DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN

Guide for Law Enforcement

COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

NATIONAL ALLIANCE
FOR DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN
Rescue. Defend. Shelter. Support.

DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN

Guide for Law Enforcement

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Message from the COPS Office Director

Dear colleagues:

It is estimated that more than 9 million children live in homes where a parent or other adult uses illegal drugs. The impact on children growing up while surrounded by illegal drugs is devastating. They are three times more likely to be verbally, physically, or sexually abused and four times more likely to be neglected. It is not easy to find and protect these kids.

Fortunately, organizations like the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children have made great strides in establishing training and resources that help law enforcement, social workers, teachers, community groups, and others track and assist children growing up within such tragic circumstances. We can provide a powerfully visible alternative to the neglect and violence that are part of the daily lives of too many children. We can reduce the incidence of children's exposure to violence and neglect. We can intervene more effectively to help mitigate the long-term negative effects children face when they are exposed to this kind of trauma.

Identifying and responding to drug endangered children through trauma-informed approaches has not yet become a central part of law enforcement's mission to serve and protect. The better the availability of training opportunities and tools focused on identifying and helping drug endangered children, the better chance we have of making this a central part of law enforcement's mission to serve and protect. It needs to be clear that there is an alternative to the neglect, violence, and fear that is part of the daily lives of these children. This guide is designed to help you and your agency in collaborating with others in the community to identify and serve these children at risk and to make it a part of your daily routine. Every child deserves to grow up in a home that is free from abuse and neglect. Together, we can make that a reality.

Sincerely,

Bernard K. Melekian, Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Message from National DEC's President

Dear law enforcement leaders:

As the President of the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (National DEC), I am pleased to introduce this guide for law enforcement professionals on how to effectively deal with the risks that children face when their caregivers are involved in drug activities or substance abuse. We know that law enforcement leadership in a collaborative approach to helping drug endangered children is critical to breaking the multi generational cycles of abuse and neglect that we see too much of in our communities. From the many law enforcement professionals who are part of our national network of concerned and dedicated practitioners, we also know that implementing the DEC approach presents a significant opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of drug endangered children.

Incorporating the DEC approach into all aspects of law enforcement takes leadership, vision, commitment, perseverance, and creativity. The DEC approach is inherently a community policing approach under which law enforcement works closely with other disciplines and agencies to create effective solutions to the risks faced by children exposed to drugs and the often related violence and abuse. This collaborative approach results in greater resources, a broader perspective, and the creation of local alliances that have proven to be very effective in making sure drug endangered children don't fall through the cracks of our criminal and child welfare systems.

Since its inception in 2006, National DEC has worked with thousands of professionals across the country to develop training programs that provide tools for reducing the risks of abuse and neglect of children in drug environments. We hope that this guide is another tool that will help that mission. It is intended to be a practical roadmap on how to take the knowledge we have about the risks faced by drug endangered children and to identify ways that we all work more effectively together to reduce those risks. This guide incorporates the collective experience of law enforcement professionals from across the country who have helped create and participate in local DEC alliances which they firmly believe have significantly improved efforts to protect children in their communities.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this guide. We hope this guide is useful to you and we welcome your comments and feedback on how to make it as effective as possible for the work you do each day. We also invite you to participate with and/or help develop drug endangered children alliances in your state, tribal, and local communities. National DEC exists to help spread the DEC mission and help implement the DEC approach across the country. Please contact us if we can help: www.nationaldec.org.

Best regards,

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The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (National DEC) is indebted to a number of talented, knowledgeable, and dedicated professionals who provided their time and expertise in the development of the *Drug Endangered Children Guide for Law Enforcement*. We would like to start by expressing our appreciation to the project's advisory group that included law enforcement professionals from local and state law enforcement as well as child welfare professionals. The advisors helped direct the project's format and practical information and reviewed the content to make it as useful to law enforcement and other practitioners as possible.

We would also like to thank Bernard Melekian, Director of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), U.S. Department of Justice, for his leadership on the drug endangered children issue and his agency's significant financial and programmatic support for the drug endangered children effort and National DEC.

We are grateful to the Department of Justice for their continuing support in the effort to break the cycle of abuse and neglect of children exposed to illicit drug use, sales, possession, or manufacturing and other substance abuse and addiction. We would like to thank the COPS Office, which helped create the vision of a more effective law enforcement response to drug endangered children. We are grateful particularly to Deborah Spence of the COPS Office for her ongoing support and guidance to National DEC throughout the course of this project.

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The Drug Endangered Children Effort: The DEC Approach

The DEC approach is a comprehensive approach that focuses on the formation of community-based partnerships that engage professionals from multiple disciplines in developing a collaborative approach to rescue, defend, shelter, and support children living in drug environments. This joint approach allows various disciplines to perform their job duties while also assisting in meeting the needs of these children.

Law enforcement professionals see the risks and consequences of drug activity and its destructive impact on children every day. With a focus on public safety, law enforcement is trained to identify illegal activity, which may include abuse and neglect of children. Within the DEC approach law enforcement is a crucial entity in identifying children at risk of harm due to drug activity as well as a crucial part of a system focused on helping children.

The DEC approach recognizes the likelihood of harm and the extensive risks that drug endangered children face. It creates a collaborative mindset among law enforcement, child welfare workers, prosecutors, and other practitioners in an effort to break the cycle of abuse and neglect. All disciplines play a vital part in the DEC approach.

The DEC approach recognizes that children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are three times more likely to be verbally, physically or sexually abused, and four times more likely than other children to be neglected.[1] Recognizing that these children are in need of earlier identification and intervention is the first step in assisting these children and changing the trajectory of their lives.

Law enforcement has a unique opportunity to be involved in children's lives and make a positive difference.

National DEC's "Children + Drugs = Risk" perspective and trainings recognize that law enforcement performs a critical role in every investigation by identifying children at risk, gathering and sharing evidence, and filing criminal charges for prosecution. Upon completion of the DEC approach trainings, law enforcement will have the necessary tools to paint a more complete picture of the child's life and the potential risks that he/she is facing. The information and evidence obtained during a DEC police investigation can be effectively utilized by child welfare and other disciplines involved in parallel investigations. The information gathered will further serve to enhance and streamline the identification of services available for children at risk.

1. *Alcohol, Other Drugs & Child Welfare* (Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America Publications, 2001).

Benefits of the DEC Approach

The key benefit to children, with respect to the law enforcement DEC approach, is earlier identification and intervention, which will assist in breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect for the next generation. This in turn gives children a greater opportunity to receive more timely and relevant interventions from other disciplines. Additionally, the DEC approach offers law enforcement several opportunities to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness in their response to drug endangered children.

Opportunities to increase efficiency and effectiveness include the following:

- Expanded knowledge of and access to other disciplines
- Greater willingness of other agencies to provide information to law enforcement investigations
- Enhanced knowledge of evidence gathering, increasing law enforcement's ability to file all applicable charges
- Improved crime reporting
- Increased crime prevention
- Heightened morale and job satisfaction

Expanded Knowledge of and Access to Other Disciplines

When law enforcement collaborates with other disciplines regularly, they gain a greater understanding of the complexities, mandates, protocols, and needs of other agencies. This improved understanding generates very positive outcomes to include; decreased frustration, increased officer safety; quicker response times, and more innovative solutions for successful collaborations on behalf of children.

Meetings and further contacts between law enforcement and other disciplines should include cross-training so each system understands the resources, policies, and limitations of the others. When agencies develop a collaborative mindset, their combined efforts begin to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness for all involved. Together, the disciplines develop new responses that would not have been identified in isolation.

Greater Willingness of Other Agencies to Provide Information to Law Enforcement Investigations

A common element for change is the recognition of an unacceptable situation. Once law enforcement recognizes the equation "Children + Drugs = Risk," identifying children becomes a primary focus, and this creates a new decision-making process where relationships between professionals are built, disciplines collaborate, and information is shared. This exchange of information enhances law enforcement's ability to make more informed decisions during criminal investigations. In turn, when law enforcement shares their report and evidence, it allows other disciplines to also make rational decision based on complete information. Credible information leads to better decisions which improve outcomes.

Discussion Points:

Other common elements for change, which lead to a greater willingness to share information, include: a shared vision for a desired outcome, strong leadership, guided activities of many, and persistence. If a shared vision is keeping children safe and providing intervention, that will break the cycle of abuse and neglect for the next generation.

▶ Do we share that common vision?

Each agency involved in DEC will have a unique mission with individual objectives. These should be generally understood so mutual objectives for the overall effort can be crafted without being in conflict.

▶ Do we have strong leadership?

Ensuring you have leadership buy-in will help keep the DEC movement supported in your agency. When participants engage middle management in the process, the middle managers can keep the entry-level personnel educated and trained. The middle managers can communicate up to the director about the successes of the effort.

▶ Do our DEC efforts involve the guided activities of many?

Certain agencies will generally be involved in the crisis intervention portion of DEC. For example, a law enforcement raid or arrest would cause an intervention at the point of family crisis. A child protective services referral investigation would be similar. Other stakeholders such as emergency medical services, victim assistance programs, and various mandatory reporters would all have roles in the initial intervention for families. At some point in the establishment of local DEC efforts, individual agencies should consider formally promulgating policies to reinforce DEC objectives. Multidisciplinary agreements can also be helpful in establishing the structure for multidisciplinary collaboration.

▶ Are we persistent?

The DEC response is an outstanding model of community policing. It started as a grass roots movement back in 1993, when law enforcement recognized they missed opportunities to identify children living in drug environments. Failing to identify these children as victims of abuse and neglect meant no services were provided to protect them.

National DEC was formed in 2003 by these passionate leaders who recognized that for it to be successful, the movement needed strong leadership and national oversight to coordinate and leverage resources. National DEC promotes a model that calls for collaboration between agencies, and coordination between the social and political systems charged with preventing, intervening, and treating these cases. In short, National DEC promotes transformation or social change from the old response to a new response. There will be great success when identifying and protecting drug endangered children becomes part of our routine response and it is seen as everyone's responsibility.

Enhanced Knowledge of Evidence Gathering

Insufficient information equals poor decisions, which equals poor outcomes, so it is critical to gather evidence of abuse, neglect, or maltreatment of children when investigating drug related crimes. If law enforcement fails to identify drug endangered children as victims, they will miss the opportunity to safeguard the welfare of the child and open doors for services.

Most states in the United States formalize the process of assessing risk by using some type of structured decision-making process or tool. Risk assessment tools generally include broad categories related to abuse and neglect, behavioral descriptions, and procedures to determine levels of risk, all collected on standardized forms for recording this information. Before child welfare agencies intervene with families, they are generally required to identify maltreatment or the risk of maltreatment. Therefore, the assessment of risk is a critical part of child welfare agency work.[2]

As discussed in this Guide, abuse of drugs or alcohol by parents and other caregivers can have negative effects on the health, safety, and well-being of children. Approximately 47 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have laws within their child protection statutes that address the issue of substance abuse by parents. Two areas of concern are the harm caused by prenatal drug exposure and the harm caused to children of any age by exposure to illegal drug activity in their homes or environment.[3]

Gathering evidence and filing charges related to abuse and neglect gives prosecutors the ability to influence terms of pre-trial release, sentencing, probation, or parole. When the criminal justice system files criminal charges of abuse and neglect it may impact what happens in child welfare dependency court. When these two systems work together they strengthen each other's response and their ability to identify the appropriate services for the child and the child's family.

Here are seven outstanding reasons, outlined by the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, why gathering evidence and filing child abuse and neglect charges is a critical step to breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect:

- Can safeguard the welfare of the child
- Identifies the child as a victim for services
- Can influence terms of pre-trial release, sentencing, probation, or parole
- May impact what happens in dependency court
- At sentencing, court establishes sanctions and activities considered necessary for rehabilitation
- Even if child endangerment charges are dismissed, prosecutor can still ask that the court consider conditions relating to the child endangerment charge
- Even if one parent or caregiver not charged with endangerment, prosecutor can influence terms of probation

National DEC's Core DEC and discipline specific trainings provide law enforcement with a better understanding of what evidence to look for and gather during their investigations. The training also provides tools to help officers document their findings in a way that describes the "life of the child" and not just a day or a moment in time. Ultimately, this will strengthen the case for each of the courts; criminal justice and dependency and neglect.

2. Bay Area Social Services Consortium, "Risk and Safety Assessment in Child Welfare: Instrument Comparisons," *Evidence for Practice*, July 2005, http://cssr.berkeley.edu/bassc/public/risk_summ.pdf.

3. Child Welfare Information Gateway, *Parental Drug Use as Child Abuse* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, 2012).

Improved Crime Reporting and Increased Crime Prevention

Identifying children associated with illegal drug activity or under the supervision of an incapacitated caregiver is a critical step in breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect and diminishing future criminal activity, as well as preventing future substance abuse. This type of crime reporting will help identify the strong correlation between drug abuse and child abuse. More children will be identified as victims and that will open the door to services that can help keep these young children out of the criminal justice system as juveniles or adults.

Law enforcement is responsible for public safety and has always seen its role in drug investigations as it relates to "supply reduction." Basically, take the drugs off the streets and arrest those who are distributing, manufacturing, possessing, or using illegal drugs. The drug endangered children effort has broadened the perspective to include "demand reduction." By identifying the children, who are at high risk of becoming the next generation of users, law enforcement can start the process of breaking the cycle of "Children see, children do."

What is known to be true includes the following:

- Children of parents with substance use disorders have a higher likelihood of developing substance use problems themselves.[4–6]
- In addition, children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are 3 times more likely to be verbally, physically, or sexually abused and 4 times more likely than other children to be neglected.[7]
- Children who experience child abuse and neglect are 59 percent more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28 percent more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30 percent more likely to commit violent crime.[8]
- As many as two-thirds of the people in treatment for drug abuse reported being abused or neglected as children.[9]
- About 30 percent of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own children, continuing the horrible cycle of abuse.[10]
- It is estimated that between 50–60 percent of child fatalities due to maltreatment are not recorded as such on death certificates.[11]

4. CSAT (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment), *Substance Abuse Treatment for Persons with Child Abuse and Neglect Issues*, Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 36, DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 04-3923 (Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2004).

5. CSAT (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment), *Substance Abuse Treatment and Family Therapy*, Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 39, DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 04-3957 (Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2005).

6. N. Young, S. Gardner, and K. Dennis, *Responding to Alcohol and Other Drug Problems in Child Welfare: Weaving Together Practice and Policy.* (Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 1998).

7. "A Guide for Caring Adults Working with Young People Experiencing Addiction in the Family," SAMSHA, www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/files/TrainingPackage/ MOD6/YouCanHelp.pdf.

8. Child Welfare Information Gateway, *Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006), www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long_term_consequences.cfm.

9. N. Swan, "Exploring the Role of Child Abuse on Later Drug Abuse: Researchers Face Broad Gaps in Information," *NIDA Notes* 13, no. 2 (1998), www.nida.nih.gov/ NIDA_Notes/ NNVol13N2/exploring.html.

10. Child Welfare Information Gateway, *Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006), www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long_term_consequences.cfm.

11. *Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities 2009: Statistics and Interventions*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children's Bureau, www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/ factsheets/fatality.pdf.

Heightened Morale and Job Satisfaction

By utilizing the DEC approach in every-day law enforcement duties, law enforcement has the satisfaction of knowing they are an integral part of breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect for that child and for the next generation.

Instead of picking up a child, who is sitting on the floor during an undercover drug investigation, and saying, "Unfortunately, I will be arresting you in 10–15 years," officers now see how they can play a significant role in changing the trajectory of the child's life.

After attending the Core DEC Train the Trainer Session, Tribal Police Officer Jayel Whitted, with the Cahto Tribal Police Department in California wrote, "Throughout my law enforcement career I have felt like I was where I needed to be, but lately I've felt like I was meant to do more, but I didn't know what. I now feel like not only do I know what I was meant to do but, I feel like I have a good foundation to save children. Thank you!"

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Challenges of the DEC Approach

Enhancing the response to drug endangered children requires changing some of the values, attitudes, and beliefs in law enforcement agencies. Any time changes are introduced to an agency, it creates challenges. Overcoming the challenges requires a comprehensive, long-term strategy, as well as reinforcement, until the changes become integrated into the agency as standard operating procedure.

Some challenges are as follows:

- Competing goals and priorities
- Establishing buy-in
- Limited training resources
- Insufficient information about other agencies' roles and responsibilities
- Difficulties in measuring success

Competing Goals and Priorities

We know collaboration can be challenging, but *why* is it challenging? All disciplines involved in the DEC approach have different responsibilities, and therefore, have different goals and priorities. For example, law enforcement's goals and priorities are public safety—it is their job to investigate crimes and to file charges when applicable. Child welfare will have different priorities—it is their job to keep children safe. These differences may cause each discipline to utilize different approaches to achieve their goals, which could make the road to a common resolution rather difficult. By working collaboratively and having an understanding of the possible difficulties, each discipline can maintain their goals but work as a team in the best interest of the child. This, in turn, will have a greater outcome than each discipline working separately.

Other reasons why collaboration is challenging—adapted from "Team Energy Drains" by Frank M. J. LaFasto and Carl E. Larson—include the following:[12]

- Relationship issues may arise when two or more members of the effort allow relationship difficulties or differences to determine their behavior, rather than allowing the actual goal to determine their behavior.
- Control issues may arise when the question of "who's in charge" becomes more important than "what we should do."
- Differing values - conflict may arise when those involved in the effort are in contention over what they value, how the effort should be defined, what behaviors are appropriate, etc.
- Helplessness - efforts may be stalled when members doubt their ability to achieve the goal or have an impact, or feel that too many critical factors are beyond their control, or they may adopt a strategy of going through the motions without actually changing anything.

12. Frank M. J. LaFasto, and Carl E. Larson, *When Teams Work Best: 6,000 Team Members and Leaders Tell What It Takes to Succeed* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2001).

Discussion Points:

- **Can we be patient and understand that trust is earned?** Several of the DEC stakeholders may find that they have a great deal of mistrust based upon old experiences and the silo mentality. Others may not have worked collaboratively with law enforcement in the past and therefore have never been in a position to cultivate trust. Trust must be earned over time and patience is necessary to ensure trust is built.
- **Does our DEC effort foster opportunities for trust?** All multidisciplinary interactions are an opportunity to begin building trust. The more often these interactions occur, and the deeper the level of cooperation, the more rapid and meaningful the basis for trust.
- **How does our communication system fit with building trust?** Establishing feedback and conflict resolution will help build trust among stakeholders.

Establishing Buy-In

Sustaining the DEC response requires buy-in at many levels—including line-level practitioners, middle management, and executives—to help implement the transformation or social change within the organization.

As mentioned previously, the DEC efforts began with officers in the field who were responding to drug deals or other calls for service and missed the risks to children. The buy-in of the DEC approach by the officer is relatively easy because they are involved in identifying the problem and finding a solution. However, if the first-line officers don't have support from their supervisor, it creates internal conflict. The officers know they need to do things differently, but the supervisor, who is one step removed, may be focused on other outcomes (i.e., drug arrest and drug seizures). If an officer is evaluated on drug seizures and arrests and there is no value placed on identifying children, it is difficult to justify time spent on DEC efforts. Officers have been recognized by their agency for seizing kilos of cocaine or heroin and thousands of dollars, but have they been recognized for saving the life of a child living in these drug environments? Supervisors, who are not exposed to DEC either in the field or through DEC training, have a more difficult time acknowledging that identifying children is law enforcements' responsibility. A critical step to sustainability is educating middle management about the DEC response.

Frontline managers are not only in a unique position to show support for DEC, but are also critical advocates to support the DEC effort. The frontline manager is able to work directly with the line officers to ensure the DEC protocols are being followed. He/she is also able to follow up on the many challenges outlined in this Guide and demonstrate to the executive level leaders the positive benefits of using the DEC approach. It is crucial to get agency management-level buy-in for DEC efforts. Perceived lack of commitment on the part of agency management and leaders to enhanced victim response will weaken progress toward the goal.

Discussion Points:

- Which agency leaders do we know would be supportive of DEC?
- Who can we bring to the meeting that will help communicate the DEC approach to the leadership?

Limited Training Resources

To institute the DEC approach into a law enforcement agency, there must be consistent and ongoing training. Due to high turnover and job changes of personnel, it's also important to make the training available on a regular basis. Mandated training and fiscal concerns may impact an agency's ability to provide adequate training on their own, so for DEC training, law enforcement agencies may be able to partner with other disciplines and institutions in order to maximize the training potential for all involved. These institutions could include police academies, prosecutors' offices, child welfare trainers, and universities and colleges. At times, a creative approach to being able to provide ongoing training is needed within law enforcement agencies.

Insufficient Information about other Disciplines' Roles and Responsibilities

Lack of knowledge of other disciplines' challenges and responsibilities often results in limited access to information, specifically regarding drug endangered children. This lack of knowledge can cause frustration with other disciplines, which interferes with the development of good working relationships. When one discipline truly understands the roles and responsibilities of other disciplines, good communication and collaboration can begin.

Difficulties in Measuring Success

Increasing awareness and the response to drug endangered children may very well lead to an increase in child abuse and neglect criminal charges, which may in turn confuse standards of success. Because the reduction of the rate of crime has been traditionally used to measure effectiveness of law enforcement, agencies may need to reconsider and redefine performance standards around drug endangered children. One measure of success could be the increased number of children identified as drug endangered children during law enforcement investigations due to increased awareness, DEC protocols being adhered to, and collaboration.

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Core Elements of the DEC Approach

Identification of Children

The early identification of children in all criminal investigations is key to the DEC approach. Children need to be identified as early as possible in order to not only be removed from unsafe living environments, but also so they can receive earlier interventions. Law enforcement often sees more children than other disciplines. When law enforcement is able to identify these children as being at risk, this often will trigger a collaborative response for the safety of the children.

For example, in a non-DEC approach a patrol officer may pull a mother over and issue her a ticket for speeding, and also notice that she smells of marijuana. The officer may then arrest the mother on drug related charges and not notice or inquire about the car seat in the back seat. In using the DEC approach, this officer would be trained in identifying the car seat as an indicator of a possible child at risk. In the DEC approach, the child has a greater chance of being identified at the earliest point possible.

Collaboration between Disciplines

Collaboration is a key component of the DEC approach. No single discipline can effectively or efficiently address drug endangered children on its own, especially over the long term. Instead, the expertise and resources of multiple disciplines combined assists to improve interventions for children. As mentioned above, successful collaboration requires a working knowledge of how other disciplines think, function, and define success. Professionals have to join together for the DEC effort to truly be effective. The professionals who can develop an effective DEC collaboration include: law enforcement, child welfare, prosecutors, judges, victim witness advocates, medical personnel, teachers, first responders, treatment providers, probation and corrections, prevention specialist, day care providers, fire fighters, among others.

National DEC defines collaboration as: "The exchange of information, altering of activities, sharing of resources, and enhancement of the capacity of another for the mutual benefit of all and to achieve a common purpose."[13] One of the benefits of collaboration between systems is the ability to share knowledge that other systems may not already possess.

When a drug endangered child is identified by law enforcement, a multi-disciplinary response can be initiated. A systematic response by disciplines can therefore lead to a better outcome for these children. In the DEC approach, the way to sustain the efforts in helping children is to develop long-lasting collaborative relationships, with children as the common denominator.

Collaboration benefits include the following:

- No reliance on grant funding for sustainability
- No reliance on individual champions for sustainability
- Builds broad community support
- Allows for comprehensive intervention to address the needs of children
- Increased knowledge, better decisions, and better outcomes for children

13. Chris Huxham, ed., *Creating Collaborative Advantage* (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1996).

No reliance on grant funding for sustainability

Once the DEC approach is instituted within a law enforcement agency, it will become the way of doing business in the future. It does not require extra financial assistance or manpower resources to implement. Training should be the only cost, but can often use agency training moneys already in place when possible.

No reliance on individual champions for sustainability

Again, once it has become the law enforcement agency's operating norm it will become part of the law enforcement job function for all officers, not just the initial champions.

Builds broad community support

It is helpful to get other community members and providers involved in identifying children at risk. Community members can be trained on identifying these children and giving the correct information on the child abuse hotline to help open an investigation. Community members may also be helpful during an investigation in providing more information about the environment of the child's family and caregivers. With the proper community awareness and identification training, community members can be valuable resources and dedicated helpers to drug endangered children. The following are suggestions of additional disciplines to engage in the DEC approach:

- Victim service providers
- Advocacy organizations representing victim interests
- School systems, college and university campuses
- Elected officials
- Businesses
- Faith communities
- Media outlets
- Community residents

Allows for comprehensive intervention to address the needs of children

It seems self-evident that the sooner that drug endangered children are identified, and the less time they spend in these traumatic and harmful environments, the higher the likelihood that the intervention and treatment strategies will be successful. When law enforcement officers are able to identify children earlier, the children are able to obtain specific and targeted services earlier. Law enforcement officers transferring and handing off necessary information and evidence to the appropriate disciplines when children are identified will increase the children's ability to obtain these specific and targeted services earlier.

Increased knowledge, better decisions, and better outcomes for children

When there is an increase in knowledge obtained by any discipline, there will then be an increase in the ability to make better decisions. With better decisions on behalf of children, there will then in turn be better outcomes for children.

Evidence Collection

It is difficult to understand how a parent or other caregiver could ever neglect or abuse a child and endanger their well-being with involvement with drugs. But whatever the reasons, it is the job of law enforcement to identify child endangerment and neglect or abuse of a child, and to gather the supporting evidence. Because parental or caregiver drug trafficking and drug use puts children at significant risk of harm, when law enforcement finds children living in drug environments, these risks warrant an investigation and the gathering of evidence. It is law enforcements' charge to gather the necessary evidence of identifiable risks and potential harm to those children.

Questions to ask when looking for evidence of the risks to children

What evidence can you look for that shows the risk of physical abuse?

What evidence can you look for that shows the risk of neglect?

What evidence can you look for that shows the risk of exposure to illegal activity?

What evidence can you look for that shows emotional problems?

What evidence can you look for that shows behavioral problems?

What evidence can you look for that shows cognitive problems?

What other evidence can you look for that shows risks?

The following are some examples of evidence that indicate a child's risk of physical abuse, neglect, exposure to illegal activity, or other risks:

Evidence that Indicates the Risk of Physical Abuse

- Drug use and withdrawal = increased irritability
- Signs of violence (holes in the walls, doors)
- Discipline that is inconsistent
- Threats of violence (notes, pictures, violent posters, words, etc.)
- Discipline that is unpredictable
- Out of proportion anger or rage
- Chaotic environment
- Child behavioral problems
- Irrational thinking
- Child already has physical injuries (child abuse)
- Bruising in areas not prone to accidental injury (attention to age and physical ability)
- Impulsive, aggressive behaviors
- Previously reported abuse

Evidence that Indicates the Risk of Neglect

- Impaired caretakers OR Inappropriate caretakers
- Chaotic environment
- Children left alone to fend for themselves; no supervision
- Weapons
- Unsafe living environment
- Booby traps
- Controlled substances in the residence
- Chemical or cooking elements in the home
- Controlled substances accessible to children (children are creative and can find ways to reach things that many adults think are out of reach)
- Parents allowing drug cooks, users, dealers, parolees, probationers, sex offenders, other unknown people who may pose a risk to the child in the home
- Drug buys happening with the children present
- Children's bedding soiled, dirty, or no sheets
- Air quality issues
- Dirty house—health risks (rodents, roaches, etc.)
- Exposed or uncovered electrical wiring
- Plumbing not working
- Lack of basic necessities such as food, clothing, etc.
- Spoiled or moldy food
- Feces and/or urine in the home
- Children are dirty
- Heating, cooling, utilities not working
- Children don't react to sudden presence of law enforcement during an unannounced entry
- Residence is cluttered and injurious (garbage overflowing, dirty dishes scattered)
- Children are sick or have untreated illnesses or injuries
- Children are "parentified" due to a lack of parenting (ex: 4-year-old feeding/changing a 6-month-old)
- Educational delays
- Children imitate negative adult behavior

Evidence that Indicates the Risk of Exposure to Illegal Activities

- Parents allow drug users in the home
- Drug buys happen with children present
- Children committing crimes to support the drug use of their parents
- Children are traded for drugs or are victims of kidnapping because of the drug activity
- Children used as decoys during drug deals
- Children witnessing violence (domestic or other)
- Children witnessing other illegal activity—car theft, burglary, forgery, robbery, etc.
- Children committing crimes in order to survive (to eat, pay bills, etc.)
- Children witnessing sexual abuse, sexual violence, sex trade/prostitution to support drug habits
- Children exposed to drug trade

Evidence that Indicates Other Risks

- Incapacitated parent or caregiver who passes out or sleeps so soundly that he/she rolls over on and suffocates the child
- Loss in the child's life; loss of security and trust; loss of normal interactions with family and community
- Increased risk of sexual abuse as a result of parents allowing drug users, dealers, cooks, parolees, probationers present, sex offenders, and unknown people in the home
- Incapacitated parent or caregiver places child in inappropriate place where child could suffocate (examples could be an infant in bedding where they could suffocate or become strangled or positioned with a pillow, mattress, or other object with loose plastic)
- Exposure to drugs—ingestion, inhalation, injection, absorption

Children living in homes in which there is illicit drug use, manufacturing, cultivation, or distribution are not only at risk for harm, but are also at risk to experience emotional, behavioral, or cognitive problems. While some of these problems may be obvious, others may not; as a law enforcement officer it is beneficial to be able to recognize and identify these problems.

The following are some examples of evidence that a child has emotional, behavioral, or cognitive problems.

Examples of Emotional Problems

- Attachment disorders
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Attaching to strangers too easily
- Difficulty trusting caregivers
- Anxiety
- Mistrust or fear (especially with adults)
- Depression
- Complex emotions
- Acting out
- Parents or caregivers swear at the child, insult the child or put him/her down
- Child has a hard time understanding or sharing his/her emotions (love, anger, guilt, feels shame)
- Sleep disorders (nightmares, restlessness, insomnia)
- Withdrawal
- Parents or caregivers acted in a way that made the child feel afraid or unsafe (fear physical injury)

Examples of Behavioral Problems

- Interpersonal problems
- Inappropriate sexual behaviors
- Attention issues
- Poor communication skills
- Aggressive behavior
- Child seriously misbehaves (belligerent, destructive, threatening, physical cruel, deceitful, disobedient, dishonest)
- Impulsive
- Low threshold for stimulation (lights too bright, room too loud)

Examples of Cognitive Problems

- Difficulty talking and listening
- Difficulty paying attention
- Often does not learn from mistakes
- Trouble picking up social cues (can't read others' emotions: happy, sad, fear, anger)
- Difficulty remembering
- Aggressive behavior
- Trouble reading
- Preoccupied or tired
- Poor school attendance
- Educational delays
- Repeated grades
- Frequent change of schools

Building and Participating in a DEC Local Alliance

Organization

All DEC alliances need to develop some sort of organizational structure and process. It helps people understand the work, the work flow, and their role within the work. Having a strong organizational structure creates increased effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity.

Discussion points:

- Are all community DEC stakeholders identified?
- Who else can we involve?
- Minimally, who do we need at the table to be successful?
- Who do we want at the table after we are established?
- How and when do we bring other disciplines into the DEC alliance?
- Have we established roles for stakeholders in the DEC Alliance?

Bylaws and Protocols

The DEC alliance will establish all parts of the bylaws and protocols.

Bylaws will include specific information regarding rules that the DEC alliance will follow. These will include but are not limited to membership, members, voting rights, meetings, and other regulatory requirements. Bylaws will provide structure within the alliance.

Protocols will include detailed information regarding the DEC alliance mission or purpose statement, goals, and procedures. These will likely be detailed explanations of each discipline's part in the DEC alliance.

- Mission or Purpose Statement: A mission or purpose statement spells out in general terms what the alliance hopes to accomplish over time.
- Goals: These would be specific to each discipline and would outline what each discipline is supposed to be doing to support the mission or purpose statement. The goals should be measurable, achievable, and shared.
- Procedures: These would be a description of how each discipline will handle drug endangered children, so every discipline understands their roles and responsibilities.

Discussion Points:

- ▶ Do we have an agreement about the objectives of our DEC effort?
- ▶ Do we understand the individual roles and combined objectives of the stakeholders, community members and providers, and other professionals?
- ▶ Are we in alignment with our statewide DEC plan if applicable?

Communication

Each member of the DEC alliance has to openly acknowledge each discipline's individual mission, refrain from being "controlling" or egocentric, share resources, and agree upon doable common goals. Open communication among alliance members is a must in keeping the alliance running smoothly. When conflicts arise, resolution needs to be sought out quickly.

Discussion Points:

- **How do we establish a communication framework?** DEC efforts should establish formal and informal communication mechanisms. The local service providers need the ability to discuss and evaluate DEC efforts and there is often a need to share information with the state DEC alliance.
- **Are we communicating to reduce conflict?** An effective communication structure is necessary to prevent conflict from overshadowing the benefits to a collaborative DEC alliance.
- **Are we sharing our DEC success stories to build momentum?** One of the keys to establishing and maintaining a DEC effort is the ability to celebrate the small victories along the way. Stakeholders will likely begin to learn more about children and families and the full scope of tools to address their complex problems. Whenever a DEC intervention results in positive outcomes for children and/or their families, everyone can become excited and use these experiences to fuel the DEC approach.

Develop Public Awareness

Mobilization, implementation, and sustainability of the DEC response model at the local, state/tribal, and national/federal levels, as well as within organizations, require public awareness and support. To maximize effectiveness, a DEC alliance should help develop public awareness of the DEC alliance and the DEC approach. This could be through presentations, trainings, publications, and brochures.

National DEC developed a Core DEC Awareness training curriculum that effectively highlights the risks faced by drug endangered children and delineates a collaborative intervention response model. Additionally, National DEC continually enhances their website with updated information about the risks faced by children and the effectiveness of the collaborative response.

Creating public awareness through the delivery of DEC training, the dissemination of publications, brochures, and promising practices is a critical step in developing sustainable DEC efforts.

Policy Support

At some point in the establishment of a DEC alliance, individual agencies should consider formally adopting policies to reinforce DEC objectives. The policy support becomes important when looking at funding the DEC alliance and it will also help institute the DEC approaches within the state.

Steps and Timeline for Starting a DEC Alliance

The following section will go through some common elements, questions, and a timeline to help you build your own DEC Taskforce.

Stakeholders suggested for starting a DEC alliance

- Law Enforcement
- Child Welfare
- County Attorney's Office/Prosecutors
- Medical (doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, etc.)

Discussion Points:

- **Do our stakeholders have individual agency DEC policies?**
- **Do we collectively have protocols to support our DEC efforts?** Memorandum of Understanding agreements can also be helpful in establishing the structure for multidisciplinary collaboration.
- **Do we have public policy (laws) that support our DEC objectives?** Laws that both acknowledge criminal conduct and child maltreatment for DEC situations can help considerably with removing barriers between service providers.

Bring only a few disciplines to the table to start and then slowly add in more disciplines as the alliance allows. Examples of other disciplines to bring to the alliance include:

- Probation/Parole
- Judicial/Courts
- Victim Witness Advocates
- Fire and EMS
- In-home Service Providers
- Schools/Educators
- Substance Abuse Providers, Mental Health Providers, other treatment providers

Questions to ask prior to the initial meeting

- Who do we bring to the table?
- How do we mend broken fences?
- How do we help them understand/believe?
- How do we make this work?
- How do we make a DEC response everyone's responsibility?
- How long will this take?
- How do we build working relationships?

Work for the initial meeting

- Each discipline makes two lists of five items each. One list explains why that discipline wants to be involved in the DEC alliance. The other list explains what that discipline can provide to the DEC alliance. See Table 1 below.
- At the initial meeting, these lists need to be displayed and discussed in detail.
- The initial meeting should also address or come close to addressing what every member would like to see addressed by the this DEC alliance.

Sample table

Why my discipline wants to be involved in DEC alliance	What my discipline can provide to DEC alliance
Example: Better collaboration with other agencies	*Example: Law Enforcement has internal data base*
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

First steps following the initial meeting

- Developing bylaws
- Developing protocols—keep them realistic and simple—don't make them work against the alliance
- Stress open and honest communication at all times. If a member cannot agree to communicate honestly and give and receive constructive feedback, an alternate person may need to be sought out.

Review protocols quarterly

The protocols are a living document and should be reviewed often and updated as needed. When the alliance is reviewing and assessing if updates are needed, it is a good time to ask the following questions.

- Are the current protocols working?
- Are the current protocols realistic?
- Do we need to adjust any of the protocols?

Common elements for change to keep in mind

- Recognition of an unacceptable situation: All alliance members understand and believe that "Children + Drugs = Risk."
- Alliance members should have similar understandings of definitions, goals, vision, etc. These will be reviewed along with protocols as needed.
- Shared vision for a desired outcome: All alliance members understand the outcome is safe children through identification, evidence collection, and collaboration.
- Strong leadership: All alliance members are strong leaders in all aspects. They are leaders in their communities and within their disciplines, and therefore strong leaders within the alliance.
- Guided activities of many: All alliance members understand that collaboration is a key component of the DEC alliance and the DEC approach.
- **Never give up! Alliance members understand that there will be challenges along the way and are dedicated to solving problems and working through difficult times.**

Sample timeline for building a DEC alliance

1–3 months. Establish DEC alliance members. Start with only a few primary disciplines.

- County Attorney (Lead, Multi-Disciplinary Team)
- Law Enforcement
- Child Welfare
- Medical (doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, etc.)

During this timeframe the initial meeting should be held. This will be the time to establish each discipline's needs and wants and to make the lists of five items. This is also the time to be working on bylaws and protocols and getting an idea of the direction of the alliance.

3–6 months. Finalize Bylaws and Protocols.

- Incorporate needs and wants list into the protocols.
- Make protocols realistic and flexible.
- Review collaboration and the need to communicate openly and honestly. Determine if collaboration is happening effectively and discuss the challenges if it is not.

6–9 months. Team should be up and running.

- Immediately address any obstacles as they arise (and they will). Make sure that anger and resentment does not build among disciplines.
- Contact with alliance members should be made often, both in person and via phone. Encourage all disciplines to contact one another on a regular basis.
- Alliance members should be making note of any challenges, successes, and ideas and sharing them with the alliance.

9–12 months. Review Protocols and Bylaws.

- Assess the current protocols and adjust as necessary.
- Start thinking of new alliance members that will strengthen and enhance the DEC alliance.

Additional Resources Available from National DEC Website

The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children website has a wealth of information about the issue of drug endangered children and the DEC approach. The following resources can be found at www.nationaldec.org.

National DEC's CORE DEC Training – 90 Minute Version

90-Minute Community DEC Awareness Training Videos (www.nationaldec.org/training/coredectraining.html)

On-Line Resource Library with over 1,000 Downloadable Reports, Articles, Protocols, and Other Resources

National DEC On-line Resource Center (www.nationaldec.org/resourcecenter/atozresources.html)

Here are a few examples of the types of resources available which can be accessed by entering the title of the publication in the "A to Z Resources" Search Box:

"Child abuse reported to the police"

"Consequences of illicit drug use in America"

"Drug-endangered Children Act"

"Hazards of grow houses"

"Is meth next door?"

"Marijuana legalization: The issues"

"Multidisciplinary protocol for the investigation of child abuse"

"National Methamphetamine Initiative survey: The status of the methamphetamine threat and impact on Indian lands: An analysis"

"New unregulated psychoactive substances marketed as 'bath salts'"

"One-pot meth alert"

"Protecting the abused & neglected child: A guide for recognizing & reporting child abuse & neglect"

"Situation Report: Synthetic cathinones (bath salts): An emerging domestic threat"

"Understanding the scope of drug endangered children victims: A need for data collection within law enforcement and child protective services"

"What you can do about child abuse"

DEC-Related Downloadable Webinars

National DEC presents a DEC-related professional development webinar each month that currently averages more than 350 participants from all over the country. Approximately 50 of these webinars are currently available for subsequent viewing on National DEC's website:

National DEC Webinars: www.nationaldec.org/training/trainingdownloads.html

Here are a few examples of the webinars available:

Defending Childhood Initiative: Addressing Childhood Exposure to Violence

An Overview of Bath Salts and Other Synthetic Drugs from Law Enforcement and Medical Perspectives

Breaking Through Barriers: Connecticut's Collaborative Response to Children and Families

National Medical Guideline for Children Removed from Meth Labs

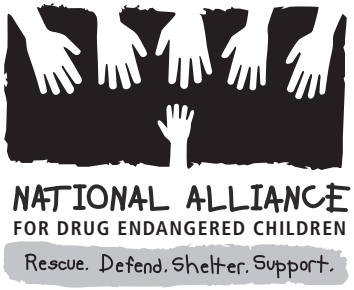
Tribal Law Enforcement and DEC

Drug Identification

Skin Findings in Child Physical Abuse

Health Risks Associated with Indoor Marijuana Grow Operations and the Impact on Children

About National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children



The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (National DEC) exists to make a difference in the lives of "drug endangered children" who are at risk of suffering physical or emotional harm as a result of illegal drug use, possession, manufacturing, cultivation, or distribution. These children may also have caretaker's whose substance misuse interferes with the caretaker's ability to parent and provide a safe and nurturing environment.

National DEC has helped create the "DEC approach," which is a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach that engages each discipline to assist children who are living in drug environments or around drug activity. This DEC approach allows National DEC to work alongside and support professionals in law enforcement, judicial, child welfare, prosecution, medical, treatment, prevention, education, probation, parole, corrections, EMS, fire, and many more disciplines. It is the belief of National DEC that all of the professionals who have the opportunity to identify a child at risk of abuse and neglect due to drug activity should be trained in understanding what to look for, how to document the risk, and how to work collaboratively.

National DEC has established a national infrastructure that includes 24 affiliated state DEC Alliances along with tribal and local alliances. A volunteer network of more than one hundred DEC leaders provides the foundation for eight practitioner working groups that identify and develop best practices. Thousands of practitioners have received DEC training and over 200 professionals around the nation from various disciplines are trained as trainers in the DEC approach and provide training to others. National DEC also maintains working partnerships with federal agencies, as well as tribal, local, national, and international organizations.

Some of National DEC's work includes the following:

- Providing technical assistance to local, tribal, and state DEC efforts both nationally and internationally
- Developing and delivering training for professionals across disciplines to increase their expertise and enhance their work with drug endangered children
- Developing and disseminating resources and tools that address the needs of drug endangered children
- Increasing public awareness about the risks faced by drug endangered children
- An online resource center that includes hundreds of downloadable publications, protocols, and templates
- A monthly professional webinar series, monthly newsletter, and social media updates
- An annual conference attended by hundreds of federal, state, tribal, local law enforcement and other professionals
- A growing series of national partners who help develop our training and spread the DEC mission

All of National DEC's resources, webinars, technical assistance, and training can be accessed through the National DEC website: www.nationaldec.org.

About the COPS Office

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.

Rather than simply responding to crimes once they have been committed, community policing concentrates on preventing crime and eliminating the atmosphere of fear it creates. Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office has produced and compiled a broad range of information resources that can help law enforcement better address specific crime and operational issues, and help community leaders better understand how to work cooperatively with their law enforcement agency to reduce crime.

- Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested nearly $14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.
- To date, the COPS Office has funded approximately 125,000 additional officers to more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country in small and large jurisdictions alike.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than 8.57 million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.

COPS Office resources, covering a wide breadth of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—are available, at no cost, through its online Resource Center at www.cops.usdoj.gov. This easy-to-navigate website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT MORE THAN 9 MILLION CHILDREN LIVE IN HOMES WHERE A PARENT OR OTHER ADULT USES ILLEGAL DRUGS. This exposure leaves them vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Identifying and responding to these drug endangered children needs to be a central part of law enforcement's mission to serve and protect. The *Drug Endangered Children Guide for Law Enforcement* offers law enforcement professionals practical information on how to develop an effective collaborative response to this complicated issue and make a positive impact on the lives of drug endangered children.

COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
145 N Street NE
Washington, DC 20530

To obtain details on COPS Office programs,
call the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Visit the COPS Office online at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

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