



Pasco Sheriff's Office

# Child Abuse Investigations

# Child Protective Investigations Division

- Pasco is 1 of 6 Counties in FL where child abuse/neglect cases are run by a Sheriff's Office (Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee, Seminole, and Broward); others are DCF
- Grant from the State since 1999
- CPI Budget through Legislative Appropriations
- Governed by DCF rules and operating procedures and also PSO's standard ops

# CPID

- 2013 CPI received **6,166** investigations
  - Including OTIs and Special Condition Investigations
  - **10,000** child interviews/observations
- We have 52 CPI positions, 11 Supervisors (on avg-45 CPI's)
- 14 hours to complete unfounded investigations
- Cases with unsafe children requiring court intervention:
  - Additional hours needed for:
    - Legal and services staffings
    - Court preparation and appearances
    - Removals of children & awaiting placements
    - Home Studies
    - Medical appointments/transport

# CPI Detectives

- Funded through CPI's budget
- Positions began in 2012 with 2 Detectives, now we have one per district
- CPI Detective is a liaison between CPI and law enforcement:
  - Response times
  - Understanding criminal elements
  - False reports to the Abuse Hotline

# What is Child Abuse?

## “Child Abuse” means:

- (a) Intentional infliction of physical or mental injury upon a child;
- (b) An intentional act that **could reasonably be** expected to result in physical or mental injury to a child;
- (c) Active encouragement of any person to commit an act that results **or could reasonably** be expected to result in physical or mental injury to a child.

# What is Neglect?

## “Neglect of a Child” means:

1. A caregiver’s failure or omission to provide a child with the care, supervision, and services necessary to maintain the child’s physical and mental health, including, but not limited to, food, nutrition, clothing, shelter, supervision, medicine, and medical services that a prudent person would consider essential for the well-being of the child; or
2. A caregiver’s failure to make a reasonable effort to protect a child from abuse, neglect, or exploitation by another person.

# GENERAL ORDER: 44.2

## Juvenile Victim Investigation Procedures

- I. CHILD VICTIM INVESTIGATION RESPONSIBILITIES:
  - A. The Sheriff's Office and local police departments are designated by F.S. 39 as **the lead investigative** agencies for child victim investigations. As such, deputies will investigate, with a Child Protective Investigator (CPI) **when possible**, and document any Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) report that alleges criminal conduct or any reported incident involving a child that is known or suspected.

# GENERAL ORDER: 44.2

## Juvenile Victim Investigation Procedures

- **B. Child Abuse/Neglect Investigations:**

When the Department of Children and Families (DCF) receives such allegations via the Florida Abuse Hotline System, DCF will prepare a Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) report and send it to the Child Protective Investigation's office for assignment to a CPI.

A CPI will contact dispatch to have a deputy respond and conduct an **independent** investigation when there are allegations of physical injury, sexual abuse, human trafficking, burns, asphyxiation, for all removals of children, and occasionally for worker safety. A CPI may conduct a **parallel investigation**, but the **law enforcement investigation must stand on its own merit.**



# GENERAL ORDER: 44.2

## Juvenile Victim Investigation Procedures

- 2. Uniform Operations District I, II and III Responsibilities:
  - a. The deputy assigned the call will respond to the location of the reported child abuse or meeting location and assume the ***lead investigative role for all criminal fact-finding and evidence gathering.***
    - A CPI representative need not be present, but the investigation should be coordinated with a CPI, when possible.

# GENERAL ORDER: 44.2

## Juvenile Victim Investigation Procedures

- 1) If the neglect or abuse does not require the presence of a Major Crimes detective, the deputy will conduct the investigation and make any necessary arrests or referrals to the State Attorney's Office.
  - The deputy **MUST** obtain a copy of the FSFN report from the CPI or have the CPI email the allegations via inter agency email. The CPI's report needs to be read so ALL allegations can be addressed and assessed for criminal element(s). The allegations received from the CPI will then go into the deputy's final report.

# GENERAL ORDER: 44.2

## Juvenile Victim Investigation Procedures

- 2) If the investigation involves the death of a child by abuse or neglect, aggravated child abuse, sexual battery or sexual abuse, the deputy will begin the preliminary investigation and immediately notify his or her **supervisor**. The supervisor may, when necessary, notify the on-call **CPI Supervisor** and the appropriate **Major Crimes Unit** supervisor.

# The Investigation

- Did we interview all parties involved with the abuse/neglect allegation (Neighbors)?
- Did we properly qualify younger children to determine reliability?
- Did we review the Ops Center, FSFN reports, and criminal histories to complete a thorough investigation?

# GENERAL ORDER: 44.2

## Juvenile Victim Investigation Procedures

- **C. Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Investigations:**
- If the child-on-child sexual abuse does not require the presence of a Major Crimes detective, the deputy will conduct the investigation and make any necessary arrests or referrals.
- The **focus of these investigations** is to determine if the child learned the behavior through neglect or child sexual abuse.
- The act may be age-appropriate exploratory behavior, but the investigation must seek to determine history of the behavior.

# House Bill (HB) 1355

## Protection of Vulnerable Persons

**Effective October 01, 2012**

- Requires reporting to the Department of Children and Families by any person who knows, or who has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child:
  - Is abused by an adult other than a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare.
  - Is the victim of childhood sexual abuse or the victim of a known or suspected juvenile sexual offender.

# House Bill (HB) 1355

## Protection of Vulnerable Persons

### What does this mean for us?

- When investigating any situation where a child has been the victim of abuse by a person other than a parent or caregiver, the deputy shall report the abuse to the Florida Abuse Hotline.
- The Department of Children and Families will act as the central repository of all reported abuse and will forward allegations to the appropriate sheriff's office for investigation.

# CPI Responsibilities: Pre-Investigative Tasks

- Contact reporter
- Review prior involvement with CPI
- Review criminal histories / local LE reports
- Locate victim/children
  - Call school board locator
  - Call day care locator
- Call and wait for Law Enforcement-required for physical injury, sexual abuse, human trafficking, worker safety concerns



# CPI Interview Requirements

- Commence investigation within required response time (4 or 24 hours).
- Face-to-face Interviews with all children within 24 hours of report being received by hotline.
  - Daily diligent efforts until located
- Face-to-face Interviews with all adults in the home.

# Interview Tasks

- Address **All** the allegations
- Address Safety Factor Questions for mandated DCF Child Safety Assessment:
  - discipline
  - domestic violence
  - criminal history
  - family relationships
  - each household member's medications (observe)
  - maintain medical information
  - current and past drug/alcohol use
  - parental child abuse history (mental, physical & sexual)

# Interview Tasks (cont.)

- Observe the home
- Obtain releases of information
- Contact Child Protection Team
- Refer services
- Written safety plans
- Follow up home visits
- Drug screens
- Collateral contacts (2 minimum)

# Investigative Tasks

- Assess for Present Danger on scene
- Supervisor consultation and possible safety planning for children
- Assess all information collected to make a safety decision for the children; safe-close case, unsafe-refer children to case management/protective supervision
- Investigation is to be completed and case locked within 60 days

# False Reporting

- **FSS. 39.01(28), F.S. : “False report”** means a report of abuse, neglect, or abandonment of a child to the central abuse hotline, which is **maliciously** made for the purpose of:
  - (a) Harassing, embarrassing, or harming another person;
  - (b) Personal financial gain for the reporting person;
  - (c) Acquiring custody of a child; or
  - (d) Personal benefit for the reporting person in any other private disputes involving the child.
- The term “false report” does not include a report of abuse, neglect or abandonment of a child made in good faith to the central abuse hotline.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Do reports of abuse to the school resource officer (SRO), CPI staff, or other school personnel satisfy mandated reporting requirements to the Hotline?

- No. Reports must be made directly to the Florida Abuse Hotline via phone, fax or web. We reporting may be done by accessing [www.myflorida.com/cf\\_web](http://www.myflorida.com/cf_web) and clicking on the Report Abuse Online link.

## How intensively should a teacher or other school personnel question a student prior to and after a report has been made to the Florida Abuse Hotline?

- School staff should use discretion, being careful to speak with the child in a comforting manner and not lead or probe with questions. Questions should be limited to those that enable the person to call the Hotline with description and explanation of suspected abuse/neglect. In most cases the teacher is the first person a student contacts to share confidential experiences. Students should not be asked to repeat their experiences to other school personnel prior to or after an investigation.



# Am I required to provide my name to the Abuse Hotline when making a report?

- Yes. School personnel making a report to the hotline in their professional capacity are required to provide their names to Hotline staff as provided in F.S. 39.201. Any person, official, or institution participating in good faith in any act authorized or required by statute or reporting in good faith any instance of child abuse to any law enforcement agency , shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise result by reason of such action.

## Is the school personnel's name given to the parent or alleged perpetrator identifying them as the reporter?

- No. This action would be against the law, subject to a criminal charge, which would be a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree misdemeanor.

## Can the CPI share and release reports to the school system upon request without authorization from the parent or guardian?

- F.S. 39.202 was amended during the 2003 legislative session to provide that information contained in a client record may be released to the principal of the school in which the child is enrolled. The principal will determine what information is relevant for school staff to know in order to provide the student with effective educational services.

# Contacts in CPID



**Director:** Ken Kilian

**Assistant Directors:** Rebecca Wilkinson-Shields &  
Dave Farquharson

**Program Manager:** Kristine Fletcher

Office Phone (727) 836-8400

District 1 Supervisors:

- Lindsay D'Ascenzio, Mindy Rommel, Dana Levy

District 2 Supervisors:

- Ashley Boyette, Amber Robinson, Kevin Wylie

District 3 Supervisors:

- Leigh Williams, Chuck Sekeres
- Training Supervisor: Lisa Tobin

**\*\*On call Supervisor can be reached via Dispatch 1700-0730\*\***