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SUBJECT: Investigations of Sudden Infant Death

ISSUED BY: Fernando Solorzano

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A complete inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the sudden death of an infant is essential in order to separate incidents of natural or accidental death from criminal misconduct. A reliable conclusion can only be determined through a complete investigation and medical examination of the events leading to the sudden death of an infant.

Police officers shall attempt to do the following when responding to reports of sudden infant death.

- (a) Determine the need for emergency medical response.
  - (1) Immediately check for signs of life and obtain and/or render medical assistance.
  - (2) Coordinate the efforts of those at the scene rendering medical assistance.
  - (3) If appropriate, assist the parents or care providers in preparing to accompany the infant to the hospital. This assistance may include arranging for the immediate care of any children remaining at the scene, securing the location, etc.
- (b) Implement death scene procedures.
  - (1) Establish control of the death scene (location where the infant was first discovered), and preserving and gathering all items of evidence that may assist in the determination of the cause of death.
  - (2) Identifying and recording the names of all persons who may be involved in the incident.
  - (3) Make appropriate field notes to be later used in preparing a written report to detail the time when the infant was last seen alive through discovery of the infant's death.
  - (4) Detailed recording of the officer's observations of the immediate location where the infant was located.
- (c) Identification and Interviewing of persons at the scene. Officers should note the following before attempting any interview.
  - (1) Parents, care providers and even first responders may suffer severe emotional responses to the sudden death of an infant.
  - (2) Emotional responses vary between individuals, and cannot be predicted.
    - a. Some individuals may become violent or show outpourings of grief and shock, anger/frustration.
    - b. Some individuals may give a guilt-ridden statement such as "It's all my fault..." or "I killed my baby"
  - (3) Inform the person to be interviewed why the interview is necessary.
    - a. In cases of an apparent SIDS incident, the parents or care providers should be informed as to how the interview and the investigation will proceed.
  - (4)

(d) Notifications

- (1) Make appropriate notifications to law enforcement and coroner staffs.
- (2) The watch commander shall request an investigator to the scene.
  - a. Upon arrival, the investigator should explain that to the parents

