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CALIFORNIA  
**Child Abduction**  
TASK FORCE



## PRESS RELEASE

Merced County participates in the first California Missing and Abducted Children's Initiative (Cal MACI)

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Merced County is the first county in California to participate in the California Missing and Abducted Children's Initiative (Cal MACI), a project of the California Child Abduction Task Force (CATF). **The impact of a child abduction is one of the most devastating events a child, family and community experiences.**

The CATF provides multi-disciplinary trainings twice a year on interventions and resources for working with missing and abducted children. The CATF developed the concept of Cal MACI to address the need to help counties develop a specific plan to respond to child abduction with an understanding of their unique strengths and challenges.

Ray Fong of the Livingston Police Department explained, "The team combined goals of all involved agencies in a plan that addressed the concerns and goals of social services, law enforcement and the district attorney." Merced County agencies presented their plan to agency CEOs for their input and support. Police Chief Richard Hawthorne, of Atwater Police Department commented, "Our most valuable treasure in our communities is our children -- Merced Cal MACI will provide the skills and resources to protect these treasures!"

Agency representatives participated in skills-based training, practical and team building exercises, development of a mission statement, and identification of community needs. Atwater Police Department, Livingston Police Department, Los Banos Police Department, Merced County Human Services Agency, Valley Crisis Center, and Merced County District Attorney's Office child abduction and victim witness representatives worked diligently during this first Cal MACI in California.

*The mission of the Merced Cal MACI multi-disciplinary team is to coordinate efforts of county-wide agencies to effectively enhance our response to the needs of families and the community, focusing on the location, recovery and reintegration of missing and/or abducted children into a safe environment.*

Genevieve Bardini-Davis of Valley Crisis Center said, "The project has a great potential to ensure that victims of domestic violence don't lose their children as a result of abduction by an abusive parent."

Expert consultants, Georgia Hilgeman-Hammond and Bill Hammond facilitated this group in working together throughout the week and guided them through this unique process.

As CIR, Inc. staff in attendance, Tamara Karakashian, commented, “Amidst tough budget times participants committed a week to learn how to best serve victims of child abductions by creating new relationships and forming a team which will aid their county tremendously.” This team will continue to utilize existing resources in a more coordinated effort for a more proactive approach to missing and abducted children’s cases. Other identified agencies may join this team as the strategic plan moves forward in Merced County.

CAL MACI is a project of the California Child Abduction Task Force. Logistical support provided by Center for Innovation and Resources, Inc. with funding from the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA), with Children’s Justice Act funds received from the United States Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime.

For information about the Child Abduction Task Force and training information, please visit [www.childabductions.org](http://www.childabductions.org). For more information about the Center for Innovation and Resources, Inc. please visit [www.CIRinc.org](http://www.CIRinc.org).