ESCARS

ELECTRONIC SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORT SYSTEM

CHRISTINE VON HELMOLT
ESCARS DEPUTY-IN-CHARGE
SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORT (SCAR)
California Department of Justice form SS8572
Use is mandated throughout the state.
Guiding statutory scheme is CANRA

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act
Penal Code § 11164 et. seq.
CANRA

- Penal Code § 11164 et. seq.
- California legislature requires Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to cross-report allegations of suspected child abuse to each other and the District Attorney

Why?

“to prevent cases from falling through the cracks”
WHAT IS ESCARS

• LA County envisioned, created and currently utilizes ESCARS, which facilitates the mandated duty to cross-report allegations of suspected child abuse between all affected agencies in order to be in compliance with CANRA (PC §11166(a)).

• ESCARS assists in the elimination of errors and lengthy time delays that transpire when paper-based methods of reporting are employed, i.e., fax, mail, hand-sorting, etc.

• ESCARS also expedites the secure electronic transmission and receipt of SCARs amongst all relevant agencies.
**WHAT GETS REPORTED**

- Child victim
- Perpetrator is **ANY PERSON**
  - *This includes out-of-home suspect*
- Following types of abuse must be reported:
  - Physical Abuse
  - Sexual Abuse
  - Neglect
  - Emotional Abuse

Penal Code § 11164
WHAT ELSE TRIGGERS A SCAR?

- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Guns
- Domestic Violence
  ✓ Child present
- Child Endangerment
- Human Trafficking/CSEC
Call: Child Protection Hotline

CWS/CMS

DCFS

Cross Report to DCFS & LEA

Social Worker Responds

Investigate

Law Enforcement

LEA Responds

DA

Audit
The benefits of ESCARS include, but are not limited to:

- Access to historical SCARs relating to either a victim/suspect from various jurisdictions within LA County
- Ability to monitor the progress and status of a SCAR
- Protect children by way of information sharing and teamwork

Documents agency cross-reporting

- Law Enforcement ↔ DCFS
- Penal Code §§ 11164(j) & (k)
ESCARS PURPOSE

- Separate but parallel investigations
  - ESCARS aids in parallel investigations by facilitating the transfer of information between social workers and law enforcement
    - Potentially minimizes fewer victim interviews, as well as, more timely communication between relevant agencies
  - Provides an investigative tool for the victim and/or suspect
    - In-Home and Out-of-Home Abuse
ESCARS AND THE PROSECUTOR
DA RESPONSIBILITIES

- Locate SCAR
- Search ESCARS history on suspect and victim
- Update ESCARS
  - Assigned DA contact information and case number
- Check ESCARS periodically throughout the course of a case
  - New SCARs may have been generated during this time
ESCARS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT
LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Receive SCAR
- Investigate SCAR
- Update ESCARS with investigation outcome
  - ✓ Crime Suspected
    - Assigned Investigator contact information
  - ✓ Crime Suspected – Not Child Abuse
    - ✓ i.e., Domestic Violence, Drug raid child present, etc.
  - ✓ No Crime Suspected
  - ✓ No Investigation
ESCARS AND DCFS
DCF'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Child Protection Hotline
  ✓ Create and upload SCAR to system
- CSW receives SCAR
- Investigate SCAR
- Update ESCARS with investigation outcome
  ✓ Substantiated
  ✓ Inconclusive
  ✓ Unfounded
ESCARS AND THE DA’S ESCARS UNIT
Los Angeles County

56,025

Every SCAR is a call for service
ESCARS UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Deputy-in-Charge and four paralegals
- Audit SCARs
- Conducts trainings throughout Los Angeles County
  ✓ Law enforcement and district attorney’s
    ▪ CANRA
    ▪ Using ESCARS as an investigative tool
    ▪ Updating Requirements
    ▪ Navigating through the system
- Compile yearly law enforcement statistics of ESCARS
- Steering Committee Chair
ESCARS UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

• Deputy-in-Charge and four paralegals
• Audit SCARs
• Conducts trainings throughout Los Angeles County
  ✓ Law enforcement and district attorney’s
    ▪ CANRA
    ▪ Using ESCARS as an investigative tool
    ▪ Updating Requirements
    ▪ Navigating through the system
• Compile yearly law enforcement statistics of ESCARS
• Steering Committee Chair
ESCARS STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
STEERING COMMITTEE

• Committee meets monthly
• Topics discussed
  ✓ Policy/Legal Questions
  ✓ Fixes/Issues
  ✓ Upgrade Suggestions
  ✓ Training and Seminar planning
SCAR HISTORY

• The impact of ESCARS on discovery investigation and prosecution of child abuse is tremendous, when you consider how child abuse is perpetrated

• In an effort to prevent discovery of the abuse, abusers frequently:
  ✓ Go to different hospitals
  ✓ Change school districts
  ✓ Move residences
Up close it looks like nothing......
From above it’s everything…

Allegations that don’t make it onto a RAP sheet may make it into ESCARS
He made stops along the way...
IF THERE WAS NO ESCARS

- The DA would not have known of the prior history
  - There was no RAP sheet
  - There were no cases
- The second and third victim would never have been re-interviewed
- The suspect may not have been charged with multiple counts

This story may have had a different ending
Christine Von Helmolt
Deputy-in-Charge
213-257-2351
cvonhelmolt@da.lacounty.gov

Christopher Chung
Paralegal/Auditor
213-257-2051
cchung@da.lacounty.gov

Tiffany Jimenez
Paralegal/Auditor
213-257-2181
tjimenez@da.lacounty.gov

Vanessa Rizzo
Paralegal/Auditor
213-257-2178
vrizzo@da.lacounty.gov

Lori Sri-Ampai
Paralegal/Auditor
213-257-2180
lmaleerat@da.lacounty.gov