

NEWS RELEASE

R. Andrew Murray
District Attorney

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DA Murray enacts plan for record number of homicide trials

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Today, Mecklenburg County District Attorney Andrew Murray announced a new initiative that will allow prosecutors to take more homicide cases to trial this year than ever before as part of an effort to bring justice to victims and closure for their families.

Prosecuting violent crimes, particularly homicides, has been a priority for Mr. Murray since he took office in 2011, when he found that the high number of pending homicide cases at the time was causing a delay in case resolution. Since then, the DA's Homicide Team has implemented new procedures to work more effectively to hold defendants accountable for the loss of life.

In the five years before Mr. Murray took office, there were an average of 8.6 homicide trials per year in Mecklenburg County. In 2013, the Homicide Team tried 14 cases. While the Homicide Team has made significant progress, Mr. Murray feels it is important to take extra steps on behalf of victims' families awaiting justice. That's why he developed the 2014 homicide trial initiative.

As a result of the initiative, which began today with the Homicide Team's first trial of the year, there are 26 homicide trial sessions scheduled in 2014. Every non-capital defendant who has pled not guilty has been scheduled for trial this year.

"Homicide cases don't improve with age," Mr. Murray says. "As time goes on, crucial witnesses may not remember details, or they may be difficult to find, so it's important that we work more quickly and efficiently."

The initiative has two components. The first involves the Assistant District Attorneys who will prosecute the cases. Typically, two Homicide Team prosecutors work together to try each case. This year, the 10 prosecutors on the team will partner with experienced prosecutors from other teams within the DA's Office to more fully utilize the office's resources to try more cases.

The second component involves acquiring more courtroom time in 2014. Mr. Murray requested additional courtrooms and judges this year from the Administrative Office of the Courts, which graciously granted the request for resources.

This aggressive homicide trial schedule is a critical element in the plan to seek justice in a timely fashion and bring the Homicide Team's caseload to a manageable level, allowing the DA's Office to refocus its resources to other types of violent crimes, such as sexual assaults. The initiative provides the opportunity to prosecute a high number of homicide cases while giving each case the time and attention it needs and deserves.

Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit www.charmeckda.com. For updates and other information, "like" the DA's Office on Facebook at www.facebook.com/charmeckda and follow us on Twitter: @CharMeckDA.

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