



What Lives in the Dark:

**Drug Endangerment and
the Forensic Interview**

Meet Your Presenters

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Let's Get in the Same Car

DEC: drug endangered child

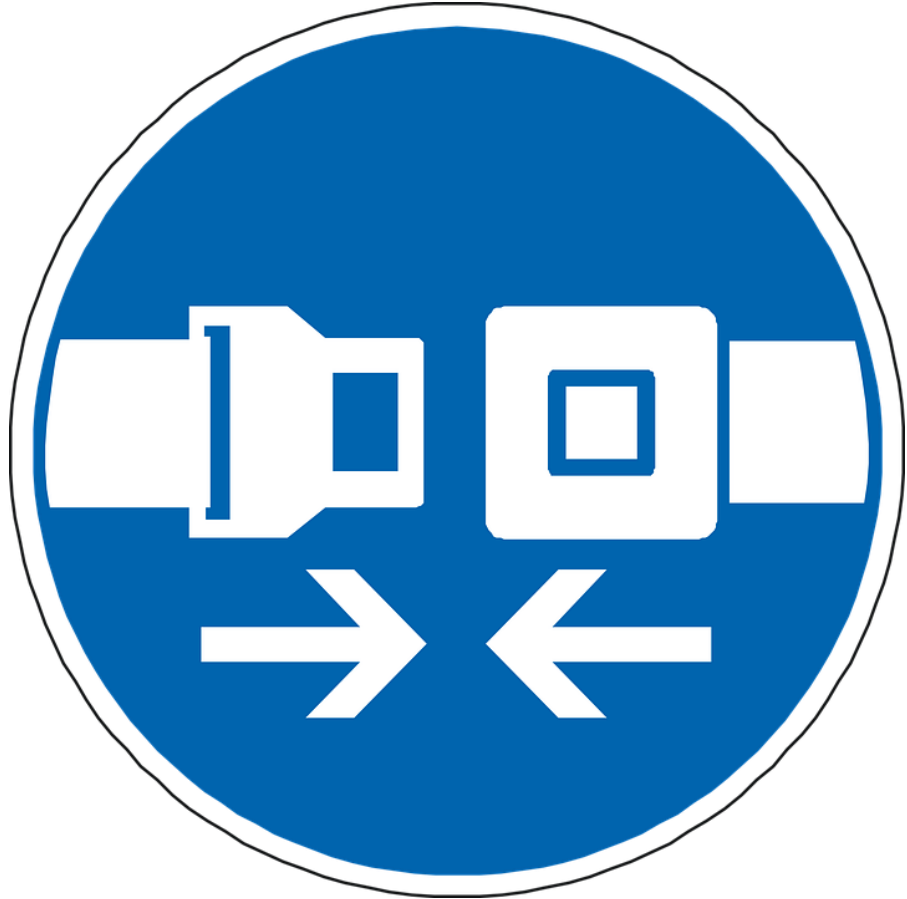
CAC: child advocacy center

CPS: child protective services

FI: forensic interview or forensic interviewer

MDT: multidisciplinary team





**Take Care of
Yourself**



Our Roadmap

- Why DEC Cases Matter
- Drug Overview
- Case Planning and Considerations
- Question Strategies for Drug Endangerment Dynamics
- Evidence in the Forensic Interview
- Benefits of collaboration on DEC Cases



Our Destination

- A better understanding of drug forms and their impact
- Stronger prompts to increase information gathered on the drug endangered child's experience
- Increase collaboration and understanding by utilizing a multidisciplinary team response
- Better outcomes for kids, stronger case

Without CACs



With CACs

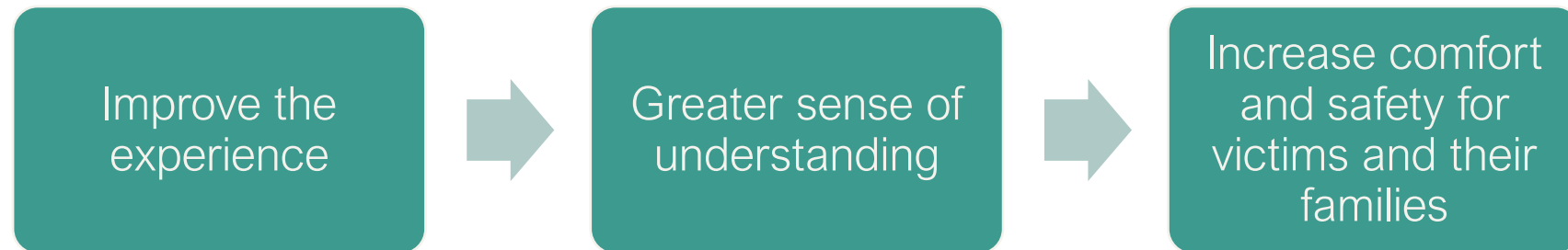


**Why the CAC Process
the Most Efficient Means of Travel?**

Don't Take Our Word...

“Do Children’s Advocacy Centers improve families’ experiences of child sexual abuse investigations?”

Yes! Results show caregivers in CAC cases were more satisfied with the investigation. Both on the Investigator Response and the Interview Experience subscales.



2022 Healing, Justice & Trust:

A National Report on Outcomes for Children's Advocacy Centers

Healing



of caregivers agree that Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) provide them with **resources to support their children.**



of professionals working with CACs believe **clients benefit from the collaborative approach** of the multidisciplinary team (MDT).

Justice

Trust



of children say CAC staff were **good at listening to them.**

"I like how I can be very open with my feelings and not keep everything bottled up."



AGE 15

"Talking about this really helped me, this is part of what I needed to do to heal."



AGE 13

"This center helps me understand more about my feelings and my secrets."



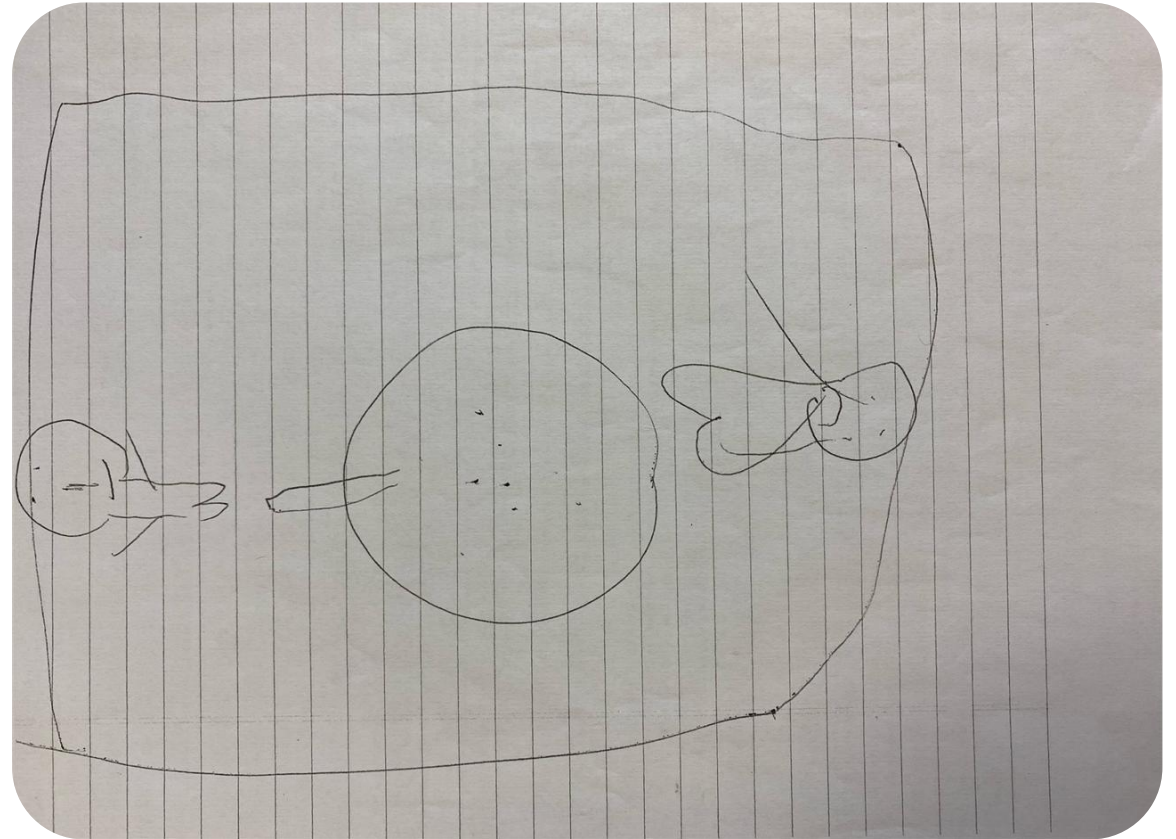
AGE 11

"I liked how they are respectful of feelings and boundaries."



AGE 16

The Child's Experience





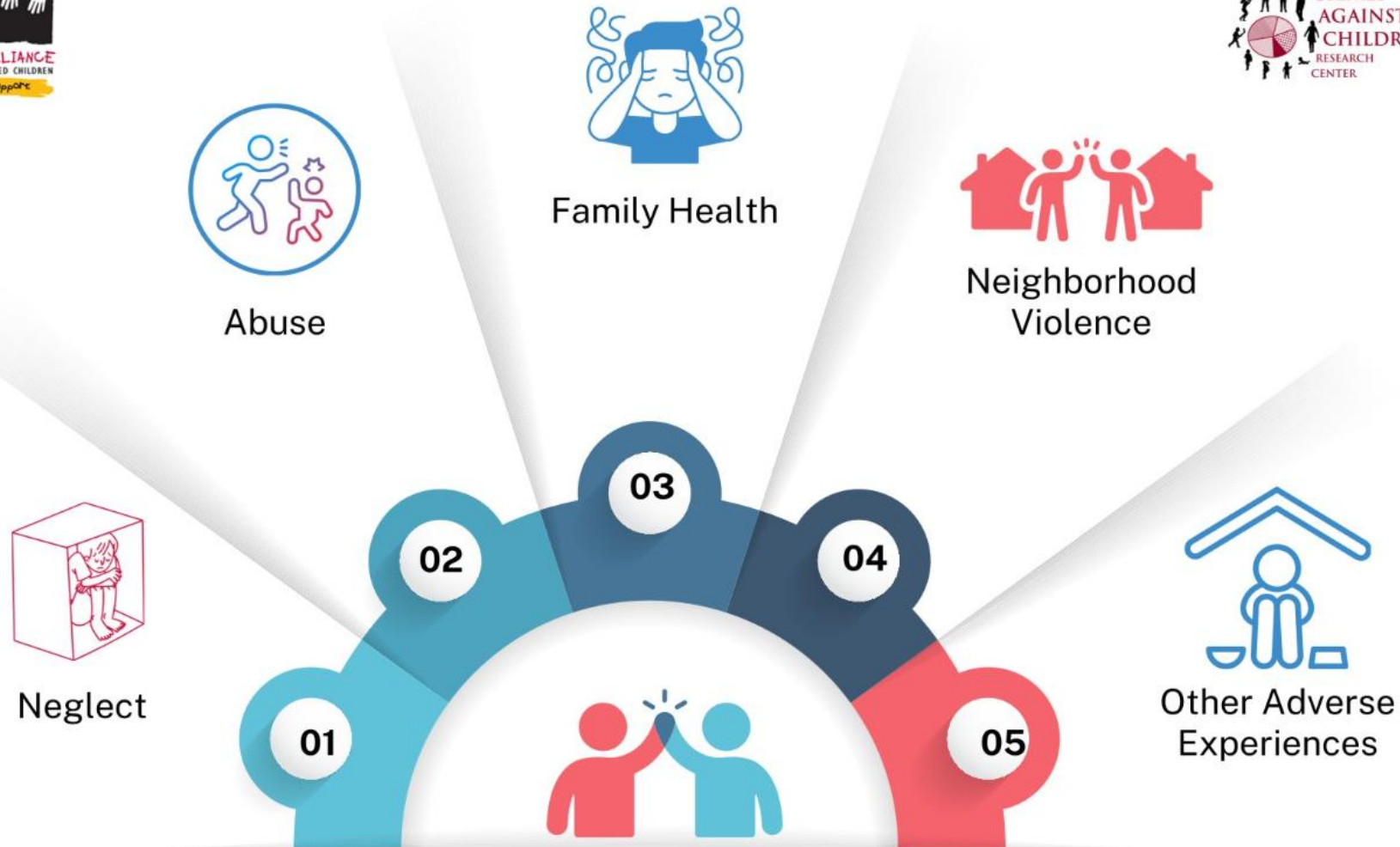
Why DEC Cases Matter

How Common are DEC Nationally?

1 in 8 children live in households with at least one parent who has a substance use disorder

1 in 10 children live in households with at least one parent who has an alcohol use disorder

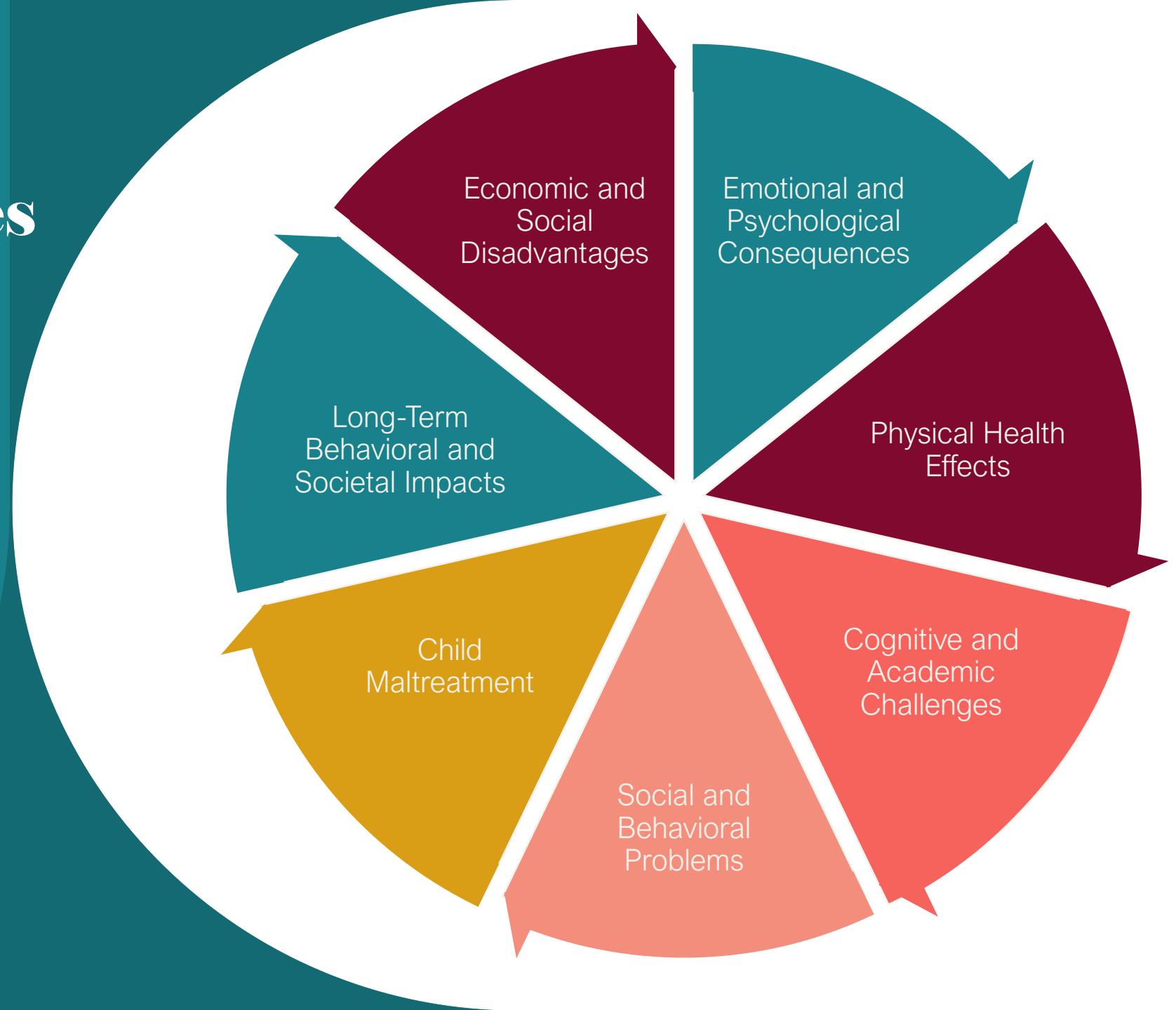
In 2023, CACs across the country saw 14,378 DEC cases



VICTIMIZATION & ADVERSITY EXPERIENCED BY DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN

Data was collected as part of the Growing Up with Opioids Study (GrowingOp) conducted in jointly by the Crimes Against Children Research Center and the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children. Participants were 577 adults (average age 35.9 years) who grew up in a home where someone struggled with drugs or alcohol.

The Consequences of Drug Exposure to Children

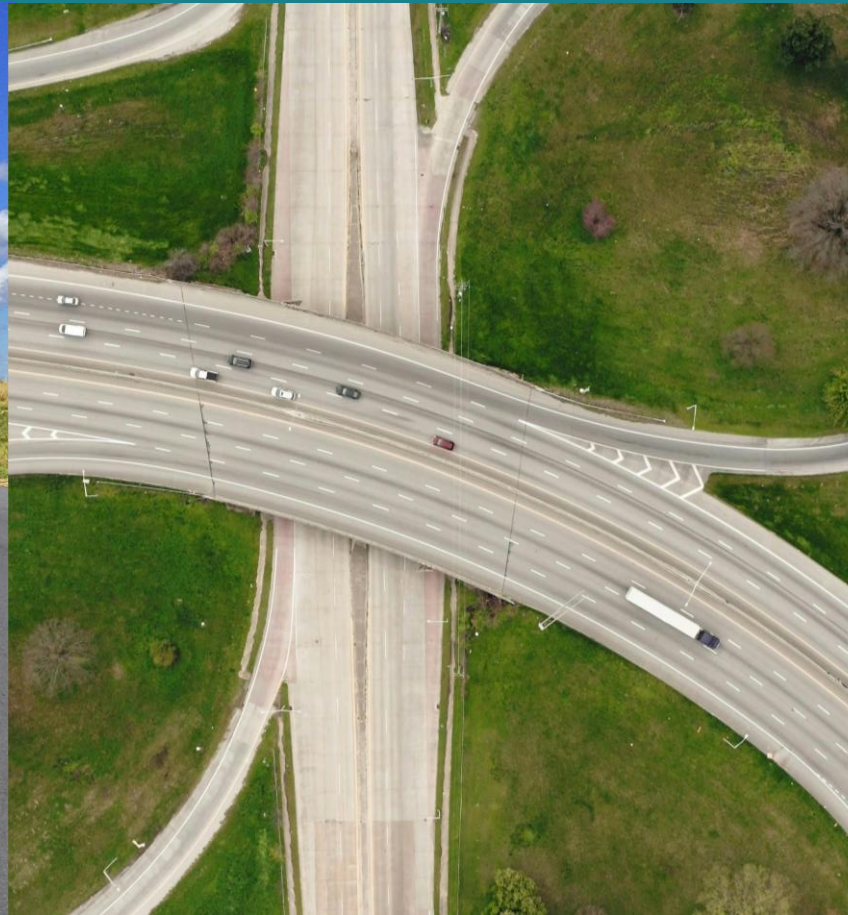


Poly-victimization

REFERS TO THE EXPERIENCE OF
MULTIPLE VICTIMIZATIONS OF
DIFFERENT KINDS

Poly-toxicity

REFERS TO MULTIPLE SUBSTANCES
OR DRUGS BEING USED TOGETHER





Drug Overview

Lens We Are Looking Through Today...



Forms

Methods of
Administration

Impact on
Adults

Marijuana



Marijuana



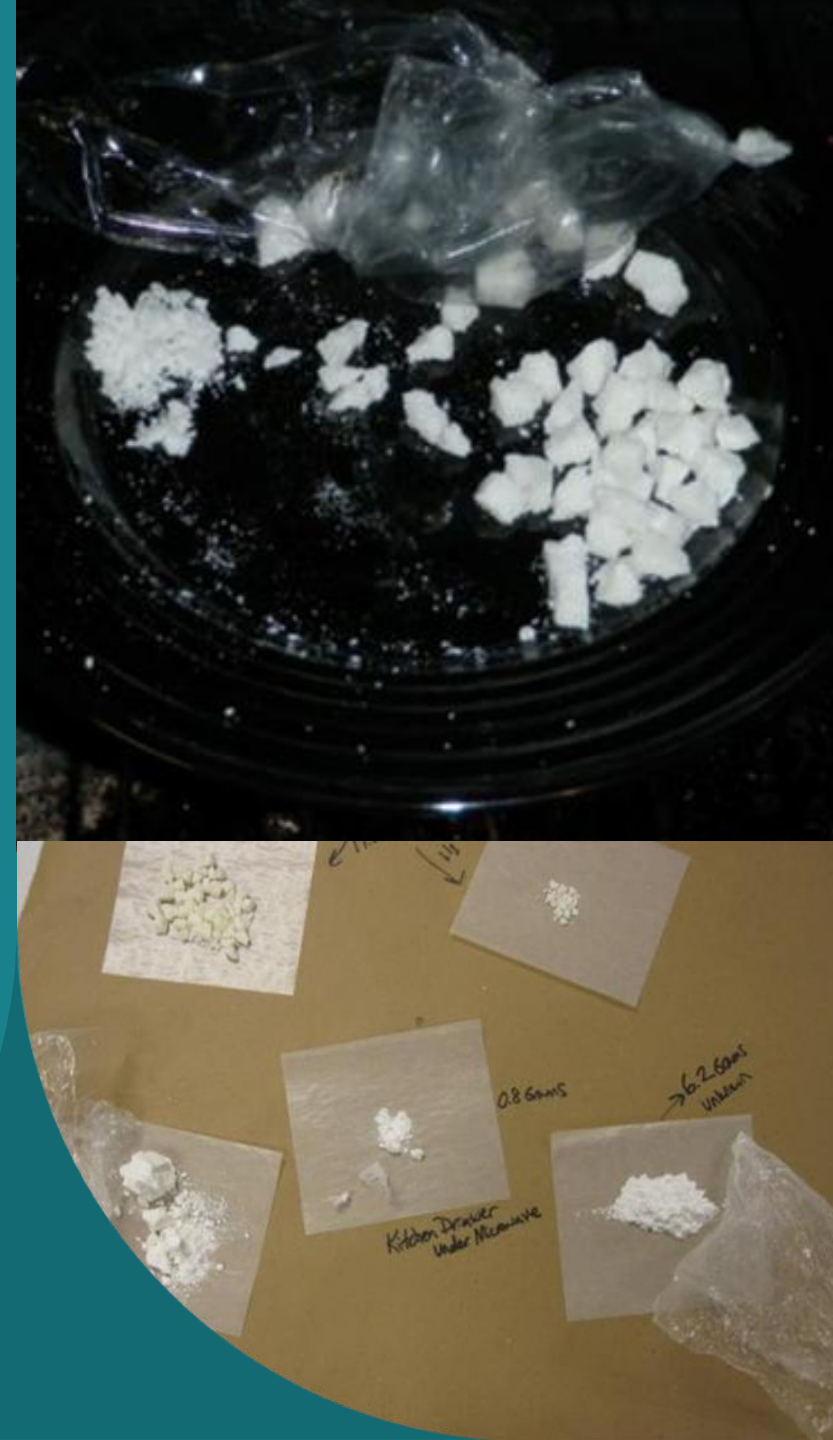


Impact on Children

- When children eat food containing marijuana they can have extreme sleepiness, low energy and possible respiratory distress
- Significant exposures can lead to severe hyperactive behaviors, slowed breathing, and even coma
- Most children who require hospital treatment for marijuana have been exposed by eating it

Cocaine vs Crack

- Nausea/vomiting
- Decrease appetite
- Higher confidence
- Dilated pupils
- Runny nose or nose bleeding
- Changes in sleep
- Changes in eating (decrease appetite)
- Can't sit still - restlessness



Meth



General Indicators of Meth and CNS Stimulants

- Not being able to sleep
- Excessive sweating
- Sores that do not heal
- Rotting teeth
- Short temper
- Non-stop, rapid talking
- Paranoia
- Twitching



General Indicators of Meth or CNS Stimulants



Heroin and Fentanyl



Why Fentanyl?



General Indicators of Heroin

Disorientation

Cycles of hyper
alertness
followed by
nodding off

Dry mouth

Dealing and Buys

Common packaging

Storage unit or multiple locations

Higher traffic coming and going



Trends and patterns are going to change across the country



Talk with your MDTs to get a sense on what trends are impacting your community

ON THE NOD

This is a video taken from a cell phone that was seized on MEG warrant
that was done on 02-26-13



Let's Pause: You are a Child

- How would you describe seeing this to someone?
- What words would you use?

Now, add in developmental differences.







Might you ask the child if they have ever taken photos or videos of their experiences?





Case Planning and Considerations

“Hi, I am Calling to Schedule a CAC Appointment...”

-  Was there a search warrant executed, or an arrest made?
-  Where were the children at the time? Where are they now?
-  What is their knowledge about what happened?
-  Disclosure or discovery?
-  What evidence already exists on this case?
-  Has a medical exam already occurred, or is that something that still needs to occur?

"Walk me through how this came in..."

Discussion about placement

What do we know about this family's systems involvement? History of revivals?

If parent or caregiver is in jail, what does the child know about that?

Others living in the home, or on and off staying there? Nicknames those people may go by?

Drug testing results

Adjusting Expectations

Communication
might be
different

Language is
shaped by
experience

Barriers for
disclosure in
DEC



Evidence Discussion

Evidence

If there is evidence that exists, the investigators and the forensic interviewer need to establish the **PURPOSE** of each piece of evidence that may be utilized in the forensic interview.

Evidence

Presenting evidence is ever evolving

Must conduct this practice in a way that's ethical and legally sound

Just because you have evidence doesn't mean you must use it

Never force a child to look at evidence

Check in with your teams and District Attorney's Office

**“Context on this
photo would be
helpful
because...”**



Why Evidence Matters in DEC Cases

Gives children a springboard to narrate on images from their own living environment

Learn about things you likely wouldn't have learned about

Potentially lifts pressure off the child to reveal what is going on in the home





Question Strategies for Forensic Interviewers

If You Have Verifiable Facts, Use Them

“I understand that you are staying with your aunt right now. Tell me the reason you had to go to your aunt’s house.”

“I know the police were at your house this morning. Tell me everything you know about that.”

“I understand that you talked to someone at school about things that mom and dad are doing at home. Tell me all about that.”



Which Doors Will You Open?

Home Environment

- Tell me about your home life.
- I want you to think about a regular day and walk me through it from waking up to going to bed.
- What do you like? What do you not like?
- Who lives in your home?
- Who comes and goes?
- Where do the adults go when they come over?
- What do the adults do when they come over?
- Are there rooms/places you aren't allowed to go in?
- Are there things you shouldn't see or touch?
- Cameras inside or outside the home.
- Are there things that happen at home that people are not supposed to know about?





Neglect Considerations

- Who takes care of you? Who is taking care of siblings?
- Tell me all the ways _____ takes care of you/your siblings.
- Who makes the food? Times there aren't enough food?
- Has there been a time where you were left home alone with no adult? What would you do in an emergency?

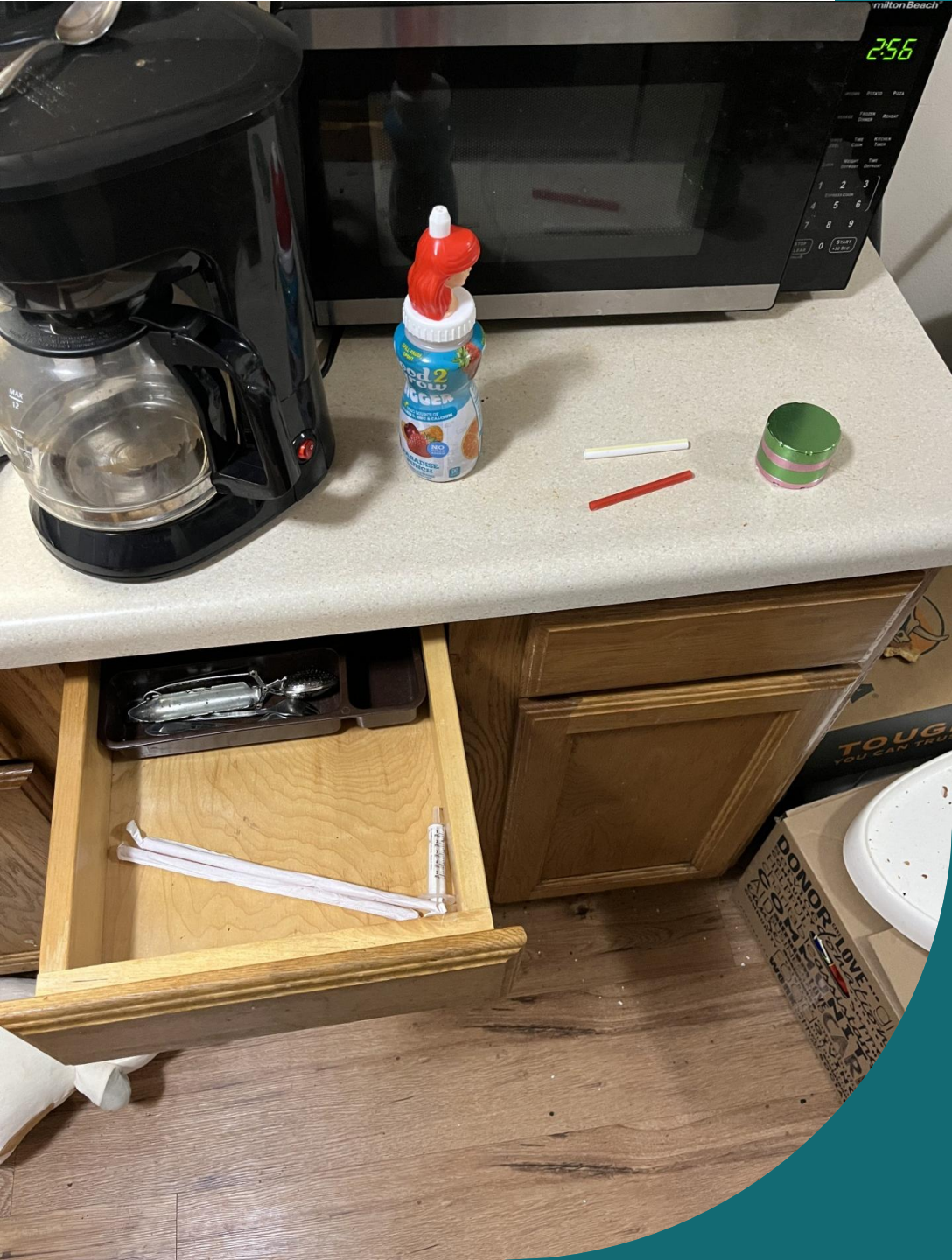


Drug Buy Considerations

- Exploring money like tell me the ways mom/dad get money?
- Digital currency
- Exploring phones
- Do you ever get to go with mom/dad? Tell me about the places you get to go with mom/dad to.
- Sometimes I talk to kids about moms and dads who trade something for something else. Have you ever seen something like that happen?

Assess the child's awareness and how it impacts the child's safety





Snorting



Sometimes I talk to kids about people they know that take medicine with their nose. Do you know someone who takes medicine with their nose?

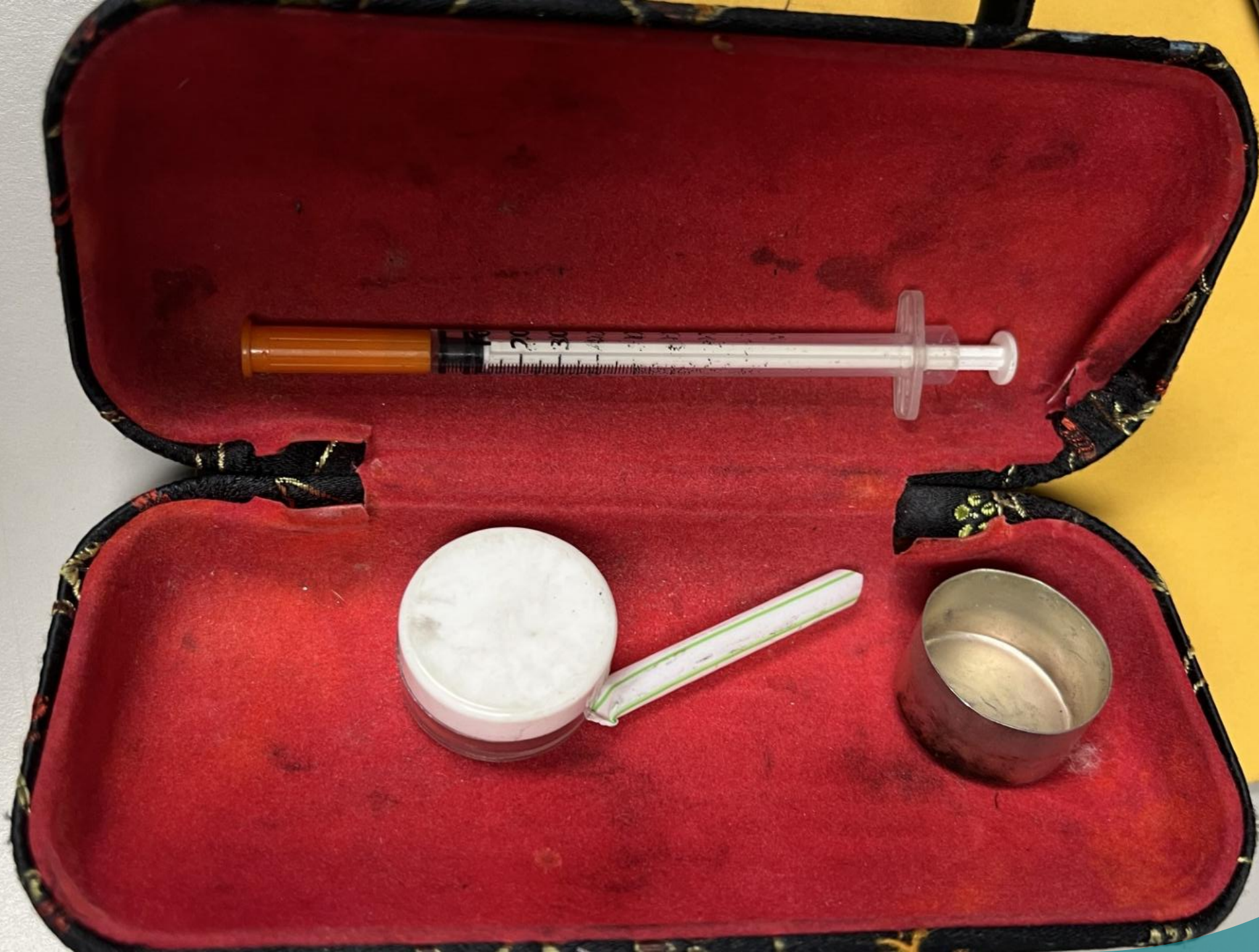


Straws, crushed up pills...how much more efficient is this conversation going to be if we have and use photos from the child's living environment?

Needle Usage

- Let's talk about needles. What do you know about needles?
- Have you ever been the doctor and got a shot? Yes. Have you ever seen shots at your house?
- Has a shot at your house ever touched your body? On accident or on purpose.
- Who gets shots? Have you seen someone give themselves a shot?
- Have you ever found something and didn't know what it was?





Heroin

- Does mom/dad ever fall asleep in “strange/weird/funny/different” positions or places?
- Has there ever been a time where you couldn’t wake mom/dad up?
- Tell me all the ways you tried to wake mom/dad up.
- What is it like for you when you can’t wake them up?



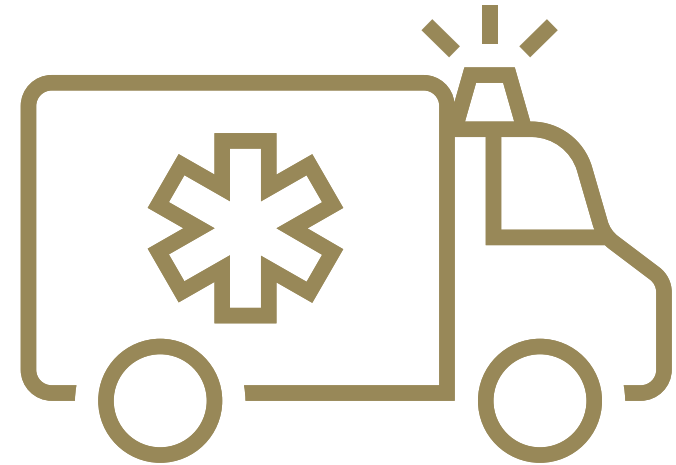
Meth

- Explore sleeping patterns
- Are there times when someone in your house stays up all night?
- Times when mom/dad woke you up in the middle of the night?
- Tell me all about your mom's day from the time you see her get up until you see her go to bed. Use this prompt to also explore mom's behaviors during the day.
- Explore sexual abuse and/or pornography exposure

Unresponsive Caregiver/Overdose

- Verifiable overdose versus screening for historical events
- Times you felt the police needed to be called or times the police were called.
- How do you know what to do? Explore child's reaction when needing to revive a parent and/or instructions from adult on what to do.
- Tell me everything you noticed about _____ "skin/face/body."

Discuss with your MDT what is the investigative team looking for related to the overdose



Substance Use Screening

- Tell me what you know about drugs.
- What are drugs? Who do you know that uses drugs?
- Sometimes I talk to kids about medicine...tell me about medicine at your house. Who takes medicine? What does it look like? Where is it kept? How does mom/dad get their medicine?
- Who takes pills? What do they look like? Where are they kept?
- Who smokes at your house? What do they smoke? What does it look like?
- Who drinks at your house? What do they drink? Do they act different?



Catch Alls



Find something
and you didn't
know what it was?



Adult wanted you
to keep a secret?



Things that you're
worried about?



Other
victimization
screenings?



**If we don't
open the door,
the child may
never walk
through.**



Post-Interview

Where do we go from here?

We made it to our destination and completed our road trip, and now you're on your next journey:

- healing journey
- ongoing CPS journey
- prosecution journey



Post-Interview MDT Considerations

What did we learn about the allegations?

Did we learn about other victimizations?

What can be corroborated?

Other witnesses?

Other victims?

Other locations?

Is consideration for an extended forensic interview applicable?

Is consideration for a medical evaluation applicable?



To Learn More About What Communities Can Do to Help Drug Endangered Children

Take a training from NADEC -
<https://www.nationaldec.org/online-courses>

Use the CheckDEC App to get familiar with
your community resources and supports.
Share CheckDEC with those who need it.

NADEC's Online Courses

Looking to expand your knowledge about drug-endangered children, addiction, and substance misuse? Our online courses are designed for individual learners and professionals who want a preview or quick dive into key topics covered in our full-length training programs.

FREE Courses

NADEC provides specialized training for the certification of multidisciplinary alliances. In order to become a Certified DEC Alliance through NADEC, all 4 of the FREE courses below must be completed.

These are self-paced online courses, hosted by the COPS E-Learning Training Portal and FREE to anyone.



DEC Overview



Prenatal Substance Exposure



CheckDEC

Substance Use Resources
& Help

Get



7 RATINGS

5.0



AGE

12+

Years Old

CATEGORY



Education

DE

Nation

CheckDEC

connects children, families and professionals to substance abuse-related information, crisis helplines, drug and treatment information, supportive resources and services within their local area.



Questions?



Thank you

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