

## **LCS Unit Order 80**

### **LANCASTER STATION**

#### **UNIT ORDER # 80**

### **SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORT (SCAR)**

#### **PURPOSE:**

To establish protocols and procedures, to ensure compliance with the mandates of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, Penal Code 11164.

#### **OVERVIEW:**

Lancaster Station handles a large volume of child abuse reports each year. All personnel shall adhere to Field Operations Directive 03-004, Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

#### **WATCH DEPUTY**

The watch deputy shall ensure all SCAR's are dispatched and handled in a timely manner. The watch deputy shall notify the watch sergeant and field sergeant of any SCAR calls being unnecessarily delayed.

All watch deputies will review and read the narrative of each SCAR to determine if it is an emergent, priority, or a duplicate SCAR. All SCAR's shall be dispatched on each shift. At no time will a SCAR be in E-SCAR's longer than twenty four hours. In the event the watch deputy receives a duplicate SCAR, a call will be entered for both SCAR's. The watch deputy will immediately clear out one of the calls as a duplicate call and cross

reference the tags. The EM watch deputy will provide the watch commander with non-emergent SCAR's which can wait to be sent out during AM or PM shift. These SCARs will be held at the discretion of the shift watch commander.

In the event a watch deputy does not have a password for E-SCAR's (i.e. not a regularly assigned watch deputy), they will contact another Sheriff's Department station. They will provide the assisting watch deputy with the SCAR number they received via the CAD system. The assisting watch deputy will then then be requested to send the Lancaster SCAR to Lancaster Station.

Before forwarding a SCAR to another station or agency, the watch deputy shall make every attempt to verify the child actually lives at the address listed on the SCAR. The watch deputy will give the agency or other station a courtesy call and put the contacted person's name and phone number in the forwarding section of the SCAR.

If the alleged abuse occurred in Lancaster Station's jurisdiction, but the child is currently in another jurisdiction, the watch deputy will attempt to contact the other jurisdiction and request a courtesy response to interview the child. If the other jurisdiction is unable or unwilling to respond, a Lancaster Station unit shall be dispatched at the watch commander's discretion.

## **SERGEANTS**

The watch sergeant and field sergeants will monitor dispatched SCAR calls for service to ensure they are handled in a reasonable amount of time. While reviewing a completed SCAR, the watch sergeant shall ensure all the allegations in the SCAR are addressed appropriately prior to approving the report.

## **FIELD DEPUTY**

A SCAR (Suspected Child Abuse Report) call shall be handled prior to any routine report calls for service, and with the utmost priority.

Deputy personnel shall thoroughly investigate all alleged abuse and neglect.

If the call was directed by a SCAR, there is no set number of times a call should be generated if the child is not at the location. The key is “due diligence.” The deputy can:

- Use department resources and run the information of the parents
- Call the phone numbers on the SCAR
- Check with the neighbors, schools, and the landlord
- Send a deputy at a different time of day
- Contact the reporting party
- Contact the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social worker for updated case information

Actual physical examination of a child is mandatory if physical or sexual abuse is reported. All children residing in the home shall be examined and documented in either an incident report or SCAR Clearance Narrative/Check-Off Report (SH-R-626). Upon “suspicion” or “actual” abuse or neglect, whether emotional or physical in nature, an Incident Report (SH-R-49) shall be written.

If the child abuse call was not generated by a SCAR and the allegation is physical or sexual abuse, the deputy shall cross report to DCFS providing the date, time, incident number (tag), and Uniform Report Number (URN) of the incident. If the deputy believes the children would benefit from services offered by DCFS, the deputy may contact the DCFS hotline.

If the handling deputy determines no crime has occurred, the SCAR will be cleared by pulling an URN with a 419 statistical code, and the deputy shall complete the SCAR Clearance Narrative/Check-Off Report. If the handling deputy is unable to conduct a complete investigation during their shift (e.g. unable to make any contact, not everyone who resides in the home is contacted, etc.) the SCAR ALONG WITH AN EXPLANATION WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE WATCH COMMANDER BY THE HANDLING DEPUTY. THE WATCH COMMANDER WILL USE HIS/HER JUDGEMENT TO DETERMINE WHETHER TO COMPENSATE THE DEPUTY WITH OVERTIME OR REASSIGN THE SCAR. In the event overtime is not warranted, the deputy shall complete the SCAR Clearance Narrative/Check-Off Report without drawing an URN, and clear the call with a 416 statistical code. The deputy shall notify the watch deputy the SCAR will need to be re-dispatched. All paperwork, including the SCAR Clearance Narrative/Check-Off Report, with a completed narrative detailing what the deputy did, shall be returned to the SCAR tray located in the watch sergeant’s office. A new call will be generated by the watch deputy each time a deputy responds to an incomplete SCAR. The SCAR Clearance Narrative/Check-Off Report shall be filled out every time a deputy responds to a SCAR. For example, if deputies respond to a SCAR 15 times before finally completing the investigation, there should be 15 SCAR Clearance Narrative/Check-Off Reports attached to the SCAR when it is turned in to the watch sergeant for approval.

Due to the volatile nature of Domestic Violence Incidents, there is an inherent risk of physical and/or emotional abuse or neglect to all children residing, or present, in the home of the incident. Deputies responding to incidents of Domestic Violence shall make every attempt to assess and interview all children in the home for incidents of abuse. If a child hears or sees a Domestic Violence incident, the child shall be listed in the Incident Report, their statement included, and a notification to DCFS. If the child is touched (examples: in the victim's arms when the victim is injured, hit by flying objects, injured by suspect slamming a door, etc.), the child shall be listed in the Incident Report as a victim, their statement included, and a notification to DCFS shall be made. If children reside in the home but are **not** present during a Domestic Violence incident, or any other crime which occurred in the home, and the deputy believes the children would benefit from services offered by DCFS, the deputy may contact the DCFS hotline

When investigating a suspected child abuse crime, deputies should be cognizant of any other type of crime which may have occurred and not been reported (i.e. non-criminal domestic violence, battery, use of narcotics, etc). WIC 305 gives deputies the authority

to take a victim of child abuse into protective custody. DCFS shall be notified and is responsible for the placement of all children taken into protective custody by deputy personnel.

All notifications to DCFS shall be documented in the deputy's written report. The documentation shall include the name of the DCFS employee, and the time the notification was made.

## **JURISDICTION:**

Deputies should not rely on DCFS to conduct any part of their investigation.

If a deputy is interviewing a child and finds out the incident occurred in another jurisdiction, the deputy shall write a courtesy report.

## **REFERENCES:**

Penal Code 11164 (Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act)

FOD : 03-004 (Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act)

MPP 4-06/023.00 (Child Abuse)

E-SCARS Procedures

Alejo v. City of Alhambra (1999) 75 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 1180

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