



## Working with **Law Enforcement** in Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Efforts

Law enforcement traditionally focuses on public safety and criminal activity, including drug arrests, drug seizures, and asset forfeitures. At times this can lead to an arrest; but it can also lead to the identification of a child at risk due a parent's substance use or drug activity. Law enforcement can be integral in the identification of drug endangered children as well as helping intervene in the child and family's life.

Law enforcement has the unique ability to sometimes see things that other disciplines are not able to see. For example, on a search warrant, law enforcement officers may see signs of drug use, a house that is filled with risks to children, drug paraphernalia lying around, and small children playing in the home. This information and evidence is vital to other disciplines when doing their investigations and making decisions around child safety and wellbeing as well as providing services to the children and family.

Law enforcement's information and evidence can assist other disciplines in making decisions around services for the children and family, cases, and investigations, and identifying children. The information needed from other disciplines could include:

- Pictures and video of the house or the scene
- Pictures of drugs and paraphernalia
- Picture of risks in the home or at the scene
- Information about statements made by children and caregivers
- Information on the behavior of the children and caregivers
- Criminal activity, charges, and convictions

Law enforcement can assist other disciplines in various training and education including:

- Drug identification and trends
- Criminal laws
- Criminal data

Other disciplines can train and educate law enforcement on the following:

- The risks to children of parental addiction and drug activity
- Signs of children
- Long term impact to children due to parental substance use and drug activity
- Signs and impact of trauma on children and their development
- Child development

*Law enforcement can benefit from information and evidence that other disciplines can provide including:*

- *Information about children in a residence*
- *Layout of the residence*
- *Information about who lives in the residence*
- *Information about prior history with child welfare or others*
- *Statements made by the child(ren) or caregivers*
- *Pictures of the residence*
- *Information on the behavior of the children and caregivers*