

**MARIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
GENERAL ORDER**

**CHAPTER 5 - OPERATIONS  
GO-05-16  
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**DATE 4-14-10**

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**MEDICAL AID CALLS INVOLVING CHILDREN**

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**POLICY**

It is the policy of the Marin County Sheriff's Office to actively investigate all incidents where a child requires an emergency medical response and to provide for the protection of the child, the detection of crime, the proper documentation and referral to appropriate child service agencies, and the notification of parents.

**REFERENCE**

The Department of Health and Human Services' Child Protective Service (CPS) has the responsibility of investigating abuse and neglect occurring in-home, furnishing placement of a child in an emergency shelter, filing W&I 300 petitions in juvenile court, and child/family counseling.

The function of the Sheriff's Office is to provide for the protection of the child, detect and investigate crime, apprehend criminal suspects, and assist the District Attorney with the prosecution of offenders.

**PROCEDURE**

Each time an emergency medical aid call comes into Communications Center and the subject of the medical aid is determined to be a child under the age of six years old, a Deputy will be dispatched to that medical aid call. In cases in which the Deputy is in a position to render life-saving assistance and the nature of the call requires that kind of assistance, the response may be Code Three.

In all cases, the Deputy will assess the situation immediately upon arrival and request any additional resources that may be appropriate, such as a detective or CPS child welfare worker. All involved parties will be identified and their role in the incident determined. The Deputy will conduct an inquiry as to the circumstances causing the child to require the medical response and make note of his/her observations of the scene, the child, and the parent(s) or caregiver(s).

Special note will be made of any observed criminal activity, evidence of neglect, abuse, unsanitary conditions, drug use, immoral or obscene conduct, and presence of known criminals.

If it appears that a crime has occurred, or that the child falls within the provisions of W&I 300, the Deputy shall initiate a crime report, take temporary custody of the child if appropriate, cause any arrest to be made as appropriate or necessary, and determine whether the Juvenile Division Sergeant or on-call detective should be contacted and made aware of the case.

If it appears that the circumstances surrounding the child's injury or illness are not criminal, but perhaps suspicious or they warrant further investigation, the Deputy shall prepare an incident report and route it to the Juvenile Division. A call may be placed to the Juvenile Division Sergeant or on-call detective for advice if more immediate attention is necessary.

If it appears to the Deputy the child has been injured in an accidental and non-negligent manner, an incident report shall be prepared and submitted through normal channels.

If the Deputy determines the request for medical aid resulted from a pre-existing illness and no accident or neglect was involved, no incident report is required, although nothing in this paragraph precludes or discourages the Deputy from initiating an incident report when the Deputy determines documentation of the circumstances leading to the medical aid call would otherwise be beneficial.

The Deputy should take special note that cases initially identified as SIDS deaths may possibly become homicide cases after the analysis of forensic and medical evidence. These cases may evolve differently than other unattended death cases, with the victim receiving resuscitation and transport even though signs of death are present. It is important that a premature assumption of SIDS be avoided during the initial investigation, causing a less thorough scene investigation than might otherwise occur.

In cases where a child requires life support measures and it is possible death may still result, items of evidence can be seized during an emergency search of the scene (i.e. clothing or bedding that contain bodily fluids, bottles containing recently consumed baby formula, medications given to the child) or any other items that may perish or be easily destroyed before a search warrant could be obtained.

Deputies questioning parents or caregivers of children in these circumstances must exercise extreme tact and consideration while still obtaining complete information.

**AFFECTED DIVISIONS:**

Patrol  
Communication  
Investigations

**DATE OF REVISIONS:**

6/14/01  
10/26/01  
1/25/02 PAT-05-06 (Revised and Re-numbered)

**BY ORDER OF:**

**ROBERT T. DOYLE**  
Sheriff