

1996

**FOURTH ANNUAL
HERMAN GOLDSTEIN
EXCELLENCE
IN PROBLEM SOLVING
AWARD**

**TEAM AWARD
ARVADA POLICE DEPARTMENT
CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN UNIT**

**SUBMITTED BY
THE ARVADA, COLORADO POLICE DEPARTMENT**

INTRODUCTION

The city of Arvada is a suburban community located at the northwest border of Denver. Arvada is home to approximately 95,000 residents. The Arvada Police Department has an authorized strength of 131 sworn officers. The Arvada Police Department was the first city in Colorado and the thirteenth in the nation to be accredited by the National Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

Approximately ten years ago, administrators and investigators realized that crimes against children, in particular sexual assaults against children, were increasing in number and complexity. In 1985, the Police Department made the commitment to thoroughly investigate these cases, and assigned two full-time investigators. As a result, the Arvada Police Department formed the Crimes Against Children Unit. The two investigators assigned to this unit were assigned based on their interest in these types of investigations as well as their knowledge and investigative skill.

These investigators realized that because of the nature of these types of investigations, it is important to be involved from the very beginning on each case. The Department's rules and procedures were changed to reflect this need. Since that time, the investigators have been involved at the start of each sexual assault on a child case. The two investigators also realized that children and families were reluctant to talk about sexual assault especially in the sterile environment of the police department, so the investigators began looking for a more appropriate location to conduct interviews.

The investigators located a therapist who understood the needs of the child sexual assault victim, and the Department made referrals to this therapist to conduct their interviews at the therapists facility which was more child friendly and caring. Once the investigators saw the success of using a child-friendly environment for interviews, the investigators began researching the possibility of creating a child advocacy center that could be used exclusively by law enforcement and therapist personnel. After spending several years researching the issue, the Arvada Child Advocacy Center was formed, and opened their doors in 1990.

Since that time, the Crimes Against Children's Unit has grown to three full-time investigators with one half-time investigator. The Child Advocacy Center is used by surrounding law enforcement jurisdictions in Jefferson County area. The Arvada Child Advocacy Center has been a model for several other child advocacy centers in Colorado and other states.

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

SCANNING

After the Crimes Against Children Unit was up and running, the investigators began studying their statistics for the number of children sexually assaulted. The investigators found the following:

ARVADA POLICE DEPARTMENT **SEXUAL ASSAULT AGAINST CHILDREN CASES**

1988 - 1990	297 cases
1991	148 cases

Source: Detective Walt Parsons, Arvada Police Department

From 1991 to 1993, there was a slight increase in the number of cases reported, but since 1993, the number of cases has remained relatively consistent at 145 cases per year.

In the state of Colorado, the number of reported cases of sexual assault against children is as follows:

STATE OF COLORADO **SEXUAL ASSAULT AGAINST CHILDREN**

1991	2,056
1992	2,004
1993	1,624
1994	1,426

Source: Colorado Department of Health and Human Services, Central Registry of Child Protection

Nationwide, the number of children sexually assaulted is approximately 150,000, and the peak age of vulnerability is between seven and thirteen.¹

After investigating hundreds of cases, interviewing hundreds of suspects and victims, and after talking with other professionals in the field, the investigators were concerned about the

*David Finkelhor, *Current Information on the Scope and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse*, "The Future of Children." Vol 4, No.2, Summer/Fall 1994.

number of children being sexually assaulted each year, and reached the conclusion that they would like to be involved in proactive investigations to intervene before the suspect had a chance to perpetrate a child victim.

The investigators began to contact other police agencies for information about other proactive investigative units, and found that they were virtually non-existent. Therefore, the investigators knew that they would need to design a plan for proactive investigations on their own.

ANALYSIS

Since 1986, the investigators have interviewed several hundred suspects and victims. The investigators saw the emotional and physical harm done to the children and their families. In many cases, this emotional and physical harm lasts a life time for the victims and their families. Because of this, the investigators were committed to doing what they could to prevent children from being victimized.

The interviews with the suspects and victims allowed the investigators to look for common threads as to why the suspects perpetrate and how they assault the victim, and the victim/suspect relationship. The investigators compiled this data, then asked other investigators from other agencies what patterns they had observed. The investigators learned through their own experience as well as from the information provided by other investigators, that the suspects were mostly male, most were involved with pornography to some degree, and most sought victims between the ages of seven and 16 years of age. Many times, the suspect would reveal additional victims unknown to the investigator, or the victim would lead the investigator to other victims.

The victims were usually known to the offender, but not always. Some offenders were related to the victims, and some suspects were friends of the family, babysitters, teachers, and other individuals in a position of trust.

The analysis of the investigators led them to conclude that any type of proactive effort was going to be difficult at best, as the suspects in these cases spend a lot of time grooming their victim. Additionally, because the victim usually knows the suspect, and because people generally do not want to talk about this type of crime, this makes it harder for a police officer to conduct a

proactive investigation when the relationship between the victim and suspect is so close.

With this obstacle in mind, the investigators went back to their information from their interviews and history of the suspects. This led the investigators to the pornography connection. Because most suspects are involved with pornography to some degree, the investigators decided to use the pornography connection as the angle to approach this problem.

RESPONSE

Because of the difficulty associated with breaking into this relationship between the suspect and victim, the pornography approach appeared to be the best avenue to try to approach the problem. The question then became how to approach the pornography avenue.

The investigators learned through their analysis that some suspects subscribed to or purchased pornographic newspapers and magazines where there were advertisements for sex. Some suspects placed their own advertisements in these newspapers or magazines looking for specific types of sex and carefully disguised their desire for a child through the choice of words they used in their advertisement. In addition, the use of the Internet was becoming a popular avenue for the pedophile.

The investigators also learned that they could not deal with this issue alone. The suspects were too widespread and they knew that other law enforcement agencies would need to be involved in order for the investigations to be successful. Through their contacts, the investigators began to form a coalition of officers to assist in these investigations including the U.S. Postal Inspector, U.S. Customs, the F.B.I., and other state and local law enforcement agencies.

The main thrust of the proactive investigations was to stop the suspect from perpetrating children and to identify other victims unknown to law enforcement. Based upon this goal, the investigators took a four-prong approach to this solving this issue. First, the investigators read the magazines and newspaper advertisements for any suspicious ads that might hint at child pornography or that the suspect wanted a child victim. Second, the investigators placed their own advertisements searching out the suspect who might be interested in a child. Third, the investigators sent mailings to known pedophiles advertising a phone sex line geared toward the child victim. Fourth, the investigators established an undercover investigation on the Internet.

As a result of this approach, the investigators were able to involve federal, state, and local

law enforcement officials across the country to work cooperatively at combating this problem. Obviously, the investigators did not know what kind of response they would get as a result of their efforts, but they knew that anything they did was better than not approaching the issues at all.

ASSESSMENT

One of the first cases involved an investigator reading a suspicious sounding advertisement in a local daily newspaper. The investigator responded to the advertisement, and through involvement with the suspect, who lived in New Mexico, the investigators learned that the suspect wanted to buy a child and have the child as a sex slave. The suspect described how he wanted to tie up the victim and make the victim scream when he penetrated the victim.

The investigators arranged for the suspect to purchase the child, and during the meeting, the suspect was subsequently taken into custody. No one knows for sure how many child victims were spared as a result of this investigative effort.

In another case, a suspect advertised he wanted a mother/daughter relationship in a pornographic newspaper. This case took the investigators to New York. Through a cooperative effort, officers in New York posed as the investigators from Arvada. The suspect showed up for the meeting with another couple who wanted to teach the child victim about sadomasochism. The suspects were arrested at that time, and New York investigators took over the case from there.

In the last year, three major cases were investigated. In one case, a man from Montana responded to an advertisement in a pornographic newspaper. A letter writing campaign was initiated and after several months, the suspect agreed to drive from Montana to the Arvada area to pay to have sex with an adolescent girl. After the suspect arrived, the deal was made and the suspect arrested. He is currently serving time in the state prison.

With the assistance of the U.S. Postal Service, another suspect was identified through the pornographic newspaper. This suspect wanted to purchase a child for sex, but wanted child pornography delivered before he would consent to purchasing the child for sex. A cooperative investigation was launched between our agency and the Postal Service, and a controlled delivery was made to the suspect. A search warrant was executed and several videos and magazines depicting child pornography were seized from the suspect. The suspect pleaded guilty and

currently is on probation.

Through the use of the Internet, U.S. Customs agents, posing as fourteen year old boys, began conversing in an Internet chat room with a suspect who wanted to have sex with them. Because the Customs agents knew that Arvada Police investigators were involved with proactive investigations, they involved our detectives. A meeting was set up, however, the suspect did not show. Contact was made again with the suspect, another meeting was set up, but again the suspect did not show up.

Throughout the course of the investigation, the suspect admitted on-line to sexually assaulting children at this job. This information was passed on to another agency for investigation.

Through our mail campaign with the U.S. Postal service, a local man answered the mailing by calling our sex line. He stated that he was interested in having sex with a young girl. Through the course of numerous phone calls and discussions, a meeting was set up for the suspect. When the suspect negotiated to have sex with an adolescent girl, the suspect was immediately arrested.

Most recently, a man in the Florida State Prison ran an advertisement in a pornographic newspaper hinting at a desire for children. One of our investigators picked up on the advertisement and began to converse with the suspect by mail while he was still in the Florida State Prison. Over the course of several months, the suspect wrote numerous letters outlining his plan for having sex with the adolescent girl.

Once the suspect was released from prison, arrangements were made for the suspect to drive to Colorado and meet the victim. The suspect arrived, and after negotiating the deal, the suspect was arrested.

This particular suspect was in the Florida State Prison serving a sentence for sexual assault on a child. Still, this did not deter the suspect as he advertised in pornographic newspaper from prison and conversed by mail with undercover investigators while in prison.

There are many other examples of the work of these investigators. It should be noted that many individuals did respond to the mailings, the sex lines, the advertisements, but then did not follow through. Obviously, those individuals are still in our society and either have or could potentially perpetrate children.

As a result of the efforts of the investigators, several pedophiles were taken off the street,

and no one knows for sure how many children were saved from being victimized by these suspects. This is not only a local issue, but as described above, is nationwide. The investigations of the Crimes Against Children Unit have protected children across the nation.

In evaluating the work that has been accomplished to date, the investigators feel successful in their efforts. It is very difficult to know for sure how effective the efforts are because of the difficulty of the suspect/victim relationship, the fact that many people do not want to talk about this kind of crime, and many simply do not report. However, we do know that the cases made so far have prevented multiple victimization by several serious offenders. This alone appears to be a measure of success for efforts to date.

This type of crime knows no boundaries either socially or economically. It is difficult to try to measure success because you do not know by what to gauge your efforts. We believe, however, that any progress made at identifying and arresting perpetrators is a worthwhile effort. Therefore, we believe we have been successful at combating this most serious crime.

Our efforts will continue in the future. This type of investigation will require more sophistication as the suspects become more sophisticated. It will require continual learning on the part of the investigators as they learn more about the techniques of how a perpetrator acquires then grooms a victim for sexual assault.

The investigators of the Arvada Police Department Crimes Against Children Unit are not yet experts in the area of proactive investigations. They are simply committed individuals who want to make a difference. Several of our investigators instruct other law enforcement investigators in the investigation of crimes against children and sexual assault of children. In addition, the investigators are helping other law enforcement agencies establish proactive investigations in their jurisdictions.

PHILOSOPHY AND ORGANIZATION

In this particular situation, the problem-solving effort was initiated by the investigators of the Crimes Against Children Unit. The investigators had the support of their immediate supervisors and that of the commanding officer of the Investigations Bureau and the Chief of Police. The investigators were given the freedom, flexibility, tools, equipment and money needed to carry out this important function.

The Arvada Police Department subscribes to the principles of community oriented/problem solving policing. All members of the Department have received training about the problem-solving/SARA process. This training occurred before and after the investigations. Even without the training, the members of the Arvada Police Department, and the investigators in particular, were well adept at problem solving. The efforts demonstrated herein prove that point.

While there were no additional incentives given to the investigators involved, additional incentives were not needed. Anyone who has any experience in investigating crimes against children knows you do not need an additional incentive to try to stop these crimes from occurring. Simply knowing that their efforts may have saved other children from becoming victims was incentive and reward enough. The investigators hope that their efforts will someday cause no further investigations to commence and for no child to be victimized. That is a strong incentive in and of itself.

Based on the information contained herein, I respectfully nominate the below listed members of the Arvada Police Department Crimes Against Children Unit for the Herman Goldstein Team Problem Solving Award.

**ARVADA POLICE DEPARTMENT
CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN UNIT**

Commanding officer Lieutenant Ted Mink

Investigator Walt Parsons

Investigator Wayne Bryant

Investigator Faith Forum

Investigator Jo Ann Rzeppa

Former Crimes Against Children Investigator Russ Boatright