

# Family Crimes Bureau

**Child abuse, domestic violence, Internet pornography and the exploitation of children are part of the daily lives of the unique men and women assigned to the Family Crimes Bureau (FCB).**

Sixty-two sworn and 15 civilian employees, supported by a staff of volunteers and reserves, work in concert to address family needs and families in crisis. The Child Abuse Detail investigates the sexual and physical abuse of children. The Domestic Violence Detail incorporates the STOP-IT Program, which seeks to assess risk and stop domestic violence recidivism. The SAFE Team partners resources from various layers of government to stem the burgeoning risk to children with access to the Internet. Each detail works closely with the other.

The Family Crimes Bureau is the product of expansion, reorganization, and augmentation. Formerly called the Juvenile Investigations Bureau, Family Crimes Bureau addresses more than crimes against minors. Headquartered at STARS, the Bureau maintains a Child Abuse Referral and Intake Desk, and a state-of-the art audio/video child interview room. Command and operational staff work at headquarters, as do two of the four investigative teams assigned to the Child Abuse Detail.



From the Antelope Valley to Avalon and Lost Hills to the San Gabriel Valley, the Family Crimes Bureau actively participates in multi-disciplinary child abuse and domestic violence intervention.

The Family Crimes Bureau works closely with the Department of Children and Family Services and has membership in several committees of the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN), as well as participation in family violence prevention programs.

Personnel are actively involved in a multitude of outreach efforts where they provide input into issues involving child abuse and domestic violence from a law enforcement perspective.

Family Crimes Bureau personnel actively participate in multi-disciplinary child abuse and domestic violence intervention centers located throughout Los Angeles County. Four centers of particular importance are the Harbor-UCLA Child Sexual Abuse Crisis Center, the Antelope Valley Abuse Network Team (AVANT), the Stuart House in Santa Monica, and the Vulnerable Child Unit at USC Medical Center. Each of these locations provide a network of child protective services, including



A SAFE Team member intercepts child molesters who use the Internet to prey on vulnerable children.

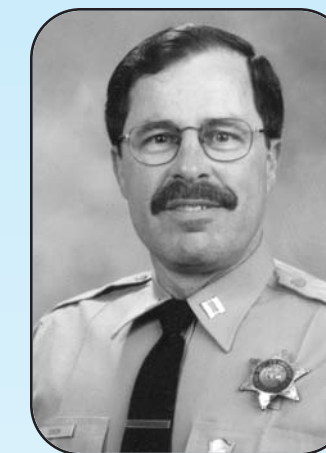
medical and psychological screening and evaluations, in addition to prosecutorial services involving the Family Crimes Bureau working in concert with the District Attorney's Office in prosecuting offenders. These four centers provide what amounts to a "one stop shop" investigation which greatly aids child abuse victims and their families.

Family Crimes Bureau personnel have frequently devoted their personal time and effort to helping child abuse and domestic violence victims and their families by establishing or participating in fund raisers designed to offset the costs of medical care resulting from their assault.

### Child Abuse Detail

There are four child abuse investigative teams at the FCB. Each team is supervised by a sergeant.

The South Team is housed at STARS and is responsible for cases emanating from Lakewood, Norwalk, Pico Rivera, and Avalon Station areas. This past year, the team han-



CAPTAIN  
Marvin J. Dixon  
Family Crimes Bureau

### FAMILY CRIMES BUREAU CASELOAD DATA 1999

Cases Investigated	2,954
Physical Abuse Cases*	1,246
Male Victims	884
Female Victims	813
Sexual Abuse Cases*	1,712
Male Victims	410
Female Victims	1,595
Suspects Arrested By FCB Personnel	808
Children Taken Into Protective Custody	259

\*One child abuse case may involve more than one victim

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**Family Crimes Bureau Caseload by Station Area  
1996 Through 1999 Station**

Station	1996	1997	1998	1999
Avalon	5	5	7	9
Carson	161	146	158	143
Century	287	250	280	297
Crescenta Valley/Altadena	97	86	67	69
East Los Angeles	243	226	185	192
Industry	199	179	162	169
Lakewood	322	367	356	312
Lancaster	630	656	603	356
Lennox	186	168	169	160
Lomita	80	51	51	52
Lost Hills/Malibu	48	62	43	41
Marina Del Rey	27	22	27	26
Norwalk	229	286	241	213
Palmdale*	*	*	*	274
Pico Rivera	125	116	87	82
Santa Clarita Valley	191	182	171	194
Temple City	177	166	159	170
Walnut/San Dimas	198	213	175	165
West Hollywood	24	19	21	18

\*In 1999, the case totals became available for Palmdale



Collecting water temperature evidence from a suspected child abuse site.

dled several newsworthy cases, one of which involved teenage girls who were drugged and raped. In one of the cases, the suspect faced "three strikes" prosecution and several years in prison.

The West Team is also at STARS and handles cases that occur in areas served by Century, Lomita, West Hollywood, Lost Hills/Malibu, Carson, Marina del Rey and Lennox Stations.

The North Team is located in the renovated Antelope Valley Station. This team handles cases in the Lancaster, Palmdale, Santa Clarita Valley, and Crescenta Valley Station areas. The area leads the County in the number of child abuse cases handled.

The East Team office is situated in West Covina and provides services to stations in the San Gabriel Valley and East Los Angeles County areas. Investigators are assigned to handle cases reported by Industry, Walnut, Temple, and East Los Angeles Stations. The West Covina office is equipped with a child interview room and presents a comfortable, non-threatening environment for suitable confidential services.

Child abuse and neglect scar the child and later contribute to alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic discord, poor performance in school, and low self-esteem, all ingredients for criminality. One of the Bureau's missions is to begin the 21st Century by establishing a credible and more realistic Child Abuse Detail within the Family Crime Bureau with the ability to positively shape the future of its victims.

Child abuse investigations are complex and time consuming, requiring personal contact by investigators with victims, witnesses, suspects, medical practitioners, and other child advocates throughout the County. All cases are considered active and require a disposition, typically within 90 days. FCB has successfully increased criminal filing rates through intensive training of staff and increased resource availability to allow investigators to travel to locations outside of the County and work unimpeded on selected cases. New Unit policies and procedures compel investigators to "leave no stone unturned in their quest for the truth."

These efforts have resulted in more dangerous felons going to prison and many child victims receiving the protection and care which they deserve. A caseload ratio of 100 investigations per year, per investigator has been the norm, keeping child abuse investigators very busy and challenged.

The Family Crimes Bureau is committed to addressing the need to streamline the issuance and receipt of all child abuse referrals to/from DCFS. This is a mandated procedure which FCB has assumed responsibility for maintaining. FCB handles over 11,000 referrals per year.

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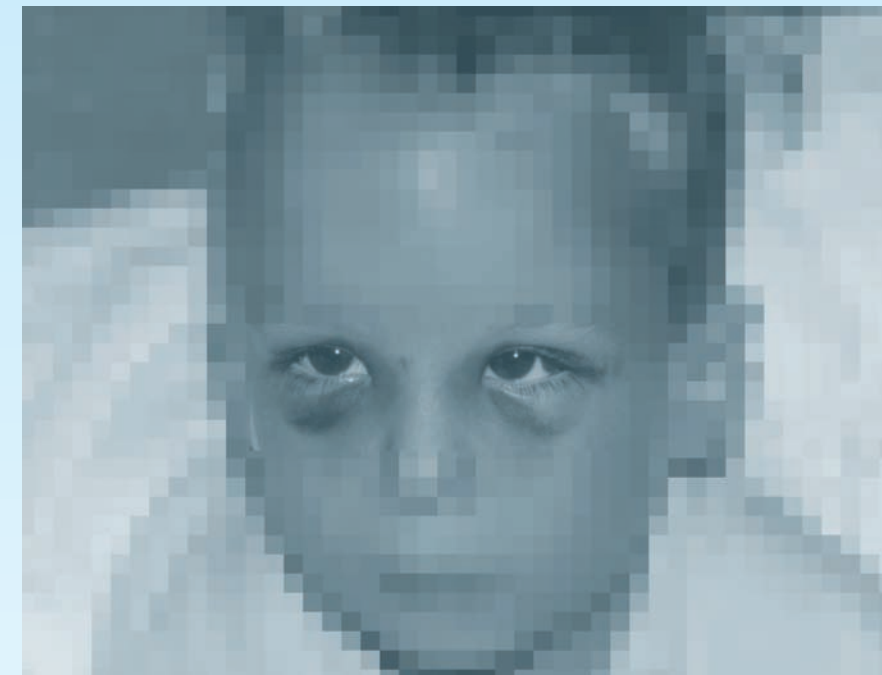
**Safe Team**

The Family Crimes Bureau participates in a federal task force specializing in child pornography and exploitation on the "Internet."

Two investigators assigned to FCB and a deputy on loan from the Custody Operations Division are members of this specialized Team known as the Sexual Abuse Felony Enforcement Team (SAFE). This Team is comprised of federal, State, County, and local law enforcement agencies working together to enforce several new laws dealing with child exploitation. A "decoy" program using youthful appearing Department personnel posing as children, seeks to intercept child molesters who use the Internet to prey on vulnerable and exploitable children. These predators frequently travel to locations to meet naive minors for the purpose of engaging in sexual acts. Several high profile cases drawing media attention have been reported.

**S.T.O.P. Intervention Team**

The need for specially trained domestic violence response teams became evident in 1994 when the



murder of Nicole Brown Simpson shocked the country.

This historic case made domestic violence a part of the national consciousness. A dramatic increase in reported domestic violence cases resulted.

The 1995 verdict apparently provided yet another wake up call for many victims of family violence.

The message they learned was that if you don't report the crime, the abuser might get away with murder. According to the 1998 "Report on Arrests for Domestic Violence in California," the number of felony arrests for domestic violence (273.5 PC) rose steadily from 31,886 in 1988 to 63,636 in 1997.

In 1997, in an effort to curb the escalating problem of family violence, the Sheriff's Department developed an emergency response team pilot program called "STOP" (Safety Through Our Perseverance). The "STOP" Intervention Team was designed to strengthen our quality of community service to families in crisis by providing them with follow-up service to include shelter placement, legal assistance, child care, mental health services, victim assistance, threat assessment, and safety planning. The Teams are comprised of a specially trained Deputy Sheriff and a local shelter advocate. They respond



Interview rooms present a comfortable, non-threatening environment for confidential services.

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*Family Crimes Bureau works to prevent, as well as investigate and successfully prosecute abusive violence.*

to incidents of family violence after the handling unit arrives at the call and as requested by patrol deputies. At the present time, the "STOP-IT" Program is operating in six sheriff station areas including Carson, Century, East Los Angeles, Industry, Lancaster, and Norwalk Stations. Deputies and community advocates respond to domestic violence scenes where they initiate follow-up services.

Domestic violence data indicates that in 1999, the number of reported domestic violence felonies statewide

declined 10.6 percent. This decline is attributable to a combination of factors:

- *Initial steps from law enforcement's efforts to curb domestic violence began to impact the affected households.*
- *As more women saw their abusers (breadwinners) removed from the homes, some chose to no longer report the crime.*
- *More women were being arrested for "mutual combat" and children were being removed from the*

*home, thus diminishing incentives for reporting.*

- *More batterers were being convicted; hence, they are in jail or prison instead of in the home, continuing the domestic violence cycle.*

It should be noted that although statistical data can be quite impressive, it cannot measure certain variables. For example, statistical accounting cannot be derived about the number of women who are still too afraid to report for reasons of fear, retaliation, intimidation, culture,



*High Tech Mobile Forensics Laboratory Van (Top) and Interiors (Right).*



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language barriers or a combination thereof. Additionally, we cannot ignore the number of men being abused who are too embarrassed to report abuse by an intimate partner. (The Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Justice Information Services.)

Over the past several years, significant changes in state and federal laws, as well as Department policies and procedures, have redirected how law enforcement responds to and resolves incidents involving domestic/family violence. As a direct result of the Sheriff's Department's commitment to end the cycle of violence by implementing early intervention programs, we have already accomplished something that was thought to never occur; the collaboration and partnerships among law enforcement, health care providers, attorneys, educators, probation officers and victims advocacy groups and/or organizations. We are overcoming the common "us against them" mentality among these various professionals.

Although no family violence incident is handled in exactly the same manner, our communities now receive the most expedient and professional services available. Expansion of these services throughout other Sheriff's jurisdictions will broaden our resources, extend available services, and increase our partnerships with victims services. The "STOP" Intervention Teams:

- *Video tape and photograph the victim, batterer (if present) and the crime scene*
- *Interview all parties involved (children, neighbors, etc.)*



*Successful intervention programs require collaboration between law enforcement and advocacy groups.*



- *Document all supplemental information*
- *Request emergency protective orders (EPO)*
- *Confer with handling units to insure the arrest of primary aggressor*
- *Provide intervention strategies*
- *Conduct family risk assessment (MOSAIC 20\*)*
- *Recommend solutions for risk reductions with safety plan information*
- *Make referrals to local partnering shelter/advocacy services*
- *Provide follow-ups for detectives, the court, and referral services for victim*
- *Attend interagency council meetings*
- *Collaborate with community representatives for team training & legal updates*
- *Conduct unannounced victim follow-ups at 30, 60 and 90 day intervals*

Upon completion of handling the incident, the STOP Intervention Teams prepare thorough packages to present to family violence detectives. Investigators assigned to handle these cases will have received specialized training on family violence. The S.T.O.P. Intervention Team deputies, station detectives, community advocates and the District Attorney's Office work collaboratively to ensure case filings and successful prosecution.

*\*A threat assessment software application is used to determine the "at risk" level for a victim of domestic violence.*

