toward strengthening the working relationship between the three agencies to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the legal system's response to shootings in Riviera Beach. Additionally, given the assessment findings that the working relationship between RBPD and PBCSAO can often depend on the detective or prosecutor assigned to the case, the two organizations should work together to identify how to improve consistency in detective-prosecutor working relationships.
	76	**Work with PBCSAO to identify areas where RBPD could use additional training.** RBPD and PBCSAO should work together to identify training topics related to investigations, search and seizure fundamentals, and report and search warrant writing that PBCSAO prosecutors have noticed are underdeveloped among some SID detectives. For instance, PBCSAO spends a large amount of time rewriting search warrants for RBPD, which can disrupt PBCSAO in quickly responding to RBPD's search warrant requests. It has offered to provide relevant trainings to SID detectives, which RBPD should accept.

	77	**The RBPD and PBCSAO should collaborate on strategies to address witness intimidation in shooting cases.** In many cities, the state attorney's office is primarily responsible for protecting victims and witnesses through formal means like by providing a small amount of funds for temporary relocation and for meeting the basic needs of victims and witnesses so that they can participate in the legal system. In Riviera Beach, PBCSAO has relied on RBPD for this. Although RBPD may be in a better position to support victims and witnesses given its focus on all victims and witnesses, not just those involving an arrested and charged offender, crime victim support and protection should be a multijurisdictional effort. RBPD and PBCSAO should work together, along with the PBSO and other area partners, to establish a more robust system for protecting and supporting shooting victims, co-victims, and witnesses.
	78	**The RBPD and PBCSAO should coordinate community engagement efforts to improve resident trust in the police and legal system, which is a commonly stated reason from crime victims and witnesses for not participating in the legal system.** RBPD and PBCSAO have their own community engagement efforts, but these might be strengthened by closer collaboration on this effort to ensure activities are not duplicative and build on each other. RBPD and PBCSAO may consider assigning a team to identify ways to improve how the organizations build resident trust, individually and in collaboration, which the NCCP team could support.

5.10   Community Engagement

Community engagement was identified as a priority during the assessment process. Interviewees from both RPBD and within the community stated that the RBPD Chief of Police has made community outreach a priority for the department and that there have been noticeable changes in RBPD interactions and engagement with residents since the chief's arrival. As one RBPD representative stated, "When you have leadership support, it makes it a priority for the department." This has translated into tangible actions as perceived by both RBPD personnel and the community. For example, there has been a noted increase in officers getting out of their cars to talk to residents while on patrol, initiating community meetings and initiatives in new areas, and expansions to existing community partnerships.

RBPD's top leaders said that the department receives strong support from the community and that the community has even given outspoken support to RPBD in the face of national community backlash against law enforcement. Interviews with leaders from CBOs supported this assertion. There are champions in the community who heavily support RBPD. For example, the Riviera Beach Police Foundation was started in 2023 to help raise funds for the RBPD. Many donors to the Riviera Beach Police Foundation were reported to have made donations specifically because of the faith and support they have in the current Chief of Police. One CBO leader stated that the city's provision of a new building for RBPD headquarters is further evidence of the community's trust in and support of the department and its leaders.

The remainder of section 5.10 describes findings and recommendations related to RBPD's community engagement efforts through the Community Service Division (CSD) and efforts to increase community participation in investigations. Please also see the supplemental Project CLEARS report provided by RTI for a more detailed assessment of RBPD's community engagement efforts, including perspectives from leaders of CBOs and residents.

5.10.1 *Community Service Division*

RBPD's CSD and its leadership is a community engagement strength for the department. The CSD maintains many community-based partnerships across its initiatives, many of which are quite innovative. According to CSD personnel, the CSD views its role as a bridge between citizens and the RBPD. The CSD engages with the community through formal mechanisms such as community meetings and events, and less formal ways through walking or biking the neighborhood and talking with residents. One RBPD interviewee stated that the bikes on bike patrol are often good conversation starters between officers and residents. Community group interviewees spoke very highly of the major who leads CSD, and most community interviewees had personal relationships with him through their involvement in RBPD initiatives.

One CSD initiative, which was recently highlighted in the NCCP news blast for peer sites, is especially focused on the Inlet Grove neighborhood (sometimes referred to as the Firehouse District) in Riviera Beach. The CSD is leading beautification efforts in the area based on the broken windows theory, which seems to have led to increased community engagement and perceptions of improved police-community relations. Although the Inlet Grove program was initiated by RBPD, there is now a sense of community ownership. Community groups and residents are partnered with RBPD to improve the area and are actively engaged in the physical work to address blight and improve community conditions. Regular community meetings have also been initiated in the Inlet Grove area with residents, RBPD personnel (including the Chief of Police and other command staff), city officials, and other city agencies in attendance. RBPD personnel believe the efforts in Inlet Grove have led to decreased violent crime, but given that the initiative started recently, more concrete data will be forthcoming. RBPD plans to use the Inlet Grove area as a "blueprint" and, if the initiative is deemed effective, will implement the plan in other areas of the Riviera Beach.

Another innovative CSD-based initiative implemented by RBPD is having a CSD officer teach Criminal Justice 101 and 102 courses at Inlet Grove High School. The effort started to assist with local RBPD recruitment but may have also resulted in increased police-community trust among youth in the school. The NCCP team offers the following recommendations to support RBPD in continuing to build trust and engagement with residents in their community.

Recommendations		
	79	**Continue to support efforts in the Inlet Grove initiative area and plan for next steps.** According to community interviewees, the community is waiting to see what will happen next with this and other types of initiatives, particularly whether partnership and engagement by RBPD will be sustained. Therefore, sustainability planning will be an important next step for RBPD to continue to build upon the positive relationships established in the area. Residents in the area who have been positively impacted by RBPD's efforts have and will become champions for RBPD and this will have long-reaching positive implications for RBPD if the department continues to consistently show up for the community.
	80	**Track data on violent crime in the Inlet Grove area and publicize the outcomes. Work with local research partners to determine if a formal evaluation is possible.** Assess if it is appropriate to use findings from the initiative data collection and research and evaluation activities to inform decision-making about future initiatives. If possible, conduct a formal evaluation of the Inlet Grove initiative to ensure that any change in violence can be attributed to the initiative.

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<td>**81**</td>
<td>**Continue the practice of having CSD officers teach criminal justice classes at Inlet Grove High School and consider developing an internship program for high school students following graduation.**

The high school-based program was intended to help boost local RBPD recruitment, and interviewees said that these efforts appear to be working. Several students have indicated that they want to be law enforcement officers or are entering college as criminal justice majors. These courses have also been beneficial for building trust with the community by having the officer present at the school regularly and providing a way for students to share information with a trusted officer.

An internship program at RBPD, which was an interest expressed by RBPD interviewees, could help retain students from the high school criminal justice classes who are interested in law enforcement, but who are not old enough to start basic law enforcement training. One possibility is to have interns assist RBPD's public information officer (PIO) with multimedia needs and generating content for social media—needs expressed by the PIO. Interns may be good champions by using their personal experiences as students in the high school criminal justice courses to reflect on how participation in the course helped to shape their career trajectory and future planning.</td>
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5.10.2 *Community Participation in Investigations*

The assessment team learned that RBPD has engaged in strategies that may increase community participation in investigations, and CBO leaders said that the chief's prioritizing of community engagement will likely improve the community's willingness to participate. However, from the community's perspective, community sharing of information could be improved.

RBPD's CSD, described above in Section 5.10.1 of this report, is one key example of RBPD's efforts to improve community relations and increase community participation in investigations. CSD officers mentioned having received information from residents that is helpful to investigations. As one CSD officer expressed, when you have built relationships with residents and they are comfortable with you, they provide information.

Another example of RBPD's community engagement efforts that may boost participation in investigations is the RECAP initiative, which focuses on providing on-scene support to victims and families and follow-up response in neighborhoods affected by violence. RBPD's victim advocates and CSD officers participate in the initiative. Through RECAP, flyers are provided to residents that encourage them to call in if they have information about specific incidents. Sometimes residents won't speak to officers at all during the door-to-door RECAP conversations, but according to one RBPD representative, residents are in some cases more willing to speak with older female residents to provide information relevant for investigations.

Additionally, Crime Stoppers of Palm Beach County is available as an anonymous reporting option, but community members and RBPD personnel had mixed perceptions of how much residents are using it to report tips. RBPD could assess its value to shooting investigations and determine how to better promote the opportunity to residents, possibly using existing community partners.

Community leaders and RBPD personnel described the need for more community education on how to report crimes and how to address the "no-snitching" mentality that exists in Riviera Beach. They stated that community norms around participating in investigations needs to change, and that instead of people

being worried about being labeled as a snitch and being viewed as a terrible person for snitching, residents should be educated so that the new norm becomes if you see something, you say something. Currently, according to one community leader, "You have no support for doing good [for reporting information] but instead are driven by the fear of being viewed as a terrible person for being a snitch." According to community interviewees, it is up to the community and leaders to change the narrative and reset the norm. Another CBO leader mentioned the lack of incentive for reporting crimes because when someone does report and their "name goes on paper, their life is on the line. They are dead to the community." There is also a concern expressed by at least one community leader that law enforcement can be careless about revealing witness names in reports. If witnesses do not feel protected in providing information, they will not engage with the legal system.

Recommendations	82	**Consider bringing in additional trusted community partners, particularly older female residents, to participate in RECAP or other efforts to promote community participation.** There is a perception that members of the community are more likely to share information with these residents. RBPD should therefore consider partnering with local groups that are currently engaged in gun violence awareness and prevention efforts, or with other individuals who can speak from experience about the impact that violent crime has had on them and their families One example of a local group working in this space is the Mothers Against Murders Association.
	83	**Ensure patrol officers and investigators are consistently having positive engagements with community members.** Document the contact and the nature of the interactions. The more that officers become familiar with residents and vice versa, the greater the likelihood of building relationships, trust, and opportunities for community members to share information with trusted RBPD contacts. Community interviewees supported the assertion that increased community engagement and relationships would improve community trust and perceived safety in reporting information. Moreover, one research study found that a single positive interaction with a uniformed officer boosted self-reported willingness to cooperate with the police up to 21 days after the interaction (Peyton et al., 2019).
	84	**Engage in practices to protect the identity of participating witnesses and victims whenever possible.** RBPD should work with PBCSAO to evaluate current practices for concealing the identify of participating victims and witnesses for as long as necessary. Agencies have different practices, such as assigning confidential informants and using grand juries during preliminary hearings, but these practices may depend on local policies and state laws. The NCCP can be a resource for RBPD as it evaluates its current practices.

85	**Promote the use of Crime Stoppers as a safe, anonymous way for community members to provide information regarding crimes.** Community interviewees expressed a desire for a "truly anonymous" way for residents to report information is needed. Given that Crime Stoppers is available, RBPD should assess the community's awareness of this program and promote its use through educational efforts. Strategies include: • Updating educational and awareness materials and efforts about Crime Stoppers to include the message that the program is a safe, confidential way to report information and help address violence in the community. • Engaging CBOs to promote Crime Stoppers at their events, as individuals affiliated with trusted CBOs can be effective messengers. • Ensuring that Crime Stoppers information is included on RECAP flyers and on RBPD's social media posts about shooting incidents.

6.   Conclusion

The NCCP assessment of RBPD's response to homicides and nonfatal shootings revealed that the department is in the process of making many positive changes. RBPD is doing many things "right"—it is forging strong community relationships, is staffed with hardworking and dedicated personnel, has hired skilled support staff, and has demonstrated a willingness to explore new solutions for addressing violent crime. The recommendations in this report are intended to build upon this foundation to help RBPD strengthen its policies; ensure that detectives and supervisors are properly trained; provide guidance on conducting follow-up investigations; and strengthen the use of crime analysts, victim advocates, and other support staff and external partners in shooting investigations. The NCCP team will work with RBPD to determine which recommendations the department can address and will support RBPD as it implements and evaluates these changes.

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