



OFFICE OF THE STATE ATTORNEY, TENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

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Legal Advisor

**Jerry Hill,
State Attorney**

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As we begin a new year, I would like to say thank you to all of you in the law enforcement community of Hardee, Highlands, and Polk Counties for all you do throughout each and every year to ensure the safety of the citizens of this circuit. Yours is a noble profession, and you honor it by your loyalty and dedication.

On behalf of the entire staff of this office, I wish you a Happy and Prosperous 2006!

Sincerely,

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BARTOW PHONE NUMBERS:
SWITCHBOARD 534-4800
MISDEMEANOR INTAKE 534-4928
MISDEMEANOR 534-4926
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE 534-4882
VICTIM ASSISTANCE 534-4861
FELONY INTAKE 534-4987
FELONY 534-4964
INVESTIGATIONS 534-4804
VIOLATION OF PROBATION 534-4803
CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT 534-4857
HOMICIDE DIVISION 534-4959
ON CALL PAGER 819-1526
WORTHLESS CHECKS 534-4874
JUVENILE DIVISION 534-4905
FAX - MAILROOM 534-4945
WITNESS MANAGEMENT MISDEMEANOR/TRAFFIC 534-4021
WITNESS MANAGEMENT FELONY 534-4020
WITNESS MANAGEMENT FAX 534-4034

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**EMPLOYEE BIRTHDAYS
NOVEMBER 2005**

November 1
Monica Hernandez, Hardee SAO

November 6
Connie Strickland, WH SAO

November 7
JJ Branam, Felony Intake
Cindy Norris, F-4
Susan Ojeda, Child Support
Tiffany Richard, VOPS

November 8
Ali McGraw, Misdemeanor

November 10
Ralph Guerra, F-5

November 15
John Flynn, F-4

November 17
Sheryl Phillips, Child Support

November 19
Cindy Rhoden, Homicide

November 20
Peggy Murray, Juvenile
Melody Stratton, F-3

November 22
Ashley Gaines, Child Support
Terri Gregg, Misdemeanor
Kathy Slappey, Investigations

November 25
Donna Carnett, F-6

November 29
Chip Thullberry, Administration

November 30
Bonnie Parker, Felony Intake

Happy Birthday!



FROM CALL-OUT TO THE COURTROOM: SUCCESSFULLY PROSECUTING A PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE CASE.

By Reinaldo Ojeda



Rey Ojeda is an Assistant State Attorney at the State Attorney's Office. In addition to his case load, Rey also serves as the Division Chief over the Child Abuse / Sex Abuse Division. He has been with this office since May 2001.

When investigating an allegation of Child Abuse, whether it be physical or sexual, an officer should ensure that certain steps are followed that will not only make for a more thorough investigation but also for a more successful prosecution.

First, an officer should identify who is the victim of the abuse. Once that is established, then if the officer works for a large agency, the officer should call a special victim's detective for the purpose of speaking to the child victim, and potential witnesses. Especially in physical abuse cases, it is important to "lock in" witnesses to their statements as soon as possible. If an officer works for a smaller agency

without a special victim's detective unit, then the officer should proceed to conduct a preliminary contact. In conducting preliminary contact, it is important to remember to speak to the child victim outside the presence of others, and likewise to interview others outside the presence of the child. A child who is interviewed alone is much more likely to give accurate information. Remember it is imperative to ask non-leading questions, to use age appropriate language, and to qualify the child as to his or her ability to distinguish between the truth and a lie. If the allegations involve sexual abuse, the officer should remember that there is a 72 hour window for physical evidence(including DNA evidence) to remain viable. Thus, the Child Advocacy Center should be contacted to determine the necessity of a medical examination. The Center's phone number is (863) 519-3900 and their regular business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. After-hours they can be reached at (863) 528-2823. Also, if the case involves physical abuse, it is imperative that pictures be taken for evidentiary purposes, as the most compelling evidence in a physical abuse case are often pictures of the injury. An officer should remember that under Florida Statute 90.803 (23), the statement of a child victim

FROM CALL-OUT TO THE COURTROOM: SUCCESSFULLY PROSECUTING A PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE CASE.

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eleven years of age or less can be admissible as substantive evidence at trial, and as such an officer should find out who the child has told, when the statement was made, and what the child said. Potentially, witness can be called to court to testify what the child said to them, and under what circumstances.

An officer should remember that a preliminary victim contact is exactly that, "preliminary". It should be kept short and to the point, long enough to find out what happened and by whom. Once this information is obtained, the officer should stop speaking to the child and give way to a more experienced interviewer, such as a Child Protection Team interviewer. Keep in mind that most detectives and all Child Protection Team forensic interviewers are certified in forensic interviewing of children, and as such are the most qualified to conduct detailed forensic interviews. Because of this, an officer should set up a forensic interview appointment for any child victim 12 years of age and under at the Child Advocacy Center in Bartow. There the child will be interviewed by a certified forensic interviewer, while the officer monitors the interview via closed circuit television. The CAC

Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from the State Attorney's Office, Law Enforcement, Department of Children and Families, Child Protection Team, Guardian Ad Litem's Office, Peace River Center, and the Children's Advocacy Center recommend that child victim's under the age of 12 be interviewed at the CAC facility by CAC/CPT, staff or by appropriately trained law enforcement personnel.

For child victims older than 12 years of age, the officer, assuming he is certified and has conducted an extensive number of child interviews can then use his discretion in determining whether a Child Protection Team interview is necessary, taking into account the maturity level of the child victim, the particular circumstances, and the nature of the allegations. Officers who so choose to conduct such interviews should have completed basic standards regarding forensic interviewing of children, which includes having observed at least five forensic interviews of children conducted by an interview specialist, the successful completion of at least eight hour of beginning interview of training of children, and successful completion of at least three child forensic interviews conducted under the supervision of an interview

EMPLOYEE BIRTHDAYS DECEMBER 2005

- December 3
Don Ratterree, VOPS
- December 4
Torie Avalon, Post Conviction
Scott Matthews, F-3
- December 7
Amanda Bolin, F-2
Steve Menge, Investigations
- December 8
Becky DeVenny, Comp Services
- December 9
Jane Bayless, Highlands SAO
- December 11
Brian Moore, Investigations
Bill Duellette, Juvenile
- December 12
Molly Dupree, F-5
- December 13
Gary Allen, VOPS
Tammy Glotfelty, Juvenile
- December 14
Bob Antonello, Homicide
Sharon Franklin, Special Pros.
- December 15
Janet Bulman, Administration
- December 18
Denise Buchanan, Records
Becky Stokes, Child Support
- December 23
Jeanette Dugas, Investigations
- December 28
Wade Warren, Felony Intake
- December 31
David Haas, Eco/Envi Crimes

Happy Birthday!



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Wauchula, Fl 33873
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Fax: (863) 534-4945

Child Support Enforcement
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Fax: (863) 519-4759

Lakeland Branch Office
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FROM CALL-OUT TO THE COURTROOM: SUCCESSFULLY PROSECUTING A PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE CASE.

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specialist. Further, all such non CAC/CPT interviews should be audio or video taped.

An officer should also keep in mind that Administrative Order No. 2-18.1 limits the number of interviews a victim of physical/sexual abuse under the age of sixteen should be subjected to. The order calls for one investigative interview conducted for the purpose of criminal and dependency proceedings. An example of such interview would be a CAC forensic interview, that could be attended by all agencies involved in the investigation. Additional interviews may be allowed, but only under limited circumstances. Keep in mind that "interview" for purposes of the or-

der does not include the initial contact with the victim by law enforcement.

Lastly, whenever possible leave suspect contact up to your detectives; who are often more experienced in interviewing suspected physical/sexual abusers and the methods employed in such investigations, such as controlled phone calls. If we at the Child Sexual/Physical Abuse Division of the State Attorney's Office can ever be of any assistance do not hesitate to contact us and for that purpose I am on call 24 hours a day at (863) 860-8232. I look forward to hearing from you and aiding in your investigations.

...FROM THE COURTS...

FACTS DID NOT SUPPORT CARRYING CONCEALED WEAPON CHARGE.

The defendant was charged with carrying a concealed firearm. At his trial, the evidence established that although the defendant had previously occupied the vehicle in which the firearm was found, he was standing outside of it at the time the searching officer recovered the gun. After the officer recovered the gun, he arrested the defendant. The defendant was convicted as

charged. On appeal, the First District reversed, holding that the evidence was insufficient because at the time of the arrest, the defendant's firearm was not readily accessible to him and therefore it could not be said that he was carrying it on or about his person. *White v. State*, 30 FLW D1369 Fla. 1st DCA May 31, 2005).