

02-002 Tracking Family Abuse Crimes

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE

Field Operations Support Services



TRACKING FAMILY ABUSE CRIMES

PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to define policy regarding the Department's collection of family abuse data and the availability of such data to patrol personnel when responding to family abuse calls for service.

BACKGROUND

It is often difficult for patrol personnel to identify and investigate family abuse. Fear of the abuser, reluctance to implicate a loved one, and the social stigma attached to such crimes have kept victims and witnesses from coming forward and reporting these crimes to law enforcement agencies. In many cases, our personnel are alerted to suspicious activity by neighbors, school officials, and health care professionals, but when they attempt to investigate the crime, the victims deny the allegations or minimize the injury.

Many times, deputies respond to a location unaware of previous calls to the same location. If the deputies were aware of previous activity at a given location, they would be in a position to broaden their investigation and possibly uncover evidence of abuse that might otherwise go unnoticed. In addition, due to a lack of specific family abuse statistical codes, deputies were routinely using statistical code "212" to clear calls in which evidence of abuse was not readily apparent. The use of "212" made it difficult to identify family abuse or escalating behavior which might lead to violence. Also, limitations of the CAD system did not allow for effective tracking of family abuse crimes because calls over seven days were dropped from the system.

As a result, the following policies and procedures were developed to effectively track family abuse incidents. In those cases where law enforcement action is not warranted, the appropriate protective services agency may elect to intervene with counseling or other appropriate action in order to de-escalate the situation and prevent violence, injury, or death.

Definitions

Family Abuse Crime:

- Child Abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Elder Abuse

Protective Services Agency

- Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)/Child Abuse
- Adult Protective Services (APS)/Elder Abuse

POLICY

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department gathers statistical information regarding all actual, suspected, and alleged family abuse crimes and reports those statistics to the appropriate protective services agency having jurisdiction in the matter. Deputies responding to the scene of an actual, suspected, or alleged family abuse incident shall ensure that a complete investigation is made. Any indication of criminal activity shall be documented in an incident report, and, when appropriate, arrests shall be made.

All actual or suspected family abuse calls shall be cleared using the appropriate stat code and include a clearance code of 831.

PROCEDURES

Stat Code 831

Stat Code 831 is a secondary statistical code and cannot be used alone. In all cases of actual, suspected, and alleged family abuse incidents, clearance code 831 shall be used in conjunction with other appropriate codes to clear the call. This clearance code is used to generate the statistics we use to cross-report to other social services/protective agencies. It is also the key that generates the hazard hit associated with family abuse incidents.

For example, deputies are dispatched to a location regarding a SCAR indicating possible child abuse where the informant is the neighbor. The informant reported hearing a parent yelling and the child screaming "bloody murder." Upon arrival, the deputies conduct a thorough investigation and determine that the incident appears to be nothing more than a child's temper tantrum. Instead of clearing the call using stat codes "212/ 415F," the call should be cleared using "419/831."

In other words, any time abuse is alleged or suspected, regardless of whether there is evidence of wrong doing, the clearance code 831 should be used.

Clearance Code 831 shall be used with the following stat codes:

050 – Domestic Violence (Aggravated)

059 – Child Assault (Aggravated)

123 – Incest

146 – Domestic Violence (Non-Aggravated)

149 – Child Assault (Non-Aggravated)

171 – Child Abandonment

172 – Child Neglect

173 – Failure to Protect

174 – Elder Physical Abuse/Neglect

175 – Domestic Violence (No Weapons Used and No Physical Injuries)

176 – Elder Mental Abuse

177 – Elder Fiduciary (Financial) Abuse

178 – Dependent Adult Abuse (Physical, Mental, and Fiduciary Abuse)

327 – Child Stealing

410 – Juvenile Dependent Child of Court (WIC 300(a)-(j))

413 – Juvenile Transient, Out of State

414 – Juvenile, Incurable (WIC 601)

415 – Juvenile School Laws, Habitual Truancy (WIC 601b)

418 – Suspicious Circumstances, Possible Child Abuse

419 – Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR) – Any SCAR that alleges a case of child abuse or neglect; however, upon investigation, no crime is substantiated due to the lack of elements

449 – Domestic Violence, Non-Criminal

707 – Suspicious Circumstances, Possible Elder Abuse

708 – Suspicious Circumstances, Possible Domestic Violence

If one of the following offenses is committed by one family member against another family member or cohabitant, the incident qualifies as a family abuse crime, and 831 shall be used as part of the clearance:

01X – Homicide

02X – Rape

12X – Sex Felonies

13X – Sex Misdemeanors

Hazard Hits

Whenever 831 is used to clear a call, the CAD system will automatically generate a hazard hit for that location. When a hazard hit appears on a deputy's dispatch screen, he or she need only to depress the "HITS" key to read the summary line on all previous family abuse calls, which will look something similar to the example below:

INCIDENT HITS SUMMARY

05/03/00 1256

LCS124-0016

/RECENT LCS122-0176 459R

/HAZARD LCS118-0542 DOM VIOL-NON CRIM

Deputies may obtain the narrative of the previous clearance, the names of the handling deputies, and information regarding the contact by typing "Haz" on a blank screen.

When the mask appears, enter either the address or the complete incident number in the appropriate field to obtain the "Full Location Record," which will resemble the following display:

SAMPLE LOCATION INQUIRY

45502 CORKWOOD CITY LAN TYPE S RECORD
NUMBER: 02 LAST: JOHNSON FIRST: FRED M W
03/06/50

SUMMARY: NON-CRIM DOM VIOL HUSBAND DRUNK AND VERBALLY ABUSIVE TO DEPS///GUNS AT
LOC ///SEND 2 UNITS

TAG LCS118-0542 CLEAR 449 DEP #1: 21234 (FREDERICKSON) DEP #2: 94834 (HUTCHINSON)

AUDIT: 04/27/00 1330 BY: 01931 PURGE: 04/27/02

Hazard hits remain in the system for two years, and each location can support up to 99 hits. While hazard hits are location specific, victims or suspected victims of family abuse crimes can be cross-checked in RAPS by name in the event the abuser moves his family.

Audit System

It shall be the responsibility of each unit to develop an audit system to ensure compliance with this Field Operations Directive.

