

Martha Bashford

Chief, Sex Crimes Unit,
New York County District Attorney's Office

MARTHA BASHFORD is a prosecutor in the New York County District Attorney's Office, and has worked there for 34 years. She is the chief of the Sex Crimes Unit, which has over 60 lawyers and was the first of its kind in the country, handling sexual assaults and human trafficking cases.

Previously she was co-chief of the Forensic Sciences/Cold Case Unit, which was established by Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., to examine unsolved homicide cases which might now be solvable through modern scientific analysis. Prior to that, she was co-chief of the DNA Cold Case Project, which was begun in 2000, using DNA technology to investigate and prosecute unsolved sexual assault cases. In that role she worked with the New York City Police Department on their "Backlog Project," where 17,000 previously unexamined sexual assault evidence kits were outsourced for DNA analysis, indicting assailants identified through CODIS and obtaining John Doe DNA profile indictments to stop the statute of limitations where no suspect had yet been identified.

She is a member of the Conviction Integrity Unit in the New York County District Attorney's Office and is a Fellow in the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

She has lectured extensively throughout the United States and Canada on her experiences in establishing a Cold Case Unit and reviving cases that had been dormant for up to 32 years.

She graduated summa cum laude from Barnard College in 1976 and received her J.D. degree from Yale Law School in 1979. In 2007, she was named one of the "Fifty Most Powerful Women in New York" for her work in ensuring that those who committed previously unsolved sexual assaults are identified and brought to justice.