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June 27, 2006

To: Orange County Grand Jury Foreperson Bette Flick

The following response is provided by the Westminster Police Department (WPD) in compliance with Penal Code § 933 and 933.05, to the findings and recommendations in the 2005-2006 Orange County Grand Jury report, "Improving Child Abuse Response." As instructed, this report is focused on findings 6.2 and 6.3 and recommendations 7.1 and 7.2.

BACKGROUND:

"To facilitate rapid social worker response to child abuse calls, the Social Services Agency (SSA) developed the enhanced protocol in 2005 to streamline the process of identifying placement alternatives for children requiring protective custody and to reduce potential trauma to them."

"When an officer responds to a call, which may lead to the removal of a child from her/his home, the enhanced protocol calls for the officer to contact CAR and request a social worker to participate in a joint assessment. The protocol calls for a 30 minute response by the social worker. If the officer stays on-site through the arrival of the social workers, they participate in a joint assessment. If the call is after-hours or the officer cannot wait until the social worker arrives, the officer handles the incident based on discretion and the law enforcement agency policy for the protection of the child."

FINDINGS:

6.2 Expansion of the enhanced protocol. "Having a social worker respond to the location of the abused child provides several advantages to the law enforcement officer, starting with the first call for assistance, which also serves as the initial notification to CAR. Other advantages include:

- A dedicated phone number providing a central contact.
- A 30 minute response time from the social worker.
- Reduction in paperwork, professional assistance, and a collaborative final decision on the appropriate disposition of the child."

The WPD agrees with the findings outlined in Protocol Advantages to Law Enforcement, and that these changes represent significant advantages to children, their families, and law enforcement.

6.3 Law enforcement agency procedures and training on child abuse response. "Those agencies which have not yet been approached by the SSA on the enhanced protocol do not refer to it in their procedures and do not train officers in its use."

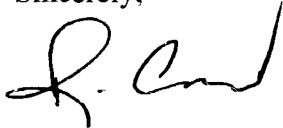
The WPD Policy and Procedure section 330 outlines our response to calls involving minor children. As is mentioned in the report, it does not contain the language of the enhanced protocol. However, the WPD agrees upon acceptance of the enhanced protocol to provide roll call training and the enhanced protocol will be incorporated into our standard operating procedure.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

7.1 Law enforcement agency acceptance of SSA Field Response Protocol. The WPD agrees to the SSA enhanced Field Response Protocol as social worker capacity is increased.

7.2 Law enforcement training on the enhanced protocol. As stated in 6.3, the WPD will provide training as to the enhanced protocol procedures upon its formal adoption.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Coopman', written in a cursive style.

Ronald Coopman
Captain, Operations

Westminster Police Department