

MAY 2022

Providing
the Highest
Quality of
Justice

FULTON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

SPRINGREPORT

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS



FANI T. WILLIS
District Attorney
Fulton County, GA



Madam DA

Our 2022 accomplishments in the first quarter of service to the people of Fulton County

We are pleased to report on our progress in the first four months of 2022 through this report. As a candidate for District Attorney in 2020, I promised the voters of Fulton County that my office would be dedicated to making every neighborhood in our county safer, acting with integrity, and being honest and transparent with the public. This report is an important part of keeping those commitments.

We continue to face unprecedented challenges. The backlog created by the pandemic's shutdown of our judicial system is still with us, and the surge in violent crime in Fulton continues to add serious cases to the burdens facing this office, the police and the courts at a rapid rate.

We are pleased, however, that we have made great progress in improving our office and working with our partners in county government, law enforcement and the courts to make real progress in improving public safety. Thanks to the support of our county commission, 129 new positions in our office were authorized. We have aggressively worked to fill positions and have a vacancy rate under 8%. While doing that, we have been able to raise standards for experience in our new hires. We now require at least three years of practice experience for entry level attorneys. We have attracted highly experienced investigators, many of whom come to our office with 15 plus years of experience as police officers and detectives. We have been able to add investigators with significant government and private sector experience in using technology in investigations.

Our new Case Intake Division has greatly improved the office's building and indictment of cases, which will lead to better outcomes for victims and their families. The improved investigations by the Case Intake Division is also preventing the office from seeking indictments in cases that should never be brought, which was a problem in the prior administration.

We have added prosecutors and investigators to our Major Crimes Division to handle gang-related cases, murders, sexual assault and cold cases. Every prosecutor and investigator in office now receives training in recognizing gang-related cases, and how to best investigate and prosecute them.

Our Special Victims Division is working with police and prosecutors to ensure that human trafficking cases are recognized and prosecuted as such, and that human

trafficking victims are recognized and offered support and assistance. We have created a unit that combines expertise in human trafficking and gangs to recognize and prosecute gang-related human trafficking, and we have brought the first RICO indictment related to human trafficking in Georgia history. We have also successfully expanded our Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Unit to find and prosecute cases from old, untested sexual assault kits through increased federal grant funding.

Our Trial Division has added experienced staff and is working with the Case Intake Division to move through cases more efficiently and effectively. We have ended the historic problem of cases being dismissed by judges in Non-Complex Unit of the Superior Court, due to failure of having evidence ready for discovery at indictment. Our Trial Division staff is now more experienced and better trained.

My administration has created a new Civil Rights Unit to handle cases involving allegations of physical abuse of citizens' by law enforcement officers. They are keeping my commitment to citizens and law enforcement agencies to make determinations on cases based on the facts and the law, and to not allow cases to languish in perpetuity.

Our newly created Anti-Corruption Unit is focused on cases involving allegations of wrongdoing by government officials, as well as cases involving allegations of election fraud. Prosecutors and investigators in the Civil Rights and Anti-Corruption Units have developed expertise in their specialized areas that allows them to handle cases fairly and efficiently.

We have worked with community partners to create ground-breaking diversion programs for both adults and juveniles. We can now divert or send cases to accountability court before indictment. We have partnered with the United States Attorney and the Fulton County Juvenile Court to bring the Credible Messengers program to at risk youth. Our Conviction Integrity Unit is fully functioning and reviewing convictions and sentences. To date, the unit has overturned both unjust convictions and modified unjust sentences.

We have made great progress, but we still have much to do. We thank you for your support and your partnership as we work together to make Fulton County a safer, more just place for everyone.

Yours In Service,



Featured Employees



Employees of the Month

2022
Fani T. Willis
District Attorney

JANUARY
employee of the month

NIKIA SELLERS
Assistant District Attorney
Accountability Court

2022
Fani T. Willis
District Attorney

FEBRUARY
employee of the month

NICOLE SANTOS
Victim Witness Advocate
Domestic Violence Unit

2022
Fani T. Willis
District Attorney

MARCH
employee of the month

TEMPERANCE STODDARD
Investigator
Crimes Against Children Unit

Employee of the Winter Quarter

2022
Fani T. Willis
District Attorney

EMPLOYEE
of the first quarter

STEPHANIE SAMPLES
Investigator | Major Crimes Division - White Collar Unit

Employee of the Spring Quarter

MARCH 28
Women's Day
CELEBRATION

Featured Employees



Will McCombs
Justice Liaison

Justice Liaison Will McCombs along with Don Geary inspected the Fulton County Tax Commissioner's Office, the Fulton County District Attorney's Office, the Fulton County Probate Court, the Office of the Fulton County Clerks of Superior Court, and the Fulton County Jail. Inspections nor reports have been completed in over 2 decades.



Don Geary
Legal Counsel to DA

Don Geary, Legal Counsel to the District Attorney, along with Will McCombs, inspected the Fulton County Tax Commissioner's Office, the Fulton County District Attorney's Office, the Fulton County Probate Court, the Office of the Fulton County Clerks of Superior Court, and the Fulton County Jail. Inspections nor reports have been completed in over 2 decades.



Aakeem Woodard
Youth Advocate

Youth Advocate Aakeem Woodard, coordinated with the Fulton County Juvenile Courts to begin the Ascend "last chance" program for juvenile offenders. This program gives youth one last chance to avoid prison.



Jill Hollander
Deputy District Attorney

Chair of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys Domestic Violence Prosecution Subcommittee for the National Training Conference.

Featured Employees



Mike Carlson
Executive District Attorney

Advocated with Senator John Albers on House Bill 359, to strengthen gang laws. The Bill didn't pass, but the Fulton County District Attorney's Office remains more committed than ever to have gang legislation passed.



Julianna Peterson
Deputy District Attorney

Won the first ever **Amber Anderson Award** for her excellent service as a Trial attorney. This award is in honor of the first female trial attorney hired by the Fulton County District Attorney's office in 1974.



Ruth Pawlak
Assistant District Attorney

Won the first ever **Carole E. Wall Award** for her excellent service as an appeals attorney. This award is in honor of the first female attorney hired by the Fulton County District Attorney's office in 1952.



Valencia Younger
Chief Legal Assistant

Chief Legal Assistant Valencia Younger was recognized as the National Association of Black Legal Associations Legal Professionals for her excellent service and dedication to her profession and the citizens of Fulton County.

Featured Employees



Epiffany Henry
Deputy Chief of Staff

Deputy Chief of Staff Epiffany Henry was hired to begin the first ever Pre-Indictment Diversion program for the Fulton County District Attorney's office. She has taken this task and has developed a dynamic protocol for the program and has ensured that every member of the Diversion team is properly trained on classes to uplift the participants. Most importantly, Ms. Henry and her team have reviewed over 500 applicants for Diversion. She currently has 100 people participating in the program which allows these individuals to avoid criminal convictions and gives them the opportunity to gain life and job skills to better their lives.



Sonya Allen
Deputy District Attorney

Deputy District Attorney Sonya Allen was appointed as the Deputy District Attorney of the Anticorruption Unit in the late fall of 2021. The Anti-corruption Unit was formed in 2021 under Madam District Attorney Fani T. Willis leadership to specifically investigate allegations of criminal activity of attorneys, public employees and elected officials. Since Deputy District Attorney Allen's appointment she has selected a team of highly qualified lawyers and investigators, formulated a protocol and made determinations in over a dozen cases.



January Towles
Community Resource Specialist

Ms. Towles began a juvenile intervention program to ensure juveniles attend their intervention meetings and have transportation if needed.



Michael Green
Deputy Chief Investigator

Deputy Chief Michael Green created a Master Investigators class to teach all Investigators advance Investigative skills. Ensuring the Fulton County District Attorney's Investigators have superior skills. 41 Fulton County District Attorney's Investigators graduated from the inaugural class.

Investigator Promotions



Robert Appell

Promoted to

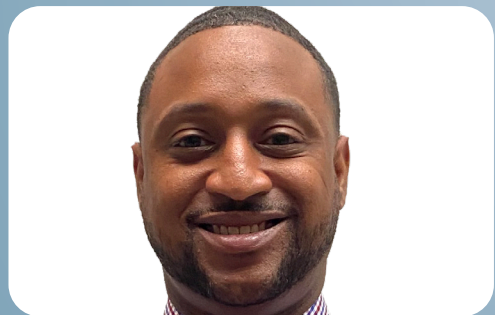
**Deputy Chief Investigator
-Trial Division**



Bernice Higgins

Promoted to

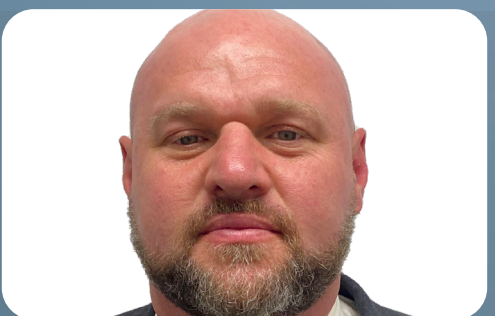
**Assistant Chief Investigator
-Trial Division**



Dashawn Raymond

Promoted to

**Assistant Chief Investigator
-Major Crimes Division**



Robert Turner

Promoted to

**Assistant Chief Investigator
-Case Intake**



What We Have Accomplished

Our Top 5 Accomplishments

- 1.** Trained all lawyers, investigators and Victim Witness staff on Implicit Bias.
- 2.** Created the first LCBTQ plus advisory committee in a District Attorney's Office in the South East.
- 3.** Partnered with Mayor Andre Dickens of Atlanta, the Atlanta Police Foundation, the Atlanta Police Department and the Fulton County Sherriff's Office to create a Repeat Offender Tracking Unit.
- 4.** Created a Community Resource Specialist Unit to interface directly with the community on issues involving crime that impact their quadrant of the county.
- 5.** Created with our Criminal Justice Partners a Child Abuse Protocol to ensure all agencies involved with protecting children use the best practices.

Special Victims Division

has a 100% Conviction Rate

Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Unit

6. Hosted the first Human Trafficking awareness forum with over 450 participants.
7. All members of the Human Trafficking Unit attended child exploitation /internet crimes training.
8. Provided education and awareness training at the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Metropolitan Atlanta Chapter and Stone Mountain Chapters.
9. Indicted first Human Trafficking case involving violations of the Georgia RICO Act in the history of Fulton County.
10. All Human Trafficking Investigators trained with the FBI/GBI Violent Criminal Apprehension Program.
11. Indicted 8 cases of Internet child exploitation in which 75 children were sexually abused and depicted in child pornography .

Juvenile Unit - 100% Conviction Rate

12. Spoke to over 100 students at 5 Fulton County public schools about citizenship, truancy and gangs.
13. Started a juvenile intervention initiative at the @promise center to provide safe positive programs for children as an alternative to gangs.
14. Implemented a intervention initiative to match juveniles charged with delinquent offenses with a certified "credible messenger" mentor.
15. Coordinated with court administration to begin the Ascend program for serious juvenile offenders. The Ascend program provides youth one last chance to avoid prison.
16. Started specialized gang prosecutions of juvenile offenders who are active gang leaders.
17. Began a juvenile intervention tracking program to ensure juveniles attend their intervention meetings and have transportation.
18. Participated in District 4 Commissioner Natalie Hall's Empowering Young Men Summit. Through this Summit Fulton County District Attorney's Office spoke to over 300 children about making good decisions.



Special Victims Division

has a 100% Conviction Rate

Sexual Assault Unit - 100% Conviction Rate

- 19.** Trained South Fulton seniors on how to avoid becoming sexual assault victims.
- 20.** Collaborated with Georgia Tech to provide information to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence victims.
- 21.** Participated in career day at Thomasville Heights Elementary.
- 22.** Met with leaders Fulton County hospitals to discuss the best practices in serving victims of sexual assault.
- 23.** Began utilizing the cutting edge science of forensic genetic genealogy to begin solving cold case sexual assaults.
- 24.** Entered 21 cases in to the Violent Crime Apprehension Program (ViCAP) database, resulting in searchable cases for law enforcement agencies across the nation, bringing our overall sexual assault cases in ViCAP to 83, surpassing any other agency in Fulton County, and the second most sexual assault cases entered by any agency in the state. While other agencies began this process more than 20 years ago, Fulton County District Attorney's Office SAKI has accomplished this in one year.

Terrell Williams Crimes Against Children Unit - 100% Conviction Rate

- 25.** Successfully tried 4 felony trials to verdict, bringing justice to 8 child victims.
- 26.** Completed the 2022 Fulton County Child Abuse Protocol in conjunction with our law enforcement partners. The Fulton County Child Abuse Panel hadn't been updated since 2015.
- 27.** Collaborated with Atlanta Police Department to begin a formal roundtable process of all cases involving child victims.
- 28.** Completed the Zero Child Abuse Project training for forensic interviewers and prosecutors.
- 29.** Reduced unindicted backlog caseload by 50%.



Special Victims Division

has a **100% Conviction Rate**

Conviction Integrity Unit

- 30.** Developed, established and swore in the Conviction Integrity Unit Review Committee.

Brenda Baham Domestic Violence Unit - **100% Conviction Rate**

- 31.** Successfully tried 3 Domestic Violence cases, 2 of the cases where homicides. All 3 defedants were convicted, bringing justice to 3 heartbroken families.
- 32.** Trained Atlanta police officers on proper report writing in Domestic Violence cases.
- 33.** Trained Fulton County Officers on best practices for documenting and collecting evidence in strangultion cases.
- 34.** Trained all Fulton County District Attorney's office investigators and attorneys on providing victims with resources to obtain temporary protective orders.
- 35.** Resolved over 100 Intimate Partner violence cases.
- 36.** Spoke to students at Bear Creek Middle School about making better choices to aviod becoming defendants in the Criminal Justice System.

Elder Abuse and Animal Cruelty Unit

- 37.** All Lawyers certified as ACT (At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics) Specialist.
- 38.** Expanded our partnership with Canine Cellmates to include private businesses, offering employment to qualified participants. This program offers rehabilitative services and job skills to defendenants, offering a better chance at success.
- 39.** Assisted out-of-state ploice agency identifying and capturing a murder/animal cruelty deffendant.

SB440 Unit

- 40.** Reviewed 29 cases of children charged as adults for consideration of alternative sentences.

Major Crimes Division

has a **91% Conviction Rate**

Gang Unit - **100% Conviction Rate**

- 41.** Developed a task force between the Atlanta Police Department and Fulton County District Attorney's Office investigators involving juvenile defendants.
- 42.** Successfully tried 3 gang cases with 5 gang members gaining extensive sentences.
- 43.** Participated in a joint operation within the Fulton County Jail with the Fulton County Sheriff's Office to successfully seize dangerous contraband inside the jail from gang members.
- 44.** Created a partnership between Fulton County Sheriff's Office and the Fulton County District Attorney's Office to encourage information sharing in gang cases.
- 45.** Established an intake/first appearance protocol with the Atlanta Police Department Gang Unit to insure the effective handling of gang cases once arrests are made.
- 46.** Taught Gang Investigations to law enforcement officers around the State of Georgia.
- 47.** Trained 50 plus new law enforcement officers on courtroom demeanor.
- 48.** Responded to all gang related homicide scenes to assist in investigation.
- 49.** Trained APD Zone's Crime Scene units on Gang investigations, social media, and warrants.

Cold Case/Capital Case Unit

- 50.** Partnered with nationally recognized experts on Fulton County District Attorney's Office Cold Cases.
- 51.** Assisted in solving 3 Cold Cases.
- 52.** Successfully indicted 2 cold homicide cases from 1988 and 2015.

Major Crimes Division

has a **91% Conviction Rate**

Civil Forfeiture Unit

- 53.** Received for forfeiture **\$569,938.54** seized property from criminals.
- 54.** Provided **\$506,005.49** to arresting agencies from seized proceeds to use for crime fighting resources.
- 55.** 84 notices of seizure filed.
- 56.** 10 complaints for forfeiture filed.
- 57.** Obtained final orders and dispositions in **75 cases**.
- 58.** Obtained partial judgments & dispositions in **27 cases**; regarding the partial judgments, closed on the currency and are waiting on the associated criminal case to resolve in order to forfeit the seized firearms.

Major Case Unit - **88% Conviction Rate**

- 59.** Developed and implemented pre-trial motion protocols to assist in effective prosecution of cases.
- 60.** Assistant District attorneys and Investigators reported to 90% of all homicide scenes in the city of Atlanta to provide legal assistance when requested to Atlanta Police Officers.

Appeals Unit

- 61.** **98%** appellate success rate for cases in the entire office.
- 62.** Over 20 Direct Appeals Affirmed.
- 63.** Successfully argued 4 cases before the Georgia Supreme Court.

White Collar Crime Unit

- 64.** Completed resolution of backlog of all 2020 pre-indictment cases.
- 65.** All White Collar Crime Unit members completed additional training on money laundering, intellectual property theft, spreadsheet skills, financial records analysis, and other topics through local agencies and through the National White Collar Crime Center.



Trial Division

- 66.** Complex Legal Assistant have closed out over **3100 case files.**
- 67.** Complex Assistant District Attorneys have closed in excess of **100 cases.**
- 68.** Successfully closed over **300** cases since January 1, 2022.

Case Intake Division

- 69.** The Case Intake Division has indicted accused in excess of **2,000** cases.
- 70.** Indicted 43 homicides cases in 2022.
- 71.** Indicted 51 defendants for homicide in 2022.
- 72.** Created a mini unit that includes 3 investigators, 5 attorneys and 1 legal assistants within the Case Intake Division that specialize in cases involving Crimes Against Children, Adult Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence.
- 73.** Partnered with Mayor Andre Dickens' office to create a repeat offender tracking unit.
- 74.** Trained 6 law-enforcement agencies on case-intake procedures.

Open Records Unit

- 75.** Processed and closed a total of 175 open records as of April 2022.



Investigations Division

Investigations Division

- 76.** 5 investigators have obtained credits to become certified teachers for the Investigative Division.
- 77.** Investigators have completed 90% of required training hours for 2022.

Evidence Unit

- 78.** Initiated a process for handing appeals evidence between the court reporters and the Fulton County District Attorney's Office creating a written chain of custody for all evidence transfers.
- 79.** All unit employee's attended evidence training through the International Association of Property and Evidence for a better knowledge of evidence handling and storage.

Justice Liaison Unit

- 80.** Completed evaluation of Fulton County Sheriff's Office as required by law for the first time in over two decades.
- 81.** Coordinated and implemented the Fulton County Grand Jury Inspection of the Fulton County Tax Commissioner Office as required by law.
- 82.** Secured a \$50,000 Grant for Formulytics Software that will assist in prosecution of dangerous gang members.
- 83.** Published the Grand Jury Presentment Reports regarding the inspection of the Fulton County Tax Commissioner's Office, the Fulton County District Attorney's Office, the Fulton County Probate Court, the Office of the Fulton County Clerks of Superior Court, and the Fulton County Jail. Inspections nor reports have been completed in over 2 decades.

Dignitary Unit

- 84.** Developed Witness Safety partnership with Atlanta Housing Authority.



Investigations Division

Digital Technology Unit

- 85.** Completed 49 cellular extractions providing valuable evidence to the prosecution of dangerous criminals.
- 86.** Became a member agency with the US Secret Service and Atlanta Cyber Fraud Task Force.
- 87.** Conducted over 100 consultations on digital forensics, technology, and threat assessment best practices.
- 88.** Built relationships and formal intelligence sharing plan with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Georgia Bureau of Investigation.



Pre-Indictment Division

- 89.** 100 participants have been enrolled in Pre-Indict Diversion for non-violent offenses. Pre-Indictment Diversion provides defendants life skills, mental health assessments, job training and record restriction. Pre-Indict Diversion provides participants with a second chance to be productive members of the community.
- 90.** All Pre-Indictment Diversion staff was trained and MRT certified to facilitate the Adult Diversion courses.

Records Unit

- 91.** In the first quarter of 2022 the Records Unit closed in excess of 500 cases.

Record Restriction Unit

- 92.** Increased efficiency of the Grand Jury work up process by 95%.



Civil Rights Unit

- 93.** Attended a briefing with the members of the Atlanta Police Department's Fugitive Unit to discuss legal parameters as well address concerns and issues of their Unit regarding the serving of warrants.
- 94.** Appointed a liaison responsible for assisting the APD Fugitive Investigators when they are faced with questions or incidents where additional guidance is needed.
- 95.** The Civil Rights Unit Investigators earned 184 hours of specialized training.
- 96.** Determinations made in 10 cases involving allegations of police brutality.
- 97.** Met with Atlanta Police Chief Rodney Bryant and Training Academy Director Fred Watson to implement training for the entire Department on Gun Safety, Gun Handling, including transportation, storage and firing in defensive situations.



Anti-Corruption Unit

- 98.** Developed and implemented protocol and processes for the newly formed Anti-Corruption Unit.
- 99.** Members of the Anti-Corruption Unit have attended a total of 224 hours of specialized training to include, Gangs, Impaired Drivers, Use of Force, Internal Affairs, Voir Dire, and Trial Tactics.



Operations Division

Grants Unit

- 100.** Obtained the Hate Crime Grant for the Fulton County District Attorney's Office. This grant is the only one in the South East to focus on the LGBTQ plus communities special needs as crime victims. The grant is used to educate both the Fulton County District Attorney's Office employees as well as our law enforcement partners on best practices.
- 101.** Received a gang focused grant that allows us to focus on hot spots in the county for gang activity by contributing resources for a Gang Investigator and a Gang Assistant District Attorney.
- 102.** Received a grant that will allow us to provide mentoring services to children living in gang hot spots in our county.
- 103.** Received a grant to hire a social worker that will connect families with mental health assistance that live in underserved communities.
- 104.** Obtained a cold case grant that will allow our office to hire experts that will focus on aged homicides throughout the 15 municipalities.
- 105.** Obtained a grant that will provide all Fulton County District Attorney's Office investigators deescalation training tools.



Programs Division

- 106.** Fulton County District Attorney Willis hosted two North Fulton Faith Based meeting to discuss the intersection of youth and trafficking and gang involvement and how Churches can offer counseling and mentorship programs to help prevent crime and be involved with the community.
- 107.** Fulton County District Attorney Willis hosted a North Fulton Elected officials update to discuss public safety and tools to keep crime rates down.
- 108.** Develop Youth Anti-Gang Community Coalitions to identify and create solutions to provide more resources to youth at risk for being recruited into gangs.
- 109.** Develop Anti-Gang youth Questionnaire to collect and quantify grassroots level ideas for combatting gangs.

Victim Witness Advocate Unit

- 110.** Developed and implemented a training class for advocates to ensure they properly serve all of Fulton County's victims.
- 111.** Cleared the backlog of U-Visas.
- 112.** Provided over 2,000 service units.
- 113.** Provided services to over 700 crime victims.











FANI T. WILLIS,
District Attorney

Fulton County District
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