

BERLIN POLICE DEPARTMENT
BERLIN, MARYLAND

SUBJECT: INVESTIGATIONS- CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT		NO: 400 I-3
APPROVED/EFFECTIVE DATE August 9, 2004	AMENDS	RESCINDS
DISTRIBUTION/DATE	REFERENCES Ocean City Police Department 2004 General Orders	

.10 When a report of suspected child abuse is received the information will be evaluated to determine if immediate response is necessary and if the suspected incident is physical or sexual in nature. If immediate response is deemed necessary, an officer will be dispatched directly to the scene. The officer will protect and determine the well being of the child. If the child needs medical attention, the officer will make arrangements. In cases requiring immediate police response or cases discovered during an officer's course of duty, Social Services shall be contacted as soon as practical. In cases not requiring immediate response the officer will attempt to contact Social Services prior to interviewing the child for the purpose of coordinating a joint investigation. However, it is the responses of the investigating officer to ensure prompt contact is made with a representative of Social Services in all cases of suspected child abuse. The officer will note in his/her incident report the time of notification to Social Services. When a report of suspected physical child abuse is received from the Department of Social Services, the complaint will be referred to the on-duty officer, who will provide assistance in a joint investigation and preserve peace while Social Services carries out their responsibilities.

.20 DEFINITIONS:

A. Sexual child abuse includes but shall not be limited to: incest, rape, carnal knowledge, sodomy, unnatural or perverted sex acts, any sexual contact (i.e. fondling for sexual gratification) or sexual exploitation (i.e. child pornography and prostitution) by any person having a permanent or temporary care, or custody of, or responsibility for a juvenile or by any household or family member.

B. Serious physical child abuse includes but shall not be limited to: excessive bruising, evidence of being intentionally burned, injuries inflicted to the head or abdominal by fist or weapons, severe injuries which

require medical treatment, and injuries that show evidence of long term abuse caused by any person having permanent or temporary care, or custody of, or responsibility for a juvenile or by any household or family member.

NOTE: The suspect abuser does not have to be an adult.

- .30 In cases of suspected sexual and serious physical child abuse reports the on-call supervisor will be immediately notified. The Worcester County Bureau of Investigation (WCBI) will be contacted to handle the criminal investigation and the officer will contact Social Services. The officer will complete an initial report stating how the incident was brought to the agencies attention and any other valuable information known (i.e. family history, witnesses etc.), plus, the name of the detective assigned by WCBI to conduct the investigation will be noted on the report. Suspected child abuse cases believed not to serious or sexual in nature shall be initially investigated by the on-duty officer and the supervisory staff shall make determination about follow-up investigations.
- .40 When a police officer conducts an investigation he will identify' and interview witnesses, collect and preserve any evidence, complete police reports and coordinate with the State's Attorney's Office and the of Department of Social Services. All cases of suspected of child abuse even those unfound shall have a detailed written report completed as soon as possible by the assigned officer and copies forwarded to the proper agencies.
- .50 In cases of suspected abuse or neglect, a victim may be questioned by the police and/or Social Services without the consent of a parent/guardian and may be questioned at school prior to notification of the parent/guardian, as the victim is willing to be questioned.
- .60 When there is a question as to the child's immediate welfare or any indication of repeated abuse, the officer, may make arrangements to either alter the child's environment or remove the child from the environment (The final decision to remove a child from a home and placement should be made by the Department of Social Services).
- .70 Child neglect shall be defined as the failure to carry out or perform certain task for a child by any person having

permanent or temporary care, or custody of, or responsibility for the child these acts include but shall not be limited to: failure to provide adequate food, failure to provide adequate clothing, failure to provide adequate shelter, failure to provide medical attention, failure to provide proper health conditions, or the failure to provide the proper supervision.

- .80 If an officer believes he has detected a case of child neglect, he must complete a detailed report, which must be forwarded to the Department of Social Services. The Department of Social Services should confirm that the report has been received and initiate an investigation. The officer should be notified as to the disposition of the case but if no disposition has been given within 15 days the officer shall conduct a follow-up investigation. A case of child neglect may not require the removal or any other immediate action. However, if the officer feels that conditions are serious enough to warrant removal or medical treatment the officer shall call the Department of Social Services and request immediate intervention (Officers have no authority to remove children in cases of child neglect).