

Purpose

To establish guidelines to govern the conduct of child physical abuse, child sexual abuse and child neglect investigations and to emphasize a compassionate and supportive approach on the part of the investigating officers toward the victim.

Policy

It is the policy of the Cecil County Sheriff's Office to investigate complaints of child sexual abuse, child physical abuse and child neglect. Deputies will work with other professionals in the criminal justice system to insure that the needs of the victim are balanced with the investigative process to bring the best case forward for the State's Attorney's Office to prosecute.

Definitions

Child: Anyone under the age of 18.

Child Abuse: Physical injury of a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member, under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed, or sexual abuse of a child, whether physical injuries are sustained or not.

Sexual Abuse: Any act that involves sexual molestation or exploitation of a child by a parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member. Sexual Abuse includes: allowing or encouraging a child to engage in:

- a) Obscene photography, films, poses, or similar activity;
- b) Pornographic photography, films, poses, or similar activity;
- c) Prostitution
- d) Human Trafficking
- e) Incest
- f) Rape
- g) Sexual offense in any degree
- h) Sodomy
- i) Unnatural or perverted sexual practices

Child Neglect: Leaving of a child unattended or other failure to give proper care and attention to a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child under circumstance that indicate:

- a) That the child's health or welfare is harmed or placed at a substantial risk of harm; or

- b) Mental injury to the child or a substantial risk of mental injury. Mental injury means the observable, identifiable, and substantial impairment of a child's mental or psychological ability to function

Procedure

A. Child Physical Abuse Investigations

1. When the report of child physical abuse is received by uniformed deputy they will initiate an immediate response to locate and determine the well-being of the child. The uniformed deputy will evaluate the initial information for the shift supervisor. Based on the severity of the injuries and the circumstances surrounding the allegation the shift supervisor will notify the Criminal Investigation Division Supervisor. Determination will be made if an immediate response of a Criminal Investigator is necessary. The Department of Social Services will be contacted by the Shift Supervisor or the Criminal Investigation Supervisor.
2. The responding deputy will contact the custodian of the child in-person and determine the well-being of the child. The safety of any other children in the household should be assessed. If a Child Protective Services Assessor is not present and it appears the child needs medical attention, the Deputy will arrange for immediate and appropriate medical attention. If a Child Protective Service Assessor is present, the Deputy will assist them in carrying out their responsibilities and preserve the peace at the scene.
3. If a Department of Social Services referral is received by the Cecil County Sheriff's Office alleging child physical abuse the Cecil County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Supervisor will determine if the case is accepted for investigation.

If the referral indicates the child physical abuse occurred within the town limits of Elkton, the Elkton Police Department will be the lead law enforcement agency. If the referral indicates the child physical abuse occurred within the town limits of North East, the North East Police Department will be the lead law enforcement agency. If the referral indicates the child physical abuse occurred within Cecil County other than within the towns of Elkton or North East, the Cecil County Sheriff's Office will be the lead law enforcement agency. If the report of child physical abuse has been received by Maryland State Police they will be the lead law enforcement agency.

4. The Deputy/Investigator will conduct an appropriate joint investigation with Child Protective Services including, but not limited to:
 - a. Conduct interviews of the victim, any other children present, the guardian/custodian of child, and the suspect
 - b. Identify and interview witnesses
 - c. Take statements for corroborating information
 - d. Identify, preserve and collect physical evidence such as belts, ropes, cords...
 - e. Arrest on probable cause or complete an application (confer with the State's Attorney's Office)
 - f. Write a detailed report

B. Child Sexual Abuse and Severe Child Physical Abuse Investigations

All Child Sexual Abuse allegations accepted by the Cecil County Sheriff's Office will be investigated by the Criminal Investigation Division or an Investigator assigned to the Child Advocacy Center jointly with the Department of Social Services/Child Protection Services. Reports of Severe Child Physical Abuse that fall underneath the Child Advocacy Center are cases of Child Physical Abuse upon a child under 3 years of age or older children who are non-verbal, or can be when severe injury is sustained by the child such as broken bones, head trauma and suspicious burns.

Responsibilities of Uniform Personnel

1. When a report of child sexual abuse or severe child physical abuse is received by a uniformed Deputy they will immediately notify the Shift Supervisor who will immediately contact the Criminal Investigations Division Supervisor. The Criminal Investigation Division Supervisor will determine after consultation with the Deputy at the Scene and the Shift Supervisor if there will be an immediate response by the Criminal Investigation Division.

If the report of child sexual abuse or severe child physical abuse is received by the Cecil County Sheriff's Office and information indicates that the alleged abuse occurred in Cecil County but outside the town limits of Elkton, the Cecil County Sheriff's Office will be the lead law enforcement agency. If the report is received by Maryland State Police they will be the lead law enforcement agency. If the report indicates that the alleged abuse occurred within the town limits of Elkton, the Elkton Police Department will be the investigating agency.

2. The uniformed Deputy will obtain identifying information of alleged victim, suspect and witnesses from the reporting person and NOT THE

VICTIM. *Interviews of the victim (and other children) will be conducted by the Criminal Investigator and the Child Protective Services Assessor.

3. Information gathered from the reporting person should include: Names, addresses, dates of birth, telephone numbers, location incident occurred and employers.
4. The responding Deputy will ensure the safety of the child victim and maintain the crime scene if one exists.
5. The Department of Social Services will be contacted by the Shift Supervisor or the Criminal Investigation Supervisor.
6. If it is determined that the child victim requires immediate medical attention, the Shift Supervisor will ensure the child victim is accompanied to the hospital.
7. Complete and submit a detailed report.

Responsibilities of Investigators:

- a) Ensure a joint investigation with Child Protective Services
- b) Locate and interview the child victim with Child Protective Services
- c) Ensure evidence is collected and processed as necessary
- d) Ensure a medical examination is conducted if necessary
- e) Interview witnesses and suspect(s)
- f) Write a detailed report
- g) Confer with the State's Attorney's Office

C. Child Neglect

In most cases the Department of Social Services will have the primary responsibility for the investigation of child neglect cases. The Cecil County Sheriff's Office will assist the Department of Social Services or accept a Department of Social Services referral for investigation when appropriate.

Responsibilities of Uniformed Personnel

1. If responding to a scene and conditions exist where the Uniformed Personnel believes the level of neglect rises to criminal neglect, the Uniformed Personnel will notify the Shift Supervisor and complete a thorough report.

2. The Uniformed Personnel will ensure the Department of Social Services is notified of the neglectful conditions within 24 hours. If the safety and welfare of the child is believed to be jeopardized by the neglectful conditions the Department of Social Services will be contacted immediately.
3. Based on the severity of the neglect and the surrounding circumstances the shift supervisor will notify the Criminal Investigation Division Supervisor. Determination will be made if the case will be turned over to a Criminal Investigator or will remain with the responding Uniformed Personnel.
4. If a Department of Social Services referral is received by the Cecil County Sheriff's Office alleging child neglect the Cecil County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Supervisor will determine if the case is accepted for investigation.

If the referral indicates the child neglect occurred within the town limits of Elkton, the Elkton Police Department will be the lead law enforcement agency. If the referral indicates the child neglect occurred within the town limits of North East, the North East Police Department will be the lead law enforcement agency. If the referral indicates the child neglect occurred within Cecil County other than within the towns of Elkton or North East, the Cecil County Sheriff's Office will be the lead law enforcement agency. If the report of child neglect has been received by Maryland State Police they will be the lead law enforcement agency.

Responsibilities of Deputies/Investigators:

- a) Ensure a joint investigation with Child Protective Services
- b) Locate and interview the child victim with Child Protective Services
- c) Ensure evidence is collected and processed/photographs are taken
- d) Interview witnesses and suspects
- e) Write a detailed report
- f) Confer with the State's Attorney's Office

Investigating Agency for reports of Crimes Against Children

Type of Investigation

		Child Sex Abuse	Child Fatality	Child Physical Abuse (serious)	Child Physical Abuse & Neglect
Location	Elkton	EPD	EPD	EPD	EPD
	North East	CCSO	CCSO	CCSO	NEPD
	Perryville	CCSO	CCSO	CCSO	CCSO
	Rising Sun	CCSO	MSP	CCSO	CCSO

*If a report of a Child Fatality, Child Sex Abuse, Child Physical Abuse or Child Neglect is received by the Maryland State Police, they will serve as the lead agency.