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# **Bridging the Gap – Protecting Our Kids**

## **Course Outline**

### **JOINT INVESTIGATIONS**

The important first step is having CPS and Law Enforcement working together

#### **CPS**

- Is the child safe?
- Did the child suffer maltreatment or were they threatened by harm as defined by State statute?
- Is maltreatment likely to occur in the future?
- Are there emergency needs in the family that must be met?
- Are continuing agency services necessary to protect the child and reduce the risk of maltreatment occurring in the future?

#### **Law Enforcement**

- Did a crime occur?
- Who is the alleged offender?
- Is there evidence to arrest the alleged offender?
- Has all the physical evidence been obtained, preserved, and/or photographed?
- Have all the witnesses been interviewed?

#### **CPS and Law Enforcement**

- Do sources of corroboration or witnesses exist?
- Has all the physical evidence been collected or preserved?
- Are there any other victims?
- Should the child be taken into protective custody?

#### **The Child Abuse Problem**

- ✓ Three million reports of child abuse are made every year in the United States, experts estimate that the actual number of incidents of abuse and neglect is 3 times greater than reported
- ✓ More than 2,000 children die of child abuse each year in the US
- ✓ Most child deaths result from physical abuse, head injuries in particular
- ✓ The next most common cause of physical abuse deaths is punches or kicks to the abdomen
- ✓ Other forms of fatal physical abuse include immersion into hot water, drowning and smothering
- ✓ Many times these injuries occur when a child's head is slammed against a surface, is severely struck or when a child is violently shaken

## **Triggering Event**

- ✓ What was the triggering event or motive of the defendant to harm the child?
- ✓ Classic triggering events include soiling, vomiting, feeding difficulties, and inconsolable crying.

## **Common Perpetrator's Lies: The Dirty Dozen**

1. Child fell from a low height (less than 4 feet), such as couch, crib, bed or chair.
2. Child fell and struck head on floor or furniture, or hard object fell on child.
3. Unexpectedly found dead (*age and/or circumstances not appropriate for sudden infant death syndrome*).
4. Child choked while eating and was therefore shaken or struck on the chest or back.
5. Child suddenly turned blue or stopped breathing, and was then shaken.
6. Sudden seizure activity.
7. Aggressive or inexperienced resuscitation efforts to a child who suddenly stopped breathing.
8. Alleged traumatic event 1 day or more before death.
9. Caretaker tripped or slipped while carrying child.
10. Injury inflicted by sibling.
11. Child left alone in dangerous situation (e.g., bathtub) for just a few minutes
12. Child fell down the stairs

## **The Benefits of Joint Investigations**

- ✓ Better protection and services for our children
- ✓ Better information sharing
- ✓ More effective use of limited resources
- ✓ Enhanced training
- ✓ Reduced burnout

## **Build and Maintain Trust between CPS & Law Enforcement**

- ✓ Trust enables people to share information
- ✓ Developing mutual respect
- ✓ Correcting common misconceptions
- ✓ Developing an informal, relaxed atmosphere
- ✓ Viewing all members as a “team”

## **Reach agreement and stay focused on common goals**

An agreement stating that all parties are focused on the common goals of the protection of our children

## **TRAINING**

### **Individual and Team Training On Child Abuse Investigation Training**

- ✓ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
- ✓ Child Death Investigations, Child Abuse and Exploitation Investigations, Child Sexual Exploitation, Responding to Missing Children, etc. ([www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com))
- ✓ National Children’s Advocacy Center, Huntsville Alabama – Forensic Interviewing, MDT Training, etc.

## **Have RESPECT FOR THE KNOWLEDGE AND Experience OF EACH PERSON**

- ✓ Respect is the fundamental starting point for understanding and action
- ✓ Effective collaboration requires the expertise and knowledge of all parties

## **Develop a Common Language**

- ✓ Explain the technical language
- ✓ Refrain from using acronyms
- ✓ Achieve a common understanding of what terms mean, for example, “strengths-based” or “family involvement”

## **Recognize the Strengths, Needs, and Limitations of All Parties**

- ✓ Identify strengths, needs and limitations
- ✓ Capitalize on strengths and address needs and limitations

## **Working through Conflict**

- ✓ Conflict is healthy and inevitable when people work together
- ✓ Express differences
- ✓ Maintain open communication

## **Leaning On Each Other**

- ✓ We must learn to lean on each other to survive

## **Working Together to Assure Safety for Each Other**

- ✓ Providing safety and support for each other