

Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center

Policy and Procedure Protocol



Revised 2023

VENTURA COUNTY MULTI-DISCIPLINARY INTERVIEW CENTER

MISSION STATEMENT

The Ventura County Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center (MDIC) is a coalition of public and private agencies dedicated to serving child victims of sexual and physical abuse and adult victims of sexual assault. Our mission is to establish and maintain a center that promotes dignity and respect while minimizing trauma and maximizing criminal prosecution.

Through enhanced teamwork and collaboration, the MDIC will:

- Provide a sensitive, safe and child-friendly environment that will decrease victim trauma and intimidation.
- Promote and improve interagency cooperation and coordination among county agencies and between criminal and dependency investigations.
- Conduct forensic interviews by specially trained staff.
- Reduce the number of interviews for children and adults who have been sexually assaulted or abused.
- Provide forensic medical examinations by specially trained staff.
- Provide crisis intervention and referrals for child and adult victims and their families.
- Prevent repetitive incidents of child abuse and sexual assault through effective intervention and prosecution.
- Promote on-going training to ensure continuous quality improvement.

OPERATIONAL AGREEMENT

This operational agreement stands as evidence that the Ventura County Human Services Agency, the Ventura County Health Care Agency, the Ventura County District Attorney, California State University Channel Islands Police Department, Oxnard Police Department, Port Hueneme Police Department, Santa Paula Police Department, Simi Valley Police Department, Ventura Police Department, Ventura County Sheriff's Office, the Coalition for Family Harmony, Interface Children & Family Services, Casa Pacifica, The Partnership for Safe Families & Communities of Ventura County (the designated Child Abuse Prevention Council), the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the Ventura County Medical Association intend to work together toward the mutual goal of providing maximum available assistance to child victims of sexual and physical abuse and adult victims of sexual assault through participation in a Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center.

All agencies agree to closely coordinate services utilizing the agreed upon Policy and Procedure Protocol to reduce trauma to victims, ensure their safety, and increase the likelihood of successful prosecution.

To further this goal, all member agencies will make every effort to:

- Respond as members of the Multi-Disciplinary Team for collaborative service provision as set forth in the Policy and Procedure Protocol.
- Bring all cases that meet the criteria for referral to the Safe Harbor Centers.
- Participate in regularly scheduled meetings to (1) assess effectiveness of the program, (2) conduct case reviews, and (3) discuss strategies, timetables and implementation of mandated services.
- Provide specific services and adhere to the Code of Conduct as described in the Policy and Procedure Protocol.

Review, Expiration, and Termination: this agreement takes effect when signed by each party and shall expire on October 01, 2030. The MOU shall be reviewed triennially in its entirety. Any party may discontinue membership in the Multi-Disciplinary Team before termination date provided that party provides 30 days written notice to all other participating member agencies of intent to discontinue membership in the Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center.

2023

In recognition of the serious problem of child abuse and sexual assault and the efficacy of multi-disciplinary teams to investigate and prosecute these crimes, the following agencies agree to participate in the Multi-disciplinary Interview Center Process and to readopt this Policy and Procedure Protocol:



DRAKE MASSEY
Interim Chief, California State University Channel Islands
Police Department

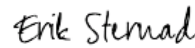


SHAWNA MORRIS
Chief Executive Officer,
Casa Pacifica



CAROLINE PRIJATEL-SUTTON
Executive Director,
Coalition for Family Harmony

DocuSigned by:



ERIK STERNAD
Executive Director, Interface
Children & Family Services



NICHOLAS CARTER
Special Agent-in-Charge,
Naval Criminal Investigative Service
Southwest Field Office



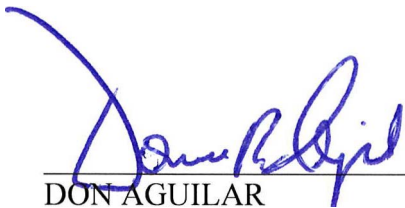
JASON BENITES
Chief, Oxnard Police Department



DR. KATHLEEN VAN ANTWERP
Executive Director, The Partnership for
Safe Families & Communities of Ventura County



ROBERT ALBERTSON
Interim Chief,
Port Hueneme Police Department



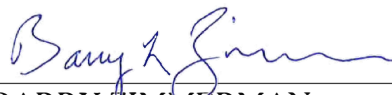
DON AGUILAR
Interim Chief,
Santa Paula Police Department



STEVE SHORTS
Chief,
Simi Valley Police Department



ERIK NASARENKO
Ventura County District Attorney



BARRY ZIMMERMAN
Director, Ventura County Health
Care Agency

Melissa Livingston

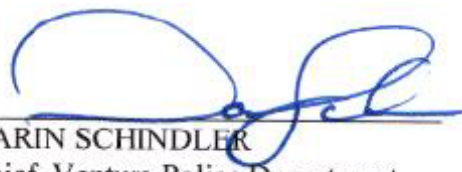
MELISSA LIVINGSTON
Director, Ventura County Human
Services Agency



GREG MARTIN
Superintendent, CA State Parks
Channel Coast District



JAMES FRYHOFF
Ventura County Sheriff



DARIN SCHINDLER
Chief, Ventura Police Department

POLICY AND PROCEDURE PROTOCOL

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MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

The following agencies are recognized as **Core Team Members** of the Multi-Disciplinary Interview Centers (MDIC) with active roles, as described: the District Attorney, all Ventura County law enforcement agencies, Human Services Agency, Children and Family Services and Adult Protective Services, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Ventura County Health Care Agency.

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

The District Attorney is the chair of the MDIC policy board. The office of the District Attorney is responsible for the general management of the program and facilities and the day-to-day administration of the centers.

Role of the Deputy District Attorney and District Attorney Investigator:

1. The District Attorney will assign one or more Program Coordinators to the Safe Harbor Program. The District Attorney's Office Sexual Assault Unit Supervisor will serve as the coordinator of the District Attorney's Safe Harbor response team and be available to consult with law enforcement as needed on all cases.
2. The Supervisors of the Sexual Assault Unit and the Juvenile Unit will designate deputy district attorneys who will be available to respond to the MDIC. The Chief of the Bureau of Investigation will designate an investigator who will also be available to respond to the MDIC as needed.
3. The deputy district attorney (and district attorney investigator, if present) will observe interviews for the purpose of assessing competency, witness demeanor, and filing criteria, and may submit case specific questions to be asked of the victim by the forensic interviewer.
4. The deputy district attorney (and district attorney investigator, if present) will participate in case discussions with other team members.
5. The deputy district attorney and the district attorney investigator will assist law enforcement with the coordination of follow-up investigation. This does not preclude the District Attorney's Office from initiating and conducting additional pre-filing or pre-trial investigation when appropriate as determined by the District Attorney's Office.
6. The deputy district attorney will assist with preparation and review of search warrants when necessary.

7. If an MDIC case is submitted by a law enforcement agency to the District Attorney's Office for possible prosecution, the case will be reviewed by the Sexual Assault or Juvenile Unit Supervisor or assigned to a deputy district attorney for review.
8. If a criminal case is filed, it will be vertically prosecuted within the Sexual Assault Unit or the Juvenile Unit as assigned by the unit supervisor. A victim advocate and district attorney investigator will also be vertically assigned to the case.
9. If a case is submitted to the District Attorney's Office by law enforcement, the assigned deputy district attorney will cause other team members to be notified, including the District Attorney victim advocate, of the filing decision and ultimate disposition of the case. It shall be the responsibility of the assigned deputy district attorney to contact the victim or victim's family when a felony case is rejected. In those instances where the victim or victim's family has been scheduled to come to the office to be informed of a felony case rejection, the assigned deputy district attorney will advise the Crime Victims' Assistance Unit of the scheduled date and time so that an advocate may be present for notification. MDIC cases will be discussed at periodic case review meetings.
10. Safe Harbor staff will maintain records of all cases referred to the MDIC, including rejected cases and current status and final dispositions on filed cases.
11. All Sexual Assault Unit attorneys and investigators will attend specialized training in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and sexual assault cases. This will include forensic interviewing of victims.
12. The assigned deputy district attorney will participate in follow-up meetings with other Team members as needed.
13. The supervisor of the District Attorney's Sexual Assault Unit and the Safe Harbor Program Coordinator(s) will represent the District Attorney on the MDIC Steering Committee. The Division Chief Deputy or Program Coordinator will attend Policy Board meetings at the request of the District Attorney.

Role of the District Attorney Victim Advocate:

1. The supervisors in the District Attorney's Crime Victims' Assistance Unit will designate the victim advocates who will be available to respond to the MDIC upon request of law enforcement, Children and Family Services, or the District Attorney. The supervisors in the Crime Victims' Assistance Unit also represent the District Attorney's Office on the Steering Committee.
2. Advocates responding to the MDIC will provide services that are responsive to the special needs of the victim, including but not limited to crisis assessment and intervention, risk

- assessment and safety planning, interview support, information about the coordinated, multi-disciplinary response, emergency assistance, resource and referral assistance, orientation to the criminal justice system and will provide culturally responsive services.
3. The advocate will provide the victim and family with restraining order assistance, California Victim Compensation information and application assistance and service referral information as needed. Service referrals include referral and access to the Ventura County Family Justice Center (VCFJC) partners and services.
 4. In those instances where the victim or victim's family have been informed of a felony case rejection, the assigned deputy district attorney will advise the Crime Victims' Assistance Unit so an advocate may provide additional contact and follow up. In those instances where the victim or victim's family have been scheduled to come to the office or speak directly to a deputy district attorney to discuss felony case rejection the victim advocate will be informed of the scheduled date and time so that the advocate may be present for this meeting.
 5. If a criminal case is filed, the assigned advocate will provide all services as mandated by California Penal Code section 13835.5, the California Office of Emergency Services and the District Attorney. These services currently include frequent ongoing contact with the victim to provide case and offender status updates, orientation to the criminal justice system, crisis intervention as needed, information regarding restraining order services, California Victim Compensation Program assistance, referrals to other agencies for services as needed, court support, assistance obtaining restitution for the victim, and protective orders.
 6. Safe Harbor Program Coordinators shall refer all cases seen at Safe Harbor to the District Attorney's Crime Victims' Assistance Unit for follow-up contact. A Supervising Victim Advocate will assign an advocate to follow-up with the family or victim.
 7. An advocate shall represent the Crime Victims' Assistance Unit at monthly case reviews and advocates who responded to the center will attend when possible.

VENTURA COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

California Parks, Channel Island District
California State University Channel Islands Police Department
Oxnard Police Department
Port Hueneme Police Department
Santa Paula Police Department
Simi Valley Police Department
Ventura Police Department
Ventura County Sheriff
 West County Sheriff's Station
 East County Sheriff's Station

Camarillo Police Department
Fillmore Police Department
Moorpark Police Department
Ojai Police Department
Thousand Oaks Police Department

Law Enforcement Role:

1. Investigating agencies will follow department policies and procedures for the investigation of child abuse and sexual assault cases.
2. When initial disclosure of suspected child abuse is made to law enforcement, the responding agency will determine if an immediate response by Children and Family Services is indicated. If it is, the agency will initiate immediate contact with a Children and Family Services Emergency Response Worker. Every effort will be made to conduct a limited joint interview between law enforcement and Children and Family Services with the child to determine if a crime has occurred and the nature of the crime.
3. When responding to a call of child abuse where Children and Family Services is already involved, the responding agency will obtain as much information as possible from the Children and Family Services worker to avoid duplicating the interview.
4. The investigating agency will be in charge of coordinating the criminal investigation with the Children and Family Services Emergency Response Worker. A joint decision will be made to determine if the child should be placed in protective custody.
5. The investigating agency will determine if the case meets criteria for referral to the MDIC.
6. If the case meets the referral criteria, a forensic-qualified law enforcement officer/detective will respond to the Center and participate in the interview and investigation process. If response to the MDIC is requested outside of regular business hours, each law enforcement agency will ensure the responding officer/detective is armed and able to provide on-site security at the Center while it is being utilized. Law enforcement will remain near the examination rooms to provide security for sexual assault nurse examiners when exams are in process. Additional precautions should be taken for high risk examinations.
7. The investigator will request the presence of appropriate victim support to respond to the MDIC. The investigator will ensure that the local rape crisis center (the Coalition for Family Harmony) is contacted either directly or through the on-call VCDAO CVAU Victim Advocate to request the presence of a Sexual Assault Counselor, defined in Evidence Code sections 1035.2 and 1037.1 and pursuant to Penal Code section 264.2, to respond to the MDIC.
8. The investigator will be responsible for receipt and storage of evidence retrieved during the investigation, other than electronic evidence maintained by The Ventura County Health

- Care Agency as identified below. If a certain agency is unable or ill-equipped to take possession of evidence, they will coordinate with another law enforcement agency to facilitate the receipt and storage of evidence.
9. Each agency will designate a representative to participate on the MDIC Steering Committee and monthly Case Reviews. There will be one representative from East Valley Sheriff's Station and one from West County Sheriff's Station.
 10. Child abuse and sexual assault investigators will attend specialized training, including forensic interviewing of child abuse and sexual assault victims.
 11. If law enforcement utilizes the MDIC for interviews without calling out other members of the Response Team, the responding officer or detective will sign in and out on the sign in/out sheet provided at the front counter of each center and provide a copy of the incident or police report related to the use of the MDIC to the Program Coordinator for grant and data collection purposes.

NAVAL BASE VENTURA COUNTY

1. Naval Base Ventura County [NBVC] falls under exclusive federal jurisdiction. The federal government has exclusive criminal authority on the installation. Crimes committed onboard NBVC will be investigated by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and prosecuted in an appropriate venue for suspected violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice or U.S. Code. NCIS Agents may also work in conjunction with Ventura County law enforcement agencies when criminal offenses are committed by military personnel off NBVC.
2. NBVC service providers include:
 - A. Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS)
 - B. Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC)
 - C. Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
 - D. Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)
 - E. Force Protection (FP)
 - F. Staff Judge Advocate (SJA)
 - G. Navy Commands and Command Support Programs (e.g., Ombudsman and Family Support Groups, etc.)
3. NCIS has a separate compensation agreement with the Ventura County Health Care Agency (HCA) to perform forensic sexual assault examinations on behalf of NBVC at the MDIC. Safe Harbor is not a party to this separate agreement between HCA and NCIS.
4. When utilizing the MDIC, NCIS will follow internal policies and procedures in accordance with the Safe Harbor Policy and Procedure Protocol (as amended).

5. When responding to a call of child abuse, NCIS will coordinate with Ventura County Children and Family Services.
6. NCIS will coordinate the criminal investigation and consult with the Children and Family Services Emergency Response Worker. Children and Family Services will decide if the child should be placed in protective custody.
7. NCIS will determine if the complaint meets the case criteria for referral to the MDIC.
8. If the case meets the referral criteria, NCIS will respond to the MDIC and conduct the primary forensic interview in all NBVC sexual assault and child abuse complaints. All effort will be made to avoid duplicating interviews.
9. NCIS Special Agents who respond to the MDIC will attend specialized training and continuing education, including forensic interviewing of child abuse and sexual assault victims.
10. NBVC will provide SAPR and FAP Advocates for crisis intervention, medical-legal examination support, follow-up, emergency shelter, and information and referral on and off base for all eligible military victims, including family members.
11. Representatives from NBVC SAPR, FAP and NCIS may attend MDIC Steering Committee, case review and quality assurance meetings as requested. NBVC may maintain continuing liaison with the MDIC.
12. For all abbreviated SAFE exams performed for victims who report an assault that occurred in a location wherein NCIS has exclusive jurisdiction (on Naval Base Ventura County; to include Port Hueneme, Point Mugu and San Nicolas Island), Safe Harbor SANE must NOT put the victim's name or contact information on the kit. Instead, the SANE must call the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) at 805-207-5309 OR 805-350-9694 to obtain a Restricted Report Control Number (RRCN). The RRCN should then be noted on the outside of the kit.
13. NCIS will pick up and transport for storage all abbreviated SAFE kits performed on victims who report a sexual assault occurred wherein NCIS has exclusive jurisdiction. NCIS will also pick up and take necessary steps to process any Acute Exams performed on victims who report a sexual assault that occurred wherein NCIS has exclusive jurisdiction.

VENTURA COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY, CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

1. If Children and Family Services (CFS) is the first responding agency, an initial screening will be made. If the screening substantiates that further investigation is warranted, the Emergency Response Social Worker will contact the appropriate law enforcement agency

- and request that an officer respond. If law enforcement is the initial responding agency, that agency will contact CFS and request that an Emergency Response Social Worker respond.
2. If a law enforcement officer takes the child into protective custody and the case meets the criteria for referral to the MDIC, the social worker will coordinate with law enforcement to have the child transported to the MDIC in accordance to CFS policy.
 3. If the child is at imminent risk of further abuse, law enforcement will complete an Application for Petition and place the child in protective custody. The social worker will then take custody of the child.
 4. Even if the case does not meet the law enforcement referral criteria, the Emergency Response Social Worker may still coordinate with the MDIC to conduct a forensic interview, medical examination, or other services as the social worker deems appropriate, after consultation with the Deputy Director or Senior Manager. If further investigation is needed, CFS must obtain the consent of the non-offending caregiver or obtain an interview or protective custody warrant and bring the child to the MDIC for an interview. If during the interview process by CFS it appears that a crime has occurred, CFS will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency.
 5. After responding to the MDIC, the responding social worker, investigating officer, and the deputy district attorney will confer with the forensic examiner to determine if a medical examination is needed and whether it should be conducted before or after the child's interview.
 6. With the permission of the non-offending parent or an interview or protective custody warrant the social worker will observe the interview and provide case specific questions to be asked by the forensic interviewer.
 7. Upon receipt of an Application for Petition, the social worker will decide, based on an investigation, if a W&I 300 Juvenile Dependency Petition should be filed to protect the child.
 8. CFS will assign a representative to participate in follow-up meetings of the Team as needed.
 9. CFS will assign a representative to participate on the MDIC's Steering Committee.
 10. All social workers that participate in the MDIC forensic interview process will be available for court testimony in a criminal action or juvenile dependency hearing, as appropriate and as legally permissible.
 11. All Emergency Response Social Workers will participate in training as specified in their Individual Training Plan.

12. All Child Welfare Social Workers will adhere to CFS policies and procedures related to child protection.
13. Whenever possible, CFS will provide a bilingual social worker when required.
14. In collaboration with CFS, RX for Kids Public Health Nurses will assure appropriate skilled medical follow-up for those children placed in out-of-home care. Referrals may be made to Public Health Nurses for follow-up in cases where a child remains in the home.

VENTURA COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY, ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

1. If Adult Protective Services (APS) is the first responding agency, an initial assessment will be done. If the screening substantiates that further criminal investigation is warranted, the social worker will contact the appropriate law enforcement agency and request that an officer respond. If law enforcement is the initial responding agency, that agency will contact APS and request that an APS social worker respond as necessary.
2. After responding to the MDIC, the responding social worker, investigating officer, and the deputy district attorney will confer with the forensic examiner to determine if a medical examination is needed and whether it should be conducted before or after the interview.
3. The APS social worker will observe the interview and provide case specific questions to be asked by the forensic interviewer.
4. APS will assign a representative to participate in follow-up meetings of the Team as needed.
5. APS will assign a representative to participate on the MDIC Steering Committee.
6. All APS social workers will follow APS standards and guidelines for all elder and dependent adult protection issues.
7. Whenever possible, APS will provide a bilingual social worker when required.

VENTURA COUNTY HEALTH CARE AGENCY

1. The Ventura County Health Care Agency will appoint a Forensic Examiner Program Coordinator who will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the forensic medical exam program, coordinating response of the appropriate forensic examiners, physicians and licensed independent practitioners to the MDIC, and maintain billing for forensic examinations conducted at the MDIC. The Medical Coordinator will maintain quality

assurance, regulatory compliance, process improvement, and representation of the HCA at multi-disciplinary planning and coordination meetings.

2. The Ventura County Health Care Agency will designate and appoint a physician as the Medical Director for the MDIC, who will be responsible for the oversight of all medical activities of the MDIC.
3. A forensic examination shall be conducted in all acute cases where law enforcement, after consultation with the MDIC Team, determines that there is a possibility of discovering evidence of physical or sexual abuse. HCA will make forensic examiners available to provide forensic pediatric examinations where there is obvious or suspected physical child abuse and forensic sexual assault exams when appropriate and requested by law enforcement. Acute cases involving emergency medical treatment and/or hospitalization shall be taken to the appropriate hospital. In non-acute cases forensic examiners will determine whether to provide an examination based on current best practices and their professional expertise.
4. The Ventura County Health Care Agency will store and maintain in an encrypted and redundant format recordings, photographs, videos, and reports created during the forensic examination.
5. HCA will designate clinics where sexual assault victims shall receive free STI testing and refer them to their primary medical doctor or emergency room if needed for medical follow-up.
6. Forensic examiners will be required to attend regular ongoing annual sexual assault training to include recognition, evaluation, and treatment of child abuse; and regular forensic medical peer review.
7. Forensic examiners are invited to attend periodic meetings of the Team for case discussions.
8. The Medical Coordinator and/or Medical Director will represent HCA on the MDIC's Steering Committee.
9. HCA will assure representation at the MDIC for process evaluation, support, and linkage to appropriate services.

The following agencies are recognized as contributing and support agencies:

CASA PACIFICA

1. Casa Pacifica partners with Ventura County Behavioral Health, Human Services Agency, and Public Health to assist with assessments, treatment interventions, resource referrals, and follow-up care. It may be used as a referral source for law enforcement, Children and Family Services, and victims and their families.
2. Trained staff have expertise in treating abused, neglected, and abandoned children and will be required to attend annual training in child physical and sexual abuse.
3. Participating Casa Pacifica staff are invited to attend periodic meetings of the Team for case discussions.
4. Casa Pacifica will designate a representative to participate in the MDIC Steering Committee.

COALITION FOR FAMILY HARMONY

1. Sexual Assault Counselors, as defined in Evidence Code sections 1035.2 and 1037.1, will be available on-call 24 hours for response to the MDIC, pursuant to Penal Code section 264.2.
2. Sexual Assault Counselors will be available to provide support, crisis intervention, and medical-legal accompaniment for victims of sexual assault as defined in Penal Code section 264.2(b)(1).
3. Sexual Assault Counselors will assist victims of sexual violence in assessing the need for individual, family, and/or group therapy, and provide appropriate referrals.
4. Coalition will offer 10 free counseling sessions to victims of sexual assault and non-offending family members, with on-going sessions available on a sliding fee scale and an unlimited number of free support group sessions in English and Spanish.
5. Coalition will provide 24-hour crisis line services and crisis intervention for victims of sexual violence. This service will be available in both English and Spanish.
6. Sexual Assault Counselors will provide assistance in locating emergency shelter and referrals.
7. Coalition will provide training for all Sexual Assault Counselors, both volunteer and paid staff, and will also make this training available to employees of the MDIC member agencies.
8. Coalition will designate a representative to participate on the MDIC Steering Committee and monthly Case Reviews.

INTERFACE CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

1. Interface Children & Family Services (Interface) operates the Ventura County 2-1-1 telephone service that provides resources to the caller when not an emergency and includes “call patching” service to immediately connect callers to necessary services in an emergency.
2. Interface staff provides 24/7 domestic violence crisis response and emergency shelter services as appropriate.
3. Interface operates a domestic violence transitional shelter program to domestic violence victims and their children.
4. Interface is available to provide follow-up treatment for child abuse and child sexual abuse victims up to 18 years of age and their non-offending family members through Interface Program to Evaluate and Treat Sexual Abuse (PETSAs), and Ventura County Child Abuse Treatment program (VCCHAT).
5. Interface will designate a representative to participate on the MDIC Steering Committee and Monthly Case Review Team Meeting.
6. Ongoing individual or group counseling for child abuse and sexual assault victims may be offered by Interface therapists on site at the MDIC or at other Interface locations.

**PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFE FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES OF VENTURA COUNTY
The Designated Child Abuse Prevention Council**

1. The Partnership for Safe Families and Communities of Ventura County [The Partnership] is the official advisory board on the use of prevention funding in Ventura County as defined by the California Welfare and Institutions Code. The Partnership assists in advising the Ventura County Board of Supervisors on Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (CAPIT), Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), and Children’s Trust Fund allocations as stated in the resolution.
2. The Partnership, in alignment with the Board of Supervisors decree, promotes community awareness, facilitates education and training, and provides networking toward the prevention, intervention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.
3. The Partnership promotes community awareness, training and technical assistance and resources for child abuse, neglect and family violence prevention, with the goal of stopping family and community violence across the lifespan, thus ending the cycles of child abuse and neglect.

4. The Partnership is the coordinating entity and serves as a model of an effective, consensus-driven partnership for violence prevention for Ventura County. The Partnership is a comprehensive network of representatives from diverse agencies, organizations, and the private sector who have partnered together to provide education, study family violence dynamics, and determine how all communities, agencies, and individuals can work together to create safe communities.
5. The Partnership conducts Mandated Reporter Training for professionals required by law to report child, elder, and dependent adult abuse. Training and outreach is open to professionals and students in the fields of childcare, criminal justice, education, faith leadership, mental and physical health, social services and community based organizations. Trainings sessions are offered in English and Spanish.
6. The Partnership encourages collaboration at all levels between its partners to identify gaps in services and to research and create innovative best-practice solutions system wide while removing competitive barriers and duplication of services.
7. The Partnership will support the MDIC by serving as a linkage to resources, including grant collaborations, providing networking opportunities, participating in meetings, and offering the expertise of its members.
8. The Partnership will create and encourage culturally competent training, education, and professional development opportunities for members of the MDIC, as well as related agencies, groups, and individuals within Ventura County.
9. The Partnership will designate a representative to participate on the MDIC's Steering Committee.

CRITERIA FOR REFERRAL TO THE CENTERS

1. After conducting a preliminary investigation, the investigating agency determines that a sexual assault or child abuse crime may have been committed.
2. The abuse or sexual assault occurred in Ventura County, the victim resides in Ventura County, or is presently in Ventura County.
3. The allegations meet the legal elements for a felony offense listed in Penal Code section 290(c) or a felony violation of Penal Code section 261.5.
4. Cases which do not meet the above criteria will be considered for referral to the MDIC on an individual basis by the law enforcement agency, CFS, or other participating agency. The

specially trained on-call medical staff or Medical Coordinator are available for consult with investigating agencies regarding the need for medical evaluation.

5. Cases of repeated, continuing, or past abuse which meet the above criteria shall be considered for referral to the MDIC in addition to cases involving offenses that have just occurred.
6. The MDIC will also be available for law enforcement use to interview child witnesses to violent crime including homicide and serious domestic violence. In sensitive cases, adults who have witnessed violent crimes may also be taken to the MDIC for interviews, crisis intervention, and service referrals.
7. Generally, individuals suspected of committing a sexual assault offense shall not be taken to the MDIC for interview or physical examination. Exceptions to this policy can be made with the concurrence of all involved partners. In addition, no known suspects shall be allowed in the MDIC at any time. If, for any reason, a juvenile offender is brought for an interview regarding his/her victimization, a 2-hour buffer before and after the interview will be set-up to ensure no contact with any victims.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURES

All participating agencies shall comply with the provisions of Penal Code section 11160, *Reports of Injuries*, and Penal Code section 11164, et seq., the *Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act*, and all reporting procedures and requirements as mandated by their respective agencies.

Referral Procedures

1. CFS or the investigating law enforcement agency will determine if the case should be referred to the MDIC.
2. That agency will contact the MDIC Program Coordinator who will schedule a time for Team members to respond to the MDIC. When possible, interviews will be scheduled in advance to provide Team members with as much notice as possible.
3. A Program Coordinator may be reached at Safe Harbor VCFJC or Safe Harbor East during regular business hours (Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.). Outside of regular business hours, the agency requesting Team response to the MDIC shall call the on-call VCDAO CVAU Victim Advocate to contact the Team members. All participants to the program agree and acknowledge that in most instances an interview of a victim during business hours is preferable, particularly with child victims. It is understood, however, that evening interviews may be necessary in the extraordinary situation when the safety of the

community or preservation of evidence may be jeopardized by a delay or the child is at imminent risk.

4. At least one Ventura County MDIC shall be structured to provide appropriate services to victims with special needs including physical or developmental disabilities.
5. The victim (and family members as appropriate) shall be transported to the MDIC by the investigating agency, CFS representative or other appropriate agency. Transportation arrangements shall be coordinated between the initial responding agencies.
6. All Team members responding to the MDIC will sign in and out on a log to be posted at the front entrance of either facility. The MDIC Program Coordinator will be responsible for maintaining the logs and keeping them on file for not less than seven (7) years.
7. Prior to a forensic sexual assault exam, the forensic examiner shall obtain written consent for the exam from the patient if age 12 or over, or from the victim's parent or guardian if the child is under age 12, or from the CFS worker if the child is under age 12 and is in the custody of that agency (see Section 5 pages 24 - 25).

INFORMATION SHARING AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Relevant information shall be exchanged in a timely manner between MDIC Team members, Safe Harbor staff and volunteers in furtherance of the Mission Statement, including to provide appropriate and coordinated services to a client or family to prevent, identify, treat and eliminate abuse of the children or adults; to maximize criminal prosecution; and to ensure continuous quality improvement.

It is the policy of the MDIC that the confidential information gathered by the Team is not disclosed in violation of state or federal law. The information or records obtained shall be maintained in a manner that ensures the maximum protection of privacy and confidentiality rights.

This policy shall apply throughout the MDIC process and during the pendency of any resulting case, including during investigations, in case review, and during peer review.

Information Sharing

Confidential records are defined as those written documents regarding a family or individual that are to be maintained by the agency of origin, including photographs, and audio or visual recordings on any medium. (See Evidence Code section 250.)

It is the policy of the MDIC that Team members understand and agree that sensitive ***information*** is shared among Team members, limited to relevant information necessary for coordinating

services and quality improvement, exchanged by oral communications or review of confidential records. The relevant information may be shared by the Team, across agency lines for the limited purposes of providing appropriate and coordinated services to a client or family to prevent, identify, treat and eliminate abuse of the children or adults; to maximize criminal prosecution; and to ensure continuous quality improvement. No further dissemination of such information may occur for any purpose outside the Team's objectives, absent a specific signed release by the client or court order.

Confidential exchange of information regarding child abuse cases is provided in Welfare and Institutions Code section 830, which states:

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, members of a multidisciplinary personnel team engaged in the prevention, identification, management, or treatment of child abuse or neglect may disclose and exchange information and writings to and with one another relating to any incidents of child abuse that may also be a part of a juvenile court record or otherwise designated as confidential under state law if the member of the team having that information or writing reasonably believes it is generally relevant to the prevention, identification, management, or treatment of child abuse, or the provision of child welfare services. All discussions relative to the disclosure or exchange of any such information or writings during team meetings are confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, testimony concerning any such discussion is not admissible in any criminal, civil, or juvenile court proceeding.

(b) As used in this section:

(1) "Child abuse" has the same meaning as defined in Section 18951.

(2) "Multidisciplinary personnel" means a team as specified in Section 18951.

(3) "Child welfare services" means those services that are directed at preventing child abuse or neglect.

Confidential exchange of information between persons who are trained and qualified to serve on multidisciplinary teams relevant to the provision of child welfare services or the investigation, prevention, identification, management, or treatment of child abuse or neglect, or of the abuse of elder or dependent persons, is also authorized by Welfare and Institutions Code sections 5328(l)(1), 10850.1, and 18961.7, and Penal Code section 11167.5(b)(4).

In the MDIC, for child abuse cases, confidential exchange of information between members of the Team furthers the prevention, identification, management and treatment of child abuse, and the provision of child welfare services.

In the MDIC, for cases involving child abuse and sexual abuse of children or adults, confidential exchange of information furthers compelling governmental interests in the investigation and prosecution of these cases, and the providing of important services to these victims, and doing so in a manner that minimizes the trauma to the victims. The necessity for allowing confidential communications within the Team, and not allowing confidential information to be disclosed to members of the public or others outside the Team, is in the interest of justice, within the meaning of the official information privilege, Evidence Code section 1040.

In the peer review process, the confidential exchange of information advances the education and expertise of the MDIC Team members, improves the quality of services to victims, and furthers the interest of law enforcement and prosecutors in promoting techniques that will lead to admissible, reliable and truthful evidence. Confidentiality is in the interest of justice because it is necessary to further the candid exchange of information and opinions that is essential to the peer review process, and outweighs the necessity for disclosure. (Evidence Code section 1040.)

Confidentiality

The MDIC Team members agree to be bound and abide by the confidentiality requirements of any relevant code sections that collectively provide that all information and writings received in the course of the multi-agency team process will be limited to pertinent data, and that all discussions as a result of this information received remain confidential. Disclosure to other persons is prohibited as specified below.

The Safe Harbor program is administered by the District Attorney's Office and is part of the County of Ventura. As such it follows the confidentiality policies of both the District Attorney's Office and the County of Ventura in regards to information sharing. MDIC Team members may also be bound by confidentiality rules of their employers and disciplines.

Information obtained from members of the MDIC Team shall not be disclosed to the public or to third parties where prohibited by law. Confidentiality requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

The **right to privacy** contained in Article I, section 1 of the California Constitution. This right protects information that was provided to law enforcement from use for another purpose. (*Central Valley Ch. 7th Step Foundation, Inc. v. Younger* (1989) 214 Cal.App.3d 145, 161-162; *Younger v. Berkeley City Council* (1975) 45 Cal.App.3d 825, 832.)

Reports of suspected child abuse or neglect are confidential (Penal Code section 11167.5).

The **identity of persons reporting child abuse or neglect** is confidential (Penal Code section 11167(d)).

The **name** of persons who allege to be victims of a sex offense, if they request confidentiality (Penal Code section 293).

The **address** of persons who allege to be victims of a sex offense (Penal Code section 293(c)).

The **address or telephone number of a victim or witness** shall not be disclosed to the defendant or to an arrested person, except as provided by law (Penal Code section 841.5; see Penal Code section 1054 et seq., providing for discovery of certain information by the prosecutor).

The **examination by health care professionals for evidence of sexual assault** is confidential under Penal Code section 13823.5(c).

Disclosure of **juvenile records** and law enforcement records of juvenile offenders is limited by Welfare and Institutions Code sections 826, 827 and 827.9. Standing Orders re Release of Juvenile Documents are contained in Ventura County Superior Court rules 12.00 and 12.01.

The **deliberative process privilege**, which protects advisory opinions, recommendations and deliberations comprising part of a process by which government decisions and policies are formulated. (*FTC v. Warner Communications Inc.* (9th Cir. 1984) 742 F.2d 1156, 1161; *Times Mirror Co. v. Superior Court* (1991) 53 Cal.3d 1325.)

The **official information privilege** for “information acquired in confidence by a public employee in the course of his or her duty and not open, or officially disclosed, to the public prior to the time the claim of privilege is made.” (Evidence Code section 1040.) Disclosure is prohibited if it “is against the public interest because there is a necessity for preserving the confidentiality of the information that outweighs the necessity for disclosure in the interest of justice.” There is a governmental interest in the confidentiality of ongoing investigations, including privacy interests in victims and witnesses. (*People v. Jackson* (2003) 110 Cal.App.4th 280, 288; see *County of Orange v. Superior Court* (2000) 79 Cal.App.4th 759, 764-765.) The public interest also favors candid comment and communication between the District Attorney’s Office and law enforcement agencies. (See *Rackauckas v. Superior Court* (2002) 104 Cal. App. 4th 169, rejecting a Public Records Act demand for a confidential letter explaining reasons why a case was rejected for prosecution.)

Summary criminal history records (“**rap sheets**”) (Penal Code sections 11142, 11143).

Local summary criminal history records (Penal Code sections 13302-13304), including a computerized data base including a defendant's criminal history in the county (89 Ops. Cal. Atty. Gen. 204 (2006)).

FBI rap sheets (28 USC 534(a)(4); *Department of Justice v. Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press* (1989) 489 US 749).

Department of Motor Vehicles records (Vehicle Code sections 1808(e), 1808.21, 1808.45-1808.47, 18 USC 2721-2725).

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation records (Cal. Code Regs., title 15, sections 2087, 3370; 13 Ops. Cal. Atty. Gen. 180 (1949)).

If members of the team come into possession of records from a provider of **health care**, further disclosure is limited. (Civ. Code, §§ 56.10, 56.11, 56.13).

Subpoenas

In civil cases, a party seeking "personal records" must provide the person whose records are being sought with a "consumer notice" and an opportunity to quash the subpoena. (Code of Civil Procedure, section 1985.3.) In criminal cases, subpoenaed records must be sent to the court, not to the attorney or party requesting the records. (Evidence Code section 1560; *People v. Blair* (1979) 25 Cal.3d 640, 651.)

Criminal Discovery

If a criminal case is filed, the criminal discovery statute requires the District Attorney to provide the defense with information and materials including statements of witnesses the prosecution intends to call at trial, statements of defendants, and the results of physical or mental examinations. (Penal Code section 1054.1.) The District Attorney also has a constitutional obligation to provide the defense in a criminal prosecution with material evidence that is helpful to the defense (*Brady v. Maryland* (1963) 373 U.S. 83), including evidence in the possession of members of the Team who assisted with the investigation. (*People v. Uribe* (2008) 162 Cal.App.4th 1457, 1476-1481.) Information in possession of Team members is provided to the defense in criminal cases through the District Attorney's Office.

Per California Evidence Code Sections 1035-1036, Coalition for Family Harmony crisis counselors may claim a privilege for information they have received from sexual assault victims. Per Department of Defense Directive 6495.01 communications between sexual assault victims and Naval Base SAPR advocates are to remain confidential.

FORENSIC INTERVIEWS

Forensic Interviewers

1. Interviews shall be conducted by persons who have received approved specialized training in forensic interviewing of abused children and sexual assault victims. The MDIC utilizes the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) interview protocol as adapted under the direction of the California Office of Emergency Services and taught by the Child Abuse Training and Technical Assistance Center.
2. Each investigation agency shall designate at least two forensic interviewers who are available to respond to the MDIC on cases being investigated by that agency. The agency conducting the investigation shall select and provide the forensic interviewer. Taken into consideration when selecting an interviewer will be the age of victim, the language the victim speaks, exigency, and victim's ability to understand the process.
3. Forensic interviewers shall have a minimum of 8 contact hours ongoing education in the field of child maltreatment and/or forensic interviewing every 2 years. Forensic interviewers shall participate in formalized peer review for forensic interviewers.

Interview Procedures

1. All responding Team members will meet and be briefed regarding the facts of the case prior to the interview. Team members will share relevant information including basic facts, names, relationship of persons involved, background information, cultural considerations, criminal history, prior CFS cases, school history and mental health history. Every effort will be made to conduct interviews in the language with which the victim is most comfortable. It is the responsibility of the investigating agency to provide interpreters. The investigating agency will make every effort to provide interpreters who meet the basic qualifications for testifying in court; this includes fluency in the primary language spoken by the victim, fluency in live spoken language, and fluency in terms necessary to describe sexual and/or physical abuse.
2. The investigating officer and/or detectives, in conjunction with other Team members, will determine if a medico-legal examination is necessary prior to a comprehensive forensic interview, to ensure the physical wellbeing of the victim and/or to preserve evidence in a timely manner.
3. All interviews will be video and audio recorded.
4. Only the forensic interviewer, interpreter and support person, if applicable, should be present in the interview room with the victim during the interview. Other Team members may observe the interview through the monitoring system. This includes but is not limited to: detectives, Children and Family Services and Adult Protective Services social workers, deputy district attorneys, and patrol officers.

5. Other Team members may also provide questions that the forensic interviewer may ask. The forensic interviewer will confer with other Team members during the interview process. Interviewers may wear a communication device that allows Team members to communicate directly with the interviewers while they are in the interview room.
6. The forensic interview shall be structured to obtain truthful legally admissible evidence, which includes using questions that are non-duplicative, non-leading and neutral.
7. Evidence may be introduced during the interview process at the discretion of the forensic interviewer in consultation with the observing deputy district attorney. Every effort will be made to minimize any re-traumatization of the victim. The interviewer shall ask the victim for permission prior to showing them the evidence. Consultation with the parent/non-offending caregiver is recommended for child victims.
8. Interview aids may be introduced at the discretion of the forensic interviewer in consultation with the deputy district attorney who is observing the interview. It is recommended that interview aids are used as secondary or a supplemental technique once as much information has been gathered using open-ended, non-leading questions or if it is unclear how a victim and suspect may have been positioned. Interview aids may be helpful in identifying a victim's names for body parts.
9. Every effort should be made to have the original forensic interviewer assist with any additional follow-up interviews. The need for follow-up forensic interviews with the victim will be determined by law enforcement, the District Attorney, or Children and Family Services. Follow-up forensic interviews should be conducted only as absolutely necessary with the goal of limiting the number of victim interviews.
10. Follow-up forensic interviews may, but need not, be conducted at the MDIC. All Core Team members will be notified and may, but need not, be present during follow-up interviews. Procedures for follow-up interviews will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
11. Following the forensic interview, the Team will meet for case review, decision making, case management, and planning that may include: (1) determining the necessity and priority for a medical examination; (2) discussing results with examiner following the exam; (3) providing feedback to the forensic interviewer; (4) coordinating follow-up investigation between agencies; (5) consideration of protection issues of the victim and/or others in the home; and (6) recommending follow-up and referral services for the victim and family.
12. It is the responsibility of the interviewer to document the interview. The original video and audio recordings of the interview shall be retained by the investigating agency to be booked into evidence at the law enforcement agency. The law enforcement agency shall also provide copies to Children and Family Services, upon their request, without charge to the law enforcement agency.

13. Video and audio equipment and recording media will be provided by the MDIC. The MDIC may retain a back-up copy of the recorded interview for a period of time based on the recording technology employed.

VICTIM SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

It is the policy of the MDIC to provide victims and their families with victim support and advocacy services at the MDIC and, after they leave, to arrange advocacy and follow-up contact throughout the investigation and prosecution process. It is also the policy of Ventura County Safe Harbor to provide victims and their families with information on crime victims' rights and services including but not limited to Marsy's law and the California Crime Victim Compensation program. Advocacy services are victim focused with the understanding that it is the victim and victim's family's decision whether to accept services and from whom.

The MDIC complies with California Penal Code Sections 264.2 and 679.04 that state that victims of sexual assault have the right to have a support person present for medical exams and interviews, and California Penal Code Section 680.2 that victims of sexual assault shall be given a card with information about their rights.

Advocates

Victim advocates who respond to the Safe Harbor centers shall have a minimum of 24 hours of specialized instruction in victim advocacy including: dynamics of abuse, trauma informed services, crisis assessment and intervention, risk assessment and safety planning, professional ethics and boundaries, understanding the coordinated multi-disciplinary response, assistance in accessing victims' rights as outlined by the law, court education, support and accompaniment, assistance with access to treatment and other services, including protective orders, housing, public assistance, domestic violence intervention, transportation, financial assistance, interpreters.

Victim advocates who provide victim advocacy services and respond to the Safe Harbor centers shall also participate in ongoing education in the fields of victim advocacy and child maltreatment a minimum of 8 contact hours every two years.

Advocates who respond to Safe Harbor include: District Attorney's Crime Victims' Assistance Unit advocates, Naval Base Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) and Family Advocacy Program (FAP) advocates, and Coalition for Family Harmony crisis counselors.

The District Attorney's Office Crime Victims' Assistance Unit provides advocates who respond to the MDIC and may continue to provide support throughout the investigation and prosecution process. Bilingual (English and Spanish speaking) advocates are available as needed. Advocates serve victims of all ages and their families. The Safe Harbor Program Coordinator(s) may instead provide victim advocacy at the MDIC during regular business hours. In addition, system-based

advocates and community counselors respond to the MDIC to provide support and can provide follow-up advocacy until the case is filed for prosecution.

System-based advocates include advocates from civilian law enforcement agencies and the military base. They serve victims of all ages and their families.

Naval Base Ventura County provides Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) victim advocates who respond 24/7 for victims of sexual assault who are military members, their spouses or family members. SAPR works with victims 18 years of age and older. Naval Base Family Advocacy Program (FAP) advocates respond to the MDIC for child abuse victims who are military family members. FAP advocates work with child physical and sexual abuse victims and their families.

Community based counselors are from the local rape crisis center. The Coalition for Family Harmony provides sexual assault crisis counselors who are available 24/7. They work with victims of all ages and their families.

For victims who are taken into protective custody, Children and Family Services social workers provide on-going case management services and ensure that the children's advocacy needs are met.

Victim Support and Advocacy

During regular business hours families are greeted by the Program Coordinator who may serve as a victim advocate as needed unless the family is Spanish speaking in which case a Spanish-speaking victim advocate from the District Attorney's Crime Victims' Assistance Unit will respond to the MDIC. The advocate orients the family to the MDIC, and as appropriate provides crisis counseling, resources and referrals, interview support, and information about the coordinated multidisciplinary response. The advocate may also coordinate VCFJC services on-site, at the time of the client meeting, whenever possible. The Program Coordinator works with any other advocate who may also be present to ensure the victim and family understand the different roles of the advocate and Program Coordinator, to ensure that the victim's needs are assessed and met, and appropriate referrals are made.

System-based advocates and community crisis counselors provide crisis assessment and intervention, safety planning, resources and referrals, exam and interview support, information about the coordinated multidisciplinary response to victims, risk assessment, follow-up contact, restraining order assistance, court accompaniment, and assistance with other services the family may need. Throughout the process, advocates assess the family and victim's individual needs and cultural considerations to ensure those needs are addressed. They also assess the family and victim's attitudes and feelings about the investigation and prosecution process to better respond to their concerns.

Regardless who initially responds, all victims who are brought to the MDIC are referred to the District Attorney's Office Crime Victims' Assistance Unit for follow-up services.

District Attorney's Crime Victims' Assistance Unit

The District Attorney's Crime Victims' Assistance Unit provides comprehensive services for adult and child victims. The Crime Victims' Assistance Unit is recognized by the Board of Supervisors as the major provider of services to victim and witnesses in the county. Victim advocates have received specialized training and are knowledgeable regarding the court system as well as the work of child protection, law enforcement and prosecution.

The Crime Victims' Assistance Unit advocates work closely with the system-based advocates and community-based crisis counselors to ensure seamless provision of advocacy services throughout the investigation and prosecution process. If a criminal case is filed the Crime Victims' Assistance Unit advocates will provide all services as mandated by California Penal Code section 13835.5, the California Office of Emergency Services and District Attorney.

In order to ensure that victim support and advocacy services are available for all MDIC clients, the Program Coordinator tracks follow-up contact. Those victims whose cases will not be submitted for prosecution or where it is determined that no crime has been committed are provided advocacy and follow-up contact and support by the system-based advocates from the law enforcement agencies and/or crisis counselors from the Coalition for Family Harmony. The Program Coordinator ensures that the families are given information and referrals for system-based advocates and/or crisis counselors.

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

1. Medico-legal exams shall be conducted for the purpose of ensuring the health, safety and well-being of the victim; to identify, document and address medical conditions resulting from abuse; to differentiate medical findings that are indicative of abuse from other medical conditions; to identify, document and address medical conditions unrelated to abuse; to assess children for any developmental, emotional or behavioral problems that warrant further evaluation and make referrals as necessary; to reassure and educate the victim and family; and to refer for therapy to address trauma related to abuse if not provided by another member of the MDIC Team.
2. Specially trained forensic examiners, through the Health Care Agency, will be responsible for conducting all child and adult forensic examinations whenever possible at the MDIC. Child and adult sexual assault examinations will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All other exams will be available for immediate consultation and scheduling. Examinations and evidence collection during the exam process and documentation of the examination and findings shall be in conformity with state and national protocol. Whenever possible, medico-legal exams that are immediately necessary, as determined by the MDIC team members, shall be scheduled prior to a comprehensive interview.

3. Specially trained forensic examiners will be responsible for conducting all non-acute/non-emergency child physical abuse examinations at the MDIC whenever possible. Examinations, evidence collection during the exam process and documentation of the examination and findings shall be in conformity with state and national protocol.
4. The requesting agency shall contact the MDIC Program Coordinator to schedule all medico-legal examinations, including child physical abuse, child and adult sexual assault exams, and domestic violence examinations. The MDIC Program Coordinator will be responsible for contacting the appropriate medical staff to respond to the MDIC. After hours the requesting agency shall use the on-call VCDAO CVAU Victim Advocate.
5. In cases involving the physical examination of a minor, the minor's parents or legal guardian must be notified of the examination before it occurs and given an opportunity to be present for the examination (or on the premises if there is a valid reason to exclude the parent/legal guardian – e.g., the parent is suspected of causing the child's injury).

This requirement shall not apply in any of the following circumstances:

- The minor requires immediate medical care;
 - There is a risk that evidence may dissipate in the time that it takes to notify the parent and provide them with an opportunity to attend the examination;
 - The minor's parent or guardian consents to the examination and waives the right to be present for it;
 - A court order expressly authorizes the examination and denies notice and an opportunity to attend to the parents;
 - The minor is 12 or older and is the victim of an alleged rape (Cal. Family Code § 6927);
 - The minor (of any age) is the victim of an alleged sexual assault – including, but not limited to, rape, oral copulation or sodomy – in which case, notification to the parents or legal guardian need only be attempted. Moreover, a parent or legal guardian is not entitled to notice of the examination if they are reasonably believed to have committed the sexual assault (Cal. Family Code § 6928).
6. Child physical abuse exams, when the child does not require emergency or in-patient care, will be conducted by a forensic examiner in consultation with the Medical Director.
 7. The investigating officer may provide the designated forensic examiner with information about the case and necessary patient history prior to the exam. Questioning by the examiner should be as limited as possible, consistent with state protocol.
 8. The examiner shall immediately turn over evidence collected during the exam (with the exception of electronic evidence) to the investigating officer. It shall be the responsibility of the investigating officer to properly book the evidence at the appropriate law enforcement agency. Evidence shall not be kept at the MDIC. Immediately after the exam, when appropriate, the examiner will brief the responding investigators and/or team members regarding the exam.

9. Law enforcement shall be responsible for the cost of the sexual assault medico-legal exam per California Penal Code § 13823.95. The cost of physical abuse and domestic violence examinations will be the responsibility of law enforcement and shall not be charged to the victims or their family. Victims and their families will be given information about the California Victim Compensation Program.
10. The forensic examiner will obtain physician consultation when appropriate. If a life-threatening condition becomes apparent prior to or during an exam, an ambulance will be called to take the victim to an emergency room.
11. The forensic examiner may respond to a local hospital, or other healthcare facility, for the purpose of forensic evidence collection on a victim who cannot be medically discharged, and when evidence collection would be compromised by waiting until the patient is medically discharged.

SAFE HARBOR CASE REVIEWS

Case review is the process through which MDIC Team members share facts and observations that inform and assist other team members. It is the process whereby cases are monitored and knowledge, experience and expertise are shared. Case review is the agreed upon process for collaborative intervention across the continuum of the case.

Every case is subject to case review. The more complicated cases may be reviewed on an ongoing basis until all efforts on the case have taken place and the case is closed. The Program Coordinators will determine the cases for review, however any Core Team member may schedule a case for review at any time. Generally, cases selected for review are those active cases that present difficulty, complexity, or special victim needs.

MDIC Case Reviews will be held each month, generally on a reoccurring day and time. Safe Harbor East case reviews are held at Safe Harbor East. Safe Harbor West case reviews are held at The Ventura County Family Justice Center.

All Core Team agencies and specific personnel from the relevant agencies involved in the cases will be informed of the case review via e-mail. This includes: detectives, Children and Family Services social workers, Adult Protective Services case workers, deputy district attorneys, victim advocates, forensic examiners, the Medical Director, sexual assault crisis counselors and mental health practitioners.

Team members shall provide information about and discuss: type and nature of allegations, interview outcomes, medical evaluations, progress of the investigation, prosecution and sentencing decisions, child protection issues, safety concerns, family reactions to the disclosures and investigation, counseling needs of the child and non-offending family members, strategies to meet

those needs, victim advocacy support services, cultural considerations and systemic barriers to an effective victim-centered response.

Follow-up recommendations will be assigned to a specific Team member(s) and documented and addressed by that specific Team member(s). The Program Coordinators will be responsible for communicating follow-up recommendations to absent Team members or others who do not attend case review but whose services are needed. Information about follow-up services will be discussed at subsequent case review meetings.

If a Team member is not able to attend the Case Review, the Program Coordinators will follow up to ensure that accurate information is available regarding the status of the cases.

Case Reviews may also serve as a forum for increasing Team members' knowledge of issues relevant to child abuse and sexual assault, for instance: new research, local experts, disabilities, innovative approaches to investigations, and cultural and linguistic perspectives.

The Program Coordinators will be responsible for scheduling the case reviews, arranging the locations, printing the monthly case review lists, setting the agenda and sending out via e-mail the case review reminders each month. The Program Coordinators shall facilitate the meetings.

The Program Coordinators will be responsible for updating the files/database with information discussed at Case Reviews.

CASE TRACKING PROCEDURES

For each victim who comes to the MDIC there will be an intake form filled out with basic demographic information and documentation of services provided, including the times services were provided. To prevent repetitive questioning of the victim or family members, most relevant information will be acquired from the law enforcement officer, detective, or Children and Family Services Social Worker, prior to the victim arriving at the MDIC. The Program Coordinators will be responsible for overseeing and/or gathering information on victims and their family members who are brought to the Safe Harbor centers.

The Program Coordinators will be responsible for entering the intake data into the Ventura County Integrated Justice Information System (VCIJIS) Victim Services database and updating it as necessary. Case records are also updated by victim advocates, prosecutors, and the courts.

The Program Coordinators will be responsible for tracking cases through the criminal justice system and/or until final disposition.

Partner agencies, for instance, Children and Family Services or law enforcement, will be responsible for providing updates on the case outcomes for victims who are brought to Safe Harbor. At a minimum, updates will be provided once a month at Case Reviews. The Program Coordinators will be responsible for updating partner agency information in the case record.

Program Coordinators will track: demographic information about the child and family; demographic information about the alleged offender; types of abuse; relationship of offender to victim; MDIC involvement and outcomes; charges filed and case disposition; child protection outcomes; and status/outcomes of medical and mental health referrals.

Information sharing to Partner agencies and to other individuals shall be shared as provided in the Information Sharing and Confidentiality Policy.

FORENSIC INTERVIEW PEER REVIEW GUIDELINES

The MDIC is committed to the improvement of services that are provided in the context of the MDIC Team. One of the researched and documented ways to ensure continuous quality improvement of forensic interviews is to conduct peer review of interviews on a periodic basis.

The purposes of peer review will be (1) to review recorded forensic interviews and give constructive critique to the interviewer, (2) to offer suggestions and different techniques that have worked in other interviews, and (3) to allow other participants the opportunity to learn how other interviewers conduct interviews and to review the interview protocol.

Peer review will be held quarterly. Team members who conduct forensic interviews at the MDIC shall participate in formalized peer review sessions at least twice a year.

Safe Harbor Program Coordinators will be responsible for arranging peer reviews and notifying the MDIC Team members who conduct interviews.

Only cases that will not be filed or those that have already been adjudicated will be reviewed. To maximize candor between participants, no documentation other than a sign-in sheet will be used.

Those interviewers whose cases are being reviewed will give a brief synopsis of the case before playing the interview for review.

Information about cases will be subject to the same confidentiality policies as any case discussion among MDIC Team members.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The MDIC recognizes the trauma that sexual and physical abuse victims and their families experience as a result of the abuse they suffer. Mental health assessment and treatment information shall be made available to all victims who come to the MDIC.

The decisions about what type of counseling and which counselor to see shall always be directed by the family and victim. Follow-up contact by the District Attorney's Crime Victims' Assistance

Unit victim advocates shall include referrals for community counseling resources for evaluation and treatment. As appropriate, information and assistance in applying for California Crime Victim Compensation will be provided for victims/families.

Mental health services shall be distinct and separate from the forensic investigative process. Sexual Assault crisis counselors who respond to the MDIC shall refer those victims and their family members to mental health practitioners that will best serve the victim's and family's needs. Formal trauma assessment and therapy will be conducted at a different time from the forensic interview and/or medico-legal examination.

If the victim and/or family member is manifesting self-harm or suicidal ideation or behaviors, the appropriate mental health crisis response team shall be called immediately to do a formal assessment and assist with placement as needed.

Providers

Two MDIC partner agencies, Coalition for Family Harmony (Coalition) and Interface Children & Family Services (Interface), have linkage agreements with the MDIC to provide trauma assessment and specialized trauma-focused mental health services. Victims who are brought to the MDIC and their families shall be given information about the counseling services available from the two partner agencies.

Mental health services shall be available to victims and their families without charge. The Coalition offers 10 free counseling sessions to child and adult sexual assault victims, their non-offending caregivers and other family members. Interface offers free counseling services to child and teen physical and sexual abuse victims, and child victims of other crimes, their siblings and their non-offending caregivers through the completion of treatment.

On-site Services

The MDIC shall have on-site counseling rooms available to both Interface and the Coalition. Victims and their families may be seen during regular business hours in the on-site counseling rooms.

Information Sharing

Case specific information regarding a victim shall be shared when it is reportable by law or when there is a signed authorization to release information. See the "Information Sharing and Confidentiality Policy" which allows that pertinent information may be shared to meet the goals of the Team necessary for coordinating services. Information may be shared for the limited purpose of developing and providing appropriate and coordinated services to a victim or family to prevent, identify, treat and eliminate abuse of children or adults in a manner that assures maximum protection of the individual privacy and confidentiality rights.

Confidential mental health records shall be stored and maintained by the agency of origin. No mental health records shall be stored on site at the Safe Harbor centers.

Role of Mental Health Professionals

Interface shall assign a mental health professional to attend case reviews. The mental health professional shall serve as a consultant regarding the victim's treatment needs and mental health as it may inform team decision-making. The mental health professional shall serve as a consultant to the Team regarding but not limited to: mental health diagnoses and behavioral issues.

The MDIC Team may request consultation from a mental health professional or request that a mental health professional from one of the two Partner Agencies respond to an interview or examination at the MDIC if the Team feels that the mental health perspective would enhance and/or inform the investigation process and/or to provide additional support for victims and/or family members.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

LOCATION OF CENTERS

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office has established the Safe Harbor program with three Multi-Disciplinary Interview Centers to serve qualified victims. Safe Harbor West, established April 2002, is located at 2982 Martha Street, Ventura, CA 93003. The contact number for Safe Harbor West is: (805) 641-4430. Safe Harbor East, established September 2003, is located at 2639 Avenida Simi, Simi Valley, CA 93065. The contact number for Safe Harbor East is (805) 579-6911. Safe Harbor at The Ventura County Family Justice Center (VCFJC), established November 2020, is located at 3170 Loma Vista Road, Ventura, CA 93003. The contact number for Safe Harbor FJC is (805) 652-7628. Safe Harbor East is primarily utilized by the Simi Valley Police Department and the East Valley Sheriff's Station; however, all centers will be available for use by any law enforcement agency as needed.

ADMINISTRATION

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office is the administrator of the Safe Harbor program. It is responsible for the general management of the Safe Harbor program, including hiring and managing personnel, obtaining funding, and supervising program and fiscal operations.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Appropriate peer review will be conducted according to accepted protocols for each discipline. Qualitative and quantitative statistics will be maintained by the MDIC Program Coordinator for measurement and outcome purposes and program efficacy.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee includes one representative from each of the member agencies. The Chair of the committee may be rotated every 12 months at the discretion of the committee based upon a majority vote. The purpose of the committee is to regularly oversee and monitor the operation of the MDIC. This will include discussing problems or suggested modifications to the program and funding issues. The Steering Committee will make recommendations to the Policy Board for final decision.

The committee shall meet on a regular basis but not less than quarterly. Any member agency may request a committee or Team meeting to address a specific case or issue.

It will be the responsibility of the Steering Committee to:

1. Review and evaluate MDIC operations and policy and procedures and make recommendations to the Policy Board and to all member agencies as needed.
2. Coordinate ongoing specialized training for Core Team Members.
3. Evaluate Team communication, cooperation, and effectiveness to ensure the highest level of service possible to victims and their families.
4. If recommendations are made by the committee, each agency representative will discuss the issue with his or her agency and advise the committee of the agency's position on the issue. The Steering Committee will then make recommendations to the Policy Board. The Policy Board will make the final decision on all recommendations. Decisions of the Policy Board shall be determined by a majority vote with one vote from each agency.
5. The Chair, with the assistance of the MDIC Program Coordinator, will prepare an agenda and distribute any written materials to other committee members prior to each scheduled meeting.
6. The Chair, with the assistance of the MDIC Program Coordinator, will prepare minutes of each meeting and distribute them to all member agencies. The MDIC Program Coordinator(s) will maintain an ongoing record of all minutes at the MDIC.
7. Persons other than committee members may attend a regular meeting to address specific issues when requested by a committee member.

POLICY BOARD

Policies for the MDIC are established by the Policy Board. The Policy Board is comprised of agency heads for each Core Team agency or their designee. The District Attorney serves as Chair of the Policy Board. The Board reviews and approves recommendations from the Steering Committee

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF AGENCIES

1. Pursuant to California Penal Code section 13823.95, law enforcement agencies shall pay for all initial sexual assault medico-legal examinations, including abbreviated exams, unless other arrangements have been made between the law enforcement agency and the County. The member agencies will make every effort to locate grant or other funding sources to minimize this cost to the agencies while at the same time recognizing that this may not occur and the primary responsibility lies with the investigating law enforcement agency.
2. The cost for medico-legal examinations conducted at the request of other than the law enforcement agency shall be the responsibility of the requesting agency
3. The cost for child physical abuse examinations and domestic violence examinations shall be the responsibility of the requesting agency.
4. All Core Team agencies and all other participating agencies shall be responsible for providing and paying for their own staff.

VENTURA COUNTY SAFE HARBOR FUND

A Ventura County Safe Harbor pass-through Fund hereinafter referred to as “Safe Harbor Fund” has been established and is administered by the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF). Assets from the Safe Harbor Fund belong to VCCF which retains final decision-making authority over making or withholding distributions from the Safe Harbor Fund.

A designee of the Policy Board, approved by unanimous vote of the Policy Board, shall serve as Safe Harbor Fund Advisor, hereinafter referred to as “Fund Advisor.” The role of the Fund Advisor shall be to serve as the designated point of contact between the Policy Board and the Ventura County Community Foundation. The Fund Advisor will receive statements from VCCF regarding the management of the Safe Harbor Fund and provide updates on the Safe Harbor Fund to the Policy Board. The Fund Advisor will also be the designated representative of the Policy Board to VCCF for the purposes of making recommendations to VCCF on use of the Safe Harbor Fund’s assets.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE REVIEW

All member agencies are encouraged to review this document on an annual basis. Minor revisions and updates will be done as needed. Proposed changes will be submitted from the Steering Committee to the Policy Board. The Policy Board will make all final decisions. Signatures of agency department heads will not be required unless additions and revisions are significant or will require a discernible change in agency internal policies and procedures. This document will then require signatures of agency department heads if multiple agencies change leadership.

DISSEMINATION OF THIS PROTOCOL

This protocol will be made available, upon request, to all agencies involved in the identification, investigation, evaluation, and treatment of child abuse and sexual assault. Each agency will be responsible for duplication and dissemination within their respective agencies, unless funding for printing costs is secured by the MDIC Program, in which case additional copies will be available by contacting the MDIC Program Coordinator.

TRAINING

Training regarding operation of the MDIC Program and this protocol will be conducted periodically for all participating agencies, and at least annually. Training will be coordinated and scheduled by the MDIC Program Coordinator. Law enforcement is encouraged to make this training available at the academy. The District Attorney’s Office will make staff available to assist with training at the academy and other locations as may be requested.

CHANGES OR MODIFICATIONS TO POLICY OR PROCEDURE

All member agencies agree that policy and procedures shall be reviewed periodically and may be changed or modified as appropriate and necessary.

INTENT TO DISCONTINUE MEMBERSHIP

If a member agency determines that it no longer wishes to participate in the Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center process, it shall provide 30 days written notice to the MDIC Program Coordinator and all other member agencies.

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PARTNER AGENCY CONTACT LIST

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CHANNEL ISLANDS	437-8888
CASA PACIFICA	366-4040
COALITION FOR FAMILY HARMONY	983-6014
INTERFACE CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES	485-6114
NAVAL BASE VENTURA COUNTY CONSOLIDATED DISPATCH	982-4591/2023
NAVAL CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE	982-4524
NAVAL BASE VENTURA COUNTY FFSC/SAPR/FAP SERVICES	982-5037
PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFE FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES OF VENTURA COUNTY, THE	535-4489
VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY	654-2500
CRIME VICTIMS' ASSISTANCE UNIT	654-3622
THE VENTURA COUNTY FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER	652-7655
VENTURA COUNTY HEALTH CARE AGENCY	677-5110
VENTURA COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY, CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES	654-3200
VENTURA COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES:	
OXNARD POLICE DEPARTMENT	385-7740
PORT HUENEME POLICE DEPARTMENT	986-6530
SANTA PAULA POLICE DEPARTMENT	525-4474
SIMI VALLEY POLICE DEPARTMENT	583-6950
VENTURA POLICE DEPARTMENT	339-4400
VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE	
EAST COUNTY SHERIFF'S STATION	494-8200
CENTRAL COUNTY SHERIFF'S STATION	388-5100
WEST COUNTY SHERIFF'S STATION	654-2890
VENTURA COUNTY SAFE HARBOR	
VCFJC (VENTURA)	652-7628
SIMI VALLEY	579-6912

APPENDICES

CODE OF CONDUCT

VENTURA COUNTY SAFE HARBOR CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS AND DIVERSITY PLAN

SAFE HARBOR CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct is the guiding principle of Safe Harbor and expresses its fundamental values. Accordingly, this Code guides the conduct to foster an environment that promotes ethical behavior while carrying out the agency's mission and responsibilities and collaborating with established multi-disciplinary team (MDT) partners.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, all Safe Harbor team members agree to the following:

1. Act in accordance to Safe Harbor policies and procedures at all times;
2. Strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and performance;
3. Behave respectfully, courteously and ethically towards children and their families, staff and all MDT partners;
4. Protect the confidentiality of all information obtained at Safe Harbor as part of services and MDT meetings except for compelling professional reasons;
5. Foster an inclusive and equitable environment for all children, families, Safe Harbor staff and MDT partners by respecting diverse backgrounds and providing culturally sensitive engagement;
6. Ensure all staff interactions with child clients are interruptible and/or observable;
7. Create a welcoming environment that promotes and enables honest conversation;
8. Ensure the safety, protection and well-being of all children at Safe Harbor by creating a comfortable and friendly environment that allows their physical and emotional needs to be met;
9. Act honestly, responsibly, and in a way that promotes the virtuous practices aligned in the mission of Safe Harbor;
10. Immediately report any suspected child abuse or neglect to proper authorities, consistent with the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (PC sections 11164-11174.3).

Any violation of the Code of Conduct should be promptly addressed and brought to the attention of Safe Harbor and Ventura County District Attorney's Office management.

**Ventura County Safe Harbor
Cultural Responsiveness and Diversity Plan**

I. Statement of Needs, Community Assessment:

- a. **Community Needs:** Ventura County is a large and diverse community with a population of 846,006 people (US Census July 1, 2019), including 194,310 children under 18 years of age. (Kidsdata.org 2020) Approximately 44.7% of residents are white, 43.2% are Hispanic, 2.4% are African American with the remaining being Asian, Native American, mixed race or “other.” A study finds Ventura County ranked the 10th most racially disparate county in California; 38.4% of the residents speak a language other than English in the home (US Census 2019). Almost 28,000 students enrolled in public schools in Ventura County 2019-2020 were English learners (EdData 2021). According to US Census Bureau 2019 estimates, approximately 8.2 % of Ventura County residents live under the official federal poverty level compared to the national average (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, OPM). The largest demographic living in poverty are women 35-44 years of age. Approximately 8,584 families live below the poverty level with children and are possibly at a higher risk for abuse. Between 2010-2014, it was estimated that 18% of Hispanics lived in poverty, according to OPM.

For this plan, the primary focus will be on the western portion of the county from Camarillo to the west and north, i.e. those areas served by Safe Harbor West/VCFJC. Approximately 60% of the total population lives in West Ventura County. Ventura County is a mixture of rural and urban communities with the bulk of the population centered along the coast in the cities of Oxnard, Ventura, and Thousand Oaks. Industries include Biotechnology, Telecommunications & Advanced Technologies, Manufacturing, Tourism, Military Testing and Development. There are three community colleges in Ventura County, as well as California State University Channel Islands and branches of Cal State Northridge and University of California at Santa Barbara.

Farming is an important element of the Ventura County economy with Ventura County ranking 10th in agricultural production among California counties 2018-2019. Ventura County has a large farmworker population: an average of 20,000 farmworkers are employed through the year (Source: California County Agricultural Commissioners' Reports). Depending on the season, January 2020, there are 16,000 farmworkers, that number increases in April-May to 25,000. Farmworkers represent up to 5% of the total county's employment. Farmworkers tend to settle in areas served by Safe Harbor West i.e. the cities of Oxnard, Santa Paula, Fillmore, Pt. Hueneme, Camarillo, and Ojai.

A study prepared in 2020 states county's farmworkers live in officially defined poverty amid the prosperity of farm sales. Most farmworkers earn the minimum wage or up to 1.5 the minimum wage. Living on these wages is difficult because housing costs have risen. The Department of Education Migrant Education Department reports a count of 2,964 Migrant Children in Ventura County for 2016.

Many of the farmworkers have unique language needs among other challenges. Most of the farmworkers in Ventura County were born in Mexico, often in Michoacan and Guanajuato, with the newest farmworkers often Mixtec-speaking indigenous people from Oaxaca. A 2012 Farm Bureau report states that 53% of Ventura County farmworkers speak only Spanish. Approximately 20,000 are from the Oaxacan and Guerrero regions of Mexico. It is estimated that at least 5,000 and perhaps as many as 20,000 do not speak Spanish but speak dialects such as Mixteco, Zapoteco or Triquis. Translation is often from the dialect to Spanish to English and there are few certified translators. The County of Ventura has a non-profit organization that specializes in serving this population and two medical clinics that specialize in Mixteco care and offer translators; but the need is greater than the services provided.

There is also an increasing homeless population in Ventura County. According to KidsData, in 2018 4.1% of public-school students were homeless. According to the 2020 Annual Homeless Census, Ventura County has around 1,743 homeless on any given day: 72.6% were unsheltered as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development(HUD); and 1.4% of those counted as unsheltered homeless are children under the age of eighteen. Since 2011, there has been an increase in the number of children considered homeless, where they are living in situations where they lack a permanent home. (2017 State of the Region Report, Ventura County Civic Alliance)

Ventura County has a small but active community of LGBTQ+ individuals and HIV/AIDS affected individuals. Grass roots non-profit agencies have partnered with the Public Health Department to plan and develop a central resource center that opened in the Spring of 2017 to serve the LGBTQ + community with a broad range of services including on-site counseling and support groups, HIV/AIDS testing and counseling, and other services.

Research indicates that almost 85,000 Ventura County residents have a disability. (Annual Disability Statistics Compendium 2015). According to the US Census, between 2015-2019, 6.8% of counties' population under the age of 65 disabled. The Tri-Counties Regional Center provides comprehensive services to children and adults that qualify for their services. In Ventura, Tri-counties has a Family Resource Center for families of children and adults with disabilities. This is important, as research has consistently demonstrated that people with disabilities are at higher risk for abuse, bullying and assault.

There is also a small but active deaf community in Ventura County as well. The Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness serves Ventura County residents who are deaf or hard of hearing with a local branch in the county called Tri County GLAD. GLAD is a non-profit organization that holds monthly community resource meetings as well as community outreach and educational events. Life signs Inc. is in the GLAD building and can assist with interpretation and

communication needs in person and through video assistance. The addition of LanguageLine to all victim services locations, including Safe Harbor, also ensures interpretation is available for these clients immediately. Both resources face challenges serving clients who are deaf, but do not understand English and do not use American Sign language but a different sign language utilized in Mexico.

According to the 'California County Scorecard' of 39 indicators of children's well-being, Ventura County is in the top third for child welfare and economic well-being, middle third for health and bottom third for education. In almost all areas, Latino and African American children's needs are not being met at the same rate as Caucasian and Asian children's needs. For the indicator "High school students who feel connected to their school:" 52% Latino and 53% African American students felt connected compared to 66% Caucasians and 65% Asians. For the indicator "Students who were college ready-or career ready:" only 35% of Latino respondents and 32% of African American respondents answered affirmatively, compared to 59% of Caucasian respondents and 72% of Asian respondents.

Between 2019-2020, there were 28,195 students in Ventura County schools that were identified as English learners: their primary language is a language other than English and they lack defined English skills in the areas of listening, comprehension, speaking, reading and writing. Those same children live in school districts in the county that are high on the "misery index," an index made up of six socioeconomic indicators. They include: poverty rate of children 5 and younger; the percentage of women-led households with children 5 and younger who live below the federal poverty line; the percentage of adults 25 and older without a high school diploma; the percentage of people who speak English 'less than very well'; the percentage of students classified as English learners.

Statistics gathered by Ventura County Children and Family Services reported 10,779 child maltreatment allegations, and 8,607 in 2020. In 2019, 1,018 of these allegations were substantiated; 839 in 2020. These numbers are down as

compared to the years prior to COVID-19. Most substantiated cases are involving Hispanic and Black children; reports are 1.2-4.3 % higher than reports involving Caucasian children, according to California Child Welfare indicator results on Substantiated Child Abuse Rate in Ventura County (2019).

As recently as 2017, Kidsdata.org compiled estimates of the prevalence of childhood poverty in Ventura County, as compared to the overall rate of childhood poverty in California. California was at a rate of 18.1% and Ventura County was 13.2%. As of 2020, 21.6 % of children were recorded in Ventura County as living in poverty. Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are also prevalent in the community. In Ventura County, between 2016-2019, 14.1% of children 0-17 years of age had experienced two or more adverse experiences. Adverse experiences include child physical and sexual abuse, family alcohol or drug abuse, poverty, domestic violence, mental illness, criminal activity in the household.

- b. Organizational Needs:** Ventura County District Attorney's Office administers the Safe Harbor program. The Ventura County District Attorney's Office actively recruits staff and volunteers that reflect the demographics of the community. Each of the Safe Harbor partner agencies follows their own cultural competency policies in recruiting and hiring staff and volunteers. Safe Harbor staff and on-site partners are professionals who represent the diverse nature of Ventura County. Safe Harbor staff and partner agency responders include 60% females and 40% males. The ethnic breakdown is comprised of 60% Caucasians, 34% Hispanic, 2% Asian American, and 3% African American. Many are bi-lingual and bi-cultural, speaking both English and Spanish (*Data as of 4/1/2021*).

Although Safe Harbor seeks a diverse make-up for the Steering Committee and Policy Board, they currently do not reflect these efforts and lack the level of diversity desired. The Steering Committee is comprised of 66% females, 34% males, 24% Hispanic and 73% Caucasian, 3 % Asian and Other. Currently, the

Policy Board is comprised of 75% males and 25% females, with 80% of the representatives being Caucasian, 10% Hispanic, and 10% Asian (*Data as of 4/1/2021*).

Client Needs: Safe Harbor receives referrals directly from Children and Family Services, the police and sheriff's departments, the FBI, Homeland Security, the Navy Base and Air National Guard, CSUCI and the District Attorney's office. All referrals involve active investigations, witnesses to abuse or violent crime or siblings who may have been victims. The referred children come from all socioeconomic levels and ethnic backgrounds. At Safe Harbor West/VCFJC, 48% percent of the children served are between the ages of birth and 12 years of age; 52% are between the ages of 13 and 17 years of age; 40% of the children served in East are between birth and 12 years; 60% are between 13-17 years (*Data July 1, 2021*). Those victims 18 and over at East and West are 48% of the total number of all victims served. The ethnicity of children 0 through 17 at Safe Harbor West/VCFJC includes 65% Hispanic, 5% African American, and 30% Caucasian. SHE 45% Hispanic 3% African American and 52% are Caucasian. At both West and East 89% of the clients are female and 11% male. 3% of the children brought to the Safe Harbors had a disability. The most common disability was developmental delay or mental disability; 1% identify with the LGBTQ+ community; 8% of child victims spoke Spanish (*Data as of 7/1/2021*).

II. **Statement of Culture and Diversity Values:**

It is the policy of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Safe Harbor Center that victims and their families from all backgrounds feel welcomed, valued and respected by staff and Multi-Disciplinary Interview Center (MDIC) Team members regardless of their appearance, background or beliefs. Safe Harbor values diversity. We are here to serve crime victims in a dignified, respectful, and ethical manner.

Safe Harbor and the MDIC Team will deliver services to a diverse population regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, medical condition, gender, sexual orientation, age (over 40), marital status, or disability or any other cultural descriptors.

All employees, in dealing with each other, clients, the MDIC, and volunteers, will value diversity and will:

- Be conscious of the dynamics that are inherent when cultures interact
- Share cultural knowledge
- Develop necessary adaptations when delivering services which reflect an understanding of diversity between and within cultures

These policies will be demonstrated in all services delivered by Safe Harbor and the MDIC Team.

The Ventura County District Attorney's work environment promotes the highest levels of performance and integrity from its employees and volunteers including Safe Harbor. In compliance with the County of Ventura and the District Attorney's Office policies, Safe Harbor adheres to the County Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (EEO). (See Board of Supervisors County Equal Employment Opportunity Plan, effective April 1, 2019 to May 1, 2021).

“The County of Ventura (County) is committed to ongoing efforts, within the parameters set by state and federal law, to ensure there are no artificial barriers in place to prevent its workforce from being reflective of the local community and to otherwise ensure equal opportunity in all aspects of employment.”

“It is the policy of the County of Ventura to assure equal employment opportunity to its employees and applicants for employment on the basis of fitness and merit without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, medical condition or disability, genetic information, age, marital status, or familial/parental status, military/veteran status, political activities/affiliations or status as a victim of domestic violence, assault or stalking and, to otherwise adhere to all state and federal EEO related mandates.”

“The County of Ventura will follow this policy in all areas of employment including but not limited to, recruitment, hiring and promotion into all classifications; and with respect to matters of compensation, benefits, transfers, assignments, tours of duty, shifts, layoffs, returns from layoff, demotions, terminations, training, educational leave, social and recreational programs, and use of County facilities. It is not the intent of this policy to permit or require the lowering of bona fide job requirements or qualification standards to give preference to any employee or applicant for employment.”

“Any employee of the County of Ventura who fails to comply with this policy is subject to appropriate disciplinary action.”

All new employees receive a Ventura County “Employee Handbook” which states:

“Further, employees are to be impartial and are not to discriminate in providing service on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, medical condition, gender, sexual orientation, age (over 40), marital status, or disability.”

“The workplace is to be free of racial, ethnic, sexual, and religious harassment. Discrimination Prevention training is required. Adherence to this policy is a condition of employment for all employees. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.”

III. Staff Training and Development Expectations and Goals:

- a. **Orientation of Staff-** County of Ventura policy states that all new hires must attend 2 days of New Employee Orientation. A class on Discrimination Prevention Training is presented along with policies related to Equal Opportunity Employment. Employees continue the orientation process with their direct supervisor during the first week of employment to learn how to integrate job specific cultural competencies into day-to-day job duties. The complaint and disciplinary process is also discussed at this time.

- b. **Governing/Advisory Board and Volunteers-** The District Attorney's Office senior management that serve as the "governing body" for Safe Harbor and the Safe Harbor Policy Board members adhere to the County of Ventura's EEOP Policy. New Policy Board member's orientation occurs within the first quarter of a new Policy Board member's term. During this orientation, Safe Harbor Policy Board members are informed of the County of Ventura non-discrimination policy and the Safe Harbor Cultural Competency plan. This Cultural Competency Plan and a copy of the non-discrimination policy shall be available for Policy Board Members and shall also be included in volunteer packets.
- c. **On-going Staff Training:**
 - i. **Discrimination Prevention class** – All Ventura County employees including Safe Harbor staff are required to attend a four-hour discrimination prevention class that covers topics including: understanding the role of our assumptions and biases, how to identify all forms of harassment and/or discriminatory practices and/or behaviors. They are also required to attend a two-hour "Discrimination Prevention Refresher" every two years.
 - ii. **Cultural awareness class** – Safe Harbor staff will attend the cultural awareness class "Developing Cultural Competency and Inclusion" offered by the Ventura County Human Resources Department. Prosecutors and supervisors who are MDIC team members and Safe Harbor staff attended a training session on Implicit Bias.
 - iii. **Monthly Case Reviews** – Safe Harbor has incorporated cultural competency into the case review process. At each monthly case review meeting MDIC team members identify and discuss the effect of cultural norms and influence on the interview and exam process and consider their impact on the service delivery and prosecution process.
 - iv. **Training Opportunities** – The Safe Harbor Program Coordinators shall research training opportunities including webinars on cultural diversity and cultural responsiveness and make that information available to MDIC

Team members on a regular basis via e-mail. Flyers and brochures for upcoming training will be e-mailed to team members and displayed at the center and at monthly Case Reviews and quarterly Steering Committee meetings. The Safe Harbor Program Coordinators shall make relevant professional articles on cultural competency available to MDIC team members.

IV. **Tactical Approach to Incorporating Culture and Diversity:**

a. **Client Care:**

- i. **Bilingual Response** - All services and documents will be provided to clients in English and Spanish. Safe Harbor will make efforts to maintain a diverse staff reflective of the need for Spanish speaking staff as Safe Harbor's non-English speaking children and families are predominately Spanish speaking. Some of the following Safe Harbor MDIC team members are Spanish speaking: victim advocates, sexual assault crisis counselors, detectives, prosecutors, investigators, social workers and therapists.
- ii. **Assessment of Family Language Needs:** MDIC team members will assess all clients who are brought to Safe Harbor for specific language needs. Children and family members will be asked in which language they are most comfortable speaking and services will be provided in that language whenever possible. Services will be provided in a manner that is culturally sensitive and reflects the child's developmental and emotional levels.
- iii. **Use of Interpreters-** If it is determined that an interpreter is needed for a Forensic Interview, all attempts will be made to use a certified interpreter. When possible, Safe Harbor Program Coordinators will assist in coordinating the interpreter's services through available resources, such as a contract with LanguageLine. Safe Harbor maintains contact information for sign language, Spanish, Mixteco and other languages interpreters. Law enforcement will continue to provide language interpretation for forensic

interviews and exams as mandated by law. The District Attorney's office has acquired Language Line services for clients for immediate telephone or video availability and can utilize these services 24/7 for live interpretation during Interviews or assistance at the Safe Harbors. These representatives speak over 240 languages and are trained to deal with sensitive case information and can assist in many languages to include sign language. LanguageLine representatives are trained to work with governments, cultures, and individuals of different abilities.

- iv. **Community Referrals:** MDIC team members will work together and in consultation with the victim and family to determine the community-based services that are culturally appropriate for that child/family.
- v. **Culturally Sensitive Forensic Interviews and Advocacy:** When possible, clients will be interviewed and receive interventions offered by bilingual and bicultural MDIC team members who have an in-depth understanding of children's developmental needs and as well as their familial customs. During the initial introduction to the center the advocate and/or the interviewer will inquire about the ethnic/cultural background of the family. The advocates/interviewer's understanding of the family's and child's perception of the criminal justice system and perception and attribution of shame and responsibility for abuse, can inform the advocacy and interview processes and enhance service delivery outcomes.

b. **Human Resources:**

- i. **Staff Recruitment:** The District Attorney's Office complies with County of Ventura EEO Plan when filling vacancies including Safe Harbor staff positions. Consideration is given to advertisement with community groups, colleges, and publications that represent a cross section of community members.
- ii. **Staff Orientation and Development-** Safe Harbor will incorporate diversity into orientation practices and annual staff development practices.

- c. **Community Education and Outreach:** The Safe Harbor Program Coordinators will routinely work with The Ventura County Family Justice Center, and all Safe Harbor partners and members to plan, develop and implement outreach and education to underserved populations in Ventura County, specifically targeting those areas of the County that are most at risk. Materials and speakers will be available in English and Spanish.
- d. Community outreach is also accomplished via the partner agencies across Ventura. Casa Pacifica, Children and Family Services, the Coalition for Family Harmony, the Health Care Agency and Interface Children & Family Services professionals as well as law enforcement agency professionals collaborate with Safe Harbor to serve all areas of the county.

V. **Cost and Resources:**

Safe Harbor staff and MDIC team members have implemented the Cultural Responsiveness plan as part of their regular job duties. No additional cost was incurred as the plan was put into action.

VI. **Outcomes and Objectives:**

	Objectives	Measures	Targets	Status
Human Resources	Assess cultural competencies and diversity among Safe Harbor staff and MDIC Team members and partner agencies	Cultural responsiveness self-assessment	Once a year	On-going
	Incorporate Cultural Responsiveness training and discussion at monthly case reviews	Agenda for Case Reviews		On going
Education	Conduct at least 1 training to an Underserved population group	Training spread sheet	yearly	On going
	Orient new Policy Board and MDIC	Training spread sheet	Yearly	On-going

Service Delivery	Team members to Cultural Responsiveness Plan			
	Conduct Client Surveys & Analysis	OMS surveys	Sample of clients	On-going

VII. Time Line:

Target Date	Initiative	Responsible Party
Throughout the year	Conduct and facilitate cultural responsiveness training and discussion at case reviews	Program Coordinator, other MDIC Team members
Throughout the year	Utilize the OMS survey at initial client visit	Program Coordinator/Victim Advocates
1 x a year	Utilize Cultural Responsiveness MDIC Team member Survey	Program Coordinator
1 x a year	Conduct Client Survey Analysis	Program Coordinator
At least once a year	Conduct outreach training on child abuse prevention to underserved Ventura County residents	Program Coordinator
Once a year	Assess cultural responsiveness and diversity among Safe Harbor staff and partners by reviewing Cultural Responsiveness Plan	Program Coordinator and MDIC Team members

VIII. Outcome Evaluation Process:

Safe Harbor aims to evaluate the staff and clients' perception of Safe Harbor's inclusion of Culturally Responsive values. This will guide Safe Harbor and the MDIC team in working to continuously improve services and will ensure a well-rounded community response. Each year the objectives, tactical approaches, and timeline will be reviewed and evaluated. Adjustments to the objectives, timeline or organizational activities will be made as needed.

Formal review with Policy Board approval of objectives will coincide with the Cultural Responsiveness plan review and renewal of objectives every three years. Safe Harbor will conduct the Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness Assessment by reviewing the Cultural Responsiveness Plan and Client Satisfaction Surveys.

Implementation:

Safe Harbor will continue to integrate these principles and goals throughout the year. The Program Coordinator shall be responsible to facilitate the process of integration and keep the MDIC Team on task. The Steering Committee will monitor progress quarterly at Steering Committee Meetings. A formal review and update process will be undertaken in coordination with the Cultural Responsiveness Plan each year. Every three years, the plan will be revised and updated, as necessary. At a minimum an annual Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness assessment will be conducted each year.