



Child Abuse Investigations

I. INTRODUCTION

The Maryland Annotated Code, Family Law Article mandates certain investigative procedures and coordinating between law enforcement agencies, the Department of Social Services, and the State's Attorney's Office in the investigation of reported child abuse cases. The Ridgely Police Department has entered into an agreement with the Department of Social Services and the State's Attorney's Office in Caroline County. This agreement defines the roles of the respective agencies in the prompt investigation of reports of suspected child abuse cases.

When a report of suspected child abuse is received by the Department of Social Services, they will immediately evaluate the seriousness of the alleged abuse from the information received and then assign a child protective service worker to begin investigation. The evaluator of the initial report shall immediately notify the appropriate law enforcement agency whenever there is an indication of a probable criminal violation. In those cases where there is a credible report that sexual abuse is involved or that the child has sustained a physical injury, law enforcement will be immediately notified so that a joint investigation can commence at the onset.

II. POLICY

When a report of suspected child abuse is received by this Department, the Supervisor or on duty Officer will evaluate the initial information to determine if immediate response is necessary due to a life threatening situation, or the well being of the child. If immediate response is deemed proper, the nearest available Officer will be dispatched to the scene with one backup unit. If immediate response is not deemed necessary, initiation of the investigation shall be made within 24 hours of receipt of a report of suspected physical or sexual abuse and within 5 days after receipt of a report of suspected mental injury.

III. PROCEDURE

A. If the report of suspected child abuse occurred in a licensed or unlicensed child care facility, the investigating Officer will immediately notify the Department of Social Services of the alleged child abuse. The Department of Social Services will be responsible for notifying the Office of Child Licensing and Regulation.

General Order No. 6-2 (Cont.)

B. If the report of an alleged abuse is received by this Department from any other source other than the Department of Social Services, the Department of Social Services will be notified immediately and advised of what specific immediate action this Department has taken. The Department of Social Services has provided this Department with an on-call duty roster for twenty four hour notification. The duty roster will be maintained in the On Call Notification Ledger.

C. If the report of a child abuse is received by the State's Attorney's Office, they will evaluate the initial information to determine if a life threatening situation, or the well being of the child requires immediate intercession. If the immediate response seems appropriate, the State's Attorney's Office will contact the appropriate law enforcement agency immediately. If an immediate response is not required, the Department of Social Services will be notified of the complaint by the State's Attorney's Office so contact can be made with the child within twenty four hours.

D. If there is any indication that a medical or psychological examination is necessary, arrangements will be made by Social Services. If emergency medical treatment is determined to be needed to determine the nature or extent of any abuse or to relieve any urgent illness or life threatening health condition, the investigating Officer, where Social Services personnel are not available, shall take the child to the nearest medical treatment facility for a complete medical examination pursuant to State law.

E. In all cases where this Department is notified from any source of suspected child abuse, an investigation into the circumstances will be made. In those cases where an immediate response to the scene is necessary, the responding Officer will contact the family and custodian of the child and determine the well being of the child. The investigating Officer will conduct an appropriate investigation which includes, but is not limited to:

1. Conducting interviews.
2. Identifying witnesses.
3. Taking statements.
4. Identifying, preserving, and collecting physical evidence
5. Conferring with the State's Attorney and the Department of Social Services.
6. Completing required reports.

F. The Officer investigating a child abuse case will maintain a free, open exchange of information between the Department of Social Services and the State's Attorney's Office.