

Child Abuse

315.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the investigation of suspected child abuse. This policy also addresses when Santa Monica Police Department employees are required to notify the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) of suspected child abuse.

315.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Child - Unless otherwise specified by a cited statute, a child is any person under the age of 18 years.

Child abuse - Any offense or attempted offense involving violence or neglect with a child victim when committed by a person responsible for the child's care or any other act that would mandate notification to a social service agency or law enforcement (Penal Code § 11165.9; Penal Code § 11166).

315.2 POLICY

The Santa Monica Police Department will investigate all reported incidents of alleged criminal child abuse and ensure the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services is notified as required by law.

315.3 MANDATORY NOTIFICATION

All employees of this Department are responsible for the proper reporting of child abuse (Penal Code § 11165.9; Penal Code § 11165.7). Each member, within his or her professional capacity or scope of employment, shall notify the appropriate child protection agency when (Penal Code § 11166):

- (a) There is a known or suspected instance of child abuse or neglect reported, which is alleged to have occurred as a result of the action of a person responsible for the child's welfare, or
- (b) A person responsible for the child's welfare fails to adequately protect the child from abuse when the person knew or reasonably should have known that the child was in danger of abuse, or
- (c) Any other case where the employee has knowledge of or observes a child whom the employee knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of abuse or neglect.

The District Attorney's office shall be notified in all instances of known or suspected child abuse or neglect reported to this Department. Notification of the District Attorney is not required for reports only involving neglect by a person, who has the care or custody of a child, to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision where no physical injury to the child has occurred (Penal Code § 11166).

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When the abuse or neglect occurs at a licensed facility or is alleged to have resulted from the actions of a person who is required to have a state license (e.g., foster homes, group homes, day care), notification shall also be made to the California Department of Social Services or other applicable licensing authority. When the alleged abuse or neglect involves a child of a minor parent or a dependent adult, notification shall also be made to the attorney of the minor or the dependent adult within 36 hours (Penal Code 11166.1; Penal Code 11166.2).

For purposes of notification, the abuse or neglect includes physical injury or death inflicted by other than accidental means upon a child by another person; sexual abuse (Penal Code § 11165.1); neglect (Penal Code § 11165.2); the willful harming or injuring of a child or the endangering of the person or health of a child (Penal Code § 11165.3); and unlawful corporal punishment or injury (Penal Code § 11165.4). Child abuse or neglect does not include a mutual affray between minors, nor does it include an injury caused by the reasonable and necessary force used by a peace officer acting within the course and scope of the peace officer's employment as a peace officer.

315.3.1 NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

All employees of the Department shall ensure the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services is notified in accordance with mandatory reporter requirements. Notification of DCFS should occur as follows (Penal Code § 11166):

- (a) Notification shall be made immediately, or as soon as practicable, by telephone, fax or electronic transmission.
- (b) A written follow-up report should be forwarded within 36 hours of receiving the information concerning the incident.

315.4 QUALIFIED INVESTIGATORS

Qualified investigators should be available for child abuse investigations. These investigators should:

- (a) Conduct interviews in child appropriate interview facilities.
- (b) Be familiar with forensic interview techniques specific to child abuse investigations.
- (c) Present all cases of alleged child abuse to the prosecutor for review.
- (d) Coordinate with other enforcement agencies, social service agencies and school administrators as needed.
- (e) Provide referrals to therapy services, victim advocates, guardians and support for the child and family as appropriate.
- (f) Participate in or coordinate with multidisciplinary investigative teams as applicable (Welfare and Institutions Code § 18961.7).

315.5 INVESTIGATIONS AND REPORTING

In all reported or suspected cases of child abuse, a report will be written. Officers shall write a report even if the allegations appear unfounded or unsubstantiated.

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Investigations and reports related to suspected cases of child abuse should address, as applicable:

- (a) The overall basis for the contact. This should be done by the investigating officer in all circumstances where a suspected child abuse victim was contacted.
- (b) The exigent circumstances that existed if officers interviewed the child victim without the presence of a parent or guardian.
- (c) Any relevant statements the child may have made and to whom he/she made the statements.
- (d) If a child was taken into protective custody, the reasons, the name and title of the person making the decision, and why other alternatives were not appropriate.
- (e) Documentation of any visible injuries or any injuries identified by the child. This should include photographs of such injuries, if practicable.
- (f) Whether the child victim was transported for medical treatment or a medical examination.
- (g) Whether the victim identified a household member as the alleged perpetrator, and a list of the names of any other children who may reside in the residence.
- (h) Identification of any prior related reports or allegations of child abuse, including other jurisdictions, as reasonably known.
- (i) Previous addresses of the victim and suspect.
- (j) Other potential witnesses who have not yet been interviewed, such as relatives or others close to the victim's environment.

All cases of the unexplained death of a child should be investigated as thoroughly as if it had been a case of suspected child abuse (e.g., a sudden or unexplained death of an infant).

315.5.1 DETECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

The duties of the detectives assigned to investigate child abuse include but are not limited to:

- (a) Responsibility for the investigation, the collection of evidence and preliminary preparation for prosecution of all cases of child abuse.
- (b) Investigating the deaths of children that could be attributed to the abuse.
- (c) Investigating any instance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- (d) Providing follow-up compliance calls on reports of suspected child abuse.
- (e) Providing appropriate training to patrol personnel.
- (f) Coordinating with other enforcement agencies, social service agencies and school administrators in the application and enforcement of the laws regarding child abuse cases.

The assigned detective will ensure the District Attorney's office or City Attorney's office is notified of known or suspected child abuse or severe neglect reported to this Department. Absent any other extenuating circumstances, those reports involving neglect by a person, who has the care or

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custody of a child, to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision where no physical injury to the child has occurred should not be reported to the District Attorney (Penal Code § 11166).

Any incident of suspected child abuse or severe neglect for which the Department conducts an investigation and determines the allegations of abuse or severe neglect are substantiated, shall be reported to the California Department of Justice (Penal Code 11165.12). The assigned detective shall complete the DOJ's Child Abuse or Severe Neglect Form- BCIA 8583 and submit it to the California Department of Justice (Penal Code § 11169).

315.5.2 EXTRA JURISDICTIONAL REPORTS

If a report of known or suspected child abuse or neglect that is alleged to have occurred outside this jurisdiction is received, Department members shall ensure that the caller is immediately transferred to the agency with proper jurisdiction for the investigation of the case. If the caller cannot be successfully transferred to the appropriate agency, a report shall be taken and immediately referred by telephone, fax, or electronic transfer to the agency with proper jurisdiction (Penal Code § 11165.9).

315.5.3 INITIAL REPORTS OF ABUSE FROM A NONMANDATED REPORTER

Members who receive a report of child abuse or neglect shall request the following information from the reporter (Penal Code § 11167):

- (a) Name and telephone number
- (b) Information and the source of information that gives rise to the knowledge or reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect

If the reporter refuses to provide their name and telephone number, the member should make a reasonable effort to determine the basis for the refusal and inform them that their information will remain confidential.

315.6 PROTECTIVE CUSTODY

Before taking any child into protective custody, the officer should make reasonable attempts to contact CPS. Generally, removal of a child from the child's family, guardian, or other responsible adult should be left to the child welfare authorities when they are present or have become involved in an investigation.

Generally, members of this Department should remove a child from the child's parent or guardian without a court order only when no other effective alternative is reasonably available and immediate action reasonably appears necessary to protect the child. Prior to taking a child into protective custody, the officer should take reasonable steps to deliver the child to another qualified parent or legal guardian, unless it reasonably appears that the release would endanger the child or result in abduction. If this is not a reasonable option, the officer shall ensure that the child is delivered to CPS.

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Whenever practicable, the officer should inform a supervisor of the circumstances prior to taking a child into protective custody. If prior notification is not practicable, officers should contact a supervisor promptly after taking a child into protective custody.

Children may only be removed from a parent or guardian in the following situations when a court order cannot reasonably be obtained in a timely manner (Welfare and Institutions Code § 305):

- (a) The officer reasonably believes the child is a person described in Welfare and Institutions Code § 300, and further has good cause to believe that any of the following conditions exist:
 - 1. The child has an immediate need for medical care.
 - 2. The child is in immediate danger of physical or sexual abuse.
 - 3. The physical environment or the fact that the child is left unattended poses an immediate threat to the child's health or safety. In the case of a child left unattended, the officer shall first attempt to locate and determine if a responsible parent or guardian is available and capable of assuming custody before taking the child into protective custody.
- (b) The officer reasonably believes the child requires protective custody under the provisions of Penal Code § 279.6, in one of the following circumstances:
 - 1. It reasonably appears to the officer that a person is likely to conceal the child, flee the jurisdiction with the child or, by flight or concealment, evade the authority of the court.
 - 2. There is no lawful custodian available to take custody of the child.
 - 3. There are conflicting custody orders or conflicting claims to custody and the parties cannot agree which party should take custody of the child.
 - 4. The child is an abducted child.
- (c) The child is in the company of, or under the control of, a person arrested for Penal Code § 278 (Detainment or concealment of child from legal custodian) or Penal Code § 278.5 (Deprivation of custody of a child or right to visitation) (Penal Code § 279.6).

A child taken into protective custody shall be delivered to CPS unless otherwise directed by court order.

315.6.1 CALIFORNIA SAFELY SURRENDERED BABY LAW

An individual having lawful custody of an infant less than 72 hours old is not guilty of abandonment if the individual voluntarily surrenders physical custody of the infant to personnel on-duty at a safe-surrender site, such as a hospital or fire department (Penal Code § 271.5). The law requires the surrender site to notify a child protective agency which includes law enforcement and/or DCFS.

315.6.2 NEWBORNS TESTING POSITIVE FOR DRUGS

Under certain circumstances, officers can be prohibited from taking a newborn who is the subject of a proposed adoption into protective custody, even when the newborn has tested positive for illegal drugs or the birth mother tested positive for illegal drugs.

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Officers shall instead follow the provisions of Welfare and Institutions Code § 305.6 to ensure that the newborn is placed with the adoptive parents when it is appropriate.

315.7 INTERVIEWS

315.7.1 PRELIMINARY INTERVIEWS

Absent extenuating circumstances or impracticality, officers should record the preliminary interview with suspected child abuse victims. Officers should avoid multiple interviews with a child victim and should attempt to gather only the information necessary to begin an investigation. When practicable, investigating officers should defer interviews until a person who is specially trained in such interviews is available. Generally, child victims should not be interviewed in the home or location where the alleged abuse occurred.

315.7.2 DETAINING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE VICTIMS FOR AN INTERVIEW

A sworn officer should not detain a child involuntarily who is suspected of being a victim of child abuse solely for the purpose of an interview or physical exam without the consent of a parent or guardian unless one of the following applies:

- (a) Exigent circumstances exist, such as:
 - 1. A reasonable belief that medical issues of the child need to be addressed immediately.
 - 2. A reasonable belief that the child is or will be in danger of harm if the interview or physical exam is not immediately completed.
 - 3. The alleged offender is the custodial parent or guardian and there is reason to believe the child may be in continued danger.
- (b) A court order or warrant has been issued.

315.7.3 INTERVIEWS AT A SCHOOL

Any student at school who is a suspected victim of child abuse shall be afforded the option of being interviewed in private or selecting any qualified available adult member of the school staff to be present. The purpose of the staff member's presence is to provide comfort and support. The staff member shall not participate in the interview. The selection of a staff member should be such that it does not burden the school with costs or hardship (Penal Code § 11174.3).

315.8 MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

If the child has been the victim of abuse that requires a medical examination, the investigating officer should obtain consent for such examination from the appropriate parent, guardian or agency having legal custody of the child. The officer should also arrange for the child's transportation to the appropriate medical facility.

In cases where the alleged offender is the custodial parent or guardian and is refusing consent for the medical examination, officers should notify a supervisor before proceeding. If exigent circumstances do not exist or if existing state law does not provide for officers to take the child for

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a medical examination, the notified supervisor should consider obtaining a court order for such an examination.

In cases where the minor is 12 years of age or older and who is alleged to have been raped, the minor may consent to medical care related to the diagnosis or treatment of the condition and the collection of medical evidence with regard to the alleged rape (Family Code § 6927-6928).

315.9 DRUG-ENDANGERED CHILDREN

A coordinated response by law enforcement and social services agencies is appropriate to meet the immediate and longer-term medical and safety needs of children exposed to the manufacturing, trafficking or use of narcotics.

315.9.1 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Officers responding to a drug lab or other narcotics crime scene where a child is present or where there is evidence that a child lives should:

- (a) Document the environmental, medical, social and other conditions of the child using photography as appropriate and include detailed observations in the police report.
- (b) Notify the Criminal Investigations Division supervisor so an interagency response can begin.

315.9.2 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Criminal Investigations Division supervisor should:

- (a) Work with professionals from the appropriate agencies, including DCFS, other law enforcement agencies, medical service providers and local prosecutors to develop community specific procedures for responding to situations where there are children endangered by exposure to methamphetamine labs or the manufacture and trafficking of other drugs.
- (b) Activate any available interagency response when a sworn officer notifies the Criminal Investigations Division supervisor that the officer has responded to a drug lab or other narcotics crime scene where a child is present or where evidence indicates that a child lives there.
- (c) Ensure officers are trained on how to appropriately document the environmental, medical, social and other conditions that may affect any children exposed to drug labs or other narcotics crime scenes.

315.10 STATE MANDATES AND OTHER RELEVANT LAWS

California requires or permits the following:

315.10.1 RELEASE OF REPORTS

Information related to incidents of child abuse or suspected child abuse shall be confidential and may only be disclosed pursuant to state law and the Records Maintenance and Release Policy (Penal Code § 841.5; Penal Code § 11167.5).

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315.10.2 REQUESTS FOR REMOVAL FROM THE CHILD ABUSE CENTRAL INDEX (CACI)

Any person whose name has been forwarded to the California Department of Justice (DOJ) for placement in California's CACI, as a result of an investigation, may request that his/her name be removed from the CACI list. Requests shall not qualify for consideration if there is an active case, ongoing investigation or pending prosecution that precipitated the entry to CACI (Penal Code § 11169). All requests for removal shall be submitted in writing by the requesting person and promptly routed to the CACI hearing officer.

315.10.3 CACI HEARING OFFICER

The Criminal Investigations Division supervisor will normally serve as the hearing officer but must not be actively connected with the case that resulted in the person's name being submitted to CACI. Upon receiving a qualified request for removal, the hearing officer shall promptly schedule a hearing to take place during normal business hours and provide written notification of the time and place of the hearing to the requesting party.

315.10.4 CACI HEARING PROCEDURES

The hearing is an informal process where the person requesting removal from the CACI list will be permitted to present relevant evidence (e.g., certified copy of an acquittal, factual finding of innocence) as to why his/her name should be removed. The person requesting the hearing may record the hearing at his/her own expense.

Formal rules of evidence will not apply and the hearing officer may consider, in addition to evidence submitted by the person requesting the hearing, any relevant information including, but not limited to, the following:

- (a) Case reports including any supplemental reports
- (b) Statements by investigators
- (c) Statements from representatives of the District Attorney's Office
- (d) Statements by representatives of a child protective agency who may be familiar with the case

After considering all information presented, the hearing officer shall make a determination as to whether the requesting party's name should be removed from the CACI list. Such determination shall be based on a finding that the allegations in the investigation are not substantiated (Penal Code § 11169).

If, after considering the evidence, the hearing officer finds that the allegations are not substantiated, he/she shall cause a request to be completed and forwarded to the DOJ that the person's name be removed from the CACI list. A copy of the hearing results and the request for removal will be attached to the case reports.

The findings of the hearing officer shall be considered final and binding.

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315.10.5 CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM

This Department should cooperate with any interagency child death review team investigation. Written and oral information relating to the death of a child that would otherwise be subject to release restrictions may be disclosed to the child death review team upon written request and approval of a supervisor (Penal Code § 11174.32).

315.11 TRAINING

The Department should provide training on best practices in child abuse investigations to members tasked with investigating these cases. The training should include:

- (a) Participating in multidisciplinary investigations, as appropriate.
- (b) Conducting forensic interviews.
- (c) Availability of therapy services for children and families.
- (d) Availability of specialized forensic medical exams.
- (e) Cultural competence (including interpretive services) related to child abuse investigations.
- (f) Availability of victim advocate or guardian ad litem support.