

Pediatric Strangulation MDT Training – Forthcoming Pilot Project

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In addition to a continuation of the current Joint Training project, the Advanced Child Abuse Investigation Training Program has also been awarded a grant for its forthcoming pilot project: Pediatric Strangulation MDT Training. The purpose of this project is to more thoroughly train investigators and other multidisciplinary team (MDT) members about pediatric strangulation to better recognize the signs and symptoms of strangulation, provide informed evaluations and medical care for victims, connect victims with crucial services and resources, collect information about strangulation incidents, and overall better serve children across Texas affected by this type of crime.

As there is limited information available regarding incidents of child strangulation across both the state and the nation, this project will provide much needed training and attention to an important but neglected topic. Research indicates a lack of training on strangulation may contribute to both investigators and prosecutors overlooking symptoms or relying on visible signs of strangulation, which often do not exist, leading to missed opportunities for both proper intervention and enhanced criminal prosecution. Thus, the Program will be conducting trainings and task force meeting, developing supplements for first responders and MDT professionals, and implementing response protocol within four established MDTs across Texas.

The development of a pediatric strangulation supplement and procedure will enhance MDTs' response to suspected child victims, while ensuring consistent medical exams are conducted by all first responders and consistent language is used among all MDT members. This pilot project is based on a similar project which former Travis County Prosecutor Kelsey McKay developed with the Austin Police Department and Travis County Sheriff's Office for adult victims of strangulation. McKay and the Travis County Strangulation Task Force developed a supplement tool for first responders who investigate and prosecute strangulation of adult victims, which led to a 36% increase in strangulation cases filed at the Travis County D.A.'s Office in the 18 months following its implementation. The Program will be partnering with McKay to develop and implement



this new project, focused on providing similar techniques and approaches as they specifically relate to infant, child, and/or teen victims.

The overall goal of this new project is to better understand the incidence of child strangulation across Texas by providing specific training on pediatric strangulation, facilitating child strangulation task force meetings, and implementing the pediatric strangulation supplement and response protocol within participating MDTs. These participating MDTs will be asked to assist in developing child strangulation investigative protocol and utilize the pediatric strangulation supplement during investigations and interviews. Upon completion of the training and task force meetings, information will be collected about child strangulation victimization rates and trends and will be used to improve the supplement and establish a statewide protocol.

If your agency, MDT, or community is interested in participating in this exciting new project to begin in October 2017, please contact Program staff.

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