Identifying Physical Child Abuse and the Role of the MDT

Presented by

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The Origins of Child Abuse Investigations

- Dr. C Henry Kempe – “Battered Child Syndrome”
- Child abuse…. Is frequently something more than a one time event, it repeats itself over and over again
- Child abuse – progression of events that escalate

The Caretaker

Generally can be the….
- Mother
- Father
- Boyfriend or Girlfriend
- Grandparent
- Aunt
- Babysitter

Identification of Terms

- The Investigation – CPS – DCFS (IL)
- LAW ENFORCEMENT
**CPS – Child Protective Services**

- **Federal Law**
  - Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)
  - Every state must have a CPS agency
  - Every state must have statutes that define child maltreatment
  - Every state must articulate how CPS will take reports & respond to child maltreatment allegations

**Traditional Multi-Disciplinary Child Abuse Team**

- **MDT Core members**
  - Law Enforcement
  - Child Protective Services (CPS – DCFS)
  - Medical Community
  - Prosecutor
  - Mental Health – Therapy
  - Child Advocacy Center (CAC)

**Two Investigations – Two Goals**

- **CPS Responsibility** –
  - What happened in the past?
  - Who did it?
  - What's likely to happen in the future?

- **Law Enforcement Responsibility** –
  - What happened in the past?
  - Who did it?
  - Was it a crime?

**Physical Child Abuse Dynamics**

- Causation factors
- Triggering mechanism
- Target children
- Over discipline

**Suspected Abusive Caretaker Assessment**

- Poor parenting skills
- Provide some advice
- Referral to CPS – Mandated Reporter
- Referral to Family / Divorce Court
- Referral to Juvenile Court – CPS
- Referral to Criminal Court – Intent?
Injury Assessment

Caretaker Question – “How did the accident happen?”

Investigation – Systematic Elimination
- Natural or Normal
- Accidental
- Nonaccidental

Accidental Injuries
- Bony Prominences –

Primary Target Zone

Systematic Elimination …..
- Natural or normal
- Accidental
- Nonaccidental

Physical Child Abuse Injury
Weapon Identification
- Weapon of opportunity
- Favorite family weapon
Some of the Investigative Issues in Physical Abuse Cases

- May occur in front of a witness
- In the majority of the physical abuse cases the medical provider won't provide an answer for the investigator....
- In most situations the victim will not want the offender punished
- BUT, evidence of multiple events can be used as corroboration of a crime

NCJRS
800-851-3420 or www.ncjrs.gov

USDOJ Publication # 243908

Recognizing When a Child's Injury or Illness Is Caused by Abuse

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Thank you!