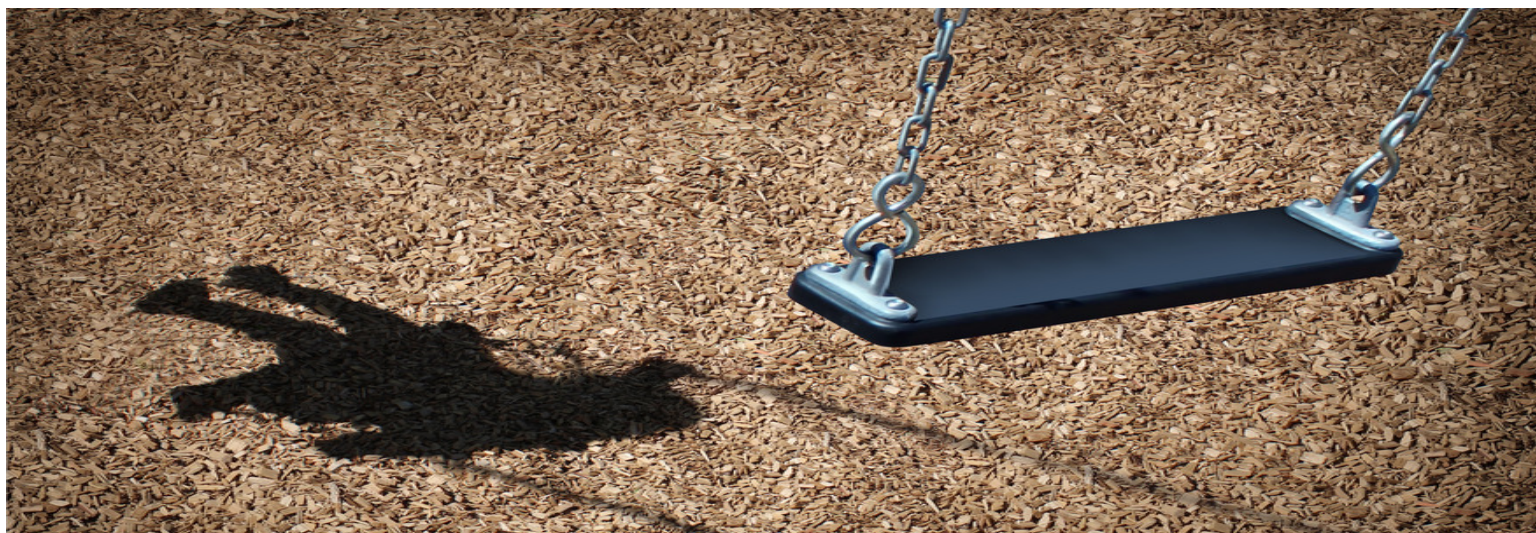




Child Abduction T.I.P.S. (Training, Information, Practices & Strategy)

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Child Abduction is Child Abuse

Written by: Leslie Olson

Family and non-family abductions are a form of child abuse. Child abduction is defined as any act of concealment of a child from the Juvenile Dependency Court or from the Child Protective Services (CPS) Social Worker for the purpose of preventing the detention of a child when a parent, legal guardian or relative is aware that such a detention is about to be made. Working child abduction cases requires a systematic approach, and knowing who to include in your multidisciplinary team is essential to the safe recovery of the child. While most multidisciplinary teams include local Sheriff and Police Departments, FBI and District Attorneys, CPS, Education, Mental Health Providers and Non Profit agencies should also be part of your team as each of these entities can be a valuable resource.

When a child is abducted prompt action is needed to ensure the child is recovered quickly and safely. If the child is a Dependent of the Court and/or under the purview of CPS, the risk to the child is elevated as the family has already come to the attention of CPS for abuse and/or neglect. CPS has a policy and process for missing and abducted children. A Missing Person's report needs to be filed as soon as possible by the caretaker of the child with a special notation to law enforcement that a child has been abducted. The CPS social worker should also be in regular communication with the Law Enforcement team to provide information related to the child, their family and extended family. CPS has been in contact with some of these families for many years and has a significant amount of information related to the family's history. Utilize CPS' resources to enhance the investigation.

Most counties have Child Advocacy Centers that provide forensic interviews, which is a structured conversation with a child to elicit detailed information about a possible event the child witnessed or experienced. The benefit of utilizing a forensic interview is it lessens the trauma to the child as they are not retelling their story over and over again to a different person. In addition, several counties also have social worker liaisons who are out-stationed in different law enforcement jurisdictions. The CPS social workers are available to law enforcement to staff cases, complete joint investigations and assess the safety of a child. In addition, CPS social workers are available to help law enforcement assess a non-offending parent or identify a safe placement when a child has been recovered.

Within the state of California, all Counties have CPS Emergency Response hotline numbers, and social workers are available to answer questions or provide assistance on cases that involve children within CPS. Welfare and Institution Code (WIC) Section 827(a)(1)(A)-(O), which outlines the persons who are entitled to inspect and/or receive child welfare information. Law enforcement is described under WIC 827(a)(1)(H). When contacting the hotline, indicate your purpose, noting that you are investigating a child abduction and need the assistance of CPS. You can always ask to speak with a supervisor, Program Manager and/or county counsel to receive the information you may need to assist with your investigation. Information that may be received from CPS is related to the history of the family including their contact with child welfare, criminal history (including probation officer and parole officer names), past addresses and phone numbers, family members and friends, past relationships, school history, etc.

With child abductions, time is of the essence and all resources need to be used. A multidisciplinary approach to these investigations and recoveries are recommended as the abductor is typically a perpetrating parent or someone who knows the child, therefore the child is at high risk of re-abuse. Each profession brings different information and experience to the table, leading to better outcomes for the children and families.

Missing & Abducted Children: What You Need to Know About Schools & Laws

Written by: Jannell Jones

Child Abduction Prevention Policies

Schools should ensure that they create appropriate child abduction prevention policies:

- Limit the ability of unauthorized individuals to enter school campuses especially after school has started.
- Ensure that student data systems are up-to-date including only those individuals who are allowed to pick-up a child from school.
- Mandate (as part of school policy) that visitors go to the main administrative office to sign out children from school. Unauthorized personnel should not be allowed to wander around a school or visit classrooms.
- Require all individuals, whether teachers, administrators or visitors to wear badges indicating their authorization to be on a school's premises.

- Maintain a current and available list of people authorized to remove a child from school with picture identification.
- Check the identification of each visitor as well as signature.
- Require consent from the authorized parent or legal guardian if an unauthorized person requests to remove a child from school before releasing the child.

Child Abduction Intervention and Resource Training

Have school personnel attend this basic training that introduces participants to a multidisciplinary approach to assist professionals working within all facets of child abduction. This is an opportunity for county partners to increase their understanding of the roles of each agency and network with partner agencies towards a more coordinated response for missing and abducted children. The training is suitable for: child abuse and abduction programs, child protective services, law enforcement officials, mental health professionals, non-profit organizations, prosecutors and investigators, sexual assault/domestic violence programs, victim witnesses, and school personnel.

For more information about this training please visit: <https://cirinc.org/abduction/events.html>

Conduct Regular Drills

Consider regular drills for school personnel, similar to those conducted at hospitals, so that all school staff, including teachers, administrators, and the support staff are provided with real-life training for what to do when:

- Visitors come to a school requesting to remove a child from campus.
- Warning signs alert school personnel that there is a suspected abduction.
- An abduction has occurred.

Note: These drills can be combined with other forms of drills, such as an intruder on campus drill.

Student Release Policies

There are often a number of people responsible for a child, such as: Guardians, parents, step-parents, grandparents, significant others, police, or child welfare workers. Thus, schools need specific policies (in writing) for tracking the identity and relationship of individuals connected to each child on campus.

Training for Students

Prevention training should be provided to ensure that every child is empowered with personal safety education. The BRAVE curriculum provides this training <http://www.thejoyfulchild.org>

What is FERPA?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA or the Buckley Amendment) is a [United States federal law](#) that governs the access of educational information and records to public entities such as potential employers, publicly funded educational institutions, and foreign governments.

Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions:

- School officials with legitimate educational interest
- Other schools to which a student is transferring
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school
- Accrediting organizations
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Education Codes to Remember Regarding Missing/Abducted Children

- E.C. 38139 School Postings
- E.C. 49068.5 School Principal Duties-Missing Children
- E.C. 49068.6 Law Enforcement Responsibility
- E.C. 49370 Reporting of Missing Children

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