

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

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HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Introduction

The Human Services Committee reviews social services operations in the county, including:

- Child Support Services
- Department of Aging and Adult Services
- Human Services Group Administration
- Performance, Education & Resource Centers (PERC)
- Preschool Services
- Public Guardian/Public Administrator
- Transitional Assistance Department
- Veterans Affairs Department
- Cities/Municipalities
- School Districts and Community College Districts
- Special Districts

The following departments were investigated:

- Children and Family Services
- Department of Homeless Services
- Preschool Services
- Veterans Affairs
- Welfare Fraud Unit

The Human Services Committee investigated two complaints filed with the Grand Jury, with no findings.

The following is the committee's report, including findings and recommendations, on the Children's Assessment Center.

CHILDREN'S ASSESSMENT CENTER

BACKGROUND

Prior to the opening of the Children's Assessment Center (CAC), abused children referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) often had to endure a number of interviews performed by the multiple agencies involved in the investigation of the case. Often victimized children suffered unnecessary trauma in this process. In 1992, the Children's Network Policy Council established a task force consisting of representatives from Children and Family Services (CFS), County Medical Center, Public Health, Behavioral Health, the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Office, Juvenile Court, Family Law Court, County Counsel, Children's Network, Children's Fund, and Loma Linda University Medical Center (LLUMC) to explore the possibility of creating a quality, comprehensive program, to provide forensic interviews and evidentiary medical examinations in one, child friendly, location for sexually abused children in San Bernardino County.

A partnership between Loma Linda University Medical Center, San Bernardino County, and law enforcement agencies was formed. With the full support of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, the Children's Assessment Center, a private/public partnership, was opened on January 24, 1994, in a suite of offices donated by LLUMC. An Advisory Board was established as the Governing Board for the Assessment Center made up of representatives from all partnership agencies. As the benefits of the Children's Assessment Center services to sexually abused children were realized, it became apparent that these same services would also be beneficial to victims of physical abuse as well as sexual abuse. The Center began to see physically abused children in 1998. The number of Children receiving services increased steadily over these first few years of operation.

In 1999, a larger, more permanent facility was needed for the Assessment Center. Children's Fund, a non-profit organization whose purpose is to raise funds for children in need, entered into a new partnership with San Bernardino County to make that facility a reality. Children's Fund began a capitol campaign to raise the funding for the purchase

and remodeling of the new facility, which is owned and maintained by San Bernardino County. A contract was formed between the administrators of Loma Linda University Children's Hospital, and Children and Family Services under San Bernardino County's Human Services Department. CFS provided forensic interviewers, the Center's management staff, and financial assistance. Currently 80-100 children are seen monthly. Since opening in 1994 over 8,000 children have received services at the Assessment Center.

FINDINGS

1. During the investigation into the CAC partnership, members of the Grand Jury heard many times the Children's Assessment Center is a gift to our county and our children. Nationally there are approximately 180 Board Certified Pediatric Forensic Physicians and San Bernardino County is fortunate to have two such physicians currently and one additional physician soon to be certified. They work tirelessly, and fiercely, for the rights and safety of abused children. Clients of the Center are child victims of alleged abuse from birth to age 18 referred to the Assessment Center by Children and Family Services, a law enforcement agency, and/or the Family Law Court.
2. The Children's Assessment Center is an important tool for the protection of suspected child victims of abuse from duplicative interviews for legal, medical, child protection, and clinical purposes. This streamlining of the process is shown in Attachments #1 and #2, which dramatically shows through the eyes of a child how the Assessment Center approach is less intrusive. The role of LLUMC and the forensic physicians is to medically evaluate the abuse. The role of CFS is to safeguard the children in an immediate crisis (e.g. removal from home, take to the CAC or the emergency room) and to provide recommendations for future steps to correct problems (e.g. parenting classes, nutritional classes, anger, and addiction management). It is the role of law enforcement to identify and deal with the perpetrator of the abuse.

3. The CAC offers an opportunity for all parties to work together while gathering information, and provide a unified response to the family. Services at the Center include forensic interviews by CFS workers who have received specialized training in child forensic interviewing. Evidentiary medical exams are performed at a minimal cost by the three forensic pediatric specialists from the LLUMC. These forensic physicians also provide expert testimony in court. Written reports are provided regarding the outcomes of the interviews and medical appointments. Crisis intervention and referrals for counseling are provided to family members by a Victim Witness Advocate from the District Attorney office assigned to the Center. The Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings discuss cases and the Child Death Review Team meets to discuss the cause of a death.
4. The relationship among the partners began to deteriorate in 2007. It became clear to the Grand Jury through statements we heard from enough sources there was dissension among CFS, the Center, and the partnership arrangement. With budgetary concerns in mind, CFS learned that it was not statutorily mandated to fund the CAC, and not mandated to request a forensic medical examination for a child believed to have been sexually or physically abused. Only law enforcement is required to seek a forensic medical examination of a sexual assault victim. The cost of such an examination is billed to the requesting law enforcement agency. After learning this information CFS discontinued the CAC Advisory Board, and no longer attended the MDT meetings. The partnership started to fall apart.
5. The Grand Jury interviewed many individuals affiliated with the CAC. The following allegations were repeated by numerous witnesses:
 - There seems to be a progressive change for the worse in the attitude of Children and Family Services towards the Children's Assessment Center. There is a lack of communication and cooperation. CFS went from being a partner to being an overseer trying to control all the functions at the Center.

- The Social Workers who bring cases to the CAC are re-active instead of pro-active. They have a fundamental misunderstanding of the cases. They have protocol but don't follow it. There is confusion as to how to work a case. Morale is low.
 - CFS hides behind a screen of confidentiality, and does not want to give out any information. Pertinent information was needed by the Child Death Review Team (CDRT) to determine the cause of death of a child. The team was asked to get a subpoena for the information. CFS refused to let the Grand Jury review even redacted data. We requested statistics and were given a bunch of meaningless numbers. The information that corresponded with the numbers was confidential and not provided. Members of the Grand Jury were invited to attend a meeting of the Child Death Review Team. There they signed a confidentiality statement. Before the next meeting of the CDRT the Grand Jury was "uninvited" by some members because of confidentiality reasons.
 - The mission at CFS is blurred. They appear to have placed a higher priority on budget and lawsuits. Children and Family Services wrote a Request for Proposal (RFP) wanting to sever the partnership with Loma Linda stating it was too expensive. They asked for bids from other medical facilities; one of which was Arrowhead Regional Medical Center (ARMC). A physician from ARMC was brought to tour the Children's Assessment Center facility in order to possibly assume the medical services. However, Loma Linda University Medical Center is the only Children's Hospital with forensic pediatricians in the Inland Empire. ARMC could not find anyone who was qualified. No other facility had personnel with the expertise or could compete financially with the minimal cost of bringing a child to the Assessment center.
6. There is little accountability for Children and Family Services to an outside authority. There is no transparency. Riverside County CFS had an outside audit

- conducted by the Child Welfare League of America (see Attachment #3). They now use a system called Technical Assistance, Review and Consultation (TRAC) which has been very successful. Training for this system was offered to San Bernardino County CFS by the Riverside County CFS. The offer was turned down. When the Director of Children and Family Services was asked about TRAC, she stated she had never heard of it. She also stated she is not high on any risk assessment tool. On occasion the state will take “a sampling” of cases to look for compliance.
7. In order to maintain the Center, and the partnership, a new protocol was written by Dr. Clare Sheridan, one of the Forensic Pediatricians from Loma Linda. She suggested two new committees; a Governing Board to meet regularly to decide policy and procedure for the Assessment Center, and an Executive Committee for the month to month management of the Center with Dr. Sheridan as the Chair. The Sheriff’s Department has assumed the financial contract responsibility for the medical examinations related to law enforcement cases but it has not been formalized yet.

The Grand Jury commends CEO, Greg Devereaux for becoming personally involved with supporting the work of the Children’s Assessment Center.

RECOMMENDATIONS

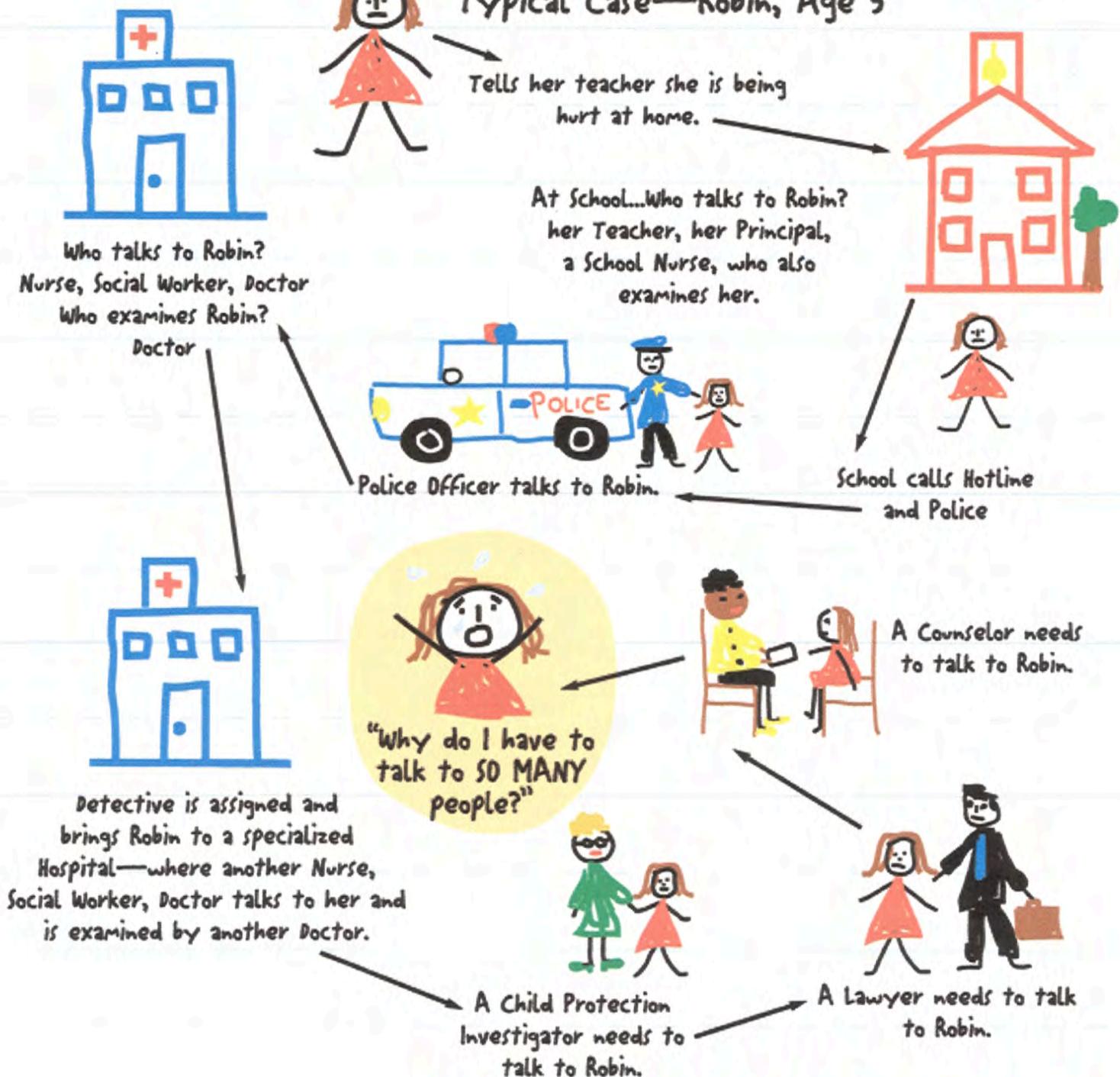
- 11-25 The Governing Board of the Children’s Assessment Center take a pro-active role in resolving conflicts among the partner agencies so that they work together toward the well- being of the children. (Findings 4, 5)
- 11-26 The Governing Board of the Children’s Assessment Center determine appropriate standards and policies to address differences in the role of each agency. (Finding 2)
- 11-27 The Executive Committee provide a good medium for discussion so that each agency is in agreement of the best course of action for the children. (Findings 2, 3)

11-28 Retain a firm with the qualifications and expertise such as the Child Welfare League of America to perform an audit of Children and Family Services to ensure that mechanisms are in place for oversight of the division. (Finding 6)

<u>Responding Agency</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>	<u>Date Due</u>
Chief Executive Officer	11-25 through 11-28	September 30, 2011

WHAT USED TO HAPPEN WHEN KIDS NEEDED HELP FOR ABUSE

Typical Case—Robin, Age 5



Robin had to talk to 15 people, but now . . .
(turn over)



WHAT HAPPENS TODAY WHEN KIDS NEED HELP FOR ABUSE



Robin tells her story, while a detective, CPS worker, and State's Attorney listen as a team.

"This Place is Great"

Robin can see a doctor.

Robin is referred to a counselor, who will help her heal.

Robin's mom talks to an advocate to help her understand the system.

Robin comes to the CCAC with her mom.

Tells her teacher that she is being hurt by her mom's new boyfriend at home.

Start Here

... Robin talks to 3 people



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ATTACHMENT #3

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BEST-KIDS

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