



**Prince William County
Police Department**

**Child Protection Review
Final Report**

July 2009

**Prince William County Police Department
Child Protection Review Team – Final Report**

Executive Summary

On January 7, 2009, Alfreedia Glover reported that her thirteen-year-old adopted daughter, Alexis, ran away from the Central Library and disappeared. On January 9, 2009, Alexis was found deceased in a small body of water approximately ten miles from where she was reported to have gone missing. On January 13, 2009, Ms. Glover was arrested and ultimately charged with Filing a False Police Report, Felony Child Neglect, and Homicide.

During the initial investigation, and subsequent death investigation, it became apparent that a variety of agencies, including the Prince William County Police Department, Department of Social Services (DSS), and the Public Schools had multiple contacts with the Glover family over the past six years. As a result, Chief Charlie T. Deane created the Child Protection Review Team (CPRT) and instructed it to review the police department's response to child abuse and neglect and propose recommendations for improvement. Chief Deane also selected the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to conduct a multi-faceted inquiry to determine if that response meets national standards.

The NCMEC reached several conclusions about the manner in which the department generally responds to complaints of abused, neglected, and missing children. Specifically, the Center concluded that the department's response to complaints of abused, neglected, and missing children is positive. However, the current process for dealing with runaway children could be improved. The Center then proposed that the department implement the Missing and Exploited Children Comprehensive Action Program (MCAP).

The police department's CPRT conducted an in-depth analysis and compared files on all incidents in which Alexis Glover is reported to have been abused, neglected, or missing. As a result of the investigation, the CPRT identified several areas of concern, including:

- Intentional mischaracterization of the victim, Alexis Glover, by the mother.
- Lack of adequate communication between DSS and the police department.
- Inconsistent investigative practices by investigating officers and detectives.

The CPRT then proposed a variety of recommended changes and improvements that would enhance the police department's response to child abuse and neglect investigations. The recommendations are categorized in four separate areas, with the most critical listed below. Additional recommendations are included in the body of this report.

Training

- **Field Training Procedures** - Revise field training procedures for new detectives to include unit-specific requirements
- **Investigative Process** - Review appropriate investigative procedures and practices with all detectives, particularly in relation to conducting background reviews prior to interviews.
- **Joint Training** - Conduct advanced joint training for DSS workers and the police department's Crimes Against Children Unit (CACU) detectives.

Communication

- **Early Warning System** - Develop an early warning system that captures vital and historical information on children, and that can be accessed by all detectives.

Policy

- **Policy Revision** - Revise current policy to require all child abuse and neglect complaints be investigated by a CACU detective or School Resource Officer (SRO).
- **Evaluate Staffing** – Conduct a staffing review to determine the need for additional CACU detectives.

Interagency Cooperation and Information Sharing

- **Enhance Communication** - Improve interaction, communication, and information sharing among all agencies involved in child abuse, neglect, and victimization incidents, particularly in relation to sharing criminal issues.
- **Develop Database** - Create an electronic information sharing system between DSS and the police department.
- **Institute MCAP** - Participate in the Missing and Exploited Children Comprehensive Action Program (MCAP).

Investigations into the neglect and abuse of children are often difficult and complex, and the department is committed to improving its ability to protect and prevent the victimization of children. The case of Alexis Glover resulted in the ultimate tragedy – the loss of a child's life. Although only one person is ultimately responsible for the death of Alexis, and that is her mother, Alfreedia Glover, every effort must be made by all agencies involved to ensure that the investigation of child victimization cases is conducted in the most thorough way possible. As a result, the police department has already begun to institute a variety of changes designed to achieve this goal.

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I. CHILD PROTECTION REVIEW TEAM

On January 7, 2009, Alfreedia Glover reported that her thirteen-year-old adopted daughter, Alexis, ran away from the Central Library and disappeared. Incident command was established and a full-scale search was initiated.

On January 9, 2009, Alexis was found deceased, by a private citizen, in a small body of water approximately ten miles from where she was reported to have gone missing. On January 13, 2009, Ms. Glover was arrested and charged with Felony Child Neglect and ultimately Homicide.

During the initial investigation, and subsequent death investigation, it became apparent that a variety of agencies, including the Prince William County Police Department, Department of Social Services (DSS) and public schools, had contact with the Glover family numerous times over the past six years. It also became evident that a number of those contacts involved allegations of child abuse and neglect with Alexis Glover as the victim and Alfreedia Glover as the suspect. As a result, Chief Deane created the Child Protection Review Team (CPRT) and instructed it to review the police department's response to child abuse and neglect allegations and propose recommendations for improvement. The CPRT consisted of one Captain, a Senior Lieutenant, two Sergeants, and one Master Detective.

Specifically, the CPRT was instructed to do the following:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of all police actions, policies, and procedures related to the Alexis Glover case.
- Review police department processes in general in handling missing and endangered child protection calls for service and investigations.
- Review multi-agency information sharing protocols.
- Encompass how the police department can better recognize situations of children in extreme need and to equip officers with additional resources to assist in these types of cases.

II. NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Concurrent to the internal investigation conducted by the CPRT, the department sought out an independent source to assist in improving its response to abused, neglected, and missing children. The National Center for Missing and Exploiting Children (NCMEC), a nationally recognized organization that has demonstrated expertise in helping law enforcement agencies work with parents and children who are in need of assistance, was selected and conducted a multi-faceted inquiry to determine the manner in which the department currently responds to the needs of abused, neglected, and missing children to ascertain if that response meets national standards.

The NCMEC interviewed workers from DSS, the Commonwealth's Attorney Office, and Prince William County Public Schools to determine how each agency interacts with the

department when responding to complaints of abused, neglected, and missing children. The NCMEC also reviewed randomly selected abuse, neglect, and missing juvenile reports to determine how the department currently responds to complaints of abused, neglected, and missing children (See Appendix A for NCMEC proposal.)

NCMEC Findings

The NCMEC reached several conclusions about the manner in which the department generally responds to complaints of abused, neglected, and missing children. These conclusions are as follows:

1. There is good cooperation among the police department, Prince William County Public Schools and Department of Social Services based on formal interagency agreements.
2. Once a case of child abuse or neglect is reported, agencies work well together collecting evidence, sharing information and operating collaboratively.
3. Improvements could be made in the manner in which patrol officers handle preliminary investigations.
4. The role of School Resource Officers in conducting follow up investigations on missing youth who attend their respective schools may not be the most effective strategy for finding them.
5. The current process for dealing with runaways and abused and neglected children could be improved.
6. Prince William County is capable of building on current strong case level cooperation and developing a more strategic approach that would reduce harm to children and youth as well as make better use of staff time.
7. The workload of the Crimes Against Children Unit should be evaluated further to determine if current staffing levels are adequate to meet established goals.

The NCMEC representatives also proposed that the department implement the Missing and Exploited Children Comprehensive Action Program (MCAP) in Prince William County. The goal of MCAP is to help communities develop effective multi-disciplinary interagency teams and strategies. The purpose of the program is to enable front-line staff members to work together on an ongoing basis to identify issues of concern in the community and to design workable solutions. (See Appendix B for MCAP project description).

III. CPRT INVESTIGATION

Existing Protocols and Memorandum of Understanding

There are two information sharing protocols in place to assist with child protection in Prince William County. Those protocols are the *Prince William County Department of Social Services and Prince William County Police Department Protocol for Joint Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect Reports* and the *Memorandum of Agreement with the Prince William County Public Schools (PWCPS)*.

The *Protocol for Joint Investigations* states that all reports of child abuse and neglect, unless otherwise agreed upon, will be investigated by a team consisting of a Child Protective Service (CPS) investigator and a Juvenile Bureau detective.

The *Memorandum of Agreement* with PWCPS states that, to the extent permitted by law, the School Board and police department will share available resources for the purpose of protecting the safety of the students, staff and property of the School Division and surrounding community.

Current Training Requirements

There are training measures in place which serve to promote child protection in the County. In Basic Training, members receive well over thirty hours of child abuse, neglect, and missing juvenile-related instruction. The training is conducted entirely by certified instructors and includes such topics as Missing Persons, Domestic Violence, Juvenile Intake and the Physical and Sexual Abuse of Children. Department members are afforded the opportunity to attend a number of child abuse and neglect-related courses each year.

All newly assigned detectives must complete the *Field Training Checklist for New Detectives* prior to becoming actively involved in any unit-specific investigations. This is completed by an experienced detective and covers such topics as case logs and files, interviews, interrogations, case investigations, evidence collection, crimes scenes, information gathering, reports, and interpersonal communications.

In addition, the police department has recognized the immeasurable importance of child protection and the unique challenges this recognition has produced. CACU detectives currently receive advanced training in the investigation of juvenile victimization.

Accreditation Standards

The CPRT verified that the department meets all applicable standards established by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) as they relate to child protection. Specifically, the Team confirmed that the department has a written directive concerning missing children, including runaway, abandoned, abducted, or other missing status which includes a policy statement concerning missing or unidentified children, criteria for supervisor notification, information required for immediate notification of appropriate inter and intra-agency coordination, criteria for activation of the AMBER Alert System, responsibilities of call takers, first responders, supervisors and investigators, and follow up responsibilities. The Team also established that the department has a written directive that established a system of case file management for the criminal investigative function which includes a case status control system, administrative designators for each case, types of records to be maintained, accessibility to files, and procedures for purging files.

Case File Review

The CPRT reviewed all case files on all contacts in which Alexis Glover was reported to have been abused, neglected, or missing. The Team compared the incidents to one another and formulated preliminary concerns as to the manner in which the cases were investigated by officers and detectives. The preliminary concerns were: failure to adhere to basic investigatory standards, ineffective communication, ineffective interviewing skills, improper titling of reports, and lack of supervisory oversight.

Investigation Interviews

The CPRT conducted interviews with a variety of individuals including private citizens, doctors, daycare workers, and school bus drivers. Interviews with members of this group validated the CPRT's preliminary concerns and provided additional information regarding the relationship between Alexis and her mother.

Information gleaned from the citizen interviews illuminated the need for further clarification as to how the Alexis Glover incidents were addressed. Therefore the CPRT conducted additional interviews with several government employees, including police officers, detectives, supervisors, school administrators, school counselors, DSS workers, and Assistant Commonwealth's Attorneys directly involved in the investigations. Information obtained during the course of the interviews is discussed in the Findings section of this report.

IV. FINDINGS

The CPRT discovered several problematic areas that became apparent as a result of the investigation. The main areas of concern include:

1. Department Response to Past Complaints

The CPRT learned several things about the manner in which the department responded to past complaints of child abuse, neglect and missing children. Specifically, the Team identified the following:

- Need for clarification of the roles and responsibilities of officers and detectives in a joint investigation with CPS
- More defined process with the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office when obtaining charges in any abuse or neglect case.

2. Misrepresentation of the victim by Alfreedia Glover

The CPRT determined that Alfreedia Glover negatively influenced the manner in which the Alexis Glover complaints were investigated. Ms. Glover purposely manipulated all of the agencies involved in the child protection system, including the police department, DSS, healthcare professionals, hospitals, and other organizations. Through actions,

statements, and purported evidence, Ms. Glover propagated the belief that 1) She was a loving and caring mother, 2) Alexis was a liar, and 3) Alexis was severely mentally and physically challenged.

3. Inconsistent investigative practices

The review determined the need for additional oversight in the investigative process and how investigations are conducted. More focused supervision would ensure that all detectives are consistently following the appropriate procedures outlined by policy.

4. Interagency communication and information sharing

Issues were raised relating to the method of communicating among the multitude of agencies involved in child abuse, neglect, and victimization cases. It is imperative that essential information concerning child protection be received and shared by all agencies involved, particularly between the police department and DSS. Additional processes should be implemented to better document precisely what information was given from one party to the other.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Completed Recommendations

As the review was being conducted, the CPRT formulated recommendations that would immediately improve the department's response to child abuse, neglect, and missing juvenile complaints. The following actions have already been taken:

- Members were reminded of the proper use of Police Information Reports.
- Members were reminded of the proper investigative and reporting procedures when handling missing juveniles who have been found or returned home.
- Detectives were reminded that once assigned to the scene of a police incident, the detective will assume complete responsibility and authority over the investigation.
- The department initiated collaboration with other child protection agencies on the Missing and Exploited Children Comprehensive Action Program.

B. Future Recommendations

The Team proposed future changes that will enhance the department's response to child abuse, neglect, and missing juvenile complaints. All recommendations have been approved by the Chief of Police and are in various stages of planning and implementation. The proposals are divided into four areas:

Training

- Review and revise the *Field Training Checklist for New Detectives* to ensure that additional unit specific material is included.
- Conduct training to ensure incident reports are completed on all missing juvenile complaints, even when a child is away from home for only a short period of time. Remind patrol officers and supervisors that the department is primary on all missing juvenile complaints.
- Reinforce the importance of completing a background on victims and suspects, preferably before conducting preliminary interviews, but definitely before conducting extensive interviews or interrogations.
- Require School Resource Officers to attend a one-week child abuse investigation class in order to conduct child abuse investigations.
- Institute advanced joint training on specific topics relating to child protection with DSS and the police department

Communication

- Develop an early warning system that captures vital information on children and that will provide an automatic alert when a specific child meets a certain set of risk criteria.
- Convene a panel of CID and Patrol representatives to examine how to better ensure that vital information is both communicated and received between the police department, DSS and the Commonwealth's Attorney Office.

Policy

- Reinforce the importance and requirements for submitting supplements whenever pertinent information on a case comes to their attention.
- Adopt a policy requiring all child abuse and neglect complaints be investigated by a CACU detective or School Resource Officer.
- Conduct a staffing review of CACU to determine the need for additional detectives.

Interagency Cooperation and Information Sharing

- Improve and reinvigorate the team concept investigation technique between the police department and DSS.
- Continue the quarterly meetings between DSS workers and CACU detectives with the objective to improve response and facilitate coordination.
- Develop procedures to ensure all potential criminal issues are relayed from DSS to the police department.
- Develop an information sharing system that allows for the timely and secure delivery of DSS requests for immediate assistance.
- Hold a thorough discussion of all applicable state and county codes with the Commonwealth's Attorney Office and County Attorney Office.
- Participate in the MCAP Program, which will help the police department develop effective multidisciplinary, interagency teams and strategies.

Attachments - Appendix A (*Proposal from NCMEC*)
Appendix B (*MCAP Project Description*)