



**Identifying Drug Endangered Children:
A Collaborative Approach**

Putting the Pieces Together for Children and Families: The National
Conference on Substance Abuse, Child Welfare, and the Courts


Presented by
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September 15th, 2011

A Look Back

How the Movement Started

The actions of **two women**
launched the DEC movement

A Look Back



- Sue Webber-Brown, Butte County (CA) DA Investigator
 - Recognized the connection between child abuse cases and illicit drugs
 - Developed a DEC program in Butte County in 1993 with a new approach to rescuing these children that were living in dangerous drug environments
 - The approach involved forming DEC teams comprising personnel from the District Attorney's Office, Child Services, and Law Enforcement

A Look Back

- Kathey Lynn James:
 - December 26, 1995
 - Riverside, California
 - 3 children died in meth lab explosion
 - Sentenced in January 1997 to 45 years to life in prison – 15 years for each murder count



A Look Back

- The DEC Team Model:
 - Included representatives from:
 - District Attorney's Office
 - Children's Services
 - Law Enforcement
 - Ensured:
 - Full investigation of child endangerment
 - Prosecution of all appropriate charges
 - Immediate intervention
 - Medical assistance
 - Appropriate placement



A Look Forward

Moving From Teams to Social Change



- Promoting social change through proactive collaboration:
 - The expertise of the **National DEC Leaders Network** informs practice in the field
 - Through the **state DEC alliances**, National DEC leverages resources and provides training and technical assistance to professionals in the field



Moving From Teams to Social Change

- Benefits:
 - Does not rely on grant funding for sustainability
 - Does not rely on individual champions for sustainability
 - Builds broad community support
 - Makes DEC everyone's job function
 - Allows for comprehensive intervention to address the long-term needs of children

CHILDREN AT RISK

www.nationaldec.org

Children at Risk

2.1 million children
in the United States live in homes
where a **parent uses** illicit drugs

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

Children at Risk

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

SOURCE: National Center on Addiction and
Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA), 2005

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.

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



Children of parents with substance use disorders have a higher likelihood of developing substance use problems themselves

SOURCE: CSAT, 2005; Price & Simmel, 2002; Young, Gardner, & Dennis, 1998; CSAT, 2004


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

SOURCE: CSAT, 2005; Price & Simmel, 2002; Young, Gardner, & Dennis, 1998; CSAT, 2004

Children at Risk





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

SOURCE: A Guide for Caring Adults Working with Young People Experiencing Addiction in the Family, CSAT, SAMHSA

Introduction to D.E.C.



**April 4, 2002:
Meet Brandon**

**DRUG ENDANGERED
CHILDREN**



Drug Use & Impact on Children

THORNTON LAB RAID

APRIL 4, 2002

North Metro
Task Force Raid
Video
Adams County,
CO April 2002

Children at Risk



Children + Drugs = RISK

Understanding Risk



Risk (n.): The chance of something going wrong; the danger that injury, damage or loss will occur.

-Encarta Dictionary of North America

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



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



- Risk of Exposure to Illegal Activities
 - Property Crimes
 - Drug dealing
 - Drug transporting
 - Kidnapping
 - Home invasions

Postnatal Risks



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



Postnatal Risks



- Other Risks
 - Loss
 - Parents
 - Death
 - School
 - Sibling Separation
 - Pets (loss or death)
 - Home
 - Multiple foster placements



Drug Use





Drug Use

Drug Recognition Experts:

7 Drug Categories

Drug Use

(1) Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants

Category Includes Synthetic Drugs

alcohol, barbiturates, anti-anxiety tranquilizers (e.g., Valium, Librium, Xanax, Prozac, and Thorazine)

Drug Use

(1) Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants

- Problems They Cause
 - Impaired performance
 - Impaired thinking
 - Decreased REM sleep
 - Nausea
 - Seizures
 - Inability to take care of children



Drug Use

(2) Central Nervous System (CNS) Stimulants

Category Includes Cocaine & Meth

Drug Use

(2) Central Nervous System (CNS) Stimulants

- Problems They Cause
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Appearance of mental illness
 - Easily irritated
 - Aggressive
 - Inability to take care of children



Drug Use

(3) Hallucinogens

Category Includes
LSD, Ecstasy,
Psilocybin Mushrooms

Drug Use

(3) Hallucinogens

- Problems They Cause
 - Harsh physical side effects
 - Brain damage
 - Bad “trips”
 - Flashbacks
 - Inability to take care of children



Drug Use

(4) Dissociative Anesthetics

Category Includes
**PCP and Its
Analog**s

Drug Use

(4) Dissociative Anesthetics

- Problems They Cause
 - Harsh physical side effects
 - Illogical or disorganized thinking
 - Unpredictable and violent behavior
 - Produces a state similar to psychosis
 - Inability to take care of children



Drug Use

(5) Narcotic Analgesics

Category Includes
**Opium, Heroin,
Morphine, OxyContin**

Drug Use

(5) Narcotic Analgesics

- Problems They Cause
 - Danger of overdose
 - Malnutrition
 - Sleep deprivation
 - Anxiety, anger, tension, hostility
 - Inability to take care of children



Drug Use

(6) Inhalants

Breathable Substances with
Mind-Altering effects

Drug Use

(6) Inhalants


- Problems They Cause
 - Injuries to the mouth, lungs, or trachea
 - Risk of asphyxiation and death
 - Serious damage to internal organs
 - Inability to take care of children




Drug Use

(7) Cannabis

Scientific Name for
Marijuana




Postnatal Risk



Adams
County
Lab

Photo:
North Metro
Task Force



True Stories

www.nationaldec.org

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?

our Goal:
Happy & Safe Children
100%

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



- **Children growing up in drug environments:**
 - Are denied the fundamental developmental experiences required to self-regulate, relate, communicate and think
 - Experience neglect, daily chaos, a lack of safety, poor communication, violence, and disorganization

Understanding the Long-Term Needs of DEC



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

Understanding the Long-Term Needs of DEC



- **Some Examples of Emotional Problems**
 - Attachment Disorders
 - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Complex Emotions

Understanding the Long-Term Needs of DEC

- Some Examples of Behavioral Problems
 - Interpersonal Problems
 - Inappropriate Sexual Behaviors
 - Low Threshold for Stimulation
 - Eating Disorders

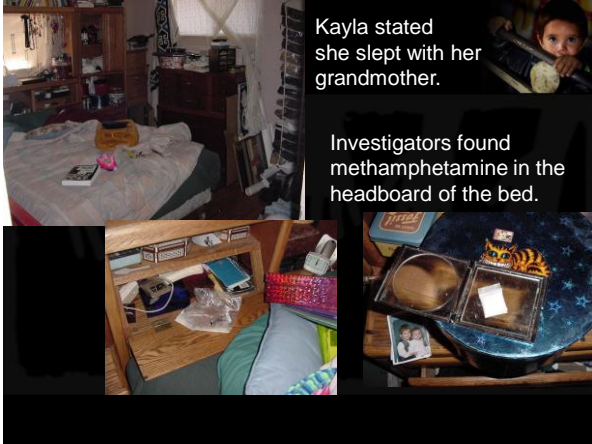
Understanding the Long-Term Needs of DEC

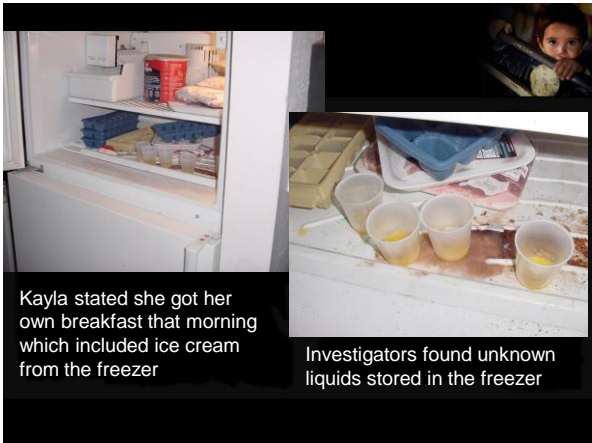
- Some Examples of Cognitive Problems
 - Difficulty talking and listening
 - Difficulty paying attention
 - Difficulty remembering
 - Trouble reading, especially learning to move from left to right
 - Often do not learn from mistakes or experiences
 - Trouble picking up on social cues

October 11, 2002: Meet Kayla, 4 year old girl who greets SWAT officers at the door of her home as it is raided.



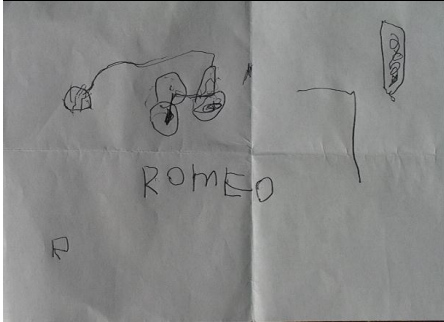
- The girl is completely calm as the SWAT team secures the house.

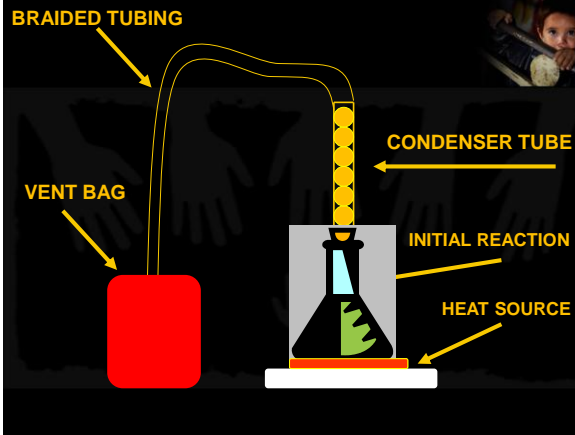






The Meth Lab Picture





Jasmine



The Importance of Intervention



The Importance of Intervention

Moving children from

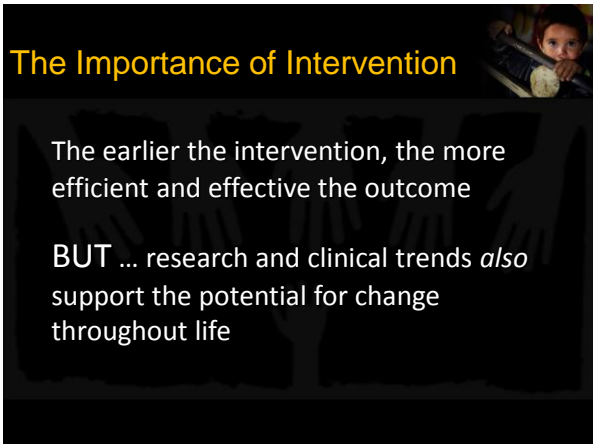
RISK to RESILIENCY



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



The Importance of Intervention

In other words...

It is never too early to intervene...

AND

It is never too late to intervene!

The Importance of Intervention


We ALL have an intervention and prevention role to play

The Importance of Intervention

- DEC efforts are collaborative



INTERVENTION



Collaborative Mindset as the Ideal Solution



Collaborative Mindset





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.

Chris Huxham, *Creating Collaborative Advantage*

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
 - Evidence collection
 - Arrests
 - Criminal prosecution
- Child Protective Services
 - Child risk assessment
 - Safety plans
 - Reunification or termination

Law Enforcement

Child Protective Services







Collaborative Mindset

- The Five Stages of Group Development
 - Forming
 - Storming
 - Norming
 - Performing
 - Adjourning or Transforming

Developed by Bruce Tuckman (1965)





Collaborative Mindset

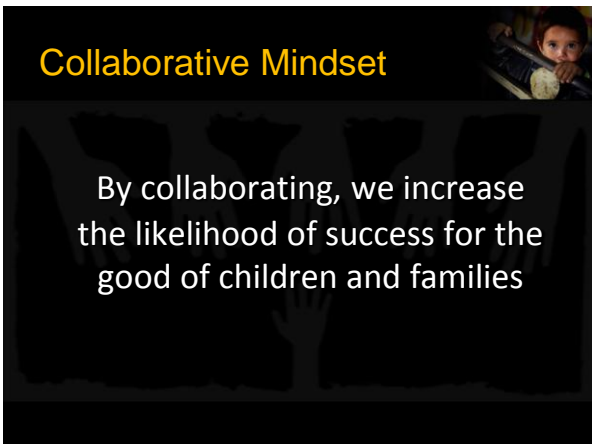
A collaborative strategy requires a deep awareness of what each system has to offer and is willing to share

Collaboration

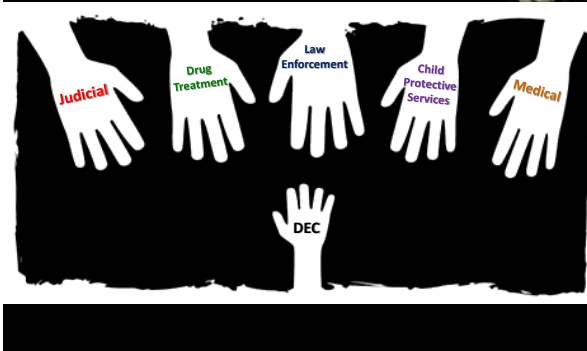
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Collaborative Mindset



Introduction

Being part of the DEC movement:

- Makes you part of the larger solution
- Connects you to other professionals working on the same challenges
- Helps you advocate more effectively on behalf of children and families

Changing the Status Quo

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead

Changing the Status Quo

- Candice Lightner, MADD Founder



- Sept 1980: MADD **incorporates**
- End of 1980: MADD **grows to 11** chapters
- 1982: MADD **grows to 100** chapters; **participates in drunk driving commission** at President Reagan's request
- 1983: **129 new anti-drunk driving laws** passed
- 1984: Uniform **drinking age raised to 21**; MADD **grows to 330** chapters in **47** states
- 2000: Congress makes **.08 BAC the national illegal limit** for impaired driving
- TODAY: **More than 300,000** lives saved and **more than 50,000** victims served

Changing the Status Quo

- John Walsh, Missing Children Advocate

- 1981: **Adam Walsh Child Resource Center** founded
- 1982: **Missing Children Act** passed
- 1984: **Missing Children's Assistance Act** passed
- 1984: **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children** founded
- 2006: **Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act** passed
- TODAY: The **recovery rate** for missing children has gone from **62% to 96%**



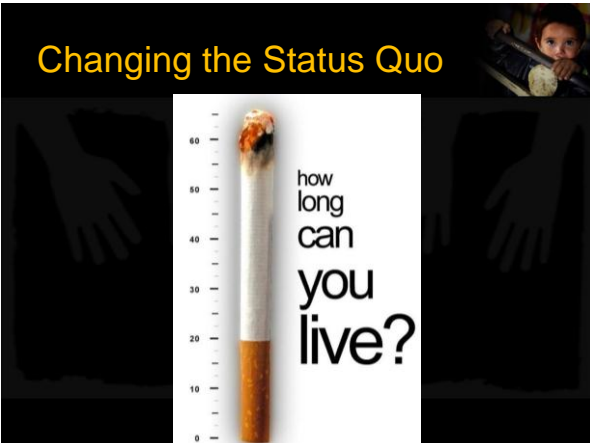
Changing the Status Quo

Changing our **attitudes**
and **beliefs**

Changing the Status Quo



Changing the Status Quo

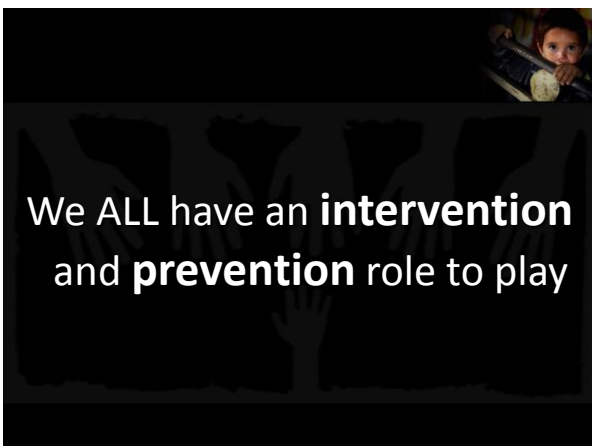


Changing the Status Quo

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












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



our Goal:
Happy & Safe Children
100%



Thank You
