



Departmental Memorandum

Volume 25-1

To: All Personnel

From: Captain Ethan Hanson, Office of Investigations

Katherine Lester, Chief of Police

ELECTRONIC SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORTING SYSTEM (ESCARS)

2-27-2025

The purpose of this departmental memorandum is to establish procedures for the Electronic Suspected Child Abuse Reporting System (ESCARS) and expires upon publication and update of General Order 540.02 (Reporting Child Abuse – revised 08/22/2017).

ESCARS is designed to ensure that reports of suspected child abuse are promptly accepted, triaged, and investigated to protect children and ensure compliance with the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) in accordance with Penal Code §§ 11164-11174.3.

To achieve an immediate and thorough response to suspected child abuse reports, the department will use a triad approach involving the Communications Division, the Office of Operations, and the Office of Investigations. This memorandum introduces ESCARS and outlines the roles and responsibilities for each entity.

In California, CANRA mandates that certain professionals (mandated reporters) must report suspected child abuse and neglect to the Department of Child, Family, and Adult Services (DCFAS), local law enforcement, and the county district attorney's office. The district attorney's office oversees the response and results of each investigation.

Due to outdated and inefficient communication methods, such as faxed or mailed hard-copy forms, many California counties struggle with timely cross-reporting. ESCARS was created to address these issues by ensuring all reports of child neglect and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, are entered into a centralized system. With the implementation of ESCARS, the Sacramento Police Department will review every Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR), ensuring compliance with CANRA and the immediate protection of children.

Response Procedures

Communications Division:

1. Monitor the DCFAS ESCARS system daily.
2. Assess and enter all ESCARS reports that meet the criteria as a call for service into the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system with an appropriate police incident type code. The priority can be upgraded or downgraded depending on incident details. The term ESCARS will be used at the beginning of the text of the call.
3. Verify the incident location is within city limits.



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4. Confirm that the ESCARS report is not a duplicate report, and that law enforcement has not already responded to, investigated, and documented the incident.
5. Note the 19-digit ESCARS reference number on the CAD call for service.

Office of Operations:

1. When dispatched to an ESCARS call for service, officers shall:
 - a. Respond as soon as practical and conduct an independent investigation for the dispatched ESCARS call.
 - b. In accordance with Penal Code § 11167(d)(1), officers are required to protect the identity of all reporting persons, including mandated reporters, when responding to reports of suspected child abuse.
 - c. Any identifying information shall remain confidential and only shared among other law enforcement agencies (e.g., CPS, DA's Office, and other federal, state, and local law enforcement), or to a licensing agency when abuse or neglect in out-of-home care is reasonably suspected.
 - d. Write the applicable report when investigating any reports of suspected child abuse (e.g., crime or information report).
 - e. Notify DCFAS by phone immediately by calling (916) 875-KIDS (5437).
 - f. Note the ESCARS reference number in the report.
 - g. Not complete another SCAR form unless a separate incident has been discovered. This mandate has already been fulfilled by the original ESCARS report.
 - (1) If an additional victim or separate incident is discovered, officers shall generate a new SCAR in accordance with GO 540.02 (Reporting Child Abuse, Neglect, Molestation, or Sexual exploitation Cases).
2. Exceptions for dispatching ESCARS call for service:
 - a. Patrol supervisor approval when the incident does not meet criteria for suspected child abuse in accordance with Penal Code § 11166(a)(1).
3. If officers are unable to make contact or locate the parties or the call is canceled by a patrol supervisor:
 - a. Officers shall consult their supervisor if they are unable to locate or contact the reporting party or victim.
 - b. The supervisor shall review the call and provide guidance of how to proceed.
 - (1) The supervisor shall determine if the alleged abuse is serious enough to require the continuing efforts of officers to locate the victim or whether another unit can be dispatched later.
4. Canceling the call:
 - a. When all reasonable efforts have been made to locate the reporting party or an alleged victim, the call can be dispositioned with patrol supervisor approval.
 - b. Responding officers shall document in the appropriate report the investigative steps taken and note that contact was not made with the victim or reporting party.
5. Patrol supervisor responsibilities:
 - a. Monitor ESCARS investigations and provide guidance to responding officers.
 - b. Determine if an immediate patrol response is appropriate based on time of day, severity of the reported abuse, and available resources.
 - (1) If the supervisor determines that a delayed response is appropriate, they shall ensure that appropriate arrangements are made with the SPD Communications Center for the call to be reassigned within 24 hours.
 - c. Ensure compliance with legal mandates and preliminary investigative steps.
 - d. Use discretion when canceling ESCARS calls that do not meet the threshold of suspected child abuse in accordance with Penal Code § 11166(a)(1) (e.g., mental, or emotional abuse or general neglect).



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- (1) Penal Code § 11166(a)(1) provides that reasonable suspicion means that it is objectively reasonable for a person to entertain a suspicion, based upon facts that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing, when appropriate, on the person's training and experience, to suspect child abuse or neglect.
- (2) Reasonable suspicion does not require certainty that child abuse or neglect has occurred, nor does it require a specific medical indication of child abuse or neglect. Any reasonable suspicion is sufficient.

6. Watch commander responsibilities:

- a. Ensure all supervisors monitor ESCARS investigations.

Office of Investigations:

1. Sexual Assault and Child Abuse (SACA) unit responsibilities:

- a. Monitor the overall ESCARS database and provide final dispositions of all ESCARS reports entered into the system.