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The IACP, Yale and the U.S. Department of Justice Launch Groundbreaking Toolkit for Law Enforcement to Help Children Recover from Exposure to Violence and Trauma

Alexandria, VA – Today, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Yale School of Medicine’s Child Study Center (“Yale”), in partnership with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at the Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice, released the *Enhancing Police Responses to Children Exposed to Violence: A Toolkit for Law Enforcement* (“*Toolkit*”) to address violence and victimization faced in homes, neighborhoods and communities around the country.

In recent years, the epidemic nature of childhood exposure to violence in the United States has been widely acknowledged, as has the damaging impact that exposure to violence can have on children’s development – a negative impact that often lasts through adulthood and contributes to the profound public health and criminal justice challenges faced in our communities.

Because of their critical role in responding to calls for service, law enforcement officers are uniquely positioned to recognize and identify children who may be traumatized, and to utilize trauma-informed policing practices— both immediately on-scene and beyond the emergency calls for service—that can help to initiate children’s recovery. This enables officers to interrupt the cycle of violence and victimization that often happens when children are traumatized and not identified following their exposure to violence. Trauma-informed police responses can interrupt the development of costly difficulties –school failure, alcohol and drug abuse, criminal/anti-social behavior, repeated victimization and mental and physical health disorders -- a trajectory so often followed when children are not identified and assisted in their recovery following exposure to violence.

The significance of the role of police in identifying children and families at risk, and initiating recovery within moments of their arrival on scene, cannot be underestimated. When law enforcement officers are properly equipped and assume their critical role in the healing process, they not only advance the recovery of individual children and families, but they strengthen relationships and advance trust between law enforcement officers and community members.

Supported by the *Toolkit* resources, police officers trained on biological, neurological, and psychological responses to trauma can be better prepared to recognize and identify these symptoms in their everyday encounters with children and family members, provide meaningful, trauma-informed policing responses to violence and catastrophic events and initiate crucial healing in children and families whom they so valiantly serve.



This new toolkit provides practical tools and resources to assist law enforcement agencies in building or enhancing effective operational responses to children exposed to violence (with or without a mental health partner). Several of these tools were first developed for the ***Protecting and Serving: Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Children Exposed to Violence*** training curriculum for frontline police officers, developed and launched by the IACP, Yale and OJJDP in 2016. Initial evaluation results from the training indicate that participating officers made significant gains in knowledge about childhood exposure to violence and changes in attitudes about the significant impact police officers can have in helping children and families move towards healing in the wake of violence.

Enhancing Police Responses to Children Exposed to Violence: A Toolkit for Law Enforcement is available in both hardcopy and electronic download at <http://www.theiacp.org/children-exposed-to-violence>.

“Equipping officers to take on the role of responding effectively to children exposed to violence, is of critical importance. Effective response can interrupt the cycle of violence and victimization that so often occurs when children exposed to violence are not identified and not able to move towards recovery, it also provides a key opportunity to strengthen relationships and advance trust between officers and community members.”

– Donald W. De Lucca, President, International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Chief of the Doral, Florida, Police Department

“Police are so much more than law enforcers in their communities. Police bring order to chaos and can restore a sense of safety and security in the wake of violence. Police officers play a major role in the lives of vulnerable children and can be a key protective factor, along with family, schools and the community, all of which can be critical in changing the trajectory towards negative outcomes that are so often associated with trauma and violence.”

– Steven Marans, MSW, Ph.D., Director, Childhood Violent Trauma Center, Yale Child Study Center, Yale School of Medicine, Yale University

About the International Association of Chiefs of Police

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is a professional association for law enforcement worldwide. For more than 120 years, the IACP has been launching internationally acclaimed programs, speaking on behalf of law enforcement, conducting groundbreaking research, and providing exemplary programs and services to members across the globe.

Today, the IACP continues to be recognized as a leader in these areas. By maximizing the collective efforts of the membership, IACP actively supports law enforcement through advocacy, outreach, education, and programs.



Through ongoing strategic partnerships across the public safety spectrum, the IACP provides members with resources and support in all aspects of law enforcement policy and operations. These tools help members perform their jobs effectively, efficiently, and safely while also educating the public on the role of law enforcement to help build sustainable community relations.

About the Yale Childhood Violent Trauma Center at the Yale School of Medicine (Yale)

Yale Childhood Violent Trauma Center is a national leader in trauma-informed collaborative interventions including developing and implementing innovative multi-disciplinary collaborative program models such as the Child Development-Community Policing program that provides immediate coordinated police, mental health, and social service interventions and follow-up services to children, youth, and families exposed to violence and trauma.

Yale brings extensive experience in providing multidisciplinary training to first responders whose work involves acute interventions with communities exposed to violence and other catastrophic events, as well as extensive technical assistance consultation to communities, law enforcement agencies, mental health providers, schools, and local, state, and national government leaders, in the aftermath of violence, acts of terror and natural disaster including the Sandy Hook Elementary School and Virginia Tech mass shootings, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

About the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), a component of the Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice, envisions a nation where our children are healthy, educated, and free from violence. OJJDP provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs and to improve the juvenile justice system so that it protects public safety, holds justice-involved youth appropriately accountable, and provides treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the needs of juveniles and their families.

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