

Palm Beach County

Child Abuse

Protective Investigations Protocol



A collaborated countywide protocol implemented to protect the children of Palm Beach County - Originally released November 2002 by the Law Enforcement Planning Council, District 9 - Department of Children and Families, Palm Beach County's Sheriff Office, Child Protection Team, and the Office of the State Attorney
15th - Judicial Circuit

Revised – August 2014

PALM BEACH COUNTY
CHILD ABUSE PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATIONS PROTOCOL
(revised August 2014)

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PALM BEACH COUNTY
CHILD ABUSE PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATIONS PROTOCOL
(revision August 2014)

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Palm Beach County Child Abuse Protective Investigations Protocol is to coordinate services to the families of Palm Beach County through cooperation, collaboration, and the sharing of appropriate information by agencies within this jurisdiction. This Palm Beach County Child Abuse Protective Investigations Protocol was revised with updates in August 2014.

To the extent set forth in this written protocol that was established by the Community Alliance of Palm Beach County in the *Child Abuse Protective Investigation Protocol Final Report*, revised July 2002, all parties assume partial or full responsibility for conducting certain components of protective investigations. Specifically, the Child Abuse Protective Investigations Protocol establishes operational procedures for the joint investigation of child abuse reports in Palm Beach County, Florida in order to:

1. Provide standard, consistent and thorough investigations,
2. Maximize the resources through a joint investigative process,
3. Minimize the number of interviews for children who are victims of abuse or neglect,
4. Allow for the orderly collection of evidence in the criminal investigative process,
5. Ensure the provision of appropriate services when deemed necessary for children and their families, and
6. Provide a forum for on-going communication and resolution of issues involving family safety in this community and foster an effective collaboration among:
 - Law Enforcement
 - Office of the State Attorney
 - Judiciary
 - Domestic Violence providers
 - Child Protection Team
 - Local school system
 - Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)
 - Department of Children and Families (DCF)
 - Medical Examiner

Key elements of the Palm Beach County Abuse Protective Investigations Protocol include the following:

1. A countywide policy (General Order) – Memorandum of Understanding between the Law Enforcement Planning Council, the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office, the State Attorney’s Office, the Department of Children and Families, Community Alliance, and others on an as needed basis.

2. An Administrative Order covering interviews of young victims in child and sexual abuse cases was updated by the Chief Judge.
3. Mandatory protocol training of law enforcement and DCF personnel.
4. Countywide agreement that all law enforcement agencies must:
 - a. Classify and respond to Child Abuse calls as 'Priority Calls'.
 - b. Adopt and implement the Palm Beach Child Abuse Protective Investigations Protocol.
 - c. Actively investigate the criminal aspects of a child abuse report specifically pursuant to Florida Statutes, Chapters 39 and 827.
 - d. Designate a Law Enforcement Liaison within their agency.
 - e. Agree to cross jurisdictions to investigate/interview, when appropriate.
 - f. Request mutual-aid, when needed.
5. DCF will provide access to their database, known as the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), to all PBC Law Enforcement Agencies. The FSFN captures child abuse investigations and information. The DCF database will serve as a means for Law Enforcement to retrieve information pertinent to their cases for criminal prosecution and prior histories of involvement with DCF.
6. The regular protocol meetings for law enforcement and DCF protocol liaisons, the regular protocol meetings for law enforcement liaisons and DCF team members and the protocol oversight team.
7. A designated staff, contributed by the Office of the State Attorney, to coordinate and facilitate the operations of the protocol teams and overall protocol communications.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On January 14, 2002, the Community Alliance of Palm Beach County established a collaborative community workgroup to research and develop a better delivery system for child abuse protective investigations in Palm Beach County. The Community Alliance stipulated that any new delivery system developed by the workgroup must involve best practices and a single management structure to ensure accountability.

The Community Alliance formed a Protective Investigations System Design Workshop and directed the workgroup to develop a:

1. Program model/design that includes clear and specific roles and responsibilities for all parties.
2. Wiring diagram, which outlines specific detail of the system.
3. Management system that has specific and clear accountability, responsibility, and integrates data for oversight.
4. Model where the police chiefs, the sheriff, and designated players work together within the same system.
5. Integrated database for protective investigations accessible to both law enforcement and DCF Child Protective Investigators.
6. Specific training design and training structure for all parties.
7. Budget and funding resources to support system.
8. Plan for independent evaluation process and outcomes.

The Protective Investigations System Design Workgroup was comprised of individuals with decision-making authority from the Law Enforcement Planning Council, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, the Department of Children and Families, the State Attorney's Office, the Child Protection Team, the Children's Services Council, and Child & Family Connections. Community Alliance members chaired and facilitated the workgroup process. The workgroup met approximately twelve times (2-3 hours sessions) from January 24, 2002 to June 7, 2002.

Direct-line staff members (i.e., patrol officers, detectives, dispatch, protective investigators) were brought into the design process on April 8, 2002 to review and critique the system design and collaborative response procedures. Input received during the critique session was incorporated into the system design.

The outcome products produced by the Protective Investigations System Design Workshop included:

1. A detailed wire diagram outlining a collaborative protocol for child abuse investigations in Palm Beach County;
2. Detailed response procedures for both law enforcement officers and DCF Protective Investigators;
3. Training timelines and competencies needed by cadets/trainees, first responders, and child abuse specialists;
4. An integrated countywide database for child abuse investigations (i.e., Child Safety Review Database);
5. A three-tier management and oversight structure for the new child abuse investigation system;
6. Accountability measures needed and required for a quality collaborative countywide child abuse investigative system;
7. Key elements needed for system implementation; and
8. Acknowledgements for workgroup members.

The outcome protocol document was submitted to the Community Alliance for Palm Beach County on June 17, 2002 (revised July 2002) and served as the final report from the Protective Investigations System Design Workgroup and protocol implementation manual.

During the year 2013, members of the protocol oversight committee discussed the need to update the protocol to reflect the current system and create a more effective document to train law enforcement and DCF staff.

CHILD ABUSE INVESTIGATIONS PROTOCOL INITIAL RESPONSE CHECKLIST

The following checklist outlines the response protocol for a child investigation requiring or involving (a) the Rapid Response Team, (b) an immediate response by a law enforcement officer and a child protective investigator, (c) a 24-hour response by a law enforcement officer and child protective investigator, or (d) a 911 or administrative call to law enforcement.

****See Checklist on Page 23****

LAW ENFORCEMENT PROTOCOL INVESTIGATING CHILD ABUSE IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Initial Response

- A. When the child abuse call comes in through dispatch or 911:
1. Communications (dispatch) will not alter the reported child abuse classification.
 2. The responding officer should collect dispatch information.
 3. Dispatch should secure the 911 recording for 90 days.
 4. Once the officer arrives on the scene and assesses the complaint, he/she shall make a determination whether an investigation is warranted. If an investigation is warranted, the officer must contact the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-866-LE ABUSE, pursuant to s. 39.201(1).
- B. When the call comes from the Florida Abuse Line or a Child Protective Investigator, an officer shall be dispatched to conduct a criminal investigation. Dispatch shall not classify call as Assist Other Agency.
1. Upon notification of a report of abuse from the Hotline, DCF shall immediately confirm the venue of the crime and then forward allegations of criminal conduct to the appropriate law enforcement agency in which the alleged conduct has occurred s. 39.301(2)(a).
 2. Law enforcement agency shall await telephonic contact from DCF prior to dispatching law enforcement officer.
 3. DCF and law enforcement shall coordinate their response. Law enforcement dispatch shall classify the call as a “priority call”.
 4. If DCF investigative interview is outside jurisdiction and law enforcement cannot respond, the law enforcement agency will seek assistance from other agencies utilizing Mutual Aid Agreement.
 5. Law enforcement will notify the agency with jurisdiction.
- C. Obtain recent and historical protective investigative reports from the Department of Children and Families. The name of any person reporting child abuse, abandonment, or neglect may not be released to any person other than employees of the Department responsible for child protective services, the central abuse hotline, law enforcement, the Child Protection Team, or the appropriate state attorney, without the written consent of the person reporting s. 39.202(1).
- D. Upon arriving at the scene the officer and the Child Protective Investigator (CPI) shall immediately assist each other to assess and secure the alleged crime scene.
- When the alleged abuse and neglect has resulted in a child’s death, the initial responder shall report such death and circumstances forthwith to the district medical examiner pursuant s. 406.12.
 - The law enforcement designee shall call out the Rapid Response Team.
 - Identify the victims, suspects and witnesses, including other children and third parties.
 - Secure control of any weapons present.
 - Determine extent of injuries.
 - Provide medical first responder treatment and request emergency medical assistance if needed.
 - Conduct preliminary interview of victim and witnesses. Children should not be interviewed in the presence of parent or guardian unless and until the perpetrator has been determined.
 - Evaluate the welfare and safety of the victim.

- E. Survey the crime scene for physical evidence of abuse and neglect. Photograph all relevant evidence.
- F. Observe and note injuries to household members who may be victims of some degree of domestic violence or other criminal offenses and take appropriate and necessary action. Photograph all relevant evidence.
- G. Separate people on scene from evidence.
- H. Determine if other assistance is needed, i.e., a translator, victim advocate, crime scene investigator, other specialized officer or detective, or other services.
- I. Document any utterances or statements made by the child victim or other children at the scene in relation to the case. Document any utterances or statements made by the parent or other guardian/responsible adult at the scene in relation to the case.
- J. Conduct a criminal history check on address, and potential suspect and warrants checks on suspects and witnesses. Law enforcement should share the results with DCF when appropriate.
- K. Law enforcement on the scene shall have primary responsibility in collecting and preserving evidence.
- L. Both the law enforcement officer and the Child Protective Investigator (CPI) shall prepare a report. The CPI will use FSFN as their document of record. The initial report is crucial to the post-investigation process, any potential prosecution, the protective investigation by the Department of Children and Families, and any related cases arising from the incident being investigated. In accordance with the individual law enforcement agency's directives and procedures the initial responder shall prepare a written report of actions and findings. That information shall then be made available for the follow-up investigation. Upon completion of the investigation a written supplemental report shall be prepared.

The written report should:

- Identify the child abuse and/or neglect crime.
- State date, time and place crime occurred.
- Determine existence of any 911 call, or any call on other recorded police lines, and document accordingly.
- State information provided by the dispatcher.
- Document any custody issues disclosed during interviews.
- Document probable cause.
- Document all verbal and written statements.
- Document the names, dates of birth, social security numbers, addresses, phone numbers, and statements of all victims, suspects and any relevant household members.
- Reference prior incident reports.
- List names and addresses of victim's contact persons.
- Identify the suspect.
- Show the relationship between the victim and suspect.
- Describe victim and suspect appearance including their demeanor at time of arrival at scene.
- Document all injuries, physical conditions and medical treatment rendered. Observable or reported injuries shall be preserved by photography and documented in the written report. Photographs must be taken with a measurable guide, whenever possible, and persons photographed must be identified in the photos. The officer should always consider the privacy of the victim, witnesses when photographing injuries.
- Document name of medical treatment provider and other health care providers such as Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel.

- Document evidence collected, from where, when and by whom including chain of custody.
 - Identify other children present and living in the home and what action was taken to provide for their safety.
 - Describe indicators of future threats to safety of family members.
 - Reference any special needs such as language barriers or disabilities of parties involved.
 - Document criminal history information.
 - Complete a narrative of the officer's observations and description of the alleged incident.
 - Identify all witnesses, by name, date of birth, address, and contact phone numbers; if interviewed, document the statement.
- M. Law enforcement and the Department shall agree on the future course of the investigation. In the event of a disagreement, law enforcement and the Department shall initiate a consultation with their respective chain of command.
- N. Drug Dependent Newborns. A CPI is not required to call law enforcement on a case involving drug dependent newborns.

Follow-up Investigation

Steps A through C are conducted when the initial responder does not continue with the in-depth investigation. Agencies requiring that the responding officer also conduct the in-depth investigation may skip steps A through C and begin at D.

- A. Determine through contact with first responder and his/her supervisor, or by reviewing the initial report what emergency action has been taken, what is being initiated, and allegations that have been reported.
- B. Determine what notifications have been made and need to be made.
- C. Obtain names with all identifying information of suspects remaining at the scene from the first responding officer and document all persons who left the scene prior to your arrival.
- D. Collect and preserve additional evidence.
- E. In consultation with the Child Protective Investigator (PI) recommend or coordinate the medical examination of victims and siblings or other children in the home with the Department of Health Child Protective Team (CPT) or other medical facility designated in the local Memorandum of Agreement.
- F. In consultation with the Child Protective Investigator (PI) recommend to the Department of Children and Families or Department of Health Child Protection Team that psychological evaluations be conducted when the victim exhibits evidence of severe emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or neglect.
- G. When the alleged abuse and neglect has led to a child's death, obtain the results of the medical examination of all children residing with the victim.
- H. Interview victim, witnesses and suspect. Prior to conducting interviews the law enforcement investigator shall, with the assistance of a Department of Children and Families Child Protective Investigator, determine interview strategies. Whenever possible, the child interviews should be conducted at a C.P.T. interview facility utilizing a C.P.T. Case Coordinator in consultation with the law enforcement investigator. The Chief Judge shall provide by order reasonable limits on the number of interviews that a victim of child abuse under the age of 13 years must submit to for law enforcement or discovery purposes s. 914.16. See copy of the updated Admin. Order attached.

1. Interview the victim.

- Any token gifts given to the child, i.e., dolls, small badges, stickers, should be done after the interview and without promising the child anything in exchange for testimony.
- Audio taping or videotaping of the victim statement should be conducted in accordance with local law enforcement procedure or administrative order. If the interviewer chooses to only use an audiotape, the interviewer must document the non-verbal responses of the victim and non-verbal behavior of the other witnesses present. Although presence of persons other than the interviewer is discouraged, when videotaping the victim, any persons in the interview room should be in view of the video camera.
- When the initial interview with the child is conducted at school, the law enforcement agency may allow a school staff member who is known by the child to be present during the initial interview if:
 - (a) Law enforcement agency believes that the school staff member could enhance the success of the interview by his or her presence; and
 - (b) The child requests or consents to the presence of the school staff member at the interview. School staff may be present only when authorized by law. s. 39.301(18).
- Interview victim in a location that is comfortable, non-distracting and provides privacy and a sense of safety for the child. When possible, the officer should interview the child away from the scene where the incident occurred.
- Children are often portrayed as unreliable witnesses, susceptible to suggestive and leading questions. The interviewer must be trained and experienced in conducting child interviews. It is strongly suggested that a C.P.T. interview facility be utilized, as well as a C.P.T. case coordinator to conduct the interview. The child should also be questioned as to whether prior incidents of abuse have occurred.
- The interviewer must either qualify or obligate the child as a witness in an age appropriate manner.
- Document the child's words exactly in identifying body parts and distinguish between contact/union or non-contact/non-union when gathering information on sexual acts.
- When a child draws or makes notes for the interview, document on the drawings or notes the date, time and the names of persons present during the interview. The drawings or notes should be retained as items of evidence.
- Review the child-victim's statement line by line and seek to corroborate each and every element of information provided in order to enhance the child's credibility.

2. Interview non-offending witnesses.

- Caution should be taken to ensure that the non-offending parent or care-giver is not provided information that can be passed on to the suspect.

3. Interview suspects.

- Law enforcement takes the lead and controls when, where and how the suspect is to be interviewed.

4. Interview other witnesses.

- When recent or historical victims have been identified as part of the case, they should be interviewed as witnesses. Prosecutors may use the Williams Rule of Evidence to submit the statements of historical victims in court (similar fact evidence).

I. Document all statements.

- J. Prepare any search warrants that would be required to secure further evidence not yet collected. When the investigator is able to obtain documented consent to search the scene from individuals with the right to authorize a consensual search, a warrant is not required. Use extreme caution when proceeding without a search warrant.
- K. Final determination.
- Upon gathering the necessary information, evaluate and compare the suspect's prior criminal history, relationship to the child, statements of the suspect, victim and witnesses, and the collected evidence to determine probable cause for which offenses, if any, have been committed. Officers or detectives may consult with the Division Chief of the State Attorney's Office Special Victims Unit for guidance.
 - If the decision made is to not make an arrest, law enforcement shall document their findings and reasons in a final report.

PALM BEACH COUNTY RAPID RESPONSE TEAM PROTOCOL

The Palm Beach County *Rapid Response Team* (RRT) consists of the State Attorney's Office (SAO), Child Protection Team (CPT), Department of Children and Families (DCF), Medical Examiner's Office (ME) and local law enforcement agencies.

The RRT provides investigative assistance and inter-agency collaboration regarding serious crimes against children. All Palm Beach County law enforcement agencies shall immediately activate the RRT when investigating any of the following incidents:

- Unexpected death or potentially life threatening injury to a child under 13 years of age
 - Includes physical abuse, drowning, murder/suicide or co-sleeping
 - Does not include vehicle crashes unless neglect is suspected
- Sexual Battery of a Child Under 13 years of age, which occurred within the past 24 hours, involving serious bodily injury
- Any multiple victim / suspect case of child abuse

Law enforcement shall obtain preliminary information (names, DOB's, incident location, home addresses, brief synopsis of the incident, etc.) and activate the RRT as soon as possible, while still on the scene, by calling each of the following:

- **DCF** – Liaison at cell 561-315-5841
- **CPT** – Liaison at cell 561-329-1114
- **SAO** - All deaths contact the Homicide Investigator at cell 561-346-1907
 - Abuse or sex crimes, call Special Victims Unit Duty Phone 561-309-1821
- **ME** - 561-688-3000 and ask for the Medical Examiner regarding a RRT case. A representative from the ME will contact you for details (death or near death cases)

These calls shall result in the dispatch of all, or parts, of the RRT depending upon the request and needs of the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction. The law enforcement agency with jurisdiction is in charge of the case and investigation.

Within 24 hours, a representative from the lead law enforcement agency shall complete the RRT "Information Sheet" and fax to the Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission at 561-242-7382 or email to CJCRPU@pbcgov.org. (SEE ATTACHMENT).

Note: The RRT Committee meets three times a year to review cases, process issues, and discuss outcomes or training. LE agencies that activate the RRT are expected to attend.

Administrative Order NO. 4.501 – 7/12

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN
AND FOR PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 4.501-7/12*

IN RE: INTERVIEWS OF YOUNG VICTIMS
IN CHILD AND SEXUAL ABUSE CASES

Section 914.16, Florida Statutes (2012), authorizes the chief judge to establish limits on the number of interviews that a minor victim must submit to for law enforcement or discovery purposes.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority conferred by Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215, it is ORDERED as follows:

1. This order shall apply to investigation and prosecution of all cases of abuse under Sections 794.011, 800.04 or 827.03 when the victim is under thirteen years of age or a victim of a violation of Sections 794.011, 800.02, 800.03 or 825.102 who is a person with mental retardation as defined in Section 393.063(42), at the time the interviews are sought.
2. For purpose of this order the term “interview” is defined as any procedure in which the child victim is required to provide a factual recitation of the circumstances surrounding the allegations of abuse. The term “interview” does not include the following:
 - a. Information obtained for the purpose of medical or psychological diagnosis for treatment.
 - b. An initial contact with the victim by law enforcement and/or Florida Department of Children and Families to assess validity of complaint or need to take protective measures on behalf of the victim.
 - c. Contacts with DCF legal, victim services (sexual assault/domestic violence) counselors, guardian ad litem, or assistant state attorneys seeking to carry out responsibilities as designated by statute.
 - d. Actual court testimony of victim.
 - e. Re-contact with the victim for the purpose of expanding/clarifying a previous statement prior to the filing of formal charges.

In accord with the foregoing and the need to act in the best interest of child victims of abuse, it is ordered that no child victim of abuse shall be subject to more than four interviews in the course of the investigation and prosecution of an incident of abuse except upon order of the court.

These interviews shall be as follows:

- a. The first interview shall be conducted within a reasonable time for the validation of the complaint. The interview when feasible shall be held at a Child Protection Team Facility in Palm Beach County. When applicable, this interview will be attended by law enforcement, a representative from DCF, Victim Services (sexual assault/domestic violence), the State Attorney’s Office, and the Child Protection Team. When applicable, DCF shall, prior to

scheduling a forensic interview, contact the law enforcement agency of jurisdiction and coordinate a mutually agreeable date and time for both law enforcement and DCF to attend the forensic interview. All attending agencies shall meet prior to the interview and make reasonable efforts to coordinate and produce all necessary information in the course of that interview. To minimize the traumatic effects to the child, all interviews shall be conducted by no more than two persons. This interview shall be recorded whenever possible to ensure that other parties have the opportunity to hear the child's statement.

- b. The second interview by law enforcement, with the State Attorneys approval, may occur prior to the filing of formal charges and may include DCF, Victim Services (sexual assault/domestic violence) or the Child Protection Team.
- c. The third interview will be conducted under the rules governing depositions. The deposition shall be conducted in a setting and manner intended to minimize the traumatic effects of the interview on the victim. Defense counsel shall notice all parties including the guardian ad litem consistent with Crim. Proc. Rule 3.220(h).
- d. If necessary, law enforcement may meet with the victim for the purpose of expanding/clarifying any facts necessary. Additional interviews shall be allowed only by order of the court upon motion for good cause shown. Additional interviews shall be limited in scope to assure minimal impact on the victim.

DONE and SIGNED in Chambers at West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, this 2nd day of July, 2012.



Peter D. Blanc, Chief Judge

*supersedes admin. Order 4.501-09/08

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CIRCUIT 15 SPECIFIC PROTOCOL INVESTIGATING CHILD ABUSE IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Investigative Response

The Department of Children and Families will be responsible for assessing the immediate safety of the child and taking the necessary actions that will ensure the continued safety of the child. The Department will also be responsible for determining and implementing necessary services to support the family.

All allegations of suspected child abuse, neglect, or abandonment are reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE by either citizens or by law enforcement through dispatch of 911 calls or directly from law enforcement at phone number 1-866-532-2873.

Based on the allegation stated in the report and the potential risk to the victim or the family members, Central Florida Abuse Hotline counselors assign response priority to the reports and forward them to the county where the alleged victim is located. In Palm Beach County all reports are received by the Analytical Unit and assigned to a Child Protective Investigator.

- All reports requiring an immediate on-site face to face commencement to conduct a Present Danger Assessment shall be immediately forwarded by the Hotline to the appropriate child protective investigative staff in the county where the victim is located.
- Reports not requiring an immediate on-site protective assessment will be forwarded by the Hotline to the appropriate circuit staff in time to allow for a face to face commencement to conduct a Present Danger Assessment within 24 hours.
- When the alleged abuse and neglect has resulted in a child's death, the responding law enforcement agency shall notify the Rapid Response Team, which includes the district medical examiner per FS. 406.12.
- Reports must be assigned to the county where the victim is located. If the abuse occurs or the child resides in a different county, that county must assist the lead county when requested. However, if a criminal proceeding is commenced in the county of residence, the residential county must take the lead with the county of location assisting.
- Hotline staff shall accept calls on child-on-child sexual abuse that do not meet the criteria for an investigation. This information is entered into the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System solely for statistical purposes and no circuit response is required. The caller is then electronically transferred to the appropriate county sheriff's office. The written report is sent from the Hotline to the sheriff's office within 24 hours.
- All reports for Circuit 15, Palm Beach County, are received at a central location. The receiving staff is responsible to forward the report electronically to law enforcement, the Child Protection Team and the appropriate DCF Investigations unit.

Law enforcement and DCF Child Protective Investigator shall provide each other with background information relating to the subjects of the reports, as permitted by law.

Upon receiving a report from the Florida Hotline, the designated law enforcement officer and the Department of Children and Families Child Protective Investigator will jointly conduct an investigation.

The investigation is commenced when the Child Protective Investigator or other designated responder attempts to make the initial on-site, face-to-face contact with the victim.

Upon arriving at the scene, the law enforcement officer and the Child Protective Investigator shall immediately assist each other to assess and secure the alleged crime scene.

- Identify the victims, suspects, and witnesses, including other children and third parties.
- Determine extent of injuries.
- Provide medical first responder treatment and request emergency medical assistance if needed.
- Conduct preliminary interview of victim and witnesses.
- Children should not be interviewed in the presence of the parent or guardian unless and until the perpetrator has been determined.
- Evaluate welfare and safety of the victim.

CHILD PROTECTION TEAM PROTOCOL

Child Protective Investigations Required Notifications

Upon commencement of an investigation, but not necessarily before the face-to-face contact with the child, the parent, guardian or other person responsible for the child's welfare, including an adult household member identified as having allegedly mistreated a child, shall be informed of the following:

1. That a report has been received by the central abuse hotline alleging child abuse, neglect, or abandonment.
2. The name of the person responding, the name of that individual's supervisor and information on how to contact each person.
3. The purpose of the investigation.
4. The right to review the Department's records 30 days after the commencement of the investigation and anytime thereafter prior to the destruction of the record.
5. The right to have an attorney present during any interviews. However, the Department may proceed with other inquiries to determine the safety of the child and veracity of the report.
6. General information about outcomes and services related to the Department's response/investigation that would assist the family to better understand what they may expect.
7. The commitment of the Department to the safety of the child and the involvement of the family to the fullest extent possible in decisions regarding service planning and provision.
8. The right of the parent or legal custodian to be involved to the fullest extent possible in determining the nature of the allegation and the nature of any identified problem.
9. The notification required above will be accompanied by delivery of brochure CF/PI 175-32. The individual receiving the notice must be given the opportunity to ask questions to ensure understanding. The case file must reflect that the notification occurred. This will be accompanied by a notation in the chronology showing the name of the person to whom the brochure was given and the date it was given.

When an investigator suspects that a false report has been made, the investigator must advise the reporter of the potential administrative fines, civil and/or criminal penalties, which may result if a false report has occurred.

Licensing staff shall be advised of a report involving a licensed home or facility. If the facility is unlicensed, the owner/operator shall be advised of the report. If the report is on a child who has an active open dependency case with the community based case agency, the CPI must immediately notify the CBC and all efforts to conduct a joint commencement should be attempted.

Child Protective Investigator

- Shall commence that case within the required time frames.
- Daily attempts and diligent efforts must occur to locate the victim and family until they are found using all known data bases available to the Department. If it is not feasible or prudent to make daily attempts that fact must be documented in FSFN as required. The CPI Supervisor will also be notified and assist in locating family. The date, time, and location of all attempted visits must be documented in the case file.
- Shall make face-to-face contact with the victim/child, other children, caretaker responsible and all other adult household members.
- Shall observe and document the conditions, appearance, and development of each child named in the report and all other children who reside in the same household.
- When age appropriate, each child named in the report and all other children who reside in the household must be interviewed, separate from their parents whenever possible.
- Child Protective Investigator must be sensitive to the social, economic, and cultural environment of the family including their response to the Department's presence in their lives
- If the person responsible for the child will not allow observation of the child, for whatever reason, the Child Protective Investigator shall immediately contact their supervisor for guidance and document in the case file as to both the caretaker's refusal and the supervisor's directions.
- Shall remove a child when conditions warrant as dictated in Florida State Statute 39.301 and determine if there are available relatives or non-relatives that are willing and able to provide care for the child.
- Complete a Present Danger Assessment and enter it into FSFN within 24 hours of the Victim Child being seen.
- The Child Protective Investigator will evaluate all relevant Danger Threats and Possible Impending Danger to Children.
- The Child Protective Investigator will be responsible for validating and reconciling conflicting information.
- Shall make all necessary notifications.
- Shall assess child safety issues. Staff must use the allegation matrix and the Child Protective Investigator will complete both a Risk Assessment Instrument and Family Functioning Assessment within 60 days in accordance with Florida State Statute and enter into FSFN.
- The Child Protective Investigator will engage families and develop either Impending Danger or Safety Plans in collaboration, focusing on the parents Protective Capacities and available resources.
- The Child Protective Investigator will be responsible for initiating timely service referrals for families.
- The Child Protective Investigator will be responsible for documenting all investigative activities into FSFN in accordance with Department Operating Procedures.
- Shall follow prescribed protocol.
- Shall confer with law enforcement on the scene.
- Shall reach a mutual agreement as to when both parties leave the scene.
- If warranted, shall make a removal decision.
- Shall document in FSFN.

If a disagreement exists or clarification is warranted between Law Enforcement and Child Protective Investigators

Law Enforcement

- The patrol officer will call the law enforcement liaison from their agency.
- The liaison will call the DCF Criminal Justice Coordinator to make a coordinated decision.

Child Protective Investigator

- The Child Protective Investigator will call the DCF liaison.
- The DCF Criminal Justice Coordinator will call the municipality's designated liaison.
- DCF may also call local dispatch and ask for a line supervisor to respond, if needed.

Completing the Initial Investigation

Child Protective Investigator:

- Shall remove a child if warranted. The person taking a child into the Department's custody must request information from the child's parent or custodian regarding parents, proposed parents, and possible relatives or non-relatives available for placement.
- Shall determine need for services.
- Shall make immediate referral for services, if warranted.
- Shall close case if no services are needed and there is no indication of child abuse/neglect.

Recording data from Investigation

DCF/Child Protective Investigator:

Child Protective Investigator shall update report information on FSFN within 24 hours of the first contact. Under no circumstances shall anyone delete any maltreatment from the report. All reported maltreatments require appropriate documentation prior to closure of the case. If applicable, Child Protective Investigator shall enter report information into FSFN.

Follow-up on Investigation

Child Protective Investigator shall complete the Department required Present Danger and Family Functioning Assessment within the specific time period and ensure all relevant safety factors are documented.

Child Protective Investigator shall make all required collateral contacts and document the contacts in the investigative file. To be relevant, this person(s) needs to have had contact with the child, alleged perpetrator or the family. The person(s) contacted must have had direct knowledge or information regarding the family situation.

Once the investigation is completed, the Child Protective Investigator shall document and upload all pertinent case information into FSFN and propose the findings of his/her investigation for final review by the supervisor within 60 days of commencement. Child death cases may remain open past 60 days pending consultation with the responding LEO agencies, review by the Departments Child Fatality Specialist and the Regional Family Community Services Director.

Referral to Child Protection Team

The reports that include one or more of the following allegations must be referred to Child Protection Team

- Injuries to the head, bruises to the neck or head, burns or fractures in a child of any age
- Bruises anywhere on a child 5 years of age or under
- Any report alleging sexual abuse of a child
- Any sexually transmitted diseases in a prepubescent child
- Reported malnutrition of a child and failure to thrive
- Reported medical neglect of a child
- Any family in which one or more children have been pronounced dead on arrival at health care facility or have been injured and later died, as a result of suspected abuse, abandonment, or neglect when any other sibling or child remains at home
- Symptoms of serious emotional problems in a child when emotional or other abuse, abandonment or neglect is suspected

Section 39.303, Florida Statutes, authorizes the Children's Medical Services Program in the Department of Health to develop, maintain, and coordinate Child Protection Team services through contracts with local community-based programs.

CPT services provided upon acceptance of a referral from DCF or LE are: medical evaluation, medical consultation, forensic interviews, specialized interviews, psychosocial assessments, psychological evaluations, psychological consultations, CPT staffing, and court testimony.

MANAGEMENT/OVERSIGHT STRUCTURE

The following section describes the Rapid Response Team and Specialist and Training Team membership, purpose, frequency of meetings, the quality assurance focus, and staffing resources needed for each management structure.

Specialist and Training Team

Membership	Purpose Frequency of Meeting	QA Focus	Staff / Resource
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law enforcement agency liaison (every municipality will have a liaison) • DCF Representatives • State Attorney's Office • Dispatch personnel • LEPC Child Abuse Protocol Liaison • Child Protection Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System refinement & improvement process meetings • 3 times per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor agencies' response to ensure compliance • Ensure child abuse reports are responded to by 1st responders • Coordinate data / ensure data is entered into FSFN • Lead person to coordinate and schedule training within agency • On call / contact person for child abuse issue, rapid response, interagency disagreements between 1st responders and when clarification is needed • Attend system refinement & improvement meetings • Trainer for agency during roll out • All information will be documented and available for review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing personnel in each agency who have specialized (or are willing to become specialized) in child abuse • Florida Statutes (Chapter 39) • Criminal Statutes / MOU • Rapid Response / Child Death Investigations • Specialized Training as needed

Rapid Response Team

Membership	Purpose Frequency of Meeting	QA Focus	Staff / Resource
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DCF Representatives• Law enforcement agency liaison (every municipality will have a liaison)• Child Protection Team• State Attorney's Office• Medical Examiner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 times per year• Review rapid process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review all rapid response cases and process of response	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Membership• Criminal Justice Commission

DCF Notification Protocol for Domestic or Dating Violence Investigations

Introduction

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Notification Protocol for Domestic or Dating Violence Investigations applies to Palm Beach County law enforcement agencies and DCF. The protocol is specific to cases in which domestic or dating violence is occurring and either of the parties has minor children living in the home. When domestic or dating violence occurs, and one party has minor children, the potential for physical and mental maltreatment to the children increases. Because of this risk, Palm Beach County law enforcement agencies and DCF have agreed to the following protocol to provide services to the family with the goal of decreasing the potential for child abuse.

Criteria

When law enforcement officers investigate a domestic or dating violence crime, and establish probable cause to believe a crime has been committed, they shall determine if the parties have minor children. If so, the law enforcement officer shall call the DCF hotline (1-866-LE-ABUSE) to advise them of the children's role, if any. If the children did not witness, or were not home, at the time of the domestic or dating violence incident, the call to DCF should still be made.

If the children are at home at the time of the domestic or dating violence incident, they must be interviewed by the investigating law enforcement officer to determine if they witnessed or have any credible information that can assist with the criminal investigation (a statement, preferably recorded, will be obtained). The police report will list the children's names and the narrative will include the referral to the DCF hotline.

Procedure

Law Enforcement

1. Call the DCF hotline (1-866-LE-ABUSE) when above criteria is met.
2. Provide the DCF call taker with the police report case number and facts surrounding the incident. Explain that the DCF referral is mandated by this protocol and is not a new allegation of child abuse. The domestic violence police report case number should be provided to the DCF call taker.
3. If a DCF Child Protective Investigator (CPI) chooses to contact a law enforcement agency to respond with them, they shall provide the original domestic violence offense report case number to the communications officer and responding law enforcement officer.
4. This request from the CPI should not be dispatched as an initial child abuse call (Signal-16). Police agencies shall decide a dispatch code that best captures the incident based the reporting requirements of their agency (example Signal-76 "assist to another agency" or Signal-84 "welfare check" etc.).
5. Law enforcement's role in a follow-up response is that of scene security for the CPI. Note: This protocol does not alleviate law enforcement's investigative responsibility should new allegations be made or other crimes discovered.

6. A supplement to the original domestic or dating violence offense report should be completed to document the law enforcement officer's actions.
7. Important: If evidence of child abuse is discovered during the follow-up visit, this should be documented under a new case number and the Palm Beach County Child Abuse Protocol should be followed.

Department of Children and Families

1. When a Child Protective Investigator (CPI) receives a case stemming from this protocol, they must evaluate the necessity of having a law enforcement officer respond for scene security. Unlike an initial child abuse investigation, law enforcement response is not mandatory for follow-up responses to domestic or dating violence cases.
2. If the CPI determines that there is a necessity for a law enforcement response, they will contact the initial reporting law enforcement agency.
3. The CPI will provide the communications officer and responding police officer with the original law enforcement offense report case number and communicate that this is a follow-up regarding a domestic or dating violence incident and not an initial child abuse investigation.

Palm Beach County Child Abuse Protocol
Initial Response Checklist

1. **Child abuse investigation** calls usually come via **Florida Child Abuse Hotline** and the Child Protective Investigator from DCF (CPI) is the one requesting law enforcement officer (LEO) to be dispatched.
2. Law Enforcement dispatch shall classify the call as a “**priority call**”. Officers shall respond to such calls immediately (**within 30 minutes**).
3. LEO officers responding to calls received through 911 will sometimes make a determination that a child abuse investigation is warranted. In a situation like that, the officer shall contact the **Florida Child Abuse Hotline at 1-866-LE ABUSE (1-866-532-2873)**.
4. If an **immediate DCF response** is needed, the officer shall call the Florida Child Abuse Hotline at: **1-866-LE ABUSE (1-866-532-2873)**.
5. LEO **shall await** telephone contact from the DCF Child Protective Investigator **prior to dispatching an officer**.
6. CPI and LEO **shall coordinate their response** and conduct joint investigation.
7. LEO shall be dispatched to **conduct criminal investigation**. CPI shall be responsible for **assessing present danger threats to the child**.
8. If the DCF investigative interview is **outside LE jurisdiction** and they cannot respond, the Law Enforcement Agency will seek assistance from other agencies utilizing the **Mutual Aid Agreement**. If the initial investigation reveals **another agency has jurisdiction**, the initial responding agency must notify the agency with jurisdiction.
9. The **name of persons reporting abuse**, neglect or abandonment, may **not** be released to anyone except DCF, LE, CPT (Child Protection Team), SAO (State Attorney’s Office) without written consent of reporter.
10. When the criteria for rapid response is met, **the initial responding agency shall have the responsibility to activate the Rapid Response Team. The criteria is as follows:**
 - Unexpected death or potentially life threatening injury to a child under 13 years of age, including but not limited to physical abuse, drowning, murder/suicide or co-sleeping. Does **not** include vehicle crashes unless neglect is suspected.
 - Sexual Battery of a Child under 13 years of age, which occurred within the past 24 hours, involving serious bodily injury.
 - Any multiple victim / suspect case of child.

Law enforcement shall obtain preliminary information and activate the RRT as soon as possible, while still on the scene, by calling each of the following:

RRT CONTACTS:

- **DCF** – Liaison at cell 561-346-1907
- **CPT** – Liaison at cell 561-329-1114
- **SAO** – All deaths contact the Homicide Investigator at cell 561-346-1907
Abuse or sex crimes, call **Special Victim Unit** Duty Phone 561-309-1821
- **ME** – 561-688-3000 and ask for the Medical Examiner regarding a RRT case.
A representative from the ME will contact you for details (death or near death cases).

These calls shall result in the dispatch of all, or parts, of the RRT depending upon the request and needs of the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction. The law enforcement agency with jurisdiction is in charge of the case and investigation.

Within 24 hours, a representative from the lead law enforcement agency shall complete the RRT '**Information Sheet**' and fax to the Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission at 561-242-7382 or email to CJCRPU@pbcgov.org

- 11. Children should not be interviewed in the presence of the parent or guardian** unless or until the perpetrator is identified.
- 12. It is recommended that the Child Protection Team be utilized to conduct the interview.**
- 13. LEO will have the responsibility to collect evidence and secure crime scene.**
- 14. Criminal history and all other valuable data shall be shared** between Law Enforcement and the Department of Children and Families.
- 15. LEO and CPI shall coordinate** the future course of **joint investigation**.
- 16. Law enforcement and DCF Child Protective Investigator shall provide each other with background information** relating to the subjects of the reports, as permitted by law.
- 17. Responding LEO shall complete a crime report** documenting his/her actions and findings.
- 18. Any conflicts, issues or concerns** between the CPI and LEO shall be immediately forwarded to the respective agency's **Child Abuse Liaison**.

Rapid Response Team – Information Sheet

** MUST be completed by Law Enforcement within 24 hours of a RRT activation**

Date: _____ Time: _____ LE Case Number: _____

Law Enforcement Agency Assigned: _____

Investigating Detective Assigned: _____

DCF CPI Assigned: _____

COMPONENTS NOTIFIED	YES	NO
1. Child Protection Team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. State Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Medical Examiner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Department of Children & Families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

VICTIM(S)

DATE(S) OF BIRTH

INJURY

- Physical abuse
- Sexual Assault
- OTHER:

- Drowning
- Death

- Neglect
- Murder/Suicide

ADDRESS:

SYNOPSIS:

Within 24 hours, fax the RRT “Information Sheet” to the Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission at 561-242-7382 or email to CJCRPU@pbcgov.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

August 2014 Update Protocol Team

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