



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Ramon Garcia
County Judge

A. C. Cuellar, Jr.
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Joseph Palacios
Commissioner, Precinct 4

Public Affairs Division

Julia Benitez Sullivan
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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, July 17, 2015

Hidalgo County DA creates a Special Crimes Division

EDINBURG – A new division created by Hidalgo County Criminal District Attorney Ricardo Rodriguez Jr. will focus on prosecuting crimes against the county's most vulnerable victims.

The Special Crimes Division will prosecute cases involving the physical abuse of children as well as all sexual assault cases. Other crimes that will be prosecuted in the Division include white collar crimes and public integrity cases.

Two Assistant District Attorneys, an investigator and an administrative assistant will focus on child abuse and sexual assaults. The ADAs and staff working on the cases have had special and ongoing training to better understand the complex nature of working with these vulnerable victims, Rodriguez said.

"There are no more heinous crimes than those against children. Their trusting natures and naiveté make them vulnerable to perpetrators," Rodriguez said. "Handling these cases are highly skilled, specially trained attorneys and victim's advocates who will work to foster relationships of trust with victims and their families while aggressively prosecuting perpetrators."

He assigned a four-member team to focus on sexual assault, failure to register as a sex offender, online solicitation of a minor, injury to a child, and capital murder of a child under the age of 10. They are:

- Hope Palacios, an Assistant District Attorney for Hidalgo County for more than 10 years, has been appointed Chief Assistant of the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Unit. Palacios has investigated and prosecuted hundreds of sexual assault and child abuse cases.
- Joining Palacios is ADA Savannah Gonzalez, who has worked in the DA's office for more than three years. Gonzalez began her work in the Child Welfare Unit working closely with Child Protective Services to prosecute cases of child abuse and neglect.

– MORE –

Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the 800,000 residents of our county as well as a variety of services to residents who live outside city limits. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility.



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- Linda Greenwood, an Investigator with the Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office, will serve as a Special Investigator in the unit. Greenwood has more than 17 years of law enforcement experience. She has a decade of experience working as a Criminal Intelligence Analyst specializing in Narcotics and Violent Crime cases and over seven years working as a patrol officer and investigator.
- Rounding out the team is Administrative Assistant Jessica Maye West who has more than 10 years experience in the DA's office working on cases involving sexual assaults, murder and aggravated robbery.

The team will seek to better serve the crime victims by working collaboratively with the DA's Victim Assistance Coordinator Rosie Martinez, area law enforcement, Child Protective Services, The Children's Advocacy Center and local medical experts to ensure effective and successful prosecutions, Rodriguez said.

Martinez, who joined the DA's staff as the Victim Assistance Coordinator in April, is also a part of the Special Crimes Division. She is working to build a team of victim advocates to serve as liaisons between prosecutors and individual victims and to assist victims during trials.

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