



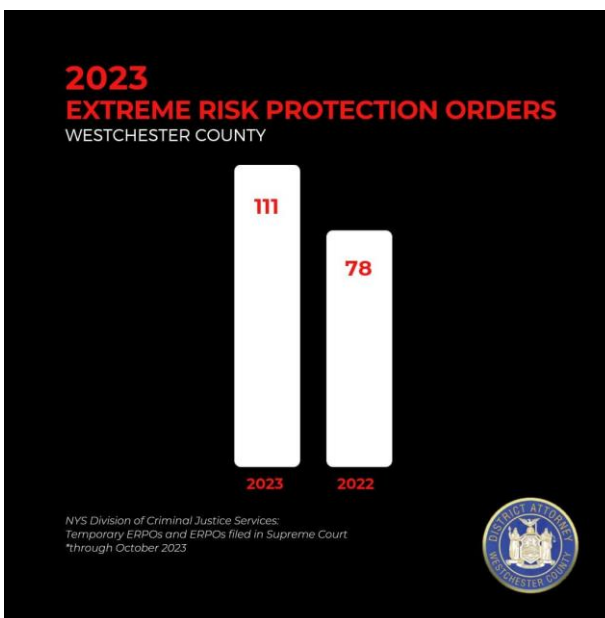
MIRIAM E. ROCAH
WESTCHESTER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

2023 IN REVIEW

As 2023 comes to a close, we're reflecting on how the Westchester DA's Office has achieved our goals of balancing public safety and justice. From prosecuting gun cases and sex crimes to expanding diversion programs and our community presence, we are proud to highlight some of our progress this year. [Here's](#) a highlight of the year in photos and headlines.

Enhancing Public Safety

In 2023, the office prosecuted 280 cases of illegal weapons possession, including ghost guns. To date, more than 267 illegal guns were seized in the County, of which 37 are ghost guns. As part of our broader gun safety agenda, we continued our training on New York's expanded red flag laws with local legislators, law enforcement, attorneys, school superintendents and administrators, as well as PTAs and students. As the number of Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs) being issued increased, we expanded our red flag law training to mental health and medical professionals, including the staff at St. Vincent's Medical Center earlier this month.



In the spring, we partnered with Peekskill PD, the City of Peekskill, and the NAACP to host a [gun buyback at the Peekskill United Methodist Church](#) where 66 firearms were collected. That's 66 weapons off our streets and out of potentially the wrong hands, reducing the chances of gun-involved incidents, including gun suicides.



We have cracked down on property crimes that impact daily life and a sense of security for communities across Westchester. From auto thefts and the problem of stolen catalytic converters to residential burglaries and retail theft, we have prosecuted repeat offenders to hold them accountable for these crimes. And we have sent strong messages that the office is committed to [protecting business owners and residents](#), and secured a lengthy prison [sentence last month for a serial burglar](#) who was also a repeat felony offender.

Justice for the Most Vulnerable

Protecting and seeking justice for the most vulnerable victims of child abuse, elder abuse, sex crimes and domestic violence continues to be the focus and priority of our Special Prosecutions Division.

Last month, we secured three consecutive maximum sentences for a combined [34 years to life for a serial child predator](#) who repeatedly sexually assaulted two children for a decade. This defendant was also charged for sending sexually explicit images and videos to another child on social media.

After a referral from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) earlier this year, we obtained a [67-count indictment against a 22-year-old New Rochelle man for sex offenses involving children](#) as well as the creation and possession of images and videos of children engaged in sexual acts.

These outcomes are a result of the collaboration between our Special Prosecutions Division and our Cyber Crimes Bureau working with criminal investigators and forensic analysts in our High Tech Unit on cases of sexual exploitation of minors that occur over the internet.

To provide parents with tools to protect children from these dangers online, DA Rocah and our Cyber Crimes Bureau hosted a virtual panel on [“Protecting Kids from Online Predators”](#) earlier this year in partnership with My Sisters' Place and the U.S. Attorney's Office (Southern District of New York).

The topic of internet safety for children has been this year's most requested presentation across Westchester. Our office has answered the call by deploying ADAs out in to the community to [speak](#) to students and parents on how to safely use the internet and social media.



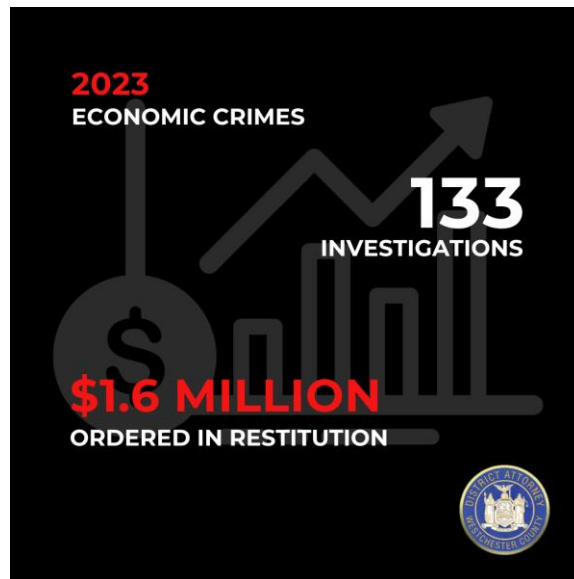
Supporting Crime Victims

Delivering on her promise to bring some closure to the victims' families of more than 100 unsolved homicides in Westchester County, DA Rocah announced this summer [significant updates out of her Cold Case Bureau](#). They included outcomes in two cases that represented a combined total of 37 years of waiting by the victims' families for prosecutorial action.



This year, in addition to obtaining indictments on three cases, we announced the resolution of three additional cases with convictions and maximum prison sentences in each of 20 years-to-life, 20 years-to-life and 25 years-to-life.

In a first for the bureau, a \$500,000 DOJ grant was awarded to advance cases utilizing DNA and investigative genealogy. The grant will support and enhance the work of the bureau, which had already identified two Jane Doe victims in decades-old murders, and produced a composite sketch of a murder victim from 1978.



As national crime reports noted an uptick in [scams, particularly targeting the elderly](#), our Economic Crimes Bureau opened a record-breaking 133 investigations involving financial crimes where defendants allegedly stole approximately \$2.3 million from victims of wage theft and labor fraud, tax and investment schemes, and identity theft. Nearly \$1.6 million in restitution was ordered on behalf of the victims in our cases.

Increasing Equitable Outcomes

The Conviction Review Unit—Westchester’s first independent unit of the DA’s Office dedicated to conviction integrity—announced this fall with the Innocence Project, the [exoneration of Leonard Mack](#), who served more than seven years in prison for a 1976 rape that he did not commit. The court vacated Mr. Mack’s conviction, which is the longest wrongful conviction in U.S. history known to the Innocence Project to be vacated by DNA evidence.



Additionally, CRU joined defense counsel in [seeking to vacate the conviction and charges of 27 individuals stemming from a 2017 MVPD undercover narcotics operation](#) triggered, in part, by a whistleblower’s secret recordings of officers alleging misconduct.

The office is now fundamentally different in how we address root causes of crime. We have made critical investments in creating and expanding initiatives that offer alternatives to traditional prosecution and incarceration by diverting individuals away from the criminal justice system, which has been proven to reduce recidivism and make communities safer.

Our pre-arraignment diversion program, Fresh Start, has offered nearly 500 individuals facing first-time, low-level offenses the opportunity to avoid entry in the criminal justice system.

Launched in 2021 in partnership with Westchester County, the diversion program, facilitated by the Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH) offers rehabilitative services to eligible program participants. At the start of this year, we [launched the Westchester Mental Wellness Court with our partners at the Office of Court Administration](#) to fill a huge gap for individuals charged with misdemeanors who need mental health services, and to prevent recidivism. And, in the fall, we [launched the Westchester Overdose Prevention and Treatment Initiative \(OPT-In\)](#) pilot paving the way for individuals to receive necessary treatment and services for substance use disorder instead of facing criminal charges.

We are also working to bring a formal Restorative Justice program to Westchester County in 2024, and continuing our efforts to expand eligibility in emerging youth, veterans and other problem-solving courts to serve more individuals.

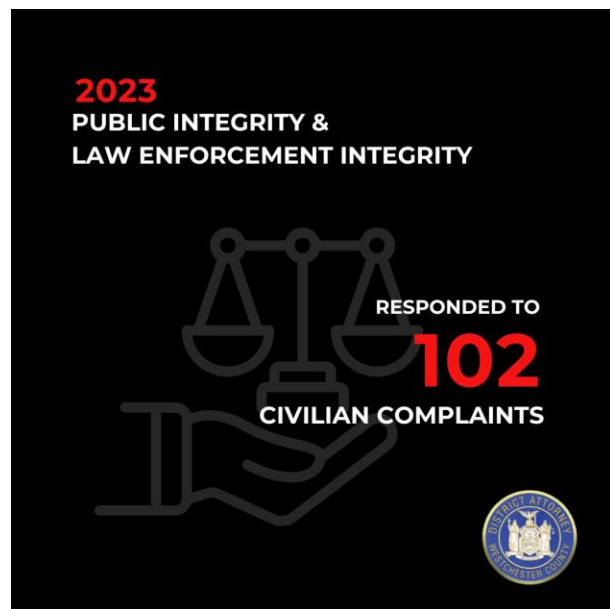
Strengthening Our Investigative Priorities

Criminal investigations conducted by the DA's Office are led by our dedicated criminal investigators and crime analysts in the Investigators Squad and the Crime Strategies Center (CSC). Their critical role serves to proactively combat crime, support our precision policing strategies, enhance cases, and provide trial support with high-level data analysis. In 2023, the CSC initiated 357 cases, and handled 753 requests for information from law enforcement agencies countywide, in addition to the DA's Office investigations and prosecutions, nearly a 30 percent jump from 2022.

From cybercrimes to cold cases and sex crimes, criminal investigators in our High Tech Unit assisted in more than 230 cases this year, resulting in 462 digital devices examined.

Fulfilling DA Rocah's promise to Westchester residents that every single complaint to the DA's Office would get a human response, our criminal investigators handled 250 civilian complaints this year, an increase of 22% from 2022.

Among them, our Public Integrity & Law Enforcement Integrity Bureau responded to more than 100 complaints related to public corruption.



Combating Hate

In 2023, the unit has handled more than 200 investigations amid an increased reporting of hate crimes and bias incidents across the County.

After the events of October 7 and the continued rise of hate and bias incidents nationwide, the Hate Crimes Unit continues to track data through the law enforcement info-sharing hate crimes portal launched last year. The portal is one example of how we are employing data to address crime, and study trends to aid in crime prevention—a key element of DA Rocah’s agenda to modernize the office.

In our commitment to combat hate and extremism, the Hate Crimes Unit continues to host county-wide hate crimes training for police, and in October [conducted a first-of-its-kind legal and development training day](#) in Westchester for law enforcement, prosecutors and public safety professionals that drew more than 100 participants.

Protecting Reproductive Rights

Following [our successful prosecution](#) of three men associated with the anti-abortion extremist group Red Rose Rescue—who were convicted and sentenced to jail in 2022 for trespassing at All Women’s Medical in White Plains—the Attorney General filed a lawsuit against members of the group this summer, and a federal judge earlier this month handed down an order subjecting Red Rose Rescue to a 15-foot buffer zone around all reproductive health care clinics in downstate New York, including Westchester County.

It is appropriate that the group connected to our case in Westchester continue to face consequences for their ongoing unlawful actions across the state interfering with New Yorkers’ rights to reproductive care. It is also a mark of how our work impacts and safeguards every member of our community.

As we celebrate this year’s milestones, we look forward to continued progress in 2024 with the same commitment and vigor.

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