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**Contacts:**  
Michael Leffler, [Michael.Leffler@indy.gov](mailto:Michael.Leffler@indy.gov)  
Destiny Burgos, [Destiny.Burgos@indy.gov](mailto:Destiny.Burgos@indy.gov)

## **Marion County Prosecutor's Office to establish a Conviction Integrity Unit in 2021**

Indianapolis, Ind.— Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears announced today that the Marion County Prosecutor's Office will establish a Conviction Integrity Unit in early 2021. The unit will work to prevent, identify, and remedy wrongful convictions by conducting fact-based reviews of past convictions. The Marion County Prosecutor's Office will be the first prosecutor's office in Indiana to establish a Conviction Integrity Unit.

"The only person who benefits from a wrongful conviction is the person who committed the crime," said Prosecutor Mears. "Incarcerating an individual who did not commit the crime undermines the integrity of the judicial system and does not bring justice to victims."

The Marion County Prosecutor's Office's Conviction Integrity Unit will fulfill the office's duty to diligently seek justice and will act as an independent unit within the prosecutor's office.

Prosecutor Mears said the decision to develop a Conviction Integrity Unit is in response to requests from the community as well as results reported from similar units in other jurisdictions. Earlier this year, the Hillsborough State Attorney in Tampa, Florida, announced that his Conviction Review Unit had exonerated a man convicted in a 1983 murder and attempted rape based on newly discovered DNA evidence.

"I wholeheartedly commend Prosecutor Ryan Mears for the creation of a unit devoted to correcting injustices," said Fran Watson, Professor at Indiana University McKinney School of Law. "Ensuring accuracy, legitimacy and integrity of Marion County criminal convictions is a commitment to promoting fairness for all."

In addition to reviewing cases, the unit will train prosecutors and investigators on ways the office can operate more efficiently, effectively, and adopt nationally-recognized best practices to help safeguard against future wrongful convictions.

"We have to look back and acknowledge if things were not handled in a way that is fair," Prosecutor Mears stated. "We want to make sure that every conviction that comes out of Marion County is based on fact and applying the law to those facts; and not motivated by any other reason."

The unit will include one attorney, an investigator and a paralegal. The Marion County Prosecutor's Office is actively seeking applicants for a Supervising Attorney for the Conviction Integrity Unit. Those interested can apply here: <https://tinyurl.com/MCPOjobs>

The unit is expected to begin accepting requests for review of convictions in early 2021.