



## **PLACER COUNTY GRAND JURY**

# **Child Abuse and Neglect**

## **Law Enforcement Referral Process, Training and Coordination with the Placer County Children's System of Care**

**June 23, 2016**

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## **Law Enforcement Referral Process, Training and Coordination with the Placer County Children’s System of Care**

### **Summary**

The Placer County Grand Jury reviewed law enforcement processes and interagency coordination related to the handling of referrals and investigations of alleged child abuse/neglect. The Grand Jury commends the Placer County Children’s System of Care, Placer County Sheriff’s Office, Auburn Department of Public Safety, Lincoln Police Department, Rocklin Police Department, and Roseville Police Department for their training, written policies and procedures, coordination and cooperation with each other, and the high priority they all set on the protection of children in Placer County.

The Grand Jury recommends that all non-sworn personnel of the five law enforcement agencies, including part time and volunteers receive training regarding the policies and procedures in child abuse reporting.

### **Background**

The Placer County Grand Jury initiated a review of referrals, reporting, and coordination between Placer County law enforcement agencies and the Placer County Children’s System of Care. The review included the Auburn, Lincoln, Rocklin and Roseville Police Departments, the Placer County Sheriff’s Office, together with the Placer County Children’s System of Care which is responsible for child welfare services<sup>1</sup> for the entire county. Placer County Sheriff’s Office has law enforcement responsibility in Loomis, Colfax and the unincorporated areas of Placer County.

California Penal Code Section 11164-11174.3 states, “The Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act” defines what constitutes child abuse and neglect and identifies persons who are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect. In section 11165.7 (a) (19) (34), the term “peace officers” is defined as including police officers and sheriff’s deputies. Employees of any police or sheriff’s department are included as mandatory reporters.

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<sup>1</sup> Placer County Children’s System of Care’s services include investigation of all child abuse allegations, services for abused and neglected children, foster care and adoptions.

In addition, the California Penal Code Section 11166.3(a) states, “The Legislature intends that in each county the law enforcement agencies and the county welfare or probation department shall develop and implement cooperative arrangements in order to coordinate existing duties in connection with the investigation of suspected child abuse or neglect cases.”

Placer County child welfare services data indicates that the county and city law enforcement agencies are one of the largest sources of child abuse/neglect referrals.

## **Investigation Methods**

The Grand Jury reviewed California Penal Code requirements related to the processing of child abuse and neglect reports. The Grand Jury also reviewed operational policies and procedures regarding child abuse reporting, training requirements and coordination of law enforcement and Placer County Children’s System of Care.

The Grand Jury reviewed data provided by Placer County Children’s System of Care related to the source of child abuse and neglect referrals and copies of written agreements, protocols, and memoranda of understanding between law enforcement and the Placer County Children’s System of Care.

The Grand Jury interviewed staff from:

- Auburn Department of Public Safety
- Lincoln Police Department
- Placer County Children’s System of Care
- Placer County Sheriff’s Department
- Rocklin Police Department
- Roseville Police Department

Three members of the Grand Jury were recused from this investigation to avoid any conflict of interest and the appearance of bias.

## **Facts**

### Facts Specific to Placer County Children’s System of Care:

- Placer County Children’s System of Care data indicates that of all mandated reporters, law enforcement agencies are one of the largest sources of child abuse/neglect referrals. For example, in October, 2015, 60 referrals came from Placer County law enforcement agencies.

- Placer County Children's System of Care Child/Abuse Mandatory Reporting Training information states that 3,300 child abuse/neglect referrals were received in Fiscal Year 2013-2014.
- Multiple Placer County agencies guided by the District Attorney have established a Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center to coordinate and improve the process of interviewing children in abuse and neglect investigations. The Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center goal is to make the investigation process more effective and efficient while reducing the traumatic effects of multiple independent interviews of child victims.
- Placer County has had a written protocol in place since 2009 (updated in 2014) addressing the cooperative process for handling child abuse/neglect referrals where children are exposed to drugs. The agreement includes the Placer County Sheriff, and Auburn, Lincoln, Rocklin and Roseville Police Departments. The protocol also includes the California Highway Patrol, California Department of Justice, California Department of Parks and Recreation, Placer County District Attorney and Placer County Probation Department.
- Placer County Children's System of Care has written policies in place on the process for investigating child abuse/neglect referrals. The policies include reference to working jointly with law enforcement and other agencies such as public health when appropriate.
- Placer County has established a Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Team which includes county and city law enforcement agencies as well as County Counsel, the District Attorney and medical professionals. The Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Team meets once a month or more often if needed. The purpose of the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Team is to review and investigate child abuse reports involving medical neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse cases for learning and to inform case decision making.
- Placer County Children's System of Care has a written policy in place (last updated in 2014) describing the process for taking a child into protective custody. The policy defines the circumstances under which law enforcement agencies will be included.

Facts Common to Auburn Department of Public Safety and Lincoln, Rocklin, Roseville Police Departments and the Placer County Sheriff's Office:

- All law enforcement agencies, along with Placer County Children's System of Care have stated that the Multi-Disciplinary Interview Team and the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Team operating agreements improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services. Also, they improve the safety and the reaction of child abuse and neglect victims to the investigation process.

- The California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training sets the minimum training requirements for law enforcement personnel. All police officers, Sheriff's deputies and dispatchers receive state mandated Peace Officers Standard Training. Peace Officers Standard Training on child abuse/neglect includes mandatory reporting requirements.
- These agencies have written policies, procedures, and training material related to the investigation and reporting of child abuse/neglect.
- These agencies participate in the Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center agreement and process for interviewing child victims of alleged abuse and neglect.
- All five law enforcement agencies participate in the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Team.
- Upon receipt from any source, all allegations of child abuse/neglect are referred to an officer for immediate investigation.
- When it is determined there is sufficient evidence to warrant further investigation of child abuse/neglect, Placer County Children's System of Care is notified. When appropriate, the law enforcement agencies will conduct a joint investigation with Placer County Children's System of Care.
- All five law enforcement agencies maintain records of all child abuse/neglect allegations they receive, their response and their findings.
- All five law enforcement agencies have a volunteer program to provide support services to law enforcement administration and operation. The functions and training of these non-sworn volunteers varies among the five departments, and are sometimes the first point of contact with the reporting party. Not all volunteers receive training related to child abuse/neglect reporting.
- The only information provided to the reporting party is that the child abuse/neglect allegation is being investigated. Specific or detailed information related to an investigation is not provided to the reporting parties due to child welfare confidentiality laws.

Facts Specific to Individual City and County Law Enforcement Agencies:

Auburn Public Safety Department:

- Alleged child abuse/neglect referrals are always sent to a police officer by dispatch personnel. These referrals are high priority for dispatch. Complex cases are forwarded to detectives for additional investigation as needed.
- Some investigators receive additional training and specialize in child abuse/neglect cases.

Lincoln Police Department:

- The Detective and Detective Sergeant receive more in-depth child welfare investigation training than Peace Officers Standard Training from external training providers dependent on officer time and funding availability. One volunteer, a retired police officer, is the training coordinator and maintains training records.
- Placer County Children's System of Care staff conducts a formal training for officers once or twice a year and attends informal training at roll calls periodically as needed.
- Dispatch staff is trained to prioritize incoming calls and to refer child abuse/neglect allegations to sworn officers immediately upon receipt.
- Lincoln Police conduct frequent presentations to community organizations to provide information which includes child abuse/neglect information and reporting.

Placer County Sheriffs Office:

- The Placer County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement services to Colfax, Loomis and the unincorporated areas of the county.
- Detectives receive additional specialized training in child abuse investigation from other state and child protection training sources.

Rocklin Police Department:

- The department has conducted mandated child abuse/neglect reporting training for Rocklin Unified School District principals and vice-principals.
- At the request of the Rocklin Unified School District, the department is currently preparing a child abuse/neglect information checklist for school personnel.
- Detectives receive additional specialized training in child abuse/neglect reporting and investigation.

Roseville Police Department:

- A full time social worker is on staff. The duties of that social worker include working with children and families to provide support or obtain services to mitigate problems which could lead to child abuse or neglect.
- The department has one detective who specializes in child abuse/neglect investigations. This individual has received additional extensive training and acts as lead detective in these cases.

## **Findings:**

The Grand Jury found that:

- F1. Sworn personnel and dispatchers in all five law enforcement agencies receive mandatory reporting and investigation training regarding child abuse/neglect.
- F2. All five law enforcement agencies work closely with the Placer County Children's System of Care in the reporting and investigation of child abuse/neglect allegations.
- F3. All agencies have a cooperative working relationship and coordination of child abuse/neglect reporting and investigation. This is reflected in the establishment of the Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center and Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Team. This enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of child abuse/neglect reporting and investigation.
- F4. The Grand Jury was unable to verify that the agencies provide training for volunteers related to child abuse/neglect reporting.

## **Conclusion**

All five law enforcement agencies and Placer County Children's System of Care place a high priority on child protection. They coordinate and cooperate with each other regarding referrals and investigations of child abuse/neglect allegations.

All five law enforcement agencies provide training for sworn personnel and dispatchers relating to child abuse/neglect reporting and investigation. They have excellent working relationships and formal written agreements with the Placer County Children's System of Care which has overall responsibility for child welfare services.

The Grand Jury could not conclude that all non-sworn staff and volunteers are provided with child abuse/neglect reporting.

The Grand Jury would like to commend the Placer County Children's System of Care, Placer County Sheriff's Department, Auburn Department of Public Safety, Lincoln Police Department, Rocklin Police Department and Roseville Police Department for their coordination in investigating child abuse/neglect referrals.

## Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. All five law enforcement agencies establish written policies and procedures for all non-sworn and volunteer personnel regarding child abuse/neglect reporting.
- R2. The law enforcement agencies ensure that all new and current volunteers and staff have received training on child abuse/neglect reporting.

## Request for Responses:

	<u>Recommendations Requiring Response</u>	<u>Response Due Date</u>
<b>Mr. John Ruffcorn</b> Public Safety Director, City of Auburn 1215 Lincoln Way Auburn CA 95603	<b>R1, R2</b>	<b>August 31, 2016</b>
<b>Mr. Rex Marks</b> Police Chief, City of Lincoln 770 7th Street Lincoln CA 95648	<b>R1, R2</b>	<b>August 31, 2016</b>
<b>Mr. Edward Bonner</b> Placer County Sheriff-Coroner-Marshal 2929 Richardson Drive Auburn CA 95603	<b>R1, R2</b>	<b>August 31, 2016</b>
<b>Mr. Ron Lawrence</b> Police Chief, City of Rocklin 4080 Rocklin Road Rocklin CA 95677	<b>R1, R2</b>	<b>August 31, 2016</b>
<b>Mr. Daniel Hahn</b> Police Chief, City of Roseville 1051 Junction Blvd. Roseville CA 95678	<b>R1, R2</b>	<b>August 31, 2016</b>



**Copies sent to:**

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**Ms. Twylia Abrahamson**

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