

DEC Guidelines

The purpose of *The Guidelines for Managing Children Found at Methamphetamine Clandestine Laboratory Sites and Other Drug Endangered Children* (DEC guidelines) is to provide multidisciplinary professionals with a foundation for the development of "better practice" procedures for situations where there are drug endangered children. An understanding among the key partners should also be considered to formalize roles and relationships beyond the guidelines.

Implementation of the DEC guidelines should be adapted by local community professionals, to ensure that children who may be at risk for exposure receive protection, advocacy, and support through a multidisciplinary approach, and that investigations provide the best opportunity for prosecution of individuals involved in manufacturing, selling, and abusing drugs or alcohol.

Why Use a Multidisciplinary Response Team Approach to DEC

Most professionals working with abused, neglected children generally agree that a multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach to child maltreatment is an effective way of improving systems and ensuring the best outcomes for children, families, and society. In Georgia, two examples of the way the multidisciplinary team concept has been used are child death review teams and child abuse protocol committees. The purpose of child death review teams is to review cases of child death in a community in order to determine whether they were abuse-related and to identify what could have been done to prevent the death. The purpose of the child abuse protocol committee is to ensure coordination and cooperation of various agencies, organizations and individuals, as they work with cases of child abuse.

It is suggested that DEC response teams work closely with their Child Abuse Protocol committees to review cases of DEC in their communities. This data will assist with the identification of available resources as well as gaps and overlaps in service. The members of the response teams will utilize this information to respond quickly when children are found in drug environments in order to remove them from the dangerous living conditions and ensure they receive medical care and other services needed to improve their long term outcomes. The basic premise of the multidisciplinary team is that because multiple professions are involved in responding to the complexity of child abuse, neglect, and endangerment cases - working together saves resources through better communications and the elimination of overlap in services.

A large body of research supports how the MDT approach is a more effective and efficient way to render services. MDTs can improve* the:

- Accuracy of overall assessment
- Prediction of risk, and
- Quality of Intervention strategies

*(Chadwick, 1996; Pardess, Finzi, & Sever, 1993; Pence & Wilson, 1994)

Other advantages of MDTs include reduced role confusion and duplication of services** and improved quality of evidence***

** (Rogan, 1990)

*** (American Prosecutors Research Institute, 1993; Hochstadt & Harwicke, 1985).