



Lessons Learned on How to Build a Successful DEC Team

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Orlando, Florida

7-9 October 2014

Agenda



- How to Develop a DEC Team
- Community Collaboration
- Lessons Learned



Developing a DEC Team

- **Identify a Need**
 - Do you have a problem in your community with children being exposed to dangerous drug environments?
 - What type of drugs? (meth, crack, heroin, etc)
 - What are the hazards? (accessibility, accidental ingestion, fires, explosions, etc)
 - Does your community have a plan to protect children from these hazards?



Developing a DEC Team

- **Our Need**
 - Increase in Meth Use
 - Increase in Meth Labs
 - Children exposed to Meth
 - Unknown Hazards of Meth
 - No Plan to Protect Children



Meth Use

- Local Statistics
 - FDLE Pensacola Regional Operations Lab
 - Meth Submissions
 - 1999 - 60 submissions
 - 2000 - 58 submissions
 - 2001 - 286 submissions
 - 2002 - 517 submissions
 - 2003 - 824 submissions
 - 2004 - 861 submissions
 - 2005 - 670 submissions

TOXIC WASTE



■ 2001	28 LABS	\$136,135.00
■ 2002	168 LABS	\$635,921.00
■ 2003	271 LABS	\$611,750.00
■ 2004	319 LABS	\$690,372.00
■ 2005	338 LABS	\$832,116.00



Developing a DEC Team

- **Obtain DEC Training**
 - **Congrats!! You're Here!!**
 - **Our Timeline**
 - **Oct 2003 - a couple of our folks attended the National DEC Conference**
 - **July 2004 - National DEC Team provided training to our community**
 - **Feb 2005 – developed NW Florida DEC Protocol**



Developing a DEC Team

- **Identify Team (Agencies/Personnel)**
 - **Team Composition – town, city, county, parish, and/or regional level?? What will work best for your community??**
 - **Our Team Structure**
 - **Initially Developed around our CAC (Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center provides services to children in Okaloosa and Walton counties)**



Developing a DEC Team

- **Identify Team (Agencies/Personnel)**

**Agencies – Law Enforcement (local, state, federal);
Dept of Children and Families; Social Services; Fire
Dept; Medical Services (emergency room personnel
and EMS); Child Protection Team; Children’s
Advocacy Center; Dept of Environmental Protection;
State Attorney’s Office**



Developing a DEC Team

- **Identify Goals**

- **Our Goals**

- **Assemble a DEC workgroup consisting of representatives from all “applicable” agencies to discuss DEC issues and solutions**
 - **DEC workgroup to develop a DEC Protocol**
 - **Identify and train agencies/personnel involved in DEC matters (initial responders and follow-on investigative/social/medical/mental health services)**



Developing a DEC Team

- **Develop a DEC Protocol**
 - Provides Direction to Team Members
 - Creates “Buy-In” from participating agencies (request agency heads sign the document in a public forum with media coverage)
 - Informs the community of the DEC issues and provides a coordinated plan toward resolution
 - Can be shared with other communities facing similar issues (a copy of our protocol is on www.floridadec.org website)



Northwest Florida Drug Endangered Children (DEC)



Multidisciplinary Protocol

Northwest Florida

DEC Work Group

2005

Rescue. Defend. Shelter. Support.



NW Florida DEC Protocol

- **NW Florida DEC Work Group developed the Protocol**
 - **Representatives** from law enforcement, DCF, CPT, CAC, DEP, medical, mental health, EMS, Fire Department, SAO, and USAF. **“Multidisciplinary team prepared the document for a multidisciplinary team approach.”**
 - **Protocol Objectives**
 - **Ensure safety of children found at scene**
 - **Determine need and provide medical treatment**
 - **Determine placement/services for children**
 - **Ensure safety of emergency, social service and medical personnel**



NW Florida DEC Protocol

- **Multidisciplinary Approach**
 - **All agencies** share information and respond in a coordinated collaborative effort throughout the investigative process
 - **All personnel** will follow their agency safety procedures when dealing with HAZMAT
 - **Known/Suspected Drug Lab**
 - Law enforcement, DCF, EMS, Fire Department coordinate plan and have EMS and Fire Department in a “staging location” without compromising the criminal investigation
 - **Unknown Clandestine Drug Lab**
 - **DCF Discovery** - Remove children and notify law enforcement
 - **Law Enforcement** – Remove all individuals, secure crime scene, and notify DCF (if children are present)



NW Florida DEC Protocol

- **DCF Investigation (On-Scene)**
 - Children located at the scene should be placed in “protective custody”
 - **DCF and Fire Department will DECON children**
 - Children’s clothing should be removed
 - DECON children using “Dry Method” (Baby-Wipes)
 - No personal items should be removed from scene
 - Coordinate for Urine sample within 2 hours
 - Coordinate for Forensic Interview at CAC (if available)
 - Interview parents for medical history, social history, HIPA, TANF



NW Florida DEC Protocol

- **Law Enforcement Investigation (On-Scene)**
 - **Responsible for securing the crime scene and conducting the criminal investigation**
 - **Photograph Everything**
 - **Identify the Hazards and Photograph**
 - **Measurements of Hazards to Children's Access**
 - Heights (coffee table with drug materials)
 - Distances to children's belongings (drug paraphernalia near play pen)
 - **Proximity of food to chemicals, drugs, and paraphernalia**
 - **Any previous or current fires caused as a result of drug production**
 - **Physical condition of the children and other occupants**
 - **Food supply in kitchen cabinets, pantry, refrigerator or freezer**



NW Florida DEC Protocol

- **Law Enforcement Investigation (Continued)**
 - **Interview all witnesses and suspects**
 - Children forensic interviews should be conducted at CAC (if available)
 - Conduct jointly with DCF and follow interview guidelines
 - **Reports/Documentation**
 - All occupants in the home (full-time and part-time residents) should be included in report
 - A listing of all drugs and chemicals (to include photographs) should be provided to DCF for their dependency action
 - List the children as Victims in the report (crimes compensation)
 - **Notifications**
 - Lab Safety Team (removal of chemicals and drugs)
 - Health Department (community safety)
 - Property Owner (responsible for HAZMAT clean-up)
 - Property Appraisal Office (disclosure to future residents)



NW Florida DEC Protocol

- **Medical Assessment/Treatment**
 - **Initial Medical Assessment**
 - On-scene by EMS
 - Conduct assessment to determine if child needs emergency medical care
 - For obvious injury or illness, transport to nearest hospital (leave personal clothing and possessions at scene and DECON)
 - **Immediate Care Protocol (Emergency Room/Pediatric Facility)**
 - Conduct initial assessment
 - Administer tests and procedures, clinically indicated by findings
 - Obtain urine specimen (within 2-hours)
 - Call Poison Control, if clinically indicated
 - Complete Baseline Assessment and refer to pediatric facility for follow-up



NW Florida DEC Protocol

- **Medical Assessment/Treatment (Continued)**
 - **Baseline Assessment Protocol**
 - To be completed within 24-hours after child removal (DCF should refer the child for evaluation to the child's provider, health dept, CPT)
 - Obtain medical history from parents and/or medical records
 - Perform complete pediatric physical examination and required tests
 - Perform developmental screening
 - Mental health screen and crisis intervention, if required
 - Follow-up with care for any positive findings
 - **Follow-up Medical Care (Recommended)**
 - 30-day follow-up
 - 12-18 month follow-up
 - Recommend a system be established to collect, analyze and report medical findings on children found at Meth Labs



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Is Meth The Only Dangerous Drug Environment to Children??

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Children at Risk



9.2 million children
in the United States live in homes
where a parent or other adult uses
illicit drugs

Children at Risk



More than **35 million**
individuals used illicit
drugs or abused prescription
drugs in 2007

SOURCE: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,
Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2007.
Rescue, Defend, Shelter, Support

Defining Drug Endangered Children (DEC)



The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children defines drug endangered children as children who are at risk of suffering physical or emotional harm as a result of illegal drug use, possession, manufacturing, cultivation, or distribution.

They may also be children whose caretaker's substance misuse interferes with the caretaker's ability to parent and provide a safe and nurturing environment.

Children at Risk



Child abuse and neglect increase a person's risk of later substance use, and individuals with substance use disorders are more likely to abuse or neglect their children



Children at Risk

- Children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are:
 - 3 times more likely to be verbally, physically or sexually abused
 - 4 times more likely than other children to be neglected

Understanding Risk



- All drug endangered children are at risk
- How much risk and risk for what varies

Understanding Risk



- Prenatal Risks
- Postnatal Risks

Prenatal Risks



The effects of prenatal drug exposure:

- Are difficult to isolate, owing to other variables such as poor prenatal care, poor nutrition, prematurity, and adverse postnatal environment
- Depend on the substance being used, frequency of use, duration of use and quantity



Prenatal Risks

- Long-term cognitive and behavioral risk factors for children prenatally exposed to drugs:
 - Low scores in mental development
 - Low scores in psychomotor index



Prenatal Risks

- Infants exposed to drugs in utero are more likely to be reported as abused or neglected (30.2%)

*- Kienberger Jaudes P, Ekwo E.
Association of Drug Abuse and Child Abuse*



Postnatal Risks



Risk of Physical Abuse

- Erratic discipline
- Increased irritability
- Irrational rage

Postnatal Risks



Risk of Neglect

- Lack of supervision
- Lack of necessities
- Lack of safe and nurturing environment

Postnatal Risks



- Other Risks
 - Exposure to violence
 - Domestic violence
 - Crime-related violence
 - Overlay deaths
 - Exposure and ingestion
 - Sexual abuse
 - Emotional Abuse

Questions to Ponder



- **When do we take action to protect children?**
- **Do we consider illicit drug activity alone justification to intervene?**
- **Do we wait until additional maltreatment circumstances arise?**
- **What if we wait too long?**



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Our Goal:
Healthy, Happy & Safe
Children
100%

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How do we get to 100%?

- Understand the long-term needs of drug endangered children
- Implement appropriate and effective intervention strategies

Understanding the Long-Term Needs of DEC



- **Consequently, some children growing up in drug environments may experience:**
 - Emotional problems
 - Behavioral problems
 - Cognitive problems



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The Importance of Intervention

Moving children from

RISK to RESILIENCY

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The Importance of Intervention

The earlier the intervention, the more efficient and effective the outcome

BUT ... research and clinical trends *also* support the potential for change throughout life

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The Importance of Intervention

In other words...

It is never too early to intervene...

AND

It is never too late to intervene!

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The Importance of Intervention

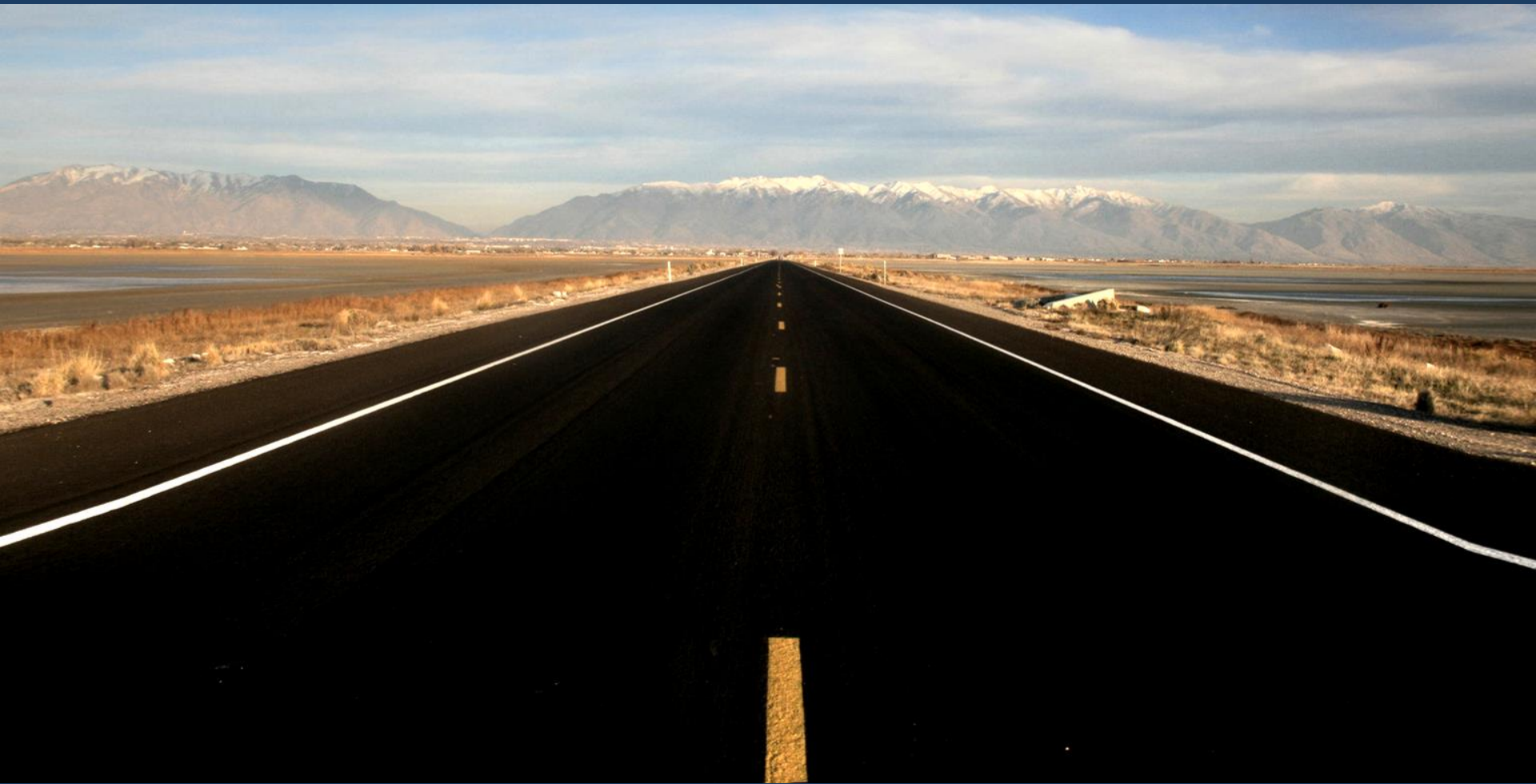
We ALL have an intervention and prevention role to play

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Collaborative Mindset



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Collaborative Mindset



No single entity can effectively or efficiently address the DEC dilemma on its own, especially over the long term

Collaborative Mindset



COLLABORATION:

The exchange of information, altering of activities, sharing of resources, and **enhancement of the capacity of another for the mutual benefit of all** and to achieve a common purpose.

Collaborative Mindset



- What we know already:

Collaboration is challenging

- What we may not know:

WHY collaboration is challenging

Collaborative Mindset



WHY collaboration is challenging:

- Competing goals
- Relationship issues
- Control issues
- Differing values
- Helplessness
- Un-channeled passion/energy

Collaborative Mindset



Law Enforcement

Child Protective
Services

Judicial

Medical

Drug Treatment

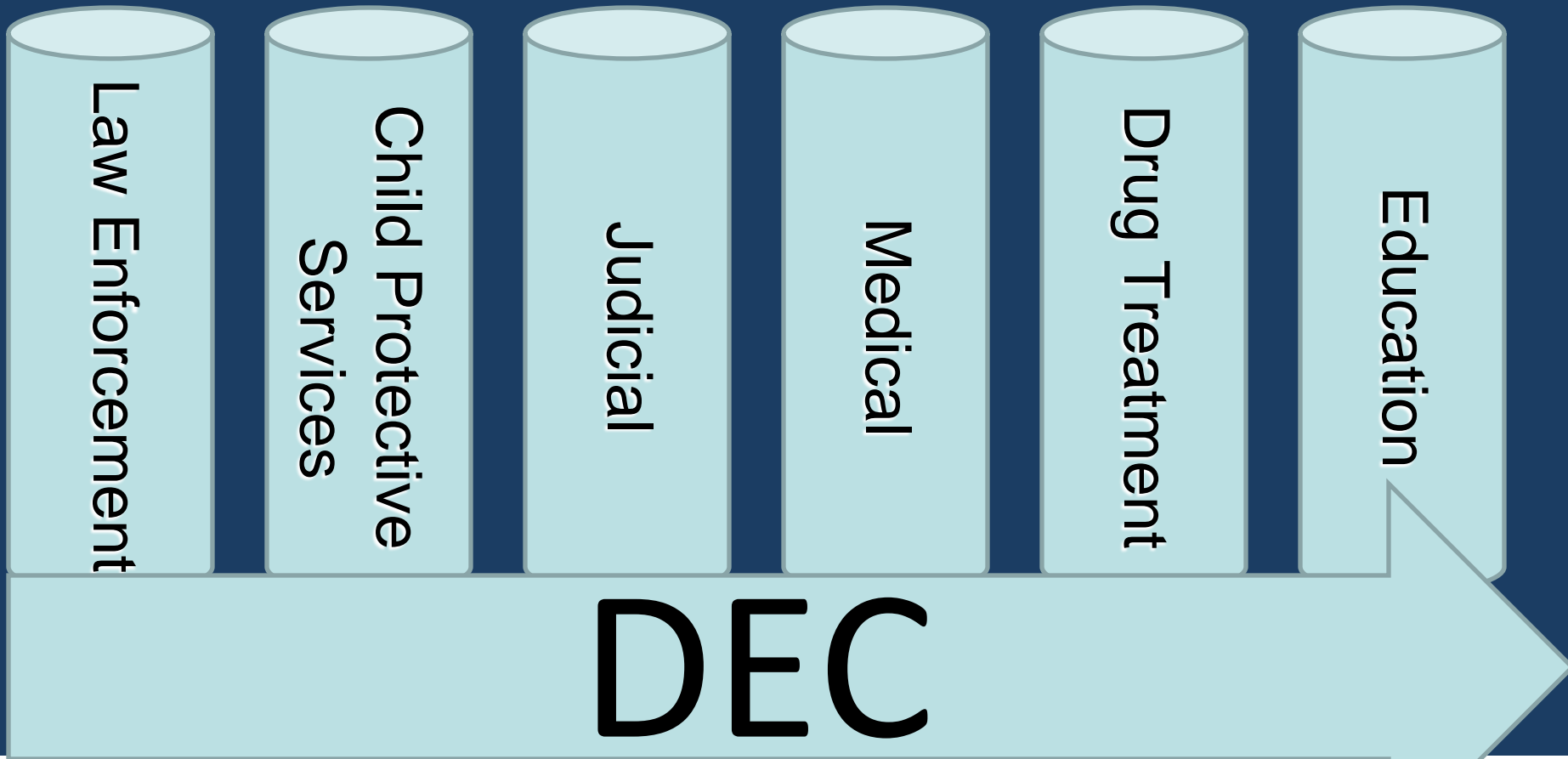
Education

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Collaborative Mindset



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Collaborative Mindset



By collaborating, we increase the likelihood of success for the good of children and families

Collaborative Mindset



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Changing the Status Quo



Changing our
attitudes and
beliefs

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Changing the Status Quo

- Common elements for change:
 - Recognition of an unacceptable situation
 - Shared vision for a desired outcome
 - Strong leadership
 - Guided activities of many
 - Persistence!



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Do we let children accept this reality?

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Or do we change the status quo?

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**We ALL have an intervention
and prevention role to play**

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**Believe in the future
and create the reality**

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A photograph of three children lying on their stomachs, smiling and looking towards the camera. The child in the foreground is a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a yellow shirt. The child in the middle is a boy with dark hair, wearing a grey cap and a yellow shirt. The child in the background is a girl with dark hair, wearing a pink shirt. The text is overlaid on the image in a large, bold, yellow font.

Our Goal:
Healthy, Happy & Safe
Children
100%

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Lessons Learned

Mistakes
are proof
that you are
trying.

Lessons Learned

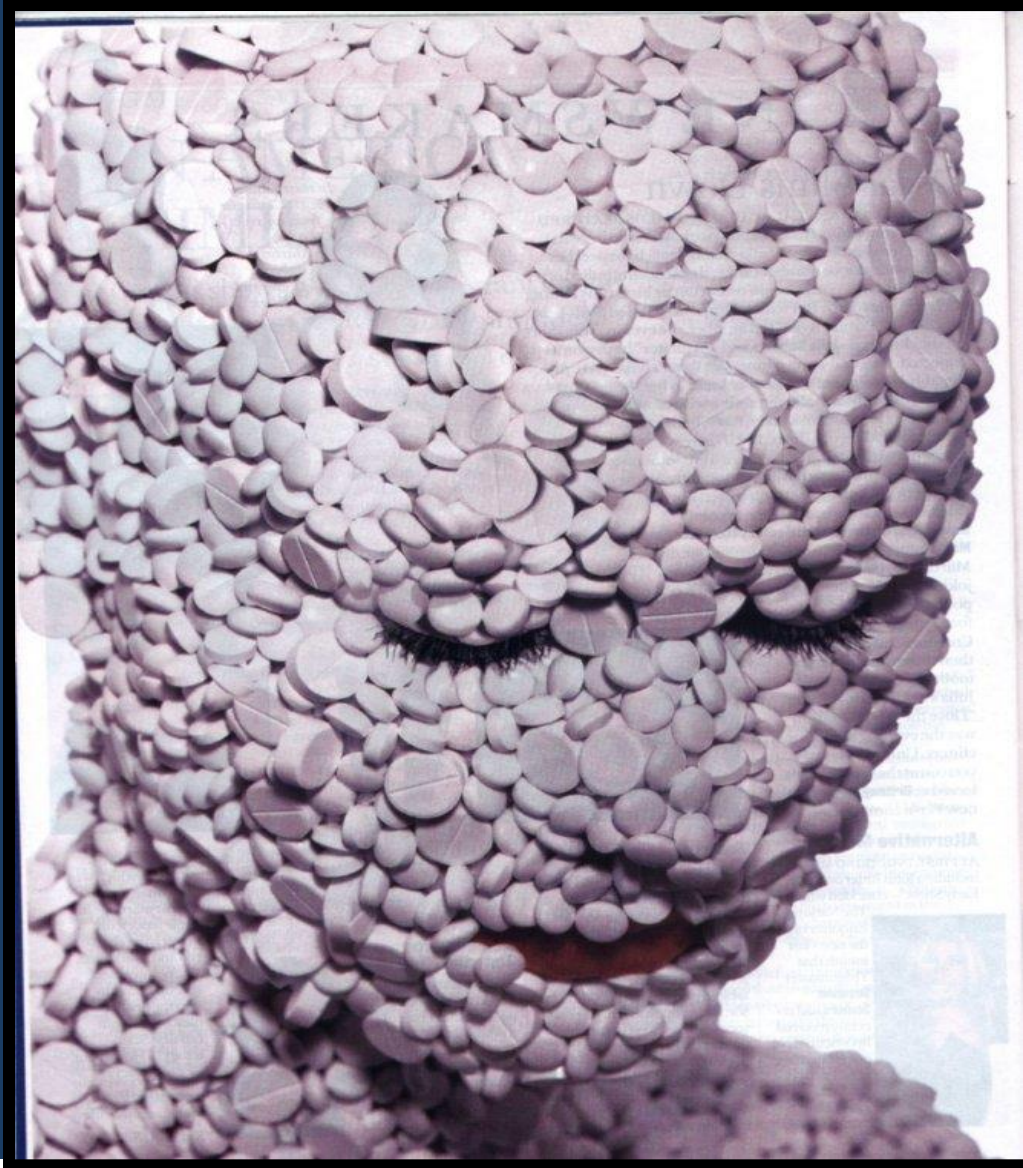
METH is not the only dangerous drug environment to children.

We need to change our Protocol (thought process) to address all substances (legal and illegal) that are being misused by caretakers and impacting their ability to care for children.

PHARMACEUTICALS



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Rescue. Defend. Shelter. Support. **Newsweek.**

Marijuana



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**Child
modeling
Mom's
behavior**

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Lessons Learned

Collaborate with community representatives outside the “First Responder” community. Need to include representatives from schools, daycares, mental health and faith community.



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Lessons Learned

Don't just focus your efforts on crisis intervention. Need to plan for long term social change.

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Lessons Learned

Don't develop your DEC Protocol and place on a shelf. The DEC Protocol needs to be reviewed annually by all agency partners. Protocol reviews encourage alliance sustainability.



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Lessons Learned

When forming your DEC team, don't ask the agency partners to send a representative to the meetings (SLL). Recruit your team members with supervisor coordination.



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Lessons Learned

“We live in a world
of our perceptions”

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Perceptions/Misperceptions

- LE Example
- Team Example



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Lesson *Learned*

As A Rule of Thumb,
Involve Everyone in
Everything!!



Lessons Learned

“Establishing teams is easier said than done. Getting people to work together as a team in any professional environment is challenging. And at times, it’s like trying