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Chicago Justice Project: Chicago's sexual assault data may be flawed; lack of data tracking makes identifying repeat offenders difficult

(Chicago, Ill.) — The Chicago Justice Project (CJP) is questioning felony sex crime statistics of the Chicago Police Department, noting that the number of cases determined to be “unfounded” is nearly three times the national average for such crimes.

CJP says that between 2000-'09, the CPD rate for categorizing felony sex crime allegations as “unfounded” was 17 percent, much higher than the national rate reported in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports of 5.66 percent over that same period.

“During that 10-year span, CPD also categorized almost 50 percent of their investigations into felony sex crime allegations as ‘suspended,’ a term that they have not defined despite our inquiries,” says CJP Executive Director Tracy Siska.

Siska also said that record keeping practices throughout the system for such crimes is so poor that it makes it difficult to identify patterns.

“Currently, OEMC only keeps these records for four years,” he noted. “By not keeping enough historical data, the chance is greater that repeat offenders may slip through the cracks, especially in cases that are classified as ‘unfounded,’ where information may not be properly documented.”

Siska called on the State's Attorney's Office to mandate that all felony review cases be detailed with demographic information regarding the individuals involved, so that patterns can be tracked over time.

The Chicago Justice Project (CJP) is an independent organization with the core mission of increasing public access to justice-related information, based on the guiding principle that access to accurate information is the foundation of any meaningful reform to the criminal justice system. Funded in part by The Ford Foundation, CJP projects and programs are designed to foster greater transparency and accountability. For interview requests please contact Jennifer Gordon (773) 983-1995.