

Ottawa

Detective tried to uncover vaccine status of dead children's parents, sources say

Det. Helen Grus suspended with pay, under investigation, say Ottawa police



[Shaamini Yogaretnam](#) · CBC News · Posted: Mar 28, 2022 4:00 AM EDT | Last Updated: March 28, 2022



The Ottawa Police Service says it has suspended Det. Helen Grus with pay in connection with an investigation by the professional standards unit. (Olivier Plante/CBC)



An Ottawa police detective who opposed the force's COVID-19 mandates is under investigation for allegedly trying to find out if parents whose infants had suddenly died during the pandemic were vaccinated, CBC News has learned.

The misconduct allegations against Det. Helen Grus raise questions about how police treat cases involving the most vulnerable members of society — and whether their own personal pandemic biases are influencing their work.

Grus has been suspended with pay since Feb. 4 amid an ongoing internal disciplinary investigation into how and why she was allegedly attempting to collect the information.

A constable by rank, Grus is a detective in the force's sexual assault and child abuse unit, which investigates criminal cases that involve some of the most vulnerable victims police see.

That includes newborns and infants who die in sudden circumstances — investigations that are mandated by law.

These deaths are automatically investigated

Whenever an otherwise healthy baby dies unexpectedly, without explanation or from unnatural causes, the province's coroner and the police must investigate.

That would include, for example, any case of sudden infant death syndrome.

After rigorous medical testing, including autopsies, the coroner's office then classifies the manner of death as either natural, accidental, a homicide or undetermined.

Ottawa police could lay criminal charges in cases where they believe there's wrongdoing, but when an infant dies, it's exceedingly rare for that to happen.

According to multiple sources, Grus allegedly accessed Ottawa police files for which she wasn't an investigating officer and then allegedly contacted the coroner's office to learn the COVID-19 vaccination information of parents in those cases.

It's not known how many times she allegedly tried to access that information or whether she was ultimately successful in collecting it.

It's also not clear to what end Grus was allegedly accessing the information, whether she was acting in her capacity as a police officer or whether she was acting out of personal interest.

While police are tasked with investigating if anything criminal led to a sudden death, it's the coroners who assess the medical information in the cases.

Placed on leave for not complying with vaccine policy

Sources also described Grus as holding anti-mask and anti-vaccine views in the workplace.

CBC News has learned she was [one of fewer than 10 Ottawa police officers](#) placed on unpaid leave after the service imposed a mandatory vaccine policy for all employees.

Any Ottawa police officer without at least one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine as of Jan. 31 was sent home without pay. Grus's suspension with pay was then imposed just days after the vaccination deadline.

According to [Ontario's salary disclosure list for 2021](#), Grus was paid \$137,390.15. Grus did not reply to a request for comment on the allegations against her.

In a statement to CBC News, the Ottawa Police Service confirmed her suspension and said it "related to an ongoing conduct investigation by the professional standards unit."

"As the Chief has advised repeatedly, since the beginning of the year [the service] has launched several internal conduct investigations involving a small number of members. We take these investigations very seriously. These investigations are ongoing," the statement said.

The Office of the Chief Coroner said it could not comment on any Ottawa police investigations and for "privacy reasons" could not discuss any death investigations.

To date, no disciplinary charges have been laid against Grus.

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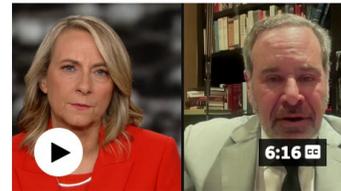
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