

INVESTIGATING CHILD/INFANT FATALITIES (SUIDI)

In 2001

AN ESTIMATED 83% OF CHILD MALTREATMENT MURDERS INVOLVED A PARENT CAREGIVER

Investigating Child Fatalities - Portable Guide to Investigating Child Abuse' (United States Department of Justice)

Complete Investigations of Child/Infant Deaths Include:

- Caregiver Interviews
- Scene Investigation – (Doll Reenactment)
- Medical & Family History
- Post-Mortem Evaluation

Cause and Manner of Death

The SUIDI Reporting Form (CDC)

- **'Top 25'** critical data points for the pathologist
- Standardized Data Collection
- Education
- Reduce Infant Mortality

SUIDI Reporting Form (Electronic Version)

INVESTIGATING CHILD FATALITIES

Caretaker Interviews

- Establish a Rapport
- Detailed account of incident before doctor provides details to caretaker
- Child's activities in last 72 hours (Times important)
- Child's normal routine, personality (good kid), habits, medication
- Walkthrough scene with caretaker (video)
- DOLL REENACTMENT
- Caretaker's education concerning child care (I.e. brochures, pamphlets)
- Caregiver's Alcohol & Drug Usage

SUIDI FORM

INVESTIGATING CHILD FATALITIES
"Red Flag" Stories from Caretakers:

- Child was unexpectedly found dead (not consistent w/SIDS)
- Child suddenly turned blue, stopped breathing
- Child suffered a sudden seizure event
- Child was hurt by improper CPR
- Child hurt themselves, or hurt by sibling
- Child was fatally injured falling down stairs
- Child fell from a low height (less than 4 feet)
- Child was hit on head by a falling object
- Child was choking so caretaker shook/hit child on back

INVESTIGATING CHILD FATALITIES
Crime Scene - Evidence Collection

THE 9-1-1 CALL

INVESTIGATING CHILD FATALITIES
Crime Scene - Evidence Collection

- Lawful Search
 - All Areas
- Photograph, Video & Diagram
- Search, Seize & Record
 - Garbage
 - refrigerator
 - Cupboards (medications)
 - Laundry
 - Items in recent feeding(s)
 - Journals, diaries, medical records
- Measurements (to include item(s) that may have caused injuries)

• Use Scene Checklists

INVESTIGATING CHILD FATALITIES
Autopsy

- FORENSIC PEDIATRIC PATHOLOGIST
- Communication Exchange
- Hemastasis Screen (diseases/disorders)
- Radiological Assessment
- Preserve Bite Mark Evidence
- Record food in stomach
- Photograph ALL evidence of abuse

INVESTIGATING CHILD FATALITIES

Investigative Technique:

- 1) Receive the Call of Infant Death
- 2) Observe and Record Scene
- 3) Obtain Caretaker(s) Verbal/Written Statement - Possible Doll Reenactment
- 4) Obtain Medical Records / Autopsy Results
- 5) Obtain Child Protective Service's Records and Criminal History on Caretaker(s)
- 6) Re-interview Caretaker(s)

INVESTIGATING CHILD FATALITIES

Other Interviews

- 3rd Parties
 - Other Siblings & Children
 - Other Caretakers (relatives, babysitters)
 - Neighbors
 - School Officials (Teachers, Nurses)
 - Friends & Co-workers of Caretaker(s)
- Persons in Contact w/Child
 - EMT's & First Responders
 - Medical Staff
 - Health Care Providers

SUDDEN UNEXPLAINED INFANT DEATH INVESTIGATIONS (SUIDI)

Sudden Unexplained Infant Death

- The sudden and unexpected death of an infant due to a variety of natural or unnatural causes
- Examples
 - SIDS
 - Natural diseases
 - Unsafe sleeping environments
 - Trauma
 - Poisons and other toxins
 - Homicide
 - Unknown causes

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

“The sudden death of an infant less than 1 year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history”

Willenger M, James LS, Catz C, 1991

The SUIDI Reporting Form (CDC)

- **“Top 25”** critical data points for the pathologist
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“The Top 25”

- Case Information
- Asphyxia
- Sharing sleep surfaces
- Change in sleep conditions
- Hyperthermia/hypothermia
- Environmental hazards (CO, chemicals, etc)
- Unsafe sleeping condition
- Diet
- Recent hospitalizations
- Previous medical diagnosis
- History of acute life threatening events
- History of medical care without diagnosis
- Recent fall or other injury
- History of religious, cultural, or ethnic remedies
- Cause of death due to natural causes other than SIDS
- Prior sibling deaths
- Previous encounters with police or social service agencies
- Request for tissue or organ donation
- Objection to autopsy
- Pre-terminal resuscitative treatment
- Death due to trauma (injury), poisoning, or intoxication
- Suspicious circumstances
- Other alerts for pathologist's attention
- Description of circumstances (what happened?)
- Pathologist Information (name/agency/phone)

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