



## **Joint Statement from Anti Gender-Based Violence Organizations on Chicago's Dismal Response to Sexual Assault Reports Against Police**

The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) and The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence (The Network) are renewing our shared call for a non-police based response to gender-based violence and accountability for officers who abuse their positions of authority over vulnerable victims.

James Sajdak, a former sergeant for the Chicago Police Department (CPD), is now facing accountability for allegations of an on-duty sexual assault in the form of federal civil rights charges. These charges come after decades of inaction and lack of enforcement by CPD.

As reported by the Tribune<sup>1</sup>, Sajdak had previously been recommended for firing for threatening an individual with false charges over 20 years ago. This is not the first time a CPD officer who was previously facing potential termination was kept on the force and then committed an act of gender-based violence.

Yesterday, the Chicago Sun-Times reported<sup>2</sup> that Officer Daniel Otero, an 18-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, is accused of sexually assaulting a burglary victim. Most CPD officers who perpetrate violence are not disciplined<sup>3</sup>, making it especially important that we encourage the Chicago Police Board to fire Officer Otero and protect the public from further predatory behavior. By acting against these recommendations, CPD enables violence.

While the victim in the Federal case against former Sergeant Sajdak has not openly spoken about engaging in the sex trade, officers were clearly suspicious of her due to her location and behavior and treated her accordingly. As highlighted in the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation report [Policing and Enforcement of Prostitution Laws in Chicago](#), women in the sex trade frequently report negative interactions with police. Many describe "dealing with derogatory comments and attitudes, and sexual misconduct by officers." Another study that surveyed Chicago women in the sex trade

---

<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/criminal-justice/ct-chicago-police-sergeant-federal-charges-sex-assault-20220929-uip4y2e42vaxxfssp7nebzgm4q-story.html>

<sup>2</sup> [Chicago cop facing dismissal for having sex with a woman hours after he responded to a burglary at her home - Chicago Sun-Times \(suntimes.com\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://abc7chicago.com/abc-7-chicago-i-team-i-team-investigation-iteam-cpd-domestic-violence/1758664/>

found that nearly a quarter of those who reported being raped indicated that a police officer perpetrated this violence<sup>4</sup>.

This behavior is not limited to those engaging in sex work. According to research by the CATO institute, sexual misconduct is the second most common complaint against officers, following excessive force<sup>5</sup>.

Given the prevalence of sexual misconduct by police, it is not surprising that only an estimated 21.5% of sexual assaults are reported to the police<sup>6</sup>, and those that do report often have negative experiences<sup>7</sup>. The 2020 CAASE report<sup>8</sup> on the Chicago Police Department's response to sexual violence revealed the following:

- **80-90% of sexual harm reports made to CPD did not result in an arrest**
- The mere 10-20% of survivors who saw an arrest in their case had to **wait weeks or months for their assailant to be detained** (longer than victims of other violent crimes)
- Sex crimes often suffer **lower arrest rates** than other violent crimes

The gender-based violence community calls on the Chicago Police Department and the City of Chicago to ensure that officers who perpetrate acts of violence are held accountable, provide a safe place for survivors to report, and adequately fund services for those who have been harmed.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/351/351.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Session/77th2013/Exhibits/Assembly/JUD/AJUD338L.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv21.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6994185/>

<sup>8</sup> [Too Little, Too Late? The CPD's Response to Sex Crimes – CAASE](#)