

# Advanced Death Investigation

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## Investigative Concepts

**Teamwork!**



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## Legal Issues



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Legal Issues – Death Scene

- *Mincey v. Arizona 1978*
- *Flippo vs. West Virginia 1999*
- There is no “murder scene” search warrant exception to search a murder/crime scene
- If the suspect would have a 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment protection to the crime scene – must get a search warrant prior to searching

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Legal Issues – Death Scene – Cont.

- Search Warrant Exception
  - Exigent Circumstances – when and when it ends
  - Plain View
  - Consent – be very cautious
  - If in doubt – best to get a search warrant
- Situations not requiring a search warrant
  - Suspect does not have a 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment protection to the scene – including vehicle

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Legal Issues – Supreme Court Rule 25.03

- **(a)** Disclosure upon filing of felony complaint... the state shall, upon written request of defendant's counsel, disclose... the following material and information in the possession of the prosecutor: **any** arrest reports, incident reports, investigative reports, written or recorded statements, documents, photographs, video, **electronic communications** and electronic data that relate to the offense for which defendant is charged.

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Supreme Court Rule 25.03 – Cont.

- This includes emails and text messages
- Any texts or emails that you may send or receive regarding an investigation need to be retained, and if possible, archived separate from your other communications to be able to retrieve them later when the time for disclosure arrives.
- For clarification, written communications of any kind are what need to be preserved.
- This includes communications on your personal devices, not just any department issued phone or computer.

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RSMO 58.451- Required Coroner Notification

- Death in any county with a coroner, and there is reason to believe that such person died as a result of:
  - Violence by homicide, suicide, or accident;
  - Criminal abortions, including those self-induced;
  - Some unforeseen sudden occurrence and the deceased had not been attended by a physician during the thirty-six-hour period preceding the death;
  - In any unusual or suspicious manner;
  - Any injury or illness while in the custody of the law or while an inmate in a public institution;

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RSMO 58.451- Required Coroner Notification

- LEO or any person having knowledge of such a death shall immediately notify the coroner of the known facts concerning the time, place, manner and circumstances of the death.

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**RSMO 58.451- Required Coroner Notification**

- Immediately upon receipt of notification, the coroner or deputy coroner shall take charge of the dead body and fully investigate the essential facts concerning the medical causes of death, including whether by the act of man, and the manner of death.
- See Handout for Full RSMO

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**RSMO 58.730 - Required Medical Examiner**

- All law enforcement officers and other officials shall cooperate fully with the department of the medical examiner and shall report immediately any death which comes to their knowledge under any of the circumstances set forth in section 58.720, subsection 1.
- See Handout for Full RSMO

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**DEATH IN HOSPICE CARE**

- **RSMO 58.451 AND 58.720**
- When a death occurs under the care of a hospice, no investigation shall be required by a coroner or medical examiner if the death is certified by the treating physician of the deceased.
- You may get calls from family members claiming a criminal act – may prompt an investigation

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Preservation Letter

- A letter directing a company/entity to maintain records of a specific account
- Preservation letter holds the information until you can get a search warrant for the information
- Preservation letters should be sent out as soon as possible
  - Account are often deleted
  - Information is usually only kept for 90 days from the day the company receives the letter

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Preservation Letter – Continued

- Consider there might be multiple accounts under different or pseudo names
- Should be sent to all applicable accounts for victims, suspects, and people of interest
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - TickTok
  - DoorDash
  - Etc.

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Locating Legal Contact Info - SW

- Search.org
  - Resources
  - ISP
    - Drop down – gives you the legal contact information for a huge number of companies
    - Also the last date it was updated and valid
- The top of the legal contact gives you the specific information on how the search warrant needs to be addressed

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Locating Legal Contact Info – SW – Cont.

- Maxmind.com
  - Provides information on who owns an IP address at a specific time
  - Can obtain IP owner – then use Search.org to get legal search warrant information for the company

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Cell Phones and Electronic Device – SW

- Search warrant for a device must also contain language to search the contents contained on the electronic storage media
- A search warrant for the device will allow you to seize the device but not search the device
  - Would require a second search warrant

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Cell Phones – Search Warrants

- Each cell provider has specific language they require to be on the search warrant or they may refuse
  - No matter if account or tower information
- Federal Partner utilization
  - Much more access – often may already have access to the information
  - Feds are able to bypass lots of issues
  - Providers are more responsive to federal authorities
  - Feds have analysts that can do the analysis for you

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Social Media – Search Warrants

- All have LE guidelines – that tells you everything that you need to know for search warrants or subpoenas
- Language must be specific – or they will reject the search warrant
- You should check the legal guides every time to make sure you have the current correct info
- Facebook
  - [Facebook.com/safety/groups/law/guidelines](https://www.facebook.com/safety/groups/law/guidelines)

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Social Media – FB Search Warrants

- Caution and be focused on what you request in your FB search warrant
  - If you ask for everything you will get everything – could be an overwhelming amount of info
  - If you need it – ask for it
  - Ask for everything you think you would need or could use

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FB Search Warrants – Continued

- Narrow if possible
  - For example – 6 months of “I Messages” – not all “I Messages” from the beginning of the account
- Photos
  - Once photos are uploaded to FB the metadata is stripped from the photo
  - Doesn’t mean that some photos won’t be useful

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### FB Search Warrants – Continued

- With narrowed and focused requests FB usually processes more quickly and is more eager to help
- Some judges have been rejecting search warrants when the SW is vague and not focused – meaning asking for the entire account information when you cannot provide a solid reason

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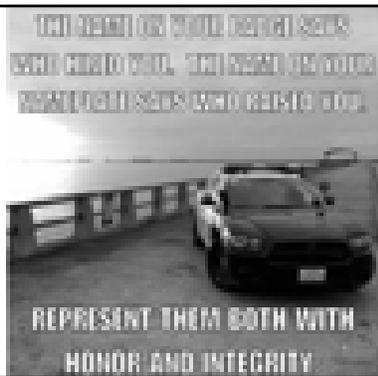
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### Crime Scene Issues and Difficult Scenes



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### Body in the Open

- Bodies in public view have become a significant issue
- Must have a solution to be able to control the body view
  - Barrier Systems are very good
  - Can purchase or construct

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Blood

- Blood must be evaluated and not discarded as it all came from one source
- Various locations should be identified and then sampled
- Look for blood that looks out of place
  - Example – falling blood on a victim, especially on the back

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Blood

- Looking at patterns and spatter
  - Spatter interpretation requires a trained/certified investigator
  - However, knowing how to photograph and measure sometimes work can be done from the photos

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Blood Spatter

- Blood Spatter interpretation is very useful and important
- It is a certification that requires a significant amount of time and continued practice
- Cast off, pattern, swipe marks, velocity, and point of origin are some important information for the investigator
- It is outside of this presentation
- I have included 2 handouts from training I have attended to get you started looking at the topic
  - The authors are included

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Fire

- Fire is very devastating – creating difficulties in victim identification and locating evidence
- Evidence is often overlooked
- Need a trained fire scene investigator
- Sifting of debris
  - Important to sift/go through everything
  - Evidence is difficult to see and locate
  - Have to be very meticulous

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Look at the Evidence

- The scene and items of evidence must be examined to give you direction in the investigation
- You have to guard against overwhelmed, intimidated, or “grossed out” by the scene or body
- The investigator must look past the totality and focus on the specific
  - This is the only way you can get the information you need to focus the investigation

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Confined Space – Difficulties

- You may not be able to control the scene type
- You may have to make alterations to access the scene to investigate and gather evidence
- You should have:
  - Plans
  - Resources
  - Understanding and authorization from the agency CEO and possibly the PA

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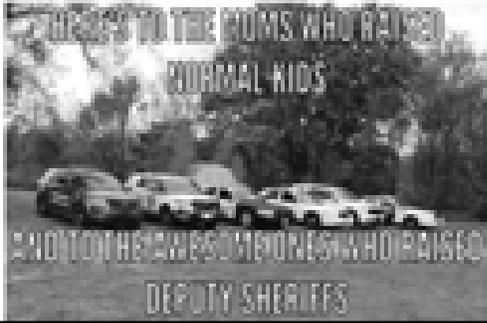
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Resources, Case Squad, MOUs




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Resource Guides and MOUs

- You should develop resource/contact guides and/or MOUs prior to a death scene
- Resource guides are identified, vetted an pre-approved pieces of equipment, resources, or specialty personnel/teams that can be deployed when needed
- Is an MOU or contract required – is so it should already be done

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Resource Guides and Equipment - Examples

- Underwater Rescue Team
- Search Teams and K9s
- Cadaver Dogs
- Heavy Equipment
- Pumps
- Food/Restrooms
  - Taking It to the Streets

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Resource Guides and Equipment -  
Examples

- Scene Barriers
- External lights
- Drone
- Access to difficult areas – ATV
- Tools
- Canopy
- Specialty tools or the ability to develop
  - Example – Sifting tables

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Resource Guides and Equipment -  
Examples

- Ingress and Egress to difficult scenes
  - Examples
    - Creek
    - Wooded area
- How to move personnel and equipment – especially into difficult areas and get them out
  - Removal of evidence
  - Body

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**Investigative Resources – Technical Specialist**

- Cellular phone and other electronic device downloads and analysis
- Computer Forensics
- CAST – FBI
- Legal
- Financial analysis

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**Investigative Resources – Support Personnel**

- ▶ Computer intelligence and resource
- ▶ Incoming leads
  - ▶ People taking incoming lead information must know how to gather information
  - ▶ Provide timely to investigator in-charge
- ▶ Report entry
- ▶ Evidence custodian/storage

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**Resource Guides – Partners**

- Major Case Squads
- State LE Partners
- Federal LE Partners
- Fire Investigators
- Forensic Specialist
  - Anthropologist
  - Archeologist
  - Odonatologist

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**Major Case Squads**

She asked me to whisper the three little words every girl wants to hear. So I said, "I'm a cop."



somecards.com

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Major Case Squad – Purpose

- Ideally you will have a formalized squad – dedicated functions and personnel
  - If not make some informal agreements – who can you call when you need help in a hurry
- Lack of resources and expertise
  - Every agency
- Complex demands with some investigations
- Greater expectations by citizens – driven with instant media reporting

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Major Case Squad – Continued

- Large number of tasks that need to be accomplished quickly
  - Investigative issues
  - Crime scene(s) issues
  - Are the tasks/teams separated
- Greater results – likelihood of success when resources are combined
- You cannot just have people “show up”

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Squad – Early Involvement

- Early notification is **essential**
- If a squad is going to be utilized – the earlier the resources arrive the better
  - Things not done correctly the first time could be compromised or lost
  - Evidence – same

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Operational Investigative Issues



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Operational Investigative Issues

- Organization and orderly processes are extremely important
  - You don't know what you know until it is organized
  - How do you know what to investigate
  - How do investigative details tie together
- How are the reports, evidence, and photographs going to be handled

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Operational Investigative Issues – Cont.

- The quicker you can get everyone on the same page and going in the same direction the better off you will be
- You may have to slow down before you can speed up
- Daily briefings of all investigators is essential

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Operational Investigative Issues – Cont.

- Immediately start:
  - Developing lead cards
  - Lead Board
  - Time Line
- We must know who is responsible for what report and what evidence
  - It is a chaotic time – with lots of moving parts
  - When it comes time for Court – could cost a case if PA doesn't have everything – has not provided

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Investigative Issues – Lead Cards

- Method of organization and tracking
- Card/form that has specific lead information on the card
- Lead numbers
  - Initial response "1", Scene "2", etc.
- Lead information should be collected completely, accurately, and consistently
  - Should be collected by trained individuals that know what information is needed and how to get it

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Investigative Issues – Lead Cards – Cont.

- Lead card should contain:
  - Case number and lead number
  - Where/who the lead came from, and their contact information
  - Lead information provided
  - Who took the lead
  - Investigator assigned to the lead

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Investigative Issues – Lead Cards – Cont.

- Each lead should have it's own lead number
  - There may be many reports under a lead number
    - Example – Lead 1 – Initial Response
- Lead cards do not have to be chronological
  - How can they be?

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Investigative Issues – Lead Development

- Priority leads vs. back burner leads
  - Always prioritize your leads
  - You will get good and bad leads
- Some cases have obvious leads – some cases require you to think and develop leads
  - Example – homicide on the side of the road – no identification

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Lead Development – Continued

- Generate obvious leads – especially when you don't have any others
  - 911 caller or original source of the information
  - Family/Friends – each separate
  - Area canvass – each separate
  - Victim background
  - Scene
- Sex offender registry
- Criminal history associates

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Lead Development – Continued

- Think outside the box
  - Example: Ammo at Dicks
- Lead development is coupled with good old investigation skills
- Good interviews will most always generate more leads

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Lead/Task Assigned - Continued

- Only 1 interview per subject – DO NOT conduct multiple interviews of same subject:
  - Avoid doubling and tripling work
  - People get angry and think you are **inept** when they are interviewed 3 times about the same things
  - Creates conflicts for PA when statements say 3 different things

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Concerns and Critical Issues

- Confidentiality is extremely important
- Limit the release of investigative information by all personnel
  - Coordinated release of information by PIO
- Information released can compromise an interrogation or the investigation
- Rumors – inaccurate information issues
- Connections between suspects and first responders

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Wound Types  
at  
Death Scenes



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**Gunshot Wounds**

- Entrance vs. Exit Wounds
  - Not your area – DO NOT classify any wound
  - Leave that to the Medical Examiner
  - There are many wounds that appear to be exit wounds that are actually entrance

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**Gunshot – Entrance**

- Generally smaller than exit
- Typically round, neat hole with an abrasion collar, and a gray or black ring around the edges
  - Exception - stellate

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**Gunshot – Exit**

- Generally larger than entrance
- Ragged and torn in appearance, shreds of tissue
- Larger amount of blood than entrance

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**Gunshot – Contact Wound**

- Pattern
- Dark Ring and Abrasion Collar
- Absence of Stippling

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**GSR**

- Your agency should have a policy if you do not use this – an explanation why
  - Can be wiped off
  - Gloves
  - Semi-automatic handguns
- Still use clothing for examination

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### Stippling or Tattooing

- Pinpoint hemorrhages due to the discharge of burned powder and fragments
- Close range - estimates run usually 8 - 12 inches
  - Some estimates go out to 24 inches
- The main takeaway is that stippling is not contact – but close range

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### Cutting

- Clean and sharp edges
- Minimum bruising
- Longer than deep
- No bridging of skin
- Bleeds freely

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### Stabbing

- Deeper than wide
- Internal bleeding with little or no external blood
- May indicate the type of weapon used

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**Mode of Death - Blunt Force**

- Injury from a solid object striking the body
  - Tearing of the skin
    - *Bridging*
  - Bruising
  - Internal Injuries

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**Mode of Death - Asphyxia**

- Strangulation (manual or ligature)
- Hanging
- Drowning
- Suffocation
- Gases

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**Hanging Deaths**

- Ligature Location
- Characteristics of the ligature
- Removal of Ligature
- Suicide or Accident

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**Petechial Hemorrhages**

- Minute (pin-like) hemorrhages
  - Eyes
  - Lips
  - Surface Skin
  - Presumptive evidence of strangulation

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**Scene and Evidence Issues**



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**Crime Scene**

- How many crime scenes
  - Crime Scene
  - Second/other Scenes
  - Ambulance
  - Hospital
- Scene Complexity – Special Resources and Equipment
  - Example – Clandestine Grave, skeletal remains etc.

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Documenting the Crime Scene - Drone

- Drones allow you to document the crime scene from a different perspective
- Drones can see things you cannot see on the ground
  - Tire tracks and paths
  - FLIR can show information in used closely to when vehicle left the area
- Establish a "no fly" zone over crime scene
  - Keep out civilian drones - media aircraft and drone

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Documenting the Crime Scene - Sketch

- What type of scene or scenes do you have?
  - FARO/Total Station/Computer Based Program - do you have access
  - Indoor or Outdoor
  - Scattered evidence
    - GPS - Compass Point
  - Grave
- Hard to document scenes - datum points

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Sketch - Continued

- Creating your own permanent points - datum points
  - Rebar - pre-cut
  - T-posts - harder to work with
  - Driver
  - GPS
- When completed with measurements and using the datum points you will drive the rebar at least 18 inches into the ground

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### Sketch – Datum Points

- Set your datum points
  - Drive deep enough to be stable – but a portion will remain above ground, visible, and useful
- Document by GPS location – before doing any measurements from the datum points
- Label the datum points so you know which point you are working from/referring to

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### Water

- Water is difficult to search
- What type of water source are you searching
  - Well
  - Pond or Lake
  - Creek
  - River
  - Sewer
  - Septic

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### Water – Continued

- What are you searching for?
  - Underwater rescue teams – hand search
  - Radar
    - Location and recovery
  - Temporary diversion
  - Draining
    - Must understand the consequences of draining a water source

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Water – Body

- Approach
  - Moving water from down stream/river not to disturb the body and/or evidence
- Metal detector

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Skeletal

- Complex – also depends on the type of skeletal scene you have
  - Surface
  - Buried
- Caution – cannot use large tools that can damage or cause items of evidence to be lost

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Skeletal

- Hand tools and sifting
  - There are many small items – examples
- If you need help – call for assistance – this is not something that most agencies deal with very often
  - Teams with experience
  - Forensic archeologist and anthropologist

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Large Items

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### Large Items

- Samples vs. seizing the whole item
  - You should consult with your PA to determine whether they or your Circuit Courts will require the whole object
- Processing of large items in place or do you have a location to work this evidence
  - Can you effectively and completely process in place – most likely not
- Should identify a location and have the ability to take that large item there for processing

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### Large Items – Vehicle – Body/Bodies Inside

- Depending on the incident, number of victims, and complexity you want to remove the vehicle to a better location with bodies in place – to be processed at a better location
- Secured and covered transport

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Large Items – Vehicle – Body/Bodies Inside

- Removal of the entire top of the vehicle – you have to be aware of evidence that could be located on/in the headliner
  - Photos
  - Diagram
  - Evidence collection

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Evidence – Large Items

- Do you have a secure location to store the item(s)
- By seizing and not sampling it allows you to go back to the items if needed for further
- Will the PA want the items for court

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Cell Phones and Electronic Evidence



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Cell Phones – Records

- Preservation Letters
- Call and text log analysis
  - Labor intensive
  - Seek an analyst so you can continue working the investigation
- Linkage analysis
- Tower Locations

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Cell Phones – Tower Locations

- Other valuable data from cell phones other than contents on the device
- Tower locations help triangulate the location of the cell phone
- You should request cell phone records sooner than later sooner the better
  - Most providers dump data after 6 months

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Cell Phones – Tower Locations – Cont.

- Have to know who the provider for the cell phone is – will require a search warrant to get the information
- Nighthawk
  - You can obtain current provider information for a cell number –
  - Find an agency that access to the service who can assist you

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Cell Phone – Seizure

- Leave the phone on
- Do not scroll through the phone
- Try to get the passcode
- Airplane mode
- Faraday Bag

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Cell Phones – Broken

- If a cell phone is broken/damaged – even in pieces – collect all the pieces
- Chip-off possibility by electronic lab
  - Reconstruct the phone
  - Obtain a duplicate phone
  - Insert chip into a new phone
  - Perform a forensic download

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Electronic Devices

- Electronic devices can be used to communicate, seek information related to the crime, and contain records/photos
  - Computers
  - Tablets and iPad
  - Gaming Stations
  - External Drives

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Electronic Devices – Searching Contents

- Search Warrant for contents
- Contents on the drive
- Search terms
- Has the drive been “wiped” or large amounts of information deleted
  - Recovery
- Were there specific search terms after the wiping of the drive

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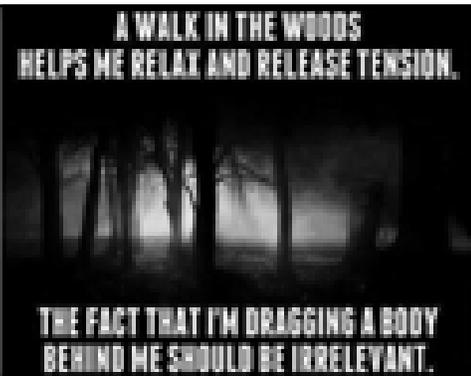
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Investigative Concerns




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**Investigator Briefings**

- Summary briefings are essential
  - All investigators should attend and be briefed – ensure all pieces of investigative information at linked together
- Investigators should participate and provide essential information in the briefing
- Minimum daily - Good idea – morning and evening – especially early
- Anytime significant information is obtained

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**Investigators**

- Everyone must be on the same page
- Cannot have uniformed investigators – they will miss or not know to locate valuable evidence or information

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**Slow Down – Take a Breath**

CASE DEVELOPMENT

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**Case Development**

- Demands and pressures on investigators to produce results are tremendous
- Leads and facts are sometimes very difficult to come by or to be developed
- THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX
- Look at everything – consider everything

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Case Development – Continued

- You have to cover all bases – no matter if you think it will produce results or not
- All things answered
  - A “no answer” is still an answer
- Examples:
  - Cameras throughout the area
  - Pumping wells/ponds
  - Pumping septic

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Case Development:  
Looking for Blood

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Case Information

- Suspect shot victim in the head – let victim lay on the floor before disposing
- Murder without a body – body never located
- Requested significantly later to attempt to locate blood and prove evidence of murder
- “No Body” Homicide
- Still didn’t think to get a SW for the bullets

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Case Development:  
Missing Items – Consider Turning it Over

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Case Information

- Domestic issue - female missing
- Suspicious vehicle – victim’s vehicle – in the parking lot at Liberty Hospital
- Scene – master bedroom – there is no bedding on the bed
- Mattress looks clean on top

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Case Development:  
Murder Conspiracy and  
Considering the Smallest Signs

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Case Information

- Unidentified Hispanic male stabbed and shot – dumped in the road ditch on a gravel road
- No ID on victim
- About 4 days before a break in the investigation – trying to develop leads
- Break comes with ID and info about girlfriend

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Children Death and SIDS

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Child Deaths and SIDS

- Felonious Act
  - Abuse
  - Intentional Act
- Neglect
- Accident
  - SIDS – Category 2
- Unexplained

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RSMO 210.192 Child Fatality Review

- 1. The prosecuting attorney or the circuit attorney shall impanel a **child fatality** review panel for the county or city not within a county in which he or she serves to investigate the deaths of **children** under the age of eighteen years, who are eligible to receive a certificate of live birth.
- See Handout for Full RSMO

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RSMO 660.520 State Technical Assistance Team

- Established in the department of social services a special team, to be known as the "state technical assistance team", to assist in cases of child abuse, child neglect, child sexual abuse, child exploitation, child pornography, or child fatality. It shall be the priority of the team to focus on those cases in which more than one report has been received.
- See Handout for Full RSMO

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Child Deaths Investigation and SIDS

- SIDS – is a diagnosis of exclusion
- Consider all possibilities that could of caused the child's death – homicide, accident, unexplained etc.

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Child Deaths Investigation and SIDS

- Scene investigation – includes scene reconstruction
- Photographs and Measurements
- Everything must be documented
  - Distances – example from surface to floor
  - Presence or lack of food, medicine, necessities/basic needs
  - Sleeping conditions
    - Co-sleeping, surface, type of bed/location

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Child Deaths Investigation and SIDS

- Living Conditions
  - Does it appear that children are being taken care of
    - Lots of unwashed bottle or un-discarded dirty diapers
- Scene Environmental Issues
  - Carbon Monoxide Example

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Child Deaths Investigation and SIDS

- History
  - Doctor/medical records
  - Care providers
  - CPS referrals
- Parent alcohol and drug testing
  - This is something our PA requires

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SIDS – Category 2

- Mechanical asphyxia or suffocation by overlaying not determined with certainty
  - Factor in SIDS death

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Shaken Baby

- Is a serious brain injury resulting from forcefully shaking an infant or toddler.
- Shaken baby syndrome destroys a child's brain cells and prevents his or her brain from getting enough oxygen.
- Shaken baby syndrome is a form of child abuse that can result in permanent brain damage or death.

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Shaken Baby

- You may not see any signs of physical injury to the child's outer body. Sometimes, the face is bruised.
- Injuries that might not be immediately seen include bleeding in the brain and eyes, spinal cord damage, and fractures of the ribs, skull, legs and other bones.
- Many children with shaken baby syndrome show signs and symptoms of prior child abuse.

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**Shaken Baby**

- Full scene reconstruction
- Must determine who had care and custody of the child for the previous 10-12 hours
- Shaken baby takes some time to be observed
- Symptoms include irritability, difficulty staying awake, seizures, abnormal breathing, poor eating, bruises, and vomiting.

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**Lucas Webb Case**

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**Investigators**

- Clinton County Sheriff's Office
- Clinton County Coroner – K. Little
- Cameron Police Department
- MSHP – DDCC
- Buchanan County Sheriff's Office

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**Lucas Webb**

**01-03-2008 TO 10-15-2012**

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**Lucas Webb – Background**

- Biological child of Justin Webb and Brooke Barnes
- Justin Webb separated from Melissa Jordan – who he later married – and became involved with Brooke while separated from Melissa
- Brooke informed Justin she was pregnant

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**Lucas Webb – Background – Continued**

- Justin denied paternity then broke up with Brooke – back to Melissa and they married
- Melissa also pregnant by Justin
- Brooke and Lucas resided with a friend – from birth till 2009
- Custody agreement Clay Co 02-2011 – joint physical custody

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**Brooke – Background**

- ▶ Arrested-criminally charged-incarcerated,
- ▶ Sporadic-inconsistent-limited contact with Lucas, no contact 12-11-2011 on
- ▶ Brooke stated she did not want Lucas returned to her
- ▶ Brooke lives with, and has allowed Lucas to associate with, convicted criminals and known drug users,
- ▶ Brooke’s ordered drug test results: amphetamine, marijuana, and meth

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**Initial Call**

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**Initial Call – Webb Residence**

- ▶ Approximately 1515 hours Holt Fire was dispatched on a report of a four year old that was not breathing.
- ▶ No pulse - chest compressions – medics “load and go”
- ▶ Headed to Liberty Hospital
- ▶ Stopped on ramp while headed to hospital and picked up 2 Kearney PM to help work the Code

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**Medic - Observations**

- Many bruises in various states of healing on his body; right temple, behind ears, back of neck, penis, larger than a softball on his lower back and buttocks
- Dark substance "resembling coffee grounds" in clear fluid coming from nose
- Belly was distended (air or fluid) accumulate in the abdomen
- Jaw is clamped – cannot open
- No heart activity – pupils were fixed and dilated

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**Emergency Room – Arrival**

LIBERTY HOSPITAL

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**ER – Notes**

- Admitted 1545 hours
- 45-minute lifesaving measures – approximate TOD 1630
- Pupils fixed and dilated/jaw rigid / cool to touch
- Signs of lividity in neck upon arrival and onset of rigor
- Extensive bruising on back, lower back, and buttocks – bruising seemed to be in a cluster right forehead, both arms and legs – especially in the lower leg

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**Autopsy**

DR. MICHAEL HANDLER

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**Autopsy – Dr. Michael Handler**

**PATHOLOGIC DIAGNOSES**

- Blunt force injuries of thorax (chest cavity) and abdomen
- Laceration of small bowel
  - 1000 ml blood in the space between the inner lining of the abdominal wall and the internal abdominal organs.
- Pancreatic hemorrhage, acute (recent onset)

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**Autopsy – Dr. Michael Handler**

**PATHOLOGIC DIAGNOSES – Continued**

- Gastric and intestinal lacerations
- Healing rib fractures; right 11th, left 6<sup>th</sup>, and left 8th through 10<sup>th</sup> upper ribs where the cartilage holds them to the breastbone
- Contusions of right diaphragm
- Contusions and abrasions
- Pulmonary emboli (blocked artery – blood clot) of right middle and lower lung lobes

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**Autopsy – Dr. Michael Handler**

**PATHOLOGIC DIAGNOSES – Continued**

- Blunt force injuries of head
  - Hemorrhage – extensive and acute – between skull and scalp
  - Abrasion, contusions, and lacerations - extensive, acute (recent onset)
- Body
  - Contusions and abrasions of extremities, extensive, acute

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**Autopsy – Dr. Michael Handler**

**OPINION**

- This 4 year old child, Lucas Webb, died of blunt force injuries of the thorax and abdomen.
- The family had been the subject of multiple DFS calls.
- Toxicology revealed no ethanol or drugs of abuse in the femoral blood.
- **The manner of death is homicide**

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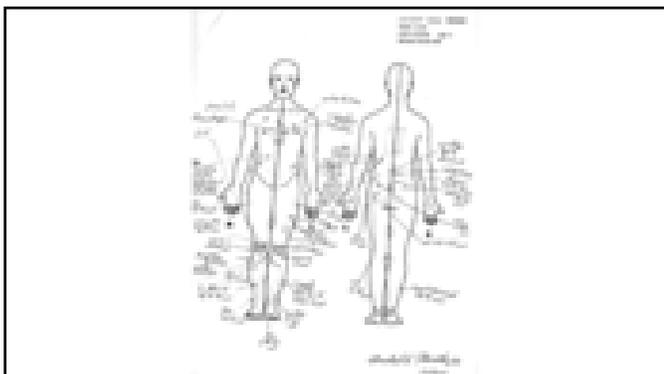
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**CAC – Ray Webb**

10-17-2012  
04-11-2014

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**CAC 10-17-2012 – Ray**

- ▶ Mommy made a mistake and Lucas died
- ▶ Answers several questions with "I can't tell you that"

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**CAC 04-11-2014 – Ray**

- Mommy did bad things and killed Lucas
- Day Lucas died saw Mommy kick Lucas in genitals
- Lucas was throwing up
- Tried to get Mommy to be nice to Lucas but she wouldn't stop and killed him
- Indicated that mom did many bad things to Lucas and made him throw up several times

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### Interview – Justin Webb

BILL PUETT AND ROGER PHILLIPS  
10-17-2012 – 1054 HOURS TO 1527 HOURS

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#### Justin Webb – Interrogation

##### TIMELINE

- Lucas and Ray jumping off the hay bale – Lucas jumped off **they saw** a bigger kid “plow” right down on top of Lucas – Lucas stated he was ok – played the rest of the time
- Justin asked during interview – **did Lucas complain of his belly hurting on the way home – Justin “no”**
- Leave fair – home at 2030
- Justin in bed between 2130-2200

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#### Justin Webb – Interrogation

##### *Investigative Point*

- ▶ Investigators must be completely briefed on all relevant information prior to attempting an interview or interrogation
- ▶ You must think ahead so you can gather relevant information to dispel untrue but possible alternate theories of the crime and/or injuries – that could be offered later – creating difficulties or failures of conviction

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Justin Webb - Interrogation

**TIMELINE**

- Justin leaves for work at 0000 10-15-2012 – Lucas asleep in his bedroom – Melissa and Ray are asleep in chair in front room
- Justin gets off work at approximately 1100 hours
- Justin texted Melissa that he was leaving work
- Justin runs errands; dropped Melissa’s ring off, exchanges costume, drops off cigarette coupons to Melissa’s dad, picks up vehicle titles from friend

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Justin Webb - Interrogation

**Timeline - Continued**

- ▶ Justin home at 1330-1400
  - ▶ Putting things together – Rigor
    - ▶ 4 hours average – several variables
  - ▶ 911 call at 1515 – EMS reports fixed and dilated, rigor, cold
- ▶ Melissa has had control of Lucas from 0000 – 1330 – 13.5 hours
- ▶ Melissa meets Justin at the front door everything else – then Melissa tells Justin that Lucas had been sick during the night and had thrown up – and Lucas felt warm

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Justin Webb - Interrogation

**Justin’s Statements About Lucas**

- Lucas falls down a lot
- Lucas can fall when walking on the deck or in the grass
- Lucas bruises easy
- Lucas has a (very high pain tolerance)
- Lucas will play even if he gets hurt
- Lucas falls all the time and bruises really easy

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**Justin Webb – Interrogation  
Points of Interest**

- Justin stated he thinks the injury was caused at the hay bale
- I asked if we excluded that – what do you think happened
  - Wants to end meeting
  - **Not going to argue about my wife**
  - Kept talking

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**Interview – Melissa Webb**

BILL PUETT AND ROGER PHILLIPS  
10-17-2012 – 1539 HOURS TO 1807 HOURS

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**Melissa Webb – Interrogation  
Timeline**

- ▶ During the night – Justin at work
- ▶ Lucas vomited all over floor, his blanket, and the clothes that he was wearing,
- ▶ Lucas had vomited all over himself, ran bathwater – put Lucas in tub – went and cleaned up the mess – went back to finish with Lucas,

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Melissa Webb - Interrogation

Timeline

► Morning

► Turned TV on - **Melissa was playing solitaire**, kids wanted to **wrestle around** and play - Lucas seemed up for it - Ray however is very rambunctious - he has a lot of energy and he **tends to knock Lucas around pretty bad sometimes** if Lucas isn't ready for it,

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Melissa Webb - Interrogation

Timeline

- I actually partook a little bit - Ray plays with my boxing gloves - he loves my boxing gloves - he **went in my room and got my boxing gloves** and wanted to play
- **Crime scene photo - gloves next to bed in master bedroom**

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Melissa Webb - Interrogation

Timeline

- **Ray had punched Lucas in the face** and apparently Lucas had a laceration on the inside of his mouth - which Ray busted open
- Ray wanted to continue playing - Lucas said he had enough

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Melissa Webb - Interrogation

**Points of Interest - Statements**

- Lucas is use to falling - he is not coordinated - he doesn't pay attention to what he is doing and do that kid always has bruises - he's always got bumps
- **Lucas just does whatever Ray says because Ray is boss - Ray gets a little hostile if he doesn't get him way - so Lucas just does it**

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Melissa Webb - Interrogation

**Points of Interest - Statements**

- ▶ Ray is so fast - he has so much energy - you cannot keep up with him
- ▶ Ray however is very rambunctious - **he has a lot of energy and he tends to knock Lucas around pretty bad sometimes** if Lucas isn't ready for it
- I feel like shit - I wish I would have known - I wish I would have seen the sign sooner

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Melissa Webb - Interrogation

**Points of Interest - Statements**

- ▶ I could have got him to the hospital sooner - I could have called the ambulance sooner - I could have done something differently
- ▶ **Then they took Ray - so now I don't have any children in my home**
- ▶ Lucas' biological mother - is a junkie meth whore
- ▶ I can't possibly imagine what I would have done - even by accident that would have caused this - I'm thinking about the day we were wrestling around - I don't know

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Lucas Webb

**CRITICAL ISSUES – FAILURES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEATH**

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CPS

- ▶ Multiple – multiple calls and failures to respond and effectively investigate
- ▶ Respect for time – I will not list the multitude of issues

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Teacher – Early Childhood  
08-2012 to 09-2012

- 9-10-2012 Lucas came to school and told teacher that his mom, Melissa, had kicked him, Lucas showed his penis teacher saw a red mark
- 9-20-2012 Lucas came to school with a bruise on his cheek – Lucas told teacher that his mom said it was none of her business
- Melissa called the bus barn on 10-1-2012 and 10-8-2012 and told them Lucas was still sick and would be out all week
- Lucas never returned to school

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Teachers Observation Notes

- 8/24/12 Lucas said that a monster plays with his pee-pee. Lucas said that sometimes he doesn't feel good.
  - When asked what hurts when he feels bad, he said that his stomach hurts when his mom kicks him in the stomach with her foot.
- ▶ 9/7/12 Lucas came to school with bruises
  - ▶ Counselor was called and documented her call
- ▶ Counselor made the hotline calls and reported the incidents/suspicious behavior from 8/23, 8/24, 8/27 and 8/31.

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Teachers Notes – DFS Info on Visit

- Dad informed worker that Lucas has a condition that makes him bruise easily – told they would need medical documentation from doctor
- Worker reported there was plenty of food in the house – did not look at Lucas' stomach

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Teachers Observation Notes

- 9/10/2012 – Melissa called school - very upset that DFS and police came on Friday
- School Official requested a doctor's note
- Melissa stated she was too upset to do that – that week, also wanted School to promise to stick to teaching and stop reporting to DFS
- 9/12/2012 – School Nurse - BMI Measurement – **12.9**
  - Placed Lucas **below the 1<sup>st</sup> percentile** – child is underweight and should be seen by a healthcare provider

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Teachers Observation Notes

- 9/14/2012 – Melissa email to Teacher
- Melissa - Please keep your hands off my child unless you are helping him with something.
- 10-16-2016 – Counselor received letter from Children’s Division regarding hotline 09-07-2012
  - This investigation was unsubstantiated. There is a finding of insufficient or no evidence for the allegations of abuse and/or neglect.
- DOD 10-15-2016

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Counselor

- 9-7-2012 contacted after Teacher observed 5 bruises on Lucas’ face – counselor made the hotline call
- Counselor also shared malnutrition concerns with DFS
- From 10-1-2012 to 10-10-2012 left 4 messages/4 different DFS workers and then 3 more messages with a specific DFS worker – after 3 days/leaving 3 messages another DFS worker called the counselor
- Counselor expressed all concerns about Lucas to the DFS worker

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Children’s Division – Findings

- The Webb/Rhoades family came to the attention of the CD due to reported concern for Lucas regarding physical marks, bruising and that he was hungry.
- Investigation was completed with assistance of LE and found to be unsubstantiated as elements have not been met.

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**Be Relentless – Trust Your Gut**



**Protect The Innocent**

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Suicide  
Investigation

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**Suicide Investigative - Concerns**

- Suicide often used to try and cover a homicide
- People expect violence in a suicide
- Family members may not accept
- Rumors and conspiracy
- The presence of the weapon or means of death at the scene

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**Suicide Investigative - Concerns**

- Injuries or wounds that are obviously self-inflicted or could have been inflicted by the deceased
- The existence of motive or intent on the part of the victim to take their own life.

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**Overdose Suicide**

- Determine if it is an accidental or intentional overdose.
  - Prescription or illegal drugs.
- Condition of premises
  - Depression indications
- Location of medicine containers
  - **Do Not** mix the location of where medicines are found
- Determine dosage

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**Overdose Suicide**

- Possibility of alcohol mixed with drugs
- Evidence that they could have been taken by accident
- Determine mental status, recent depression, recent medical history, etc.,
- Search for suicide note or other writings to indicate intent or mental status of deceased
- Electronic devices – new concerns
  - Who had the device

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**Firearm Suicide**

- Protect the hands – GSR possibilities
- Detailed description of scene including position of body, position of weapon and measured distance from body, position of cartridge cases and measured distance from the body.
- Accident considerations
- Determine if person is right or left handed.

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**Firearm Suicide**

- When rifle or shotgun is used - measure the length of the barrel from trigger to end and length of arm from axilla (armpit) to tip of forefinger.
- If visible (not blood covered) note the wound characteristics presence of powder (soot) deposit, etc.

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**Cutting Suicide**

- Wounds usually multiple, parallel, superimposed, and show "hesitation" marks
- Identify weapon, describe, measure distance from body and after fingerprints have been taken, trace the weapon if applicable.
- Is the victim right or left handed?
- Depression indications
- History or evidence (old wrist scars) of previous attempts.

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**Cutting Suicide**

- Wounds should be on accessible areas of the body/absence of defense wounds.
- Multiple methods
- Rule out the possibility of fall onto broken glass or sharp object.

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You might be a cop if ....

- You have the bladder capacity of 5 people
- Your idea of a good time is a robbery at shift change
- You find humor in other people's stupidity
- You have to put a complainant on hold while you laugh uncontrollably, AND

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Your most creative works begin with the words,

*" Dear Chief no one was more surprised that me..."*

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**Take care and stay safe!!**



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Contact Information

Sheriff Bill Puett  
Buchanan County Sheriff's Office  
501 Faraon  
St. Joseph, MO 64501  
816-236-8840 (o)  
**[wpuett@buchmo.org](mailto:wpuett@buchmo.org)**

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