

CCSAO

2023

YEAR-IN-REVIEW



KIMBERLY M. FOXX
COOK COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY



Pictured above is the Cook County DV Courthouse at 555 W. Harrison in Chicago. Photo credit: Booth Hansen.



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CCSAO BUREAUS & UNITS

CCSAO is organized into specialized bureaus and units, each dedicated to handling specific aspects of the office's wide-ranging responsibilities.

- Bureau of Administrative Services (BAS)
- Alternative Prosecution and Sentencing Unit (APSU)
- Criminal Prosecutions Bureau (CPB)
- Civil Actions Bureau (CAB)
- Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU)
- Investigations Bureau (IB)
- Juvenile Justice Bureau (JJB)
- Special Prosecutions Bureau (SPB)

MISSION:

To do justice in the pursuit of thriving, healthy, and safe communities.

VISION:

A safer, stronger Cook County.

VALUES:

Accountability, collaboration, fairness, integrity, and respect.



ABOUT THE COOK COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE (CCSAO)

CCSAO is the second-largest prosecutor's office in the United States, serving over five million residents of Cook County, Illinois.

The office is responsible for prosecuting a wide range of criminal cases, from misdemeanors to felonies, as well as enforcing regulatory laws related to child support, civil matters, domestic violence, fraud, and immigration services. With tens of thousands of cases handled each year, CCSAO tirelessly advocates for the well-being and safety of the community.

Guided by its mission to pursue justice and create thriving, healthy, and safe communities, CCSAO is committed to demanding accountability, increasing its presence in the community, and addressing historic inequities within the justice system.

Through its tireless work and unwavering commitment to justice, CCSAO aims to be a national leader in prosecutorial excellence, setting an example for other offices across the country. The office remains steadfast in its mission to protect the innocent, hold the guilty accountable, and uplift the voices of victims and communities impacted by crime. CCSAO strives to embody its core values of accountability, collaboration, fairness, integrity, and respect in every aspect of its work, ensuring that justice is served equitably and transparently for all residents of Cook County.



KIMBERLY M. FOXX

COOK COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Foxx', written in a cursive style.

A MESSAGE FROM THE STATE'S ATTORNEY

As we reflect on the pages of this year-in-review report, I am filled with profound gratitude and immense pride for the transformative journey the Cook County State's Attorney's Office (CCSAO) has embarked upon throughout the past year.

The year 2023 marked a pivotal moment for CCSAO, as we stood at the vanguard of groundbreaking change. The Illinois Supreme Court's monumental ruling, affirming the constitutionality of the Pretrial Fairness Act, reshaped our approach to justice by dismantling the inequitable system of money bond and steering us towards a future anchored in fairness, transparency, and community well-being. The implementation of this historic legislation in September 2023 was the fruit of years of dedication to a fairer, more just pretrial justice system.

Our vision of justice extended far beyond the confines of legal proceedings. We actively engaged with communities through workshops, recognition events, and community talks, fostering meaningful connections and dialogue.

The establishment of the Conviction Integrity Unit exemplified our unwavering commitment to rectifying past injustices and rebuilding trust in our legal system. CCSAO is not merely an entity within the criminal justice system; we are a steadfast community partner dedicated to the well-being and safety of every resident, working tirelessly to create a more equitable and just County for all.

Thank you for entrusting CCSAO with the responsibility of shaping the narrative of justice in our community. Together, we will continue to write a story of progress, resilience, and a vision for a brighter future.

BOND REFORM



PRE-TRIAL FAIRNESS

One of the most transformative reforms in 2023 was the successful implementation of the Pretrial Fairness Act (PFA). By eliminating the use of money bond and redesigning pretrial processes, PFA aimed to increase transparency and fairness in release and detention decisions, ensuring that an individual's freedom was not determined by their financial means. CCSAO played an instrumental role in the collaborative planning process leading up to the implementation of the PFA. The office worked hand-in-hand with other Cook County criminal justice agencies, law enforcement, advocacy groups, and community representatives to ensure a seamless transition to the new procedures.

By eliminating wealth-based disparities and increasing transparency in pretrial decision-making, this reform aligned with CCSAO's mission to promote fairness and equality within the criminal justice system. The successful implementation of this Act served as a testament to CCSAO's dedication to advancing meaningful change and set the stage for further progress in the years to come. As Illinois heralds a new era by becoming the first state to eliminate the use of money bond, the CCSAO's dedication to equity and justice shines through. By supporting the transition to a detention process grounded in risk assessments rather than financial status, CCSAO upholds its core values of fairness, transparency, and community safety.

EVOLUTION OF PRE-TRIAL REFORM

In March 2017, CCSAO initiated a groundbreaking shift in approach, actively supporting agreed motions requesting I-Bonds for defendants unable to pay bond amounts of \$1000 or less. This proactive stance signaled a departure from traditional practices, prioritizing public safety over incarcerating individuals solely due to financial constraints, particularly for nonviolent offenses. Building upon this initiative, in June 2017, CCSAO expanded its bond reform policies further, recommending I-Bonds for defendants deemed not to pose a risk of violence or flight. This expansion marked a significant departure from previous practices, where Assistant State's Attorneys primarily participated in bond hearings by presenting alleged facts. These sequential efforts underscored CCSAO's commitment to fostering fairness and equity, and ushering in a new era of pre-trial reform in Cook County.

EQUITY & JUSTICE

CCSAO has consistently prioritized fostering equity and justice as the guiding principle behind its efforts in bond reform initiatives. By collaborating with a diverse range of stakeholders, including criminal justice agencies, law enforcement, advocacy groups, and community representatives, CCSAO has emphasized transparency and inclusivity in shaping policy changes. This collaborative approach underscores the importance of collective action in achieving meaningful reform and reflects CCSAO's unwavering commitment to promoting equity and justice within the criminal justice system.

Beyond legislative changes, CCSAO has actively addressed systemic inequalities, promoted community safety, and worked tirelessly towards creating a more equitable pretrial system. The office's proactive stance aims to ensure that an individual's freedom is not determined by their financial means, aligning with the fundamental principles of fairness and justice. Throughout the implementation of past bond reform initiatives, CCSAO has remained vigilant in monitoring legal challenges and advocating for justice based on the law. This dedication to oversight and advocacy upholds the principles of fairness and equity within the criminal justice system, particularly in the context of bond reform.

Moreover, CCSAO's leadership extends beyond the boundaries of Cook County, as the office actively advocates for broader legislative changes and drives systemic reform efforts at both the state and national levels. This unwavering commitment to advancing equity and justice within the bond system positions CCSAO as a trailblazer in the fight for a more just and equitable criminal justice system.

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CONVICTION INTEGRITY

DO-NOT-CALL

In 2023, Cook County State's Attorney Kimberly Foxx made significant strides in criminal justice reform and accountability. The Cook County State's Attorney's Office (CCSAO) took a bold step towards increasing transparency and accountability by releasing a public "Do Not Call List" of law enforcement officers who would not be called to testify in criminal cases due to credibility concerns. This initiative was part of the office's broader modernization of its Brady Giglio policy, which outlines the procedures prosecutors are required to follow when disclosing information that could question the credibility of government witnesses.

By publicly releasing this list, CCSAO demonstrated its unwavering commitment to ensuring the integrity of its prosecutions and rebuilding public trust in the criminal justice system. This move marked a pivotal moment in Foxx's efforts to promote transparency and credibility in witness testimony, reflecting her dedication to upholding fairness and integrity in the judicial process. The release of the "Do Not Call List" not only served to enhance the reliability of witness testimony but also sent a clear message that the office would not tolerate misconduct or dishonesty from law enforcement officers.

State's Attorney Foxx's leadership in implementing this groundbreaking policy underscored her commitment to reforming the criminal justice system and holding all individuals accountable, regardless of their position or authority.

Photo Credit: Amber Huff, Chicago Reader

CONVICTION REVIEW

In December 2023, CCSAO underwent a significant transformation with the rebranding of its Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) to the Conviction Review Unit (CRU). This rebranding, under the leadership of Michelle Mbekeani, signaled a renewed dedication to addressing historical injustices and ensuring fairness and integrity in the pursuit of justice. The CRU's establishment marked the second overhaul initiated by State's Attorney Kimberly Foxx since taking office, reflecting the office's commitment to rectifying past wrongs and incorporating community voices into its decision-making processes. Through participatory justice principles, the CRU aims to engage community members, advocates, and families in the judicial process, fostering transparency and accountability within the criminal justice system.

CRU has a crucial role in examining assertions of actual innocence to assess if new evidence significantly raises the likelihood that the convicted defendant was not the true perpetrator of the offense they were found guilty of committing. The term "actual innocence" denotes complete absolution of any criminal responsibility on the part of the defendant for the said crime. CRU's primary responsibility is to investigate these claims and subsequently offer recommendations to the Cook County State's Attorney regarding the appropriate course of action, if any, in light of its findings. However, the final decision on whether to grant a remedy to individuals seeking review by CRU lies with the State's Attorney.

The existence of the CRU does not create or confer any appeal rights, but claimants dissatisfied with its conclusions may request a meeting with the executive staff of the State's Attorney's Office. Additionally, the evidence developed by the CRU during its investigation may be shared with other units within the State's Attorney's Office for further consideration.

In December 2023, CCSAO announced the dismissal of the 1988 wrongful conviction of Brian Beals, shedding light on the indispensable role of the CRU in meticulously examining cases affected by systemic issues, thus safeguarding justice with integrity and fairness. Here, we see the dedicated team of CRU members alongside partners from the Innocence Project.



Photo Credit: The Innocence Project

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DATA TRANSPARENCY & TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENTS

CCSAO, under the visionary leadership of State's Attorney Kim Foxx, has embarked on a transformative journey to revolutionize the criminal justice system through groundbreaking initiatives focused on data transparency, accountability, and efficiency. These bold endeavors seek to modernize antiquated processes, foster meaningful community engagement, and ensure the unwavering pursuit of fair and equitable justice for every resident of Cook County. By making critical information accessible to the public, the Office has taken a significant step towards building trust and fostering open dialogue with the communities it serves.



In an era where efficiency is paramount, State's Attorney Foxx has spearheaded the adoption of cutting-edge technology and streamlined processes that have transformed the way the CCSAO operates. Leveraging data-driven insights and collaborating with key stakeholders, the Office identifies and addresses systemic inefficiencies, resulting in swifter justice and better outcomes for all parties involved. This commitment to innovation not only enhances the Office's ability to serve the community effectively but also underscores its dedication to transparency, accountability, and the constant pursuit of justice.

NICE

The implementation of the NICE Investigate System in 2023 stands out as one of the most notable advancements. This state-of-the-art digital platform streamlines the collection, dissemination, and use of evidence in criminal cases. The centralized system securely stores, manages, and analyzes digital evidence from various sources, such as mobile devices, social media, and CCTV cameras. By adopting this system, CCSAO has significantly reduced the administrative burden associated with evidence handling, enabling prosecutors to build stronger cases and expedite the path to justice.

HACKING 4 JUSTICE

In 2023, CCSAO proudly relaunched its transformative "Hacking 4 Justice" (H4J) program. This immersive two-day, in-person workshop served as a catalyst for empowering Cook County residents, regardless of their technical background, to dive deep into the world of data-driven justice. Participants embarked on a journey of discovery, learning the intricacies of the powerful "R" programming language, a tool that unlocks the potential for conducting original, self-directed analyses using CCSAO case-level data. By opening its doors and sharing its case-level data, the office fostered an environment of openness and understanding, inviting the community to become active participants in the pursuit of justice. The H4J program not only provided the tools and knowledge necessary for data analysis but also ignited a spark of curiosity and civic engagement within each participant, setting a new standard for community engagement and paving the way for a more inclusive, data-driven approach to justice.

85%

APPROVAL RATE

In 2023, CCSAO reviewed 16,679 adult felony cases, ultimately approving charges for 14,219 cases, reflecting an 85% approval rate for prosecution decisions.

77%

CCSAO CONVICTION RATE

In 2023, Of the 16,665 adult felony cases filed by CCSAO, 12,815 resulted in convictions, indicating a 77% conviction rate for cases prosecuted by the office.

68%

OVERALL CONVICTION RATE

When accounting for all cases in 2023, including those filed directly by law enforcement without CCSAO's involvement in charging decisions, 14,277 cases led to convictions, indicating an overall conviction rate of 68%.

All incidents presented in this data section occurred in Cook County between January 1 and December 31, 2023. It's important to note that the data specifically focuses on adult felony cases and does not include misdemeanor charges.

TRANSPARENCY OVER THE YEARS

Under the visionary leadership of State's Attorney Kim Foxx, CCSAO has embarked on a transformative journey to enhance transparency and public access to the intricacies and outcomes of its vital work. Recognizing that the credibility and effectiveness of both CCSAO's operations and public discourse on criminal justice rely on data rather than anecdotes, State's Attorney Foxx has made it a priority to generate and facilitate understanding of this essential information.

Since taking office in December 2016, State's Attorney Foxx has spearheaded significant initiatives to promote transparency and accountability. In October 2017, CCSAO released its first-ever data report, marking a groundbreaking step towards providing the public with unprecedented access to the office's operations. This commitment to transparency was further reinforced in March 2018 and May 2019, with the release of over six years of felony criminal case data and the introduction of dynamic data dashboards. These initiatives, supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, have set a new standard for transparency in the criminal justice system. To further bolster the pursuit of data transparency, State's Attorney Foxx appointed Matthew Saniie as CCSAO's first-ever Chief Data Officer in 2017.

By making data and evidence the foundation of its work, CCSAO has not only enhanced its own operations but also empowered the public to engage in informed discussions about criminal justice. The availability of comprehensive data reports and interactive dashboards has provided residents of Cook County with unprecedented insight into the workings of the State's Attorney's Office, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the criminal justice system.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARDS

CCSAO annually honors the exceptional work of community leaders who have made significant contributions to their communities. In 2023, CCSAO celebrated a diverse group of remarkable individuals for their exemplary leadership, dedication to service, and tireless efforts to empower others and drive positive change in Cook County. The honorees, hailing from various communities and backgrounds, were recognized for their meaningful impact and unwavering commitment to building a more just and equitable society. Notably, 2023 marked the inaugural year for the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Leadership Awards and the Honoring a Phenomenal Woman Awards.

The 2023 Community Leadership Award recipients are listed below.

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Awards

- Don V. Villar, Secretary Treasurer of the Chicago Federation of Labor
- Honorable Jasmine Villaflor Hernandez, Cook County Circuit Court
- Karen Chiu, M.D., Co-Founder & Executive Director of Project Vision

C.F. Stradford Awards

- Honorable Adrienne E. Davis, Cook County Circuit Court
- Cannon D. Lambert, Sr., Esq., Karchmar & Lambert, P.C.
- Martin Coffey, Breakthrough Urban Ministries

El Humanitario Awards

- Honorable David R. Navarro, Cook County Circuit Court
- Carlos Tortolero, Founder and President of the National Museum of Mexican Art

Pride Recognition Awards

- Honorable Jill Rose Quinn, Cook County Circuit Court
- Michael Herman, CEO of Chicago House
- Angelica Ross, Founder of TransTech Social Enterprises

Middle Eastern North African (MENA) Award (Inaugural Year)

- Honorable Rouhy J. Shalabi, Cook County Circuit Court
- Dr. Rami Nashashibi, Founder of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN)

Honoring a Phenomenal Woman (Inaugural Year)

- Honorable Nancy Maldonado; Federal District Judge; Northern District of Illinois
- Iris Y Martinez, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County
- Commissioner Josina Morita, Cook County 13th district
- Micaela Smith, Village of Lansing Trustee
- Chief Schenita Stewart, Evanston Police Department
- State Representative Nabeela Syed, 51st District
- Commissioner Maggie Trevor, Cook County 9th District



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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

PUBLIC AWARENESS INITIATIVES

CCSAO has prioritized public awareness and community engagement as crucial components of its mission to foster trust, transparency, and understanding within the diverse communities it serves. In 2023, CCSAO launched several innovative initiatives aimed at raising awareness about critical issues affecting Cook County residents, such as wrongful convictions, hate crimes, and the unique challenges faced by specific communities. By collaborating with various stakeholders, hosting informative events, and creating dedicated advisory councils, CCSAO has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to educating the public, promoting open dialogue, and working towards a more just and equitable society.

Wrongful Conviction Day 2023

The Cook County State's Attorney's Office (CCSAO) marked the milestone of the 10th annual Wrongful Conviction Day with a commemorative brunch, resource fair, and illuminating panel discussion. Exemplifying the spirit of resilience, individuals vindicated during the Foxx Administration—Jose Cruz, Terrell Swift, Charles Johnson, and Marilyn Muero—graciously shared their harrowing journeys and insights, shedding light on avenues to bolster support and prevent miscarriages of justice not only within Cook County but nationwide. Guiding the discourse as emcee was Alderman Stephanie Coleman, lending her voice to the crucial dialogue aimed at fostering awareness and actionable solutions to combat wrongful convictions. The event also featured a screening of a documentary highlighting the struggles and triumphs of those who have been wrongfully convicted, offering a poignant glimpse into their battles for justice. This powerful visual narrative served as a poignant reminder of the human toll of wrongful convictions and underscored the urgent need for systemic reform.



Hate Prevention

In 2023, CCSAO collaborated with Cook County United Against Hate, the Cook County Sheriff's Office, and the Cook County Human Relations Department in a concerted effort to combat the pervasive issue of hate crimes. This collaborative initiative involved a series of thought-provoking discussions that delved deep into the complexities of identifying hate crimes, the resources available to victims and communities, and the paramount importance of raising public awareness about this critical issue.

In a parallel effort, CCSAO's dedicated Community Engagement team joined forces with Alderman Gilbert Villegas to host a compelling event at the Ukrainian Center. The event, titled "Public Safety from the Lens of CCSAO," featured a distinguished panel of experts, including Chief of Investigations Joshua Hunt, Supervisor of Felony Review Kim Ward, and Director of Community Engagement Lauren Simmons. Each panelist shared unique insights into their respective unit's role in ensuring public safety, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of law enforcement and community protection.

Community-Based Conversations

Throughout 2023, CCSAO organized and participated in several community-based conversations to engage with residents, share information, and foster open dialogue on critical issues related to the criminal justice system.

The Community Engagement Team and the Community Justice Center collaborated with the 4th District CAPS office to host a Juvenile Justice Panel. The panelists discussed the point system, diversion, and community-related strategies to proactively support youth. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions about the panelists' career paths, changes in juvenile law, and ways to support efforts within the juvenile justice system. CCSAO also provided an overview of the felony review process. Panelists discussed their units' roles and their connection to public safety, followed by a Q&A session.

Lastly, State's Attorney Kim Foxx engaged in "Keeping up with Kim" chats at various locations, including the DuSable Museum, Moraine Valley Community College, Indo American Center, South Suburban College, and Moody Bible Institute, to maintain open lines of communication with the community.



RICHARD J. DALEY CENTER

Home of CCSAO's Appeals, and Asset Forfeiture Unit teams. This photo was snapped by Eddie Jackson, Jr. an Admin Assistant in our Traffic Division.