

Bridging the Gap Between Law Enforcement and Child Protective Services: Analyzing the Benefits of Merging the Criminal Aspect of Maltreated Children and the Services Aspect to Help Optimize Protection of Abused Children.

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Abstract

Child Maltreatment is an unfortunate reality of society. Agencies across the nation struggle with complex investigations and heavy caseloads as they try to protect America's most vulnerable victims. This research paper explores the multidisciplinary approach to solving these cases, particularly the efforts of law enforcement and child protective services. While it may appear obvious to have these two entities work together in solving cases it is not a universal practice. After an in-depth literature review and interviews with six agencies across Florida, it is clear that the multidisciplinary team response towards child maltreatment is the most effective way to tackle these cases. By researching the relationship between law enforcement and child protective services we can see the value in the collaboration of these two entities.

Introduction

In the United States 4.4 million child maltreatment referral reports were filed in 2019. Of these cases 1,840 children died from abuse and neglect (Child maltreatment 2019). As cases are reported of child maltreatment where there is possibly a criminal act, law enforcement as well as civilian child protective services are called to investigate.

The role the local police department and the child protective services play in managing these cases is pivotal to the safety of our communities. Unfortunately lack of resources, funding, and personnel constraints make these tasks daunting. While this statement is true of most departments in any government funded sector, there are ways to improve current workflow using the resources that are currently available.

The following literature review reveals opportunities of improvement that bridge the gap of communication between child protective services and the police detectives assigned to these cases. Child Protective Services and Law Enforcement agencies manage child maltreatment in unique ways. The goal of this review is to identify a more efficient and multidisciplinary team response towards child maltreatment. Bridging this gap may cause less confusion, stress, and a better overall experience for the victims and the family of the victims involved.

In order to place this topic into proper context this literature review will begin by exploring the definition of maltreatment, reporting requirements, and a historical snapshot of child maltreatment in the United States. This will serve as a foundation in understanding child maltreatment and will reveal issues that may explain the current pulse of child maltreatment in the United States.

Literature Review

Child Maltreatment

The protection of children from maltreatment is a complex challenge. To have a common understanding of child maltreatment, we will begin by defining child maltreatment. According to the U.S department of health and human services Administration for children and families child welfare information, child maltreatment is “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation.” (The child abuse prevention treatment act, n.d.). This definition appears to be clear, but in reality, does not take into account cultural differences, the fact that child maltreatment is not always immediately apparent/visible, or the large spectrum of actions that fall under the term of maltreatment. The mere definition reveals that child maltreatment is not black and white but instead multifaceted and broad (The child abuse prevention treatment act, n.d.).

In addition to understanding the definition of child maltreatment it is important to understand how these cases come to light. Traditionally speaking, a maltreatment case can be brought forth by any member of the community. In fact, many states mandate the reporting of child abuse and neglect to local law enforcement, making non reporting punishable by law. Child protective service workers, law enforcement officers, medical and mental health professionals, teachers/school personnel, and social workers are examples of mandated reporters in States such as Florida, New York, and California (Mandatory reporters of child abuse, child welfare, n.d.)

Presently not all states have the same reporting requirements. This becomes problematic as laws differ from state to state allowing perpetrators to use these differences to their advantage. Nonetheless, the federal child abuse prevention and treatment act (CAPTA) requires each state to have provisions or procedures for requiring certain individuals to report known or suspected instances of child abuse and neglect (About Capta: A legislative history, 2019). As federal mandates and state mandates are not one in the same neither are the reporting groups mentioned above. Therefore, it is essential to recognize these limitations so that law enforcement and child protective services who serve as frontline community personnel managing child maltreatment are armed with the proper knowledge to overcome such obstacles.

In terms of the historical presence of child maltreatment, child maltreatment dates back to the beginning of time. For centuries, civilizations have been known to have abandoned deformed and even killed their children. Since children have been considered the property or the responsibility of their parents the maltreatment of children has long been concealed behind closed doors or seen as customary amongst different cultures and religions. To put this into perspective, we are currently in the 21st century but child maltreatment has only been a concern since the 19th century (Child Abuse, a historical perspective, n.d.).

Child maltreatment did not become taboo or unacceptable in the United States until 1874 when a child named Mary-Ellen was repeatedly beaten and maltreated by her caretaker. This case was the first case to create public interest and change how adults treat children. A church social worker sent to the child’s home revealed that the child was malnourished, often whipped, and cut with scissors at the discretion of her caretaker.

Mary Ellen Wilson's case led to the founding of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC) in 1875. The first child protective agency in the world, the NYSPCC continues in the twenty-first century to work for the best interests of children (NYSPCC, history, n.d.).

Another milestone in child protection came in the form of federal involvement and aid. "The federal government first provided child welfare services with the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935 (49 Stat. 620). Under Title IV-B (Child Welfare Services Program) of the act, the Children's Bureau received funding for grants to states for "the protection and care of homeless, dependent, and neglected children and children in danger of becoming delinquent." (Social Security Administration, history, n.d.).

In 1974 Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA; Public Law 93-247). The law stated:

[Child abuse and neglect refer to] the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child under age eighteen, or the age specified by the child protection law of the state in question, by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances which indicate the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened thereby, as determined in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.; (About Capta: A legislative history, 2019).

Today, we have made great strides in both the number of publicly funded and privately funded agencies dedicated to protecting children. However, minimal resources, a shortage of personnel, and an overwhelming case load plagues this historically fragile population (The child abuse prevention treatment act, n.d.).

The definition of maltreatment, the way maltreatment cases are reported and the history of child maltreatment reveals that child maltreatment is very complex. This merits a deeper look on how agencies across the nation manage child maltreatment cases. Of particular interest, the efforts of Child Protection agencies and Law Enforcement agencies who are primarily responsible for Services and what collaborative efforts exist to protect this vulnerable population (Cross, et al, 2005).

Child protection services process

Both the law enforcement agencies and the child protection services agencies need to identify specific information in child maltreatment cases such as what type of abuse allegations are being made and who is the alleged perpetrator. What each agency does with the required information and what steps are taken differ due to their individual agency's responsibilities and mission (Sheppard, Zangrillo, 1996).

In the Child Protection Services process there are numerous steps along the way before a case is considered complete or closed. The process begins with the identification of an alleged maltreated child, followed by reporting of the situation, intake created by child protection services, initial assessment or investigation, assessment of the family, planning, service provision, evaluation of the family progress, and closure of the case (Goldman, et al, 2003).

In the identification step the information alleging child maltreatment can come about from a variety of ways. Child maltreatment can be identified from a neighbor, a friend, family member, or mandatory reporter. The most common is through the mandatory reporter as they are in the position to identify and also trained to be able to

identify a maltreated child. Once a mandatory reporter or other person identifies this information, it needs to be reported to child protective services. The child protective services intake officer will attempt to gather information such as the names of persons involved, ages of the child or children, sex of the child or children, location of the alleged incident, and the dates and times of the alleged incident. It is very important that this intake officer gather as much pertinent information as possible to help with the investigation. In 2000 education personnel reported the most cases. (Goldman, et al, 2003).

Once this intake officer has gathered all the necessary information they must determine whether or not it meets the guidelines for child maltreatment and whether or not an immediate response is necessary. This is a critical point in a child maltreatment case. In 2000, 62 percent of the nearly 3 million reports received nationwide were investigated (Goldman, et al, 2003).

If the decision is made to investigate then the case is assigned to a child protective services investigator who will respond within a reasonable amount of time to conduct an assessment. The child protective services investigator will have to assess several concerns such as whether the child maltreatment is substantiated, not substantiated, or reason for concern. They will also determine if the child is at risk of further maltreatment, and is the child safe, period. Also during this time the child protective services investigator will determine if the family needs some other type of emergency services. This may once again occur during the family assessment. Aside from determining the needs of the family they will determine the family strengths and weaknesses, what needs adjustments to reduce child maltreatment risk, and whether or not the family is ready for change (Depanfilis, Salus, 2003).

In the planning stage the child protective services investigator will prepare procedures or steps to reduce the possibility of further abuse. They will also ensure that these steps are being met and that progress is being made. Once the child protective services are no longer monitoring the family's progress the case will be closed (DePanfilis, Salus, 2003).

Law Enforcement investigator process

Law enforcement agencies receive information Just like child protective services does, where the initial identification and reporting can come from several ways. The one difference is where law enforcement is constantly in the communities therefore, they can identify potential victims through their training and experience (Law enforcement response to child abuse and neglect, 2014).

Once the law enforcement agency receives the initial information it will be routed to the specific area of the agency that investigates child maltreatment. The investigator who receives this information will have the responsibility to gather the pertinent facts, conduct a preliminary assessment of the risk to the child involved, and determine the priority of response to the alleged child maltreatment (Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, 1998).

The law enforcement investigator will observe and conduct initial interviews of all parties involved in the alleged incident to include the original person who reported the incident, witnesses, and victims. The investigator will identify and collect any and all

evidence associated to the alleged child maltreatment. The law enforcement investigator will need to determine the safety of the child by looking at different factors such as the family child maltreatment history, and whether the child will remain in harms way if not removed from the current situation (Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, 1998).

After all the interviews are completed and all the evidence is collected the law enforcement investigator will determine whether a crime has been committed and if so, whom the involved suspect is. Once the suspect has been identified the law enforcement investigator will decide on whether to interview the suspect or just make the arrest (Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, 1998).

Collaboration

As we discussed child protective services investigators and law enforcement investigators have similarities in their investigations but ultimately have different responsibilities. The collaboration of these two agencies is the preferred approach to investigating reports of child abuse according to a study completed by the American Human Association, however, it has been reported that this collaboration has been difficult to foster due to conflicting priorities, different requirements, and different management systems (Newman, Dannenfelser, 2005).

There are concerns with having these agencies conduct their own separate investigations such as the timing of the investigations where one investigation may be completed but the other is in a completely different stage. One of the main reasons to have law enforcement agencies and police services agency work in conjunction on cases involving maltreated children is to reduce the interviews the child is subjected to during these types of investigations. Multiple interviews may re-victimize the child causing further damage (Sheppard, Zangrillo, 1996).

In 2005 a study was conducted where 133 Child protective services workers and 157 law enforcement officers across 20 states were telephonically interviewed regarding collaboration of child abuse investigations specifically difficulties with collaboration of the two agencies and identifying facilitators to collaboration. The results named a number of difficulties with collaboration such as different mandates between Law enforcement and child protective services, conflict over case control, time and scheduling inconsistencies, insufficient resources, different protocols, inconvenient location, and lack of knowledge of individual investigators. The results for facilitators to collaborate were cross training that provides knowledge of each other's roles, co-housing and co-location, availability to each other and teamwork, communication, and good relationships (Newman, Dannenfelser, 1996).

The child protective services investigators in this study made it known that just the different training they receive compared to law enforcement investigators is a barrier alone and that law enforcement does not see this collaboration as a team effort but more of an individual effort. A big concern in individual investigations is the fact that child protective services investigators receive the cases faster than the law enforcement investigators. In turn they respond quicker to the incident location and also conduct interviews prior to the law enforcement investigator causing them to believe that child protective investigators will damage the case, or the perpetrator will change their story.

This study also revealed insufficient resources coming from both child protective services and law enforcement agencies. Specifically, it identifies the load of cases being too high for the amount of child abuse trained law enforcement officers and too high for well-trained child protective services investigators. Also identified was the turnover of child protective investigators, which was subsequently hindering a well-coordinated effective investigation. Consistently adding new investigators without the training was further hindering the investigation and collaboration due to unfamiliarity with protocols, interview techniques with children, or just child abuse overall (Newman, Dannenfelser, 1996).

Another barrier with collaboration between law enforcement investigators and child protective services investigators was the location of interviews. Having to travel to a specific center to be able to have a joint interview was causing a barrier on its own. It was suggested that having offices in the same building would be helpful. The study showed that some agencies had law enforcement and child protective services housed under one roof which would allow them to share information quickly and also respond to cases together quicker. With child protective services and law enforcement investigators in the same building it would help build relationships in turn improving the communication between the agencies. It would also limit the duplication of investigations. The last barrier identified over collaboration was conflicts over case control. Where child protective services investigators believe that they should take the lead on an interview, but law enforcement investigators believe that if someone is going to take the lead it should be them causing a barrier in the collaboration (Newman, Dannenfelser, 1996).

An important variable in helping the collaboration of both child protective services investigators and law enforcement investigators was cross training and continued education. Having one agency understand the procedures and responsibilities of the other agency would help the communication between the two agencies and the effectiveness of the investigation and collaboration (Newman, Dannenfelser, 1996).

It is stated that joint child maltreatment investigations involving child protection services and law enforcement investigators is practical because it can prevent issues such as child protection services investigators contacting suspects before the law enforcement investigators can as well as returning the children to their families prior to law enforcement interviewing the child. The joint contact would help preserve evidence and prevent the perpetrator from tampering with witnesses. Law enforcement can also assist the safety of the child by arresting the perpetrator further removing the child from harm. By collaborating in cases of maltreated children the investigators would respond simultaneously and if the parents are refusing access to the children the law enforcement investigators are trained to handle these situations as well as if the situation became dangerous law enforcement can step in. (Sheppard, Zangrillo, 1996).

Child maltreatment causes suffering to children and their families and can have long-term consequences. With millions of cases reported each year, child maltreatment is an ongoing issue that plagues our communities. Through the efforts of Child Protective Services and Law Enforcement investigators, perpetrators are identified, arrested, and prosecuted. This process however is not perfect and is often faced with obstacles. As the literature review revealed, the mere definition of child maltreatment and a historical background review unveils the complexities of child maltreatment. With each state dictated by different mandates it's understandable how child maltreatment can become

blurred and mismanaged. While the obstacles mentioned above are present, it does not dismiss the need to continue to help vulnerable victims given the limitations investigators face (child abuse a historical perspective, n.d.).

A detailed literature review explored the processes and procedures of Child Protective Services and Law enforcement detectives assigned to child maltreatment cases. Literature tells us that each agency works in the best interest of the child but the priorities of each are different. As described in the literature review priorities are different for each group and this is understandable but not optimal. The collaboration of these two agencies is the preferred approach to the investigation of child maltreatment and there are ways to improve the process. The goal is to create a more efficient and multiple disciplinary team-oriented response towards child maltreatment with the use of real time communication. Implementing these steps can help bridge the gap between child protection services and Law enforcement creating a better overall experience for victims and their family members.

Methods

The purpose of this research was to determine whether merging child protective services and police agencies' criminal investigations would be beneficial to the overall streamlining of protecting abused children. Data was gathered through telephonic interview surveys with members of the seven Florida agencies currently having merged child protective services with police agencies identified as, Walton County Sheriff's Office (WCSO), Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO), Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO), Manatee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), Pasco County Sheriff's Office (PCSO), Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PSO), and Seminole County Sheriff's Office (SCSO).

The survey questions were designed to determine the pros and cons of merging the two separate entities as well as identifying what would be changed and what would not. The participants chosen were those members who are currently integrated in the merged procedures of these agencies. Participants were kept anonymous to encourage participation and validity of data. Data regarding number of years and roles working within this field were collected only to identify if other determining factors exist. The survey was not mandatory but instead participatory. This is a weakness in the data collected simply because of volume. Agencies that meet the criteria for evaluation are minimal; therefore, sample size is a weakness in this survey.

Results

There are seven Sheriff Agencies in the state of Florida that have Child Protective Service Responsibilities under their management. Of these 7 agencies 6 agencies agreed to be telephonically interviewed in an effort to understand the pros and cons of the multidisciplinary team response towards child maltreatment for a return rate of 85%. Using a structured interview of 14 questions 3 command level sworn officers and 3 upper management civilians were interviewed over the course of four weeks. One representing

each agency participating. The following are the questions and responses obtained during this process.

The first question asked participants what their role was and how long have they had that role as well as their total experience. The three civilian participants were Directors or program managers of the child protective services unit for their respective agencies. One of the civilian participants had over 15 years' experience and was in their current role for seven years. The other two civilian participants had over 20 years' experience in their current role. The three sworn participants were Captains overseeing the child protective services within their agency. Two of the sworn participants had over 25 years of law enforcement experience with three years in their current role. The other sworn participant had over 32 years of law enforcement experience and seven years in their current role.

The second question asked the participants if they currently had the child protection services and law enforcement aspect currently merged in their agency and for how long. All the participants said that they did have the collaboration and that it had been in place for over 15 years.

Question three asked the participants how many child protective services employees were assigned to the unit and how many law enforcement investigators were assigned to the unit. One agency had over 140 staff members with seven total sworn personnel. Two agencies had over 100 staff members, one of which had nine sworn personnel and the other having two sworn personnel. Two agencies had over 80 staff members, one of which had 11 sworn personnel and the other not having any sworn personnel assigned to the unit. One agency had over 40 staff members with nine sworn personnel.

Question four asked the participants if they were employed by the state or their agency. All the participants were employed by their respective agency and were funded by a state grant.

Question five asked the participants if the child protective services unit was housed in the same building as the sworn investigating officers. Two of the agencies are housed in the same building and the other four agencies were not housed in the same building.

Question six asked the participants to explain the process that was used in an immediate response child abuse case for both the child protective investigator and the law enforcement investigator. All six agencies receive notifications from the child abuse hotline and all the agencies have an assessment team that determines if the case is an immediate response or not. All six agencies had child protective investigators respond together with a law enforcement investigator when it was an immediate response that met criminal criteria.

Question seven asked the participants to explain the process of a case that does not require immediate response and how they collaborate with the law enforcement investigator. All six agencies have an assessment team that will determine whether the case will be an immediate response or not. Five agencies will have a child protective investigator respond with a uniform officer or a law enforcement investigator only if it arose to a criminal case. One agency has a child protective investigator respond with a uniform patrol or a law enforcement investigator on every case.

Question eight asked the participants what access the child protective services investigators had to the law enforcement reports and databases and vice versa. Four

agencies gave the child protective investigators access to all of the law enforcement investigators reports and databases and the law enforcement investigators had full access to the child protective investigators reports. One agency did not provide the child protective investigators access to the law enforcement investigators reports but the law enforcement investigator had access to the child protective investigators reports. One agency gave the child protective investigators access to most law enforcement reports and the law enforcement investigators had access to the child protective investigators reports.

Question nine asked the participants if the child protective investigator responded together on every case with the law enforcement investigator. Five agencies only had uniform patrol officer or law enforcement investigator respond if the case rises to criminal in nature. One agency has a uniform patrol officer or law enforcement investigator respond on every single case.

Question ten asked the participants if there were any opportunities for cross training provided to either the child protective services investigators or law enforcement investigators. All six agencies have training opportunities for the child protective investigators and the law enforcement investigators. All six agencies have a similar academy to train the child protective investigators and it takes approximately one year to get them fully certified.

Question eleven asked the participants if the child protective investigators supervisors were sworn personnel or civilian supervisors. All six agencies are mainly civilian supervisors with minimal sworn personnel in the chain of command.

Question twelve asked participants if they thought the merge with child protective services and law enforcement was beneficial and what were those benefits. All six agencies felt that the merge was beneficial to the overall process of child abuse investigations. All six agencies felt that the merge helped streamline the process.

Question thirteen asked the participants how many cases they investigated on average yearly. Three agencies averaged over 4,000 cases per year. Two agencies averaged over 5,000 cases per year and one agency averaged over 10,000 cases per year.

Question fourteen asked the participants if in their current notification/call out procedures if it would be possible for a law enforcement investigator to not be notified or notified late by a child protective investigator on a case that would require an immediate response. All six agencies stated that this would not be possible.

Discussion

In an effort to gather the most comprehensive information about this topic, telephonic interviews were conducted with six agencies in Florida that currently have a multidisciplinary team approach in place. Earlier research suggests that agencies who have both law enforcement and child protective services working together have the most favorable results in child Maltreatment cases. The results support research like that of Cross et al. which reviewed several reports that have delineated the positive impacts of co-involvement of police and child protective services. Two of the benefits discovered in Cross and Spath's interviews: 1. Ability to conduct joint interviews and avoid redundant

interviews of the child and 2. The ability to gather more information together and gather more leads, were both identified in the interviews conducted in this report. (Cross, et al, 2005)

The results reveal that all six agencies felt that the merge was extremely beneficial to the overall process of child maltreatment cases. The Manatee County Sheriff's Office participant said that the communication between the child protective service investigators and the law enforcement investigators improved drastically which in turn improved the relationships between the two. They also said that by improving the relationships and communications it in turn helped with the streamlining of information allowing instant access to information that would not normally be received quickly without the merge. The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office participant said that as a whole both law enforcement investigators and child protective investigators can respond quicker and collectively to changes or trends in the community. Another benefit they mentioned was the familiarization of each other's overall investigation. That familiarization allows for example, a child protective investigator to directly contact a law enforcement investigator they have an established relationship with and clear a case with them that is borderline a criminal investigation. The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office participant said that the merge helped with the response times on child maltreatment cases due to being under one agency. Pasco County Sheriff's Office participant said that one of the most beneficial reasons of the merge was that child maltreatment cases would not be missed/overlooked or have delayed notifications because of the improved communication. The Seminole County Sheriff's Office participant said that an extremely beneficial aspect of the merge was the improved sharing of information and access to each other's resources.

What I found interesting was that the Broward Sheriff's Office participant said that because of the better communication and relationships they often lost child protective investigators to the police academy preparing for a career in law enforcement.

In my opinion, one of the most important responses to note during the interviews is that all six agencies said they were funded by the state and/or received grants due to agreements with legislation and the child welfare agency who in the state of Florida is the Department of Children and Families. This is important because any agency considering a merge is going to have a large financial commitment but having government financial support would help alleviate that commitment.

All six agencies have their own similar version of a child protective investigator's academy with an on the field training aspect. All the agencies also stated that it normally takes about one year to be fully certified as a child protective investigator including the academy.

Out of the six agencies interviewed only one of the agencies had the law enforcement investigators and the child protective investigators housed under the same roof. Two of the agencies said it would be an improvement to have them housed under one roof, but they are actually housed near each other therefore it is not a concern. The other three agencies said that it would greatly benefit them if they were housed under the same roof.

All six agencies said that due to the number of cases they receive on annual basis they have a full-time assessment response team who reviews every case assigned to the unit and determines if it should be assigned to a child protective investigator or returned over to the child welfare agency as no case assignment, meaning it does not reach the

criteria for assignment to a child protective investigator. This process was stated to be extremely beneficial by all the agencies interviewed because it helped to not waste any child protective investigators time.

It's also important to note that the caseload was high in all six agencies, with each agency averaging a minimum of 400 cases a month. The case load not only implies a need for collaboration between law enforcement and child protective services in order to meet demands but also reveals the challenges each agency faces in protecting the community.

In addition to caseload, the geographic location of each agency plays a pivotal role in the type of cases these agencies investigate. All agencies interviewed are all located in metropolitan cities with diverse populations.

While it appears that there is not a large sample size to gather information on this topic due to only being seven agencies in the state of Florida currently having this merge in place and not being able to interview one of the seven agencies, I still felt that the information gathered from those agencies that participated was so consistent that it reflects a much larger sample size.

Limitations of study

One of the limitations of this study is the varying backgrounds of the participants interviewed. Civilians and sworn officers have different training and backgrounds and may approach cases with different techniques. Another weakness is the varying number of years that each person interviewed has with dealing with maltreatment cases, with the most experienced having 20 years and the least with 3 years of experience. Finally, the sample size is a weakness of this study as only six agencies were interviewed. While this included almost all the agencies currently merged in Florida it would have been beneficial to conduct interviews in other states who have similar populations as that in Florida.

Recommendations

The primary purpose of this paper was to determine the pros and cons of the multidisciplinary team response towards child maltreatment. As the research has shown that joint investigations provide a quicker and often less invasive process that helps protect victims, it is surprising to learn that only seven agencies in the state of Florida have this process in place. This is a process that can provide mutual support with second opinions in cases that are not only emotionally challenging but mentally challenging as well. In addition to helping the victim, this collaboration also helps protect the investigators.

Child protective investigators differ in training than law enforcement investigators and performing joint investigations could help provide support to Child protective investigators who may be uncomfortable with conducting certain home visits and in turn could also help law enforcement investigators in streamlining the removal and placement of maltreated children.

The pros of working as a multidisciplinary team outweigh any cons and if agencies are serious about helping vulnerable victims, adapting a multidisciplinary approach is the most effective method currently available.

To anyone researching this topic or in a position to implement joint investigation units in their departments, data supports this process. It is recommended that agencies implement a multidisciplinary unit within their organization for enhanced communications, better sharing of information, and most importantly an improved maltreated child investigation, helping keep our children safe.

Captain Andy Valdes has been with the Miami-Dade Police Department for 20 years. As an officer he worked in high crime patrol areas and spent eight years in the Narcotics Bureau working numerous undercover deals as well as being assigned as a Task Force Officer with a federal agency. As a Sergeant he worked in patrol, proactive units, and spent his last two years within the Internal Affairs, Investigative Section before being promoted to Lieutenant. As a Lieutenant he worked in the Communications Bureau, and was assigned as the Administrative Lieutenant within South Operations and finally assigned to the Special Victims Bureau as the commanding officer for Domestic Crimes, Vulnerable Victims Unit and the Sexual Predator Enforcement Team. In December of 2021, he was promoted to Captain and is currently assigned the North Operations, Northside District overseeing approximately 240 employees which cover patrol, administration, and investigations. Captain Valdes received a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice Management from Union University.

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Appendix A

Survey/Interview Questions

1. What is your role, how long have you had it and what is your total time in the field?
2. Do you currently have child services and law enforcement merged as one unit and how for how long?
3. How many Child services employees are assigned to the unit? How many Law enforcement investigators are assigned to the unit?
4. Who are you employed by? (Sheriff's Office or State agency)
5. Are the child protective services investigators housed in the same location as the law enforcement investigators?
6. Please explain the process used when an immediate response case comes in. Specifically, the process of law enforcement investigators and that of the child protective services component?
7. Please explain the process of a delayed case (a case that does not require immediate response) such as a child abuse hotline intake and how both agencies collaborate in the investigation.
8. What access do law enforcement investigators and child protective investigators have for each other's reports?

9. Do law enforcement investigators and child protective investigators respond together on every case?
10. What training is given to the child protective investigator and is there any opportunity for cross training?
11. Who supervises the child protective investigators is it sworn or civilian personnel?
12. Do you see benefits by merging child protective investigators and law enforcement? What were they?
13. On average how many cases does your agency hand annually?
14. Is it possible for the law enforcement investigators to not be notified in a case requiring immediate response from child protective investigators in this merge?