



The Importance of CIUs



Corey McCall was wrongfully incarcerated for 16 years before being exonerated with the help of Michigan's Conviction Integrity Unit. (Hope Davison/MLive)

Conviction Integrity Units (CIUs) play a critical role in undoing wrongful convictions. Our [data](#) show CIUs were involved with 506 of the 2,832 exonerations in our main registry.

Most CIUs are run through the offices of elected district attorneys. Not surprisingly, CIUs tend to be found in the nation's largest counties. It is part politics and part budgets. Progressive prosecutors are responding to the desire of voters for a more holistic version of justice. But large counties also have the resources to fund these offices, whereas smaller counties may not have the funds to allow a dedicated staff to review convictions.

Statewide conviction integrity units, run out of a state's Attorney General's office, provide one way to bridge this gap. Statewide offices have the budgets and appellate expertise to tackle these cases. Six states — Delaware, Michigan, New Jersey, New York,

statewide CIUs. We published two of these in July — [Corey McCall](#), from Benton Harbor, Michigan, and [Taron Hill](#), from Camden, New Jersey.

Statewide CIUs are not a panacea. The other four statewide units have not yet recorded any exonerations. But these units form another important part of criminal-justice reform and provide a step toward helping wrongfully convicted and innocent defendants get a chance at freedom.

Learn more about CIUs

23 Exonerations Posted in July

Including Corey McCall and Taron Hill, we published 23 exonerations in July. Browse our [recently posted](#) exonerations, including:

[Jesus Lozano](#) and [Steven Garcia](#), both of Los Angeles, California, pled guilty to drug possession charges in 1997. They were exonerated in 2000 after the arresting officer said he had falsified the arrest report and lied at a preliminary hearing.

[Russell Newman](#) was sentenced to 12 years in prison for sale of a controlled substance in Los Angeles, California in 1992. He was exonerated in 2000 after evidence of corruption in the Los Angeles Police Department's Rampart division undermined the credibility of the conviction.

In 2006, [LeeVester Brown](#) was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the murder of his six-month-old son in Clarksdale, Mississippi. He was granted a new trial because he had been denied the opportunity to hire a medical expert to contest the prosecution's theory that the baby died from Shaken Baby Syndrome. In 2018, the case was dismissed.

[Juan Bautista](#), of Lodi, California, was sentenced to between 40 years and life in prison for attempted murder in 2011. He was exonerated in 2021, after his brother told investigators that he was the shooter and another witness confirmed that account.

In 1988, [Curtis Crosland](#) was sentenced to life in prison without parole for a murder in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was exonerated in 2021 because the prosecution failed to disclose evidence impeaching the only witnesses linking him to the crime, as well as evidence pointing to the real killer.

In 2001, [Kadafi Ala](#), then known as Phillip Almeda, was sentenced to 21 years in prison for shooting at four police officers in Brooklyn, New York. He was exonerated in 2021 based on evidence that the officers fabricated their testimony implicating him.

[Emmanuel Chavez](#), of Los Angeles, California, pled guilty to a weapons

confessing to participating in a murder in Philadelphia. In 2021, the conviction was vacated and the case dismissed because the lead detective had been accused of sexually assaulting witnesses and suspects in other cases and also had failed to disclose promises of benefits to a confidential informant.

[Esteban Gonzalez](#), of Oak Creek, Wisconsin, was sentenced to 18 months in prison in 2008 for exposing his daughter to a pornographic video. Gonzalez was not allowed to introduce impeachment evidence against the state's witnesses at his trial, and he was exonerated in 2011 after the Wisconsin Supreme Court said the trial judge gave incomplete jury instructions.

In 2018, [Robert Harra Jr.](#), [David Gibson](#), [William North](#), and [Kevyn Rakowski](#), all officers with Wilmington Trust, were convicted in federal court on fraud charges that they concealed past due loans from investors. They were granted new trials and the charges were dismissed in 2021 based on evidence that the loans were not required to be reported.

In 2012, [Edward Ghostbear](#) was sentenced to five years in prison for sexually assaulting a 7-year-old girl in Havre, Montana. During the appeal, the prosecution conceded that records undermining the complaint's credibility had not been disclosed. In 2020, Ghostbear's conviction was overturned and the case was dismissed.

misconduct formed the heart of the Rampart police scandal, said he had framed Chavez.

[Walter Rivas](#) and [Carlos Guevara](#), both of Los Angeles, California, pled guilty to drug possession in 1997. They were exonerated in 2000 as part of a re-examination of convictions tied to misconduct in the Los Angeles Police Department's Rampart division.

In 1993, [Ronald McCallum](#) was sentenced to six months in jail for sexually assaulting his girlfriend's 13-year-old daughter in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He was exonerated in 1997 after the girl admitted her accusation was false.

[Manuel Guardado](#) of Los Angeles, California, received probation in 1997 after pleading guilty to drug possession. His co-defendant, [Jose Madrid](#), received a sentence of a year and four months in prison after pleading guilty to a weapons possession charge. Both were exonerated in 2000 after the arresting officer said he had framed the men.

In 1999, [Bradley St. George](#), of Ashland, Wisconsin, was sentenced to 20 years in prison for sexual assault of a child. He was exonerated in 2003, after the Wisconsin Supreme Court said the trial judge erred in excluding expert testimony that supported St. George's claim that the victim's recantation was truthful.

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼



Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).