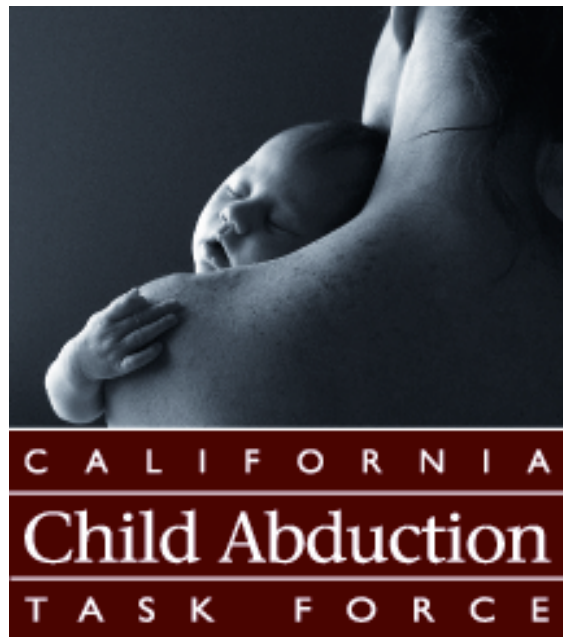


CALIFORNIA CHILD ABDUCTION TASK FORCE



Summary Report Fifth Edition 2011

California Emergency Management Agency

May 2012



California Emergency Management Agency

Mark S. Ghilarducci

Secretary

Mike Dayton

Undersecretary

Brendan A. Murphy

Assistant Secretary

Gina Buccieri-Harrington

*Assistant Director, Office of Grants Management
Public Safety and Victim Services Division*

Gwen Durling

Chief, Public Safety and Victim Services Division

Sonia Banales

Chief, Victim Services Branch

3650 Schriever Avenue
Mather, California 95655
916-845-8301
www.CalEMA.ca.gov

Table of Contents

FOREWORD	ii
I. WHO WE ARE	1
A. Child Abduction Task Force Members	1
B. Mission Statement, Scope of Activities, and Role	2
C. Introduction and Background	3
II. UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM	5
A. Child Abduction Facts	5
B. The Impact of Child Abduction	9
C. Significant Concerns About Child Abduction	12
III. CHILD ABDUCTION TASK FORCE'S RESPONSE	14
A. Recent Accomplishments	14
B. Past Accomplishments	17
C. Future Directions	20
D. Conclusion	23
IV. APPENDICES	24
A. Child Abduction Resources	24
B. California Laws	25

Foreword

“We see their faces smiling at us, pictures of missing children in our mail, on our television, and on posters in store windows and community bulletin boards. We have come to realize that many children are missing but we rarely learn what happens to them. On those few occasions when we do, headline news stories tell about a murdered child and a suspect being sought. Other times we rejoice when a child is found alive and is reunited with his or her family. In such cases we see, or imagine, visions of tearful reunions with hugs and kisses. While we might wish for happy endings with reunited families living happily ever after, the truth is that the lives of abducted children and their families are forever changed.”¹

Child abduction is a parent’s worst nightmare. It strikes terror in families, friends, schools, and communities. The abduction of a child by a stranger is the most frightening and dangerous form of the crime, but the serious risk and trauma involved in abductions by parents or family members is less understood. The California Child Abduction Task Force was formed to examine the full spectrum of child abductions, family and non-family alike, and to develop approaches and recommendations for improving the responses to these crimes in California.

The California Child Abduction Task Force (CATF) and this report are supported by the Children’s Justice Act (CJA), which in turn receives funds from the Federal Crime Victim’s Fund, an amalgamation of fines and fees collected from defendants convicted of federal crimes. The Crime Victim’s Fund is administered by the United States Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). CJA grants are awarded by the Administration for Children and Families, United States Department of Health and Human Services, as authorized by Section 107 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).

Summary reports are created by Child Abduction Task Force members every three-to-five years. This report covers a three year period, from January 2009 through December 2011. It is available to members of the State Legislature, administrators, policy makers, law enforcement officials, judges, and other professionals who deal with child abduction, and it serves several purposes: it is a guide to increase understanding of the dynamics of non-family abductions and those carried out by a family member, close friend or loved one; it discusses issues,

¹ Georgia K. Hilgeman-Hammond, “Impact of Family Child Abduction,” 27 Jan. 2001 <www.childabductions.org> California Child Abduction Task Force website. Used with permission.

existing problems or deficiencies identified by the Task Force which must be addressed in order to prevent or respond more effectively to the numerous abductions that occur annually; and it summarizes the work the Task Force has done to address those issues.

Sincerely,

BRENDAN A. MURPHY, Assistant Secretary
California Emergency Management Agency

ELAINE F. TUMONIS, Chair
Child Abduction Task Force

The opinions, findings, and conclusions in this publication are those of the authors, experts in the field of child abduction, and do not necessarily reflect the beliefs, ideals, and goals of the staff of the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA), or the members of the California Children's Justice Act Task Force. Cal EMA reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, and use these materials, and to authorize others to do so. Copies of this report are available on Cal EMA's website at www.CalEMA.ca.gov. Look under Grants and Funding, Public Safety and Victim Services, Victim Services Programs, Child Abduction Task Force.

I. WHO WE ARE

A. Child Abduction Task Force Members

Current Members

ELAINE F. TUMONIS, Chairperson*
Deputy Attorney General
Statewide Child Abduction Coordinator
California Office of the Attorney General

ERIN BROOKS, Vice-Chair*
Administrator, California Department of Justice
Investigative Services Program

JAMES BACIN
Deputy District Attorney
Orange County District Attorney's Office

JOSEPH BRINE II
Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation

DEANNE CASTORENA*
Deputy District Attorney
Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

MARLENE GLUSING
Legal Assistant
Merced County District Attorney's Office

GEORGIA HILGEMAN-HAMMOND
Consultant
Retired Executive Director & Founder
Vanished Children's Alliance

LINDA QUINTANA-MANSOURI
Consultant
Child Protective Services, Los Angeles County
Child Abduction, Recovery, Reunification and
Prevention Programs

RAQUEL GONZALEZ
Deputy Attorney General
California Office of the Attorney General

California Emergency Management Agency:
Alan Logan*, Task Force Liaison, Program Specialist
Richard Bunch, Co-Liaison, Program Specialist

Child Abduction Training Grant Recipient:
Rebecca Bevan, Executive Director
Center for Innovation & Resources (CIR), Inc.

**Authors of this report*

Former Members

CRAIG KLEIN
Chief, Southern Division
California Highway Patrol

THOMAS JOHNSON
Deputy District Attorney
Ventura County District Attorney's Office

DAVID WAGNER
Deputy District Attorney
Orange County District Attorney's Office

JULIANNE SYLVA
Deputy District Attorney
Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office

KEVIN COFFEY
Detective, Juvenile Division
Los Angeles Police Department

TINA WILLIAMS
Regional Director
Central California CARES/Visalia YMCA

ARTHUR CUMMINS
Administrator
Orange County Department of Education

MARGARET PETROS
Consultant, Victim Compensation Program
Director, Mother's Against Murder

LD MAPLES
Captain-Commander, Emergency Operations Section
California Highway Patrol

California Emergency Management Agency:
Gillsa Heredia Miller, Children's Section Chief
Roseann St. Clair, Federal Funds Coordinator

Child Abduction Training Grant Recipient:
Connie Silva-Broussard, Executive Director
CIR (formerly California Institute on Human Services, Inc.)

Former members who served during this report period.

B. Mission Statement, Scope of Activities, and Role

Mission

The mission of the California Child Abduction Task Force is to reduce the risk and incidence of child abduction, and increase the effectiveness of a multi-disciplinary response, by enhancing skills, knowledge, and awareness of child abduction.

The Task Force's scope is to:

- (1) promote and facilitate a coordinated local, county, statewide, and federal response to child abduction;
- (2) provide ongoing education that maximizes the prompt and safe recovery of children and return to their caregivers;
- (3) influence policies as they relate to the needs of abducted children and their caregivers; and
- (4) identify resources which will help service providers in their efforts to prevent, locate, and reunify abducted children.

The Task Force's role is to:

- (1) make recommendations to responding agencies in order to improve the prompt recovery of abducted children;
- (2) work with various disciplines that deal with at-risk children;
- (3) regularly seek input from victims or family members affected by abduction, and agencies working with them, to keep current on the emerging issues in the field and to ensure trainings remain relevant; and
- (4) identify, develop, and/or promote the use of systems and resources that enhance a holistic approach to timely, effective, and coordinated child abduction recoveries and reunifications.

C. Introduction and Background

After suffering the effects of multiple abductions resulting in murders between 1994 and 1997, citizens in Central California appealed for statewide attention to the increasing number of child abductions. Concerns about child abduction in California initially came to the attention of the former Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP)² in 1996.

In response, OCJP established an *ad hoc committee* of experts knowledgeable in the prevention of and intervention in violence against children to identify prevalent issues in the area of child abduction. On June 12, 1996, the committee met in the San Francisco Bay Area. Representatives of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and social service agencies, prosecutors from county district attorney offices, administrators from non-profit community organizations, educators, and child advocates participated in this meeting.

Numerous family abduction and non-family abduction issues were identified and reviewed. The issues were divided into two categories, and the *Policy and Standards Subcommittee* and the *Training Subcommittee* were formed. The subcommittees met to identify, clarify, and research the issues and recommend solutions for the most pressing concerns.

In July 1998, the California Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force allocated funds to allow the committee to formally become the California Child Abduction Task Force (Task Force), and it has generously supported the Task Force since that time. The Task Force consists of members from the original ad hoc committee and of new members considered experts in child abduction intervention and/or prevention, who meet three-to-four times a year to maintain an ongoing review of current child abduction issues. The Task Force is uniquely positioned to take a statewide view of how child abductions are handled within the state, and its members possess the expertise from various professions to determine how best to handle child abduction cases.

Since its inception, the Task Force has focused on issues currently impacting the effective response to child abduction cases, from the initial investigation through recovery and reunification, and has conducted an ongoing review of priorities outlined in the first, second, third, and fourth editions of the *California Child Abduction Task Force Summary Report*.

Early on, the Task Force determined that the most effective and efficient way to improve the response to incidents of child abduction was to make sure that those responsible for

² OCJP was abolished by legislation on December 31, 2002. Its programs, with the exception of those in the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Branch, were transferred to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. As of January 1, 2009, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and the Office of Homeland Security merged to form a new Cabinet-level agency called the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA).

handling these complex, sensitive cases were adequately trained to do so. Its signature accomplishment has been the development of a multi-disciplinary intervention and resource training for professionals dealing with child abduction cases. Since 1999, the Task Force has presented thirty-one of these highly acclaimed trainings throughout California. These multi-disciplinary trainings have attracted 3,400 participants, primarily professionals who are first responders to reports of child abduction and/or who work with the impacted children and/or families. Through evaluation and follow-up surveys for the training, participants continually report that the training provides excellent information, tools, and resources they can use to better handle these cases, that they have experienced a significant increase in knowledge after attending the training, and that they share knowledge gained through the training with their peers. The CJA Task Force awarded funds, via Cal EMA, to the Center for Innovation and Resources, Inc. to provide logistical support for the child abduction trainings and other child abduction activities.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

A. Child Abduction Facts

Law enforcement officers, therapists, and other professionals in the field of child abduction are hindered by the limited availability of current research and statistics regarding child abduction in the United States. There are two primary sources for statistical information regarding child abduction. The most recent comprehensive study on the national incidence of missing, abducted, runaway, and throwaway youth was published by the United States Department of Justice in 2002. On the state level, the California Department of Justice (Cal-DOJ) receives missing person reports from law enforcement pursuant to Penal Code section 14205, and publishes annual statistics. Details from each of these sources are summarized below.

NATIONAL STATISTICS

The *National Incidence Study of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children* (NISMART-2) Report used 1999 estimates of abducted children as its basis for reporting incident rates. Data was collected from four sources: National Household Survey of Adult Caretakers, National Household Survey of Youth, Juvenile Facilities Study, and Law Enforcement Study. Since different methodologies were used and a standardized definition of a “missing child” did not exist in 1990, the results of this study cannot be compared to the results of an earlier study known as NISMART-1, described in the previous editions of the *California Child Abduction Task Force Summary Report*.

A primary NISMART-2 study objective was to estimate the size and nature of the nation’s missing children problem. The total number of missing children in 1999 was 1,315,600, 99.8 percent of which were returned home or located by the time the study data were collected. There were 797,500 estimated children who were reported missing to law enforcement or missing children’s agencies; 48 percent of these children ran away and 28 percent of the cases involved miscommunication about where the child should be.

Other children were abducted by family and non-family members. The study defined family abduction as the taking or keeping of a child by a family member in violation of a custody order, a decree, or other legitimate custodial rights, where the taking or keeping involved some element of concealment, flight, or intent to deprive a lawful custodian indefinitely of custodial privileges.

The study defined non-family abduction as (1) an episode in which a non-family perpetrator takes a child by the use of physical force or threat of bodily harm or detains the child for a substantial period of time (at least one hour) in an isolated place by the use of physical force or threat of bodily harm without lawful authority or parental permission, or (2) an episode in which a child younger than 15 or mentally incompetent, and without lawful authority or parental permission, is taken or detained or voluntarily accompanies a

non-family perpetrator who conceals the child's whereabouts, demands ransom, or expresses the intention to keep the child permanently.

Stereotypical kidnapping is defined as a non-family abduction perpetrated by a slight acquaintance or stranger in which a child is detained overnight, transported at least 50 miles, held for ransom, abducted with intent to keep the child permanently, or killed.

Highlighted below are relevant facts about family and non-family abductions according to the NISMART-2 study.

Family Abduction Facts

- An estimated 203,900 cases of family abductions occur annually in the United States; however, only 56,500 (28 percent) were reported to authorities for assistance in locating the children.
- Forty-three percent of the children who were victims of family abduction were not considered missing by their caretakers because the caretakers knew the children's whereabouts or were not alarmed by the circumstances.
- Forty-four percent of family abducted children were younger than age six.
- Fifty-three percent of family abducted children were abducted by their biological father, and 25 percent were abducted by their biological mother.
- Forty-six percent of family abducted children were gone less than one week, and 21 percent were gone one month or more.
- Only six percent of children abducted by a family member had not yet returned at the time of the survey interview.
- Child victims of family abduction have had their names and appearances altered, experienced medical or physical neglect, and were subjected to homelessness, frequent moves, and unstable schooling.
- Children were often told lies about the abduction and the left-behind parent. Sometimes they were told the left-behind parent was dead. The children often became psychologically and emotionally distressed.
- Long-term effects vary based on the degree of trauma involved in the abduction, the resiliency of the child, and whether follow-up support was provided to help the child process the events of the abduction.

Non-Family Abduction Facts

- An estimated 58,200 non-family abductions occur annually in the United States, with an estimated 115 being stereotypical kidnappings.
- In forty percent of stereotypical kidnappings, the child was killed; in four percent, the child was not recovered.
- Eighty-one percent of non-family abducted children and 58 percent of stereotypical kidnapping victims were age 12 or older. Non-family abduction victims overall were particularly concentrated among the oldest groups, with 59 percent being 15-17 years old. Girls were the predominant victims of non-family abduction overall and of stereotypical kidnappings as well (65 percent and 69 percent, respectively).
- Fifty-seven percent of children abducted by a non-family member were missing from caretakers for at least one hour; police were contacted to help locate 21 percent of the abducted children.
- Teenagers were by far the most frequent victims of both stereotypical kidnappings and non-family abductions.
- Nearly half of all child victims of stereotypical kidnappings and non-family abductions were sexually assaulted by the perpetrator.³

2011 CALIFORNIA STATISTICS

Pursuant to Penal Code section 14205, California police and sheriffs' departments are required to accept any report of a missing person and to submit those reports to the Cal-DOJ. The statistics summarized below are gathered from missing person entries and updates made by law enforcement agencies into the Cal-DOJ Missing Persons System. This is an automated database available to authorized law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.

In 2011, law enforcement reported a total of 94,152 missing children to Cal-DOJ:

- 981 cases of family abductions;
- 25 cases of non-family abductions;
- 248 cases of suspicious circumstances;

³ David Finkelhor, Heather Hammer, and Andrea J. Sedlak, "Children Abducted by Family Members: National Estimates and Characteristics," "Nonfamily Abducted Children: National Estimates and Characteristics," and "National Estimates of Missing Children: An Overview," Oct. 2002, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; access publications and fact sheets at ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

- 2,594 cases of unknown circumstances;
- 90,076 cases of runaway children;
- 216 cases of lost children; and
- 12 cases of juveniles missing due to a catastrophe.

Detailed statistical information is also available on the California Attorney General's website at: <http://oag.ca.gov/missing/stats>. Statistical data is available online going back to 1996, and can be reviewed based on report type, status, and county.

B. The Impact of Child Abduction

Family and non-family abduction is a serious crime and form of abuse which is traumatic. In each case of abduction, the child, the family, and the community are irrevocably changed by the tragedy. While the psychological trauma inflicted upon a child abducted by a non-family member is commonly acknowledged, abduction by a parent or other family member has long been minimized as having few severe consequences because the child knows the abductor. *However, children who are abducted, whether by a family member or by a person unknown to the child, suffer serious psychological and emotional trauma.*

Impact on the Child and Family

“The impact on child victims will differ. Each child is an individual with different reactions to the circumstance and with different coping styles. The impact will be affected by the pre-stressors in the child’s life, the relationship the child has to the abductor, as well as the relationship the child had with the left-behind family and community. The child’s age, character, how they were taken, length of time missing, what they were told, and their individual and cumulative experiences while abducted will also affect the child.”⁴

An abducted child may experience:

- **Rejection** when the abductor tells the child his/her left-behind parent no longer loves or wants him/her, or tells the child the parent is dead;
- **Isolation** when the child is separated from parents, family, and friends and is moved from place to place;
- **Terror and fear** when the child is forced into hiding, or threatened that he or she will be killed if discovered;
- **Neglect** when the child is denied proper nutrition, shelter, medical or dental care, clothing, and education;
- **Emotional harm** by an abductor who forces him/her to lie, live with a changed name and identity, and deceive authority figures; and
- **Alienation** when their feelings are programmed to be only positive toward the abductor and only negative toward the left-behind parent(s) or other family member.

“The left-behind family members, which include the parent(s), siblings, stepparents, step and half siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and others, will suffer as

⁴ Georgia K. Hilgeman-Hammond, “Impact of Family Child Abduction,” 27 Jan. 2001 <www.childabductions.org> California Child Abduction Task Force website. Used with permission.

well. Initially, the left-behind family might experience shock and disbelief.”⁵ Parents will have fears and questions. Their questions may not be readily answered or answered in the manner they expected. Parents may also experience anger, feelings of abandonment, and even physiological symptoms. Some parents may seek relief from legal and illegal substances.

“Time does not heal the wounds when the family remains in a state of limbo and left with uncertainty about what has happened to their child.”⁶ Furthermore, the passage of time provides painful triggers such as the child’s birthday or the anniversary of the abduction.

The abducted child's siblings are also victims of the abduction because they have not only lost their brother or sister but in many ways their parent(s) too. Searching parents often have little time or energy for other siblings. The siblings may be left to their own devices or even forced to parent their parents.

Motivating Factors: Non-Family Abduction

“The motivating factors underlying family and non-family abductions may be quite different. Social deviancy, the need for power, and sexual arousal motivate the majority of non-family abduction-homicides. Receiving the most media coverage, these cases often end with the murder of the child. Media coverage is essential to recovery of the child because when homicides occur, they usually occur within a few hours of the abduction.

Due to media attention, the psychological consequences of non-family child abduction can extend far beyond the victim and family to children and adults far removed from the actual crime. The case of Polly Klaas—a non-family abduction of a child from her bedroom at night during a slumber party—is a perfect example, as parents, teachers, and counselors can attest. School children across the country were not only concerned about Polly, but were terrorized by the prospect that they, too, could be abducted.”⁷ The consequences of the emotional stress and fear stay with children for long periods, sometimes indefinitely.

Motivating Factors: Parental/Family Abduction

Families in which an abduction has occurred may have experienced “pre-stressors,” . . . such as “domestic violence, separation, divorce, child abuse, neglect, loss of a job or housing, and financial insecurities. Couple the pre-stressors with the trauma of child abduction and you have parents and children in distress.”⁸ “Family abductions are usually motivated by one parent’s anger and desire for revenge, control, and power over the other parent. Some abductors may believe they are rescuing the child; this typically occurs when a prolonged custody dispute over a child cannot be satisfactorily resolved. Some abductors are narcissistic; they do not have the ability to view their

⁵ Georgia K. Hilgeman-Hammond, “Impact of Family Child Abduction,” 27 Jan. 2001 <www.childabductions.org> California Child Abduction Task Force website. Used with permission.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

children as separate entities from themselves and they believe that because they hate the other parent, the child should as well. Some abductors feel disenfranchised and have a culturally different perspective regarding child rearing and parenting. They may miss and want to return to their country of origin with the child. Children in this situation struggle with difficult feelings toward both parents including fear, guilt, shame, confusion, and divided loyalties. Many of these children are further traumatized when they are forced into living like fugitives and/or are plunged into poverty, instability, and a life of deprivation and neglect.”⁹ And it can be even worse: between 2009 and 2011 there were several cases in California involving a custody dispute or termination of a relationship, where a parent abducted their child and murdered the child, then committed suicide.

Recovery of Child

“Even when children are recovered and reunited with their family, the trauma does not cease. Most child development experts agree that personality is formed prior to the age of six. Abduction of a young child will have a significant influence on whom he or she becomes” . . . because “the abductor influences a child’s attitude toward themselves, other people, and the world in general. Long-lasting effects on the child include fearfulness and anxiety, fear of public places, fear of being around strangers, nightmares, poor concentration, underachievement in school, and mistrust of even familiar adults and family members. Children may stop growing emotionally, socially, and academically, and may also experience regressive behaviors.”¹⁰

The California State Legislature has acknowledged that abducted children suffer trauma. They have extended Victim Compensation Program benefits to children who have experienced family or non-family abductions.

Future Issues

The impact of abduction may last a lifetime. Children may experience triggers of the abduction event which can interfere with school and with developing and sustaining relationships. Once they become adults, no matter how resolved their trauma was or how well-adjusted they appear, there may be issues of self-esteem, trust, intimacy, and nurturing which will affect their ability to have a stable marriage and career, and to bond and have a nurturing relationship with their children.

“While we have looked at the devastating effects this crime has on children and families, the resilience and strength of the human spirit should not be underestimated. With the proper help, understanding, and services that they desperately need, families and children can heal and become whole again.”¹¹

⁹ Georgia K. Hilgeman-Hammond, “Impact of Family Child Abduction,” 27 Jan. 2001 <www.childabductions.org> California Child Abduction Task Force website. Used with permission.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

C. Significant Concerns About Child Abduction

The California Child Abduction Task Force identified common misconceptions and problematic issues related to child abduction. The following significant concerns are highlighted:

- Child abduction is typically perceived as being perpetrated by a non-family member or stranger, whereas more abductions are carried out by family members.
- Child abduction by a family member is often incorrectly perceived by law enforcement to present minimal risks to the child simply because the abducted child is with a family member.
- Family child abduction cases present a high potential for physical injury and emotional trauma to the child, but are often considered to be civil cases when they should instead be considered criminal cases.
- Cases of homicide, suicide, and sexual assault, which began as child abductions, were never recognized as cases of abduction and, consequently, were not reported or the report was not accepted as such.
- Current statistics do not adequately reflect the number of child abduction cases because incidents may not be reported at all; are often reported as “other types of crimes”; reports are not taken and entered by law enforcement agencies; or reports are recorded as only “missing child” reports.
- Law enforcement response time for a family-related child abduction is generally longer because the matter is given a lower priority when compared to the higher priority given to a non-family abduction.
- There have been no standardized law enforcement guidelines which include an objective assessment of the risk to the child regardless of whether the abduction is by a family or non-family abductor.
- The serious emotional and/or physical trauma of child abduction is often minimized and not viewed as child abuse.
- Family abduction cases are not prosecuted as often as they should be.
- Typically, in family abduction cases, the left-behind parent, not the child, is considered the crime victim, because the violation is of the parent’s right to child custody.

- In rare cases where a perpetrator of family abduction is criminally prosecuted, the sentence imposed often does not reflect the seriousness of the crime.
- There is no statewide child custody registry.
- There is a need for pre-planning and coordination between agencies that work child abduction cases.
- There is a need for an ongoing multi-disciplinary effort to address the prevention, education, location, recovery, reunification of abducted children, and to promote coordination among the various agencies involved in these cases.

Recognition of the above concerns led the Task Force to recommend a number of steps to address these issues.

III. CHILD ABDUCTION TASK FORCE'S RESPONSE

A. Recent Accomplishments

The Task Force is a dynamic, evolving group that continually evaluates how best to positively impact the response to child abduction within the state by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, county prosecutors and investigators, child protective services and victim-witness agencies, other social services providers, and non-profit missing children groups. The Task Force regularly provides outstanding multi-disciplinary training throughout California and has taken a number of other steps to accomplish its mission. In recent years, we have achieved the following:

TRAINING

Child Abduction Two-Day Regional Training

Responding effectively to family and non-family child abductions requires special expertise and an understanding of both criminal and family laws, child and family impacts and dynamics, and procedures for resolving these cases. For this reason, and because of frequent staff turnover, ongoing training for first responders and others handling these cases is essential to ensuring that abducted children are located and recovered and the cases are resolved appropriately and effectively. Perhaps the most important thing the Task Force has done, and continues to do, is provide such training several times a year throughout the state. Task Force members who are experts in the field provide training to multi-disciplinary audiences of professionals on a full range of topics, including information and resources for law enforcement and prosecutors, the role of child protective services, the impact of abduction on the children and their parents, and international child abduction, among others. From January 2009 through December 2011, 1,400 people attended trainings, bringing the total number of people trained by the Task Force to 3,400. The Task Force continually evaluates the training curriculum and modifies it to better meet the needs of those working in the field. We have improved the training by:

- Making it more accessible to participants by keeping registration free and providing a limited number of travel scholarships to those working for cash-strapped government agencies who would otherwise be unable to attend, thanks to funding from the Children's Justice Act Task Force;
- Incorporating new and timely training components when appropriate, such as a segment on Human Trafficking and a presentation on using DNA to identify missing persons;
- Surveying participants about the gaps in resources and services in their communities so the Task Force can address these issues in training and other activities;

- Developing a 90-day feedback/evaluation mechanism to help us better assess the longer-term effectiveness of the trainings;
- Developing a stable group of back-up speakers who can stand in for regular presenters, and videotaping the training for use in the event a speaker becomes unavailable at the last minute; and
- Incorporating activities that encourage interaction between disciplines.

County-Based Training / Strategic Planning

The Task Force has always promoted the benefits of a community-based multi-disciplinary response to child abduction cases, and we developed the concept for a project that would actualize such a response on the local level. Based on that concept, the Children's Justice Act Task Force, through a grant with the Center for Innovation and Resources, Inc., enabled the development of the *California Missing and Abducted Children's Initiative* (Cal MACI), a program designed to help communities develop a strategic plan for responding to cases of missing and abducted children. A pilot Cal MACI project was successfully conducted in Merced County and led to the development of a strategic plan and the creation of a multi-disciplinary task force that continues to meet and work on improving its response to child abduction cases in Merced County.

TOOLS

AMBER Alert Card and DVD

The Task Force became aware of a need among law enforcement officers out in the field for quick access to information about how to initiate an AMBER Alert. To meet that need, 80,000 credit-card sized AMBER Alert Cards and an instructional DVD were printed and distributed to all California law enforcement agencies. The cards set forth the criteria for issuing an AMBER Alert and list the procedures and contact information for activating an AMBER Alert.

Field Packet

The Task Force updated and distributed the Law Enforcement/First Responders Field Packet, which now contains checklists for law enforcement, child protective services, and non-profit agencies responding to child abductions, along with a guideline for law enforcement on Handling Custody Disputes out in the field, as well as the AMBER Alert card. The Field Packet is distributed at Task Force trainings throughout the state and upon request.

Website

In December 2010, the Task Force launched its website, www.childabductions.org. The launch of the Child Abduction Task Force website has been a great success, based on usage and requests for further information. The website offers information and resources to those working in law enforcement, prosecutorial, social services, and non-profit agencies for responding to child abductions within California (See Appendix A). Each section contains pages of information regarding prevention, resources, and general information. The Task Force plans to explore ways to enhance the resources and information available on the website. The website provides statewide resources and nationwide resources for professionals and the public.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Advisory Council

The Task Force created an Advisory Council for former Task Force members, which allows us to draw on former members' wisdom, experience, and expertise. Advisory Council members have assisted with trainings and have participated in discussions about future projects.

Strategic Plan

We strengthened the internal structure of the Task Force by developing a two-year strategic plan that includes goals and objectives, updating our by-laws for the first time since their creation in 2005, and developing our membership to accommodate departures from the Task Force and help ensure the Task Force represents the different disciplines that respond to incidents of child abduction.

Collaborations

We collaborated with professionals in other disciplines. Task Force representatives met with the California Child Welfare Directors Associations' Children's Committee, comprising representatives from county child protective services agencies, to share information about the Task Force and our Child Abduction Intervention and Resource trainings. Since that meeting, we have seen a notable increase in participation by child protective services staff at our trainings.

B. Past Accomplishments

The Task Force was formally established in July 1998. In its first decade, the Task Force impacted the field of child abduction in numerous significant ways. Throughout its existence, the Task Force sought to assess the state's priorities and increase the effectiveness of multi-disciplinary responses to child abduction. The following is a summary of significant accomplishments through December 2008.

TRAINING

A primary function of the Task Force was to provide training to various agencies regarding the best practices for responding to and investigating child abductions.

Regional Training

The Task Force conducted, and still conducts, Child Abduction Intervention and Resource Training in two-day sessions across the state. Trainings have been well attended. Nineteen training sessions were conducted through 2008, reaching over 2,000 attendees.

Child Abduction Response Teams (CART) Training

Child Abduction Response Teams (CART) have been formed across the nation to respond quickly to incidents of missing and abducted children. These teams consist of law enforcement investigators, AMBER Alert coordinators, policy makers, search and rescue professionals, crime intelligence analysts, victim service providers, and other inter-agency resources. At its regional trainings, the Task Force continues to encourage missing children's professionals to participate in CART trainings, as well as other investigative trainings both in California and nationally. While these trainings focus on specific investigative techniques, our Task Force's regional Intervention and Resource Training remains unique, not only for its multi-disciplinary approach, but also for its comprehensive coverage of issues surrounding family and non-family abductions, including investigation, agency resources, and international laws, as well as recovery, reunification, and the impacts of child abduction.

Elementary School Training

A subcommittee of the Task Force addressed the issue of increasing child abduction awareness within the educational system, specifically, identifying and reporting suspected child abduction. A member of the Task Force developed a presentation on the role of schools in missing and abducted children investigations. This presentation has been used in Los Angeles County to educate employees of the elementary school system.

Model Child Abduction Guideline

The Task Force considered developing a model child abduction guideline or minimum standards for counties in child abduction cases. To that end, the Task Force created surveys to ascertain the existence of protocols in each county, or the lack thereof. In July 2003, surveys were distributed to district attorneys' offices, non-profit agencies for missing children, child protective services agencies, local law enforcement agencies, and county counsel offices affiliated with dependency court and child protective services in all 58 counties. After evaluating the surveys, the designated subcommittee determined that creating minimum standards for every county in California would not be appropriate because each county has unique needs and relationships among agencies.

Instead, the Task Force decided that presenters would demonstrate to the regional training attendees how multi-disciplinary approaches work in the counties that had developed them. The Task Force determined a more efficient model for multi-disciplinary teams tailored to the needs of the individual county would develop if the necessary participants in that county were 1) presented with the concept of a multi-disciplinary approach, 2) offered tools which could be modified for best use by their county, and 3) provided consultation by the Task Force experts on how to make the multi-disciplinary approach most effective. This eventually led to the development of the concept behind the Cal MACI project (See above Recent Accomplishments, County-Based Training).

FUNDING

Funding for District Attorney Child Abduction and Recovery Units

Several Task Force members testified on their own behalf in Sacramento in the spring of 2005 in opposition to a proposal to suspend funding for the Child Abduction and Recovery Mandate, which reimburses counties for their district attorneys' child abduction work. Task Force members independently engaged in other lobbying efforts to defeat this proposal, which resulted in the legislature approving ongoing funding. This funding enables deputy district attorneys and district attorney investigators to continue to take all actions necessary to recover abducted children, as required by state law, and to attend trainings, including those offered by the Task Force.

Victim Compensation Program

In 1999, Task Force members acting in their individual capacity facilitated a change in the law, making victim compensation funds available to victims of parental child abduction after the child was missing at least 30 days. (Funds were already available to victims of non-family/stranger abduction). However, the Task Force became aware that few victims of child abduction applied for the benefits allowed them, and many who did apply were incorrectly denied funds. In response, the Task Force met with representatives of the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board to discuss this problem. As a result of this meeting, training on this topic for new victim-witness advocates, including those in the district attorneys' offices, was instituted by a Task Force member. To further inform victims of their rights and resources, the Task Force developed a Victim Compensation Program Information Sheet presenting child abduction issues and available resources.

TOOLS

The Task Force developed and promoted several tools to assist law enforcement and others in child abduction investigations and recoveries.

AMBER Alerts

Members of the Task Force from the California Highway Patrol (CHP) played a leading role in the development and implementation of the AMBER Alert System. Since its inception on July 24, 2003, to January 18, 2012, the AMBER Alert system has been activated 191 times regarding 232 abducted children resulting in 226 recoveries. The California Highway Patrol is responsible for operating the AMBER Alert system in California. The crux of the system is activation of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) on television and radio stations. There are several other resources utilized when an AMBER Alert is issued, including the changeable message signs on the freeways, the Highway Advisory Radio, the Emergency Digital Information System, computer based Critical Reach System, and the CHP Traffic Incident Media Web Server and internet site. AMBER Alerts are also now disseminated on cell phones, Facebook and lottery tickets.

Checklist for First Responders

The Task Force created the “Child Abduction Law Enforcement Field Packet,” which includes a Child Abduction and Risk Assessment Checklist for use in the field by those who are the first to respond to child abduction scenes. It is designed to provide patrol officers, dispatchers, and other first responders with a tool to assist them in making an initial assessment of the inherent risks to the child – including the risk of injury or death, or of being transported to another state or country. The field packet also includes the “Child Abduction First Responding Officer Checklist,” which is a basic guide to assist an officer in gathering relevant dates and other important information during the initial contact with the reporting party.

Since December 2001, the checklists and field packets have been disseminated at the regional training sessions. The checklists are available on our website and through the California Attorney General’s website at: <http://clew.doj.ca.gov>.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Missing Children’s Day

The Vanished Children’s Alliance and San Jose Police Department held a joint press conference on May 25, 2005 to recognize “National Missing Children’s Day” and raise awareness about the serious issue of missing and abducted children. The Executive Director and Founder of the Vanished Children’s Alliance, a Task Force member, spoke at the conference.

The Task Force urged Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to proclaim May 25, 2006 as “Missing Children’s Day,” which he did from 2006 to 2009.

C. Future Directions

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Budget cuts to state and local governments have limited the resources available to agencies working on child abduction cases. Many district attorney child abduction units and law enforcement and child protective services agencies continue to vigorously respond to parental kidnapping cases, but two sizable counties closed their district attorney child abduction units despite the fact that the state has continued to appropriate funds to reimburse counties for their child abduction work under the Child Abduction and Recovery Mandate. One of these counties has since reestablished its unit, but at the present time, the other remains closed.

District attorneys' child abduction units play a central role in resolving both domestic and international parental child abduction cases. When district attorneys close or curtail their child abduction units, the burden of responding to family abductions falls on law enforcement, even though they are not equipped with the statutory authority given to district attorneys to act in these cases. The Task Force recognizes that in the current era of fiscal restraints, all agencies are being asked to "do more with less," which – as a practical matter – usually means, simply, they must do less. But in view of the harm done to children who are abducted, even when the abductor is a parent, the Task Force calls on all counties to ensure their district attorneys' offices fulfill their statutory obligations to locate and recover abducted children.

In addition, the closure or diminished services of non-profit missing children agencies has resulted in the loss of critical services to families of missing and abducted children. There are now fewer than ten non-profit missing children agencies in California, several of which were created by a parent whose child was abducted and murdered. The majority of these agencies assist with searches for abducted children; a few focus on prevention. See the Child Abduction Task Force website for a partial listing of agencies.

A constant challenge is to maintain, within agencies tasked with responding to child abductions, the requisite level of expertise necessary to ensure these cases are handled professionally and resolved successfully. The skills required to do this work effectively are perishable. Staff cutbacks necessitated by budget shortfalls, the usual turnover in staff assigned to work on child abduction cases, and various agencies' shifting priorities, often result in a loss of staff with experience and expertise in this highly specialized area. Coping with these changes requires ongoing training throughout the state, an activity on which the Task Force places the highest priority.

FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS

Individualizing Training

After a Cal MACI pilot project was successfully implemented in one county, the Task Force evaluated feedback from that county and from other counties that had considered participating in the Cal MACI pilot project but opted not to do so. Based on that feedback and input from the Task Force, the Center for Innovation and Resources, Inc. is re-designing the program to offer a menu of more individualized resources to counties interested in improving their response to child abductions. Consultants with Cal MACI will conduct a needs assessment with interested counties and will design, develop, and implement training events or provide other services that meet the needs of individual counties. The strategic planning process offered in the original pilot project will remain available to interested counties, but additional services, including training offerings for multi-disciplinary groups, targeted training for individual sectors such as law enforcement, guidelines to support development of an agency's own protocol, and support for the creation of a county-based child abduction task force, also will be available.

Increasing Public Awareness

With funding from the Children's Justice Act Task Force, the Child Abduction Task Force is working to create a Public Service Announcement designed to educate the public about the fact that parental child abduction is a crime and has a traumatic effect on the children involved.

Collaborating to Identify Needs

The Task Force is continuing to look for opportunities to collaborate with various disciplines to improve the handling of family and non-family abductions and their aftermath. In the past, the Task Force met with Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board representatives to address problems in providing Victim-Witness Assistance funds to victims of parental kidnapping for use in obtaining therapy, and met with the child protective services representatives to solicit participation in our trainings and representation on the Child Abduction Task Force. We plan to continue to identify high-level management representatives in different disciplines with a view toward identifying issues and needs in particular agencies working on child abduction cases, and promoting collaboration and cooperation across disciplines on child abduction cases.

Reviewing Training Curriculum

The Task Force is undertaking a comprehensive review of its training, which will be completed by June 2012. It is conducting a thorough peer review of its presenters and a full evaluation of the curriculum to ensure that the content of the training meets the needs of its intended audience and continues to be professionally delivered to those audiences.

D. Conclusion

We often hear people talk about how important it is to support, protect and invest in children because they are our future, our most precious and valuable resource. The Child Abduction Task Force is committed to doing its part to help make this ideal a reality.

The abduction of a child, whether by a family member, acquaintance or stranger, is a traumatic life event that changes the child, and those around the child, forever. As a recovered abducted child once said, "If anyone is thinking of abducting a child, please don't. I have never gotten over it, and I'll be in therapy for the rest of my life."¹²

Child abduction cases must be met with an appropriate and professional response by those who investigate, locate and recover the abducted child, help the child reunite with family members, and help the child and family members process the experience so the recovered child has the best possible chance to grow into an emotionally healthy adult. To that end, the Task Force provides training to professionals in the field, stays abreast of issues and problems that face responders to abductions, and develops approaches to address those issues and problems, with a view to ensuring that child abduction cases in California are handled with the highest possible level of expertise.

¹² 2007 California Attorney General's Child Abduction Manual, p. 8.

IV. APPENDICES

Appendix A

Child Abduction Resources

The following resources are included in the **California Child Abduction Task Force Website—www.childabductions.org**

Includes information on:

- Victim Witness Information
 - Victims of Crime Resource Center, www.1800victims.org
- Missing & Abducted Children Organizations
- Missing Children Clearinghouse
 - California Department of Justice, www.ag.ca.gov/missing
- International Agencies/Resources
 - National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, www.missingkids.org
- California Attorney General's Office
- Federal & National Agencies/Resources
- State Agencies/Resources (list of county District Attorney Child Abduction Units)
- AMBER Alert
- Missing/Unidentified Persons
- Prosecutor Response
- Prevention/Public Awareness
- International Family Abduction
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Non-Profit Agency Roles
- Child Protective Services
- Training: Center for Innovation & Resources, Inc., www.CIRinc.org

Appendix B

California Laws

There are several areas of California law that are pertinent to child abductions. Summary information is provided below. The full text of these laws is available via the California Legislative Counsel's website at: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html>.

California Education Code	
49068.5	Describes the task of a principal to check each child with missing person's bulletins before enrolling that child into their school when transferring from another.
49068.6	All law enforcement must notify the school district in which the child is enrolled that the child is missing. This information must be placed in the child's school record.
California Family Code	
3048	Lists requirements for child custody and visitation orders, factors for assessing abduction risk, and measures that can be taken to help prevent abduction.
3130	Deals with the actions necessary when a party does not appear in court with the child for custody proceedings.
3131	Deals with the actions necessary for a child taken or detained by another person in violation of a custody or visitation order.
3132	As described in sections 3130 and 3131, the district attorney must act on behalf of the court and not any other party involved in the proceeding.

California Family Code - *continued*

3133	Describes the right of the district attorney to write a declaration for a temporary custody order to a parent recommended by the district attorney for purposes of recovering a child.
3134	Deals with the reimbursement of expenses to the district attorney from the state for any expenses that may have been incurred pursuant to this chapter.
3134.5	The right of the district attorney to issue a protective custody warrant for the recovery of an unlawfully detained child.

California Government Code

13955	Lists and explains all who are eligible for compensation and when/under what circumstances they are eligible.
-------	---

California Penal Code

207	Defines the crime of kidnapping.
277	Defines terms used in child abduction statutes.
278	Any person without a right to custody who maliciously takes a child with intent to detain or conceal the child from a lawful custodian shall be punished by up to four years imprisonment and a fine not exceeding \$10,000.
278.5	Any person who takes a child, maliciously depriving a lawful custodian of a right to custody or visitation, shall be punished by up to three years imprisonment and a fine not exceeding \$10,000.
278.6	Lists all relevant factors to be considered in the sentencing hearing following a conviction for violating section 278 or 278.5.

California Penal Code - *continued*

278.7	If a person who takes, withholds or conceals a child from the person with a right to custody has reasonable belief that the child will suffer bodily injury or emotional harm, they must follow specific guidelines to avoid arrest and prosecution.
279	Anyone who violates section 278 or 278.5 and was not a resident of, or in this state at the time of the offense, is still punishable in this state if the child was present in or resided in this state, is found in this state, or a person with custody or visitation rights resided in this state at the time the child was taken.
279.1	The offenses in sections 278 and 278.5 are continuous in nature.
279.5	When setting bail in section 278 or 278.5 cases, the judge shall consider whether or not the child has been returned to the legal custodian.
279.6	Lists all circumstances in which law enforcement can place a child into protective custody.
280	Describes the punishment for anyone who causes or permits the concealment of a child in an adoption proceeding.
784.5	Defines the legal jurisdiction for sections 277, 278, or 278.5.
14205	All police and sheriffs' departments shall give priority to handling any reports of missing persons and runaways without delay.
14210	The legislature declares that all law enforcement are to immediately assist any person attempting to make a missing persons report.
14213	Defines "missing person," which includes child abducted by parent, and lists relevant evidence to establish a child is "at risk."

California Public Utilities Code

588	All inspectors or investigators employed by the office of a district attorney have the right to request any customer information from telephone, gas and electric companies. Lists the requirements necessary to protect the privacy of the utility customers.
-----	--

Welfare and Institutions Code

305	Lists all circumstances when an officer has the right to take temporary custody of a minor without a warrant.
-----	---