



Operational Safety Considerations While Investigating
CHILD SEX OFFENDERS

A Handbook for Law Enforcement Volume 1

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Abstract

The danger to the law enforcement officer who is initiating a search warrant or arrest of a Child Sex Offender (CSO) is most likely underestimated. CSOs are often perceived to be less dangerous and nonviolent. However, CSOs pose a significant risk to themselves and in turn can potentially be a danger to law enforcement officers. This handbook, based on a review by the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit III- Crimes Against Children of over 100 cases of CSOs who committed suicide, is the first of a two part handbook addressing salient operational and safety factors that might arise between law enforcement and CSOs. A Volume II will provide specific skills and techniques that can be utilized by law enforcement in gathering information about potential risk factors impacting CSO behavior.

Operational Safety Considerations While Investigating Child Sex Offenders

A Handbook for Law Enforcement,
Volume I
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A man with a beard and sunglasses, wearing a black cap and a tactical vest, is shown in profile, holding a handgun. He is standing on a balcony or porch with a metal railing. The background shows a yellow building with white trim. The image is used as a background for the text on the page.

CSOs pose a significant risk to themselves and to law enforcement.

“I heard the pounding on the door. It must have been six in the morning and I was half asleep. It took me a moment to realize what it was. I am not a morning person and usually don’t talk to anyone until I have had my morning coffee. Who could be knocking this early in the morning? Then I heard it, “FBI, search warrant.” I thought maybe one day the FBI would be knocking on my door. I thought I was so careful. I didn’t fall for those stings I saw on TV and I didn’t communicate with anyone I didn’t know. I had thought about what I would do if I were caught. I thought I would kill myself, or if I couldn’t maybe the cops would kill me. I can’t go to prison. Besides a parking ticket I have never broken the law. Should I open the door? What did I do with that external drive? Do I have time to delete those images? I better open the door, but then what?”

Thoughts of a CSO moments before the FBI makes entry into his home to execute a search warrant of his residence for child pornography.

1 Introduction

Though law enforcement officers commonly execute search and arrest warrants on offenders who have committed a myriad of state and federal crimes, for some offenders this is the first time they have been the focus of an investigation. The dynamic interplay between law enforcement and offenders is a complex dance that is impacted by many variables, such as the specific crime type, the offender's background and personality, and law enforcement's perception and preparation. In addition, the unique responses of law enforcement and the offender can change this interaction. The story of the fox and the rabbit illuminates this dynamic. The fox is simply looking for a meal. However, the rabbit is running for his life. Similarly, for a law enforcement officer, the officer is simply doing the job for which he/she is paid to do. On the other hand, the offender is facing a life-changing event. It is clear that there is impact on the offender resulting in an increased intensity of his response. This could result in the offender responding violently to law enforcement. Incidents range from mild resistance to death of offenders and/or law enforcement.

This handbook explores the mindset of the offender, the mindset of law enforcement and the unique factors influencing how a CSO responds to law enforcement. The article also offers suggestions and recommendations for consideration prior, during and following the execution of search and arrest warrants with CSOs.

Typically, a law enforcement officer experiences stress prior to and during the incident while an offender experiences more stress during and after the incident. For example,



A CSO may begin to formulate a plan to escape. His plans may include violence toward himself or others.

an officer is on edge prior to the arrest or search, but may quickly relax once the situation appears to be under control. The law enforcement officer has trained for high-stress situations such as these and has often prepared for the situation prior. On the contrary, the offender is initially relaxed, due to being unaware of the pending investigation. However, once officers identify themselves and their purpose, the offender will most likely react to the stress physiologically and cognitively as he begins to think of the consequences of being arrested. This inverse relationship impacts the dynamic interplay between law enforcement, the offender and the potential outcome. This could result in the escalation of the offender's stress levels – perhaps to the point in which the offender begins to formulate a plan to avoid being caught (e.g. the offender's escape, injury or the death of the officer).

2 Stress And How It Impacts Offenders

There is a pounding on the door. It startles him awake and his heart begins to pound. His muscles are flooded with blood and the adrenal gland is pumping hormones into the body to mobilize and spring into action. His heart pounding feels like anxiety and fear, which elicit an emotional response and a memory of other times in his life when he felt fearful and how he reacted and coped with these unpleasant feelings. Addressing the sound of the pounding and yelling, he focuses on what he perceives as the threat. His mind struggles as it is overwhelmed with millions of thoughts going through it. He attempts to evaluate all the stimuli while most of the blood flow is moving away from his brain and into his muscles where it is needed for a rapid fight or flight response. If he evaluates that the threat is too dangerous, he will mobilize his legs to run. If he believes the threat is one that he can overcome or he has no other choice, he will remain and fight. If he is so overwhelmed with the threat he might just freeze and not move at all. Having never experienced such a stressful event he is not prepared and has not had the opportunity to practice responding rationally in the midst of the flood of hormones. He is not able to slow down the racing heartbeat, which is speeding up the rest of his body functions. This results in him responding in a solely physiological and emotional manner.

Stress was initially introduced into the psychology field by Hans Selye (1956). He defined stress as “the nonspecific (physiological) response of the body to any demand made on it.” A certain amount of stress or “eustress” can be beneficial for humans and other species. Some stress leads to an optimal state of arousal, which allows individuals to experience being mentally awake and alert, thereby creating the best response cognitively, emotionally or physically. However, stress also leads to negative responses. So, when does stress become a liability rather than a benefit?

Stress causes physiological changes in the body, such as increased heart rate, or adrenaline and blood pressure elevation. A number of researchers in the area of stress note that the process of stress reactions results in emotional and behavioral changes such as feelings of irritability, anxiety, and excitability (Cox, 1978; Selye, 1976; Goldberg & Breznitz, 1982; Horowitz, 1986). In addition to physiological response, cognitive and behavioral changes occur, including increased feelings of helplessness, depression, or aggression. Blood increases in the muscles, which hardens an individual to be ready for action, but can make one clumsy and accident-prone. Basic functions are then difficult to complete. This automatic reaction is defensive when the body is in a stress mode and often exceeds the person’s resources to mobilize.

Unfortunately, most people who experience stress and pressure become too aroused and their heartbeat increases rapidly. At this level of arousal, there are numerous symptoms that might occur, limiting the effectiveness of the person’s response or impairing his ability to rationally assess the situation or make appropriate decisions. Acute stress responses can be expressed through a wide range of behaviors to include argumentative or resistant behavior when someone is in a fight response and social withdrawal when in a flight response. Males tend to respond to stressful events with a fight rather than flight response, which could elevate the potential for violence or aggression by the offender during his contact with law enforcement. In addition, a loss of perception often occurs during times of desperation. For example, when a dog is focused on the hunt he does not even want to stop to scratch a flea.

Besides feelings of desperation, there are many different variables influencing an offender’s decision to become violent during an interaction with the police. One of the most dangerous men in American history was John Henry “Doc” Holliday. What made this frail, sickly man so dangerous? Doc Holliday knew he was dying of Tuberculosis and preferred to die by gunfire rather than disease. Unlike his enemies, Doc had nothing to lose. Likewise, today’s offenders often



The CSOs initial contact with law enforcement is impacted by tremendous stress.

evaluate the situation as it unfolds. On February 28, 1997, Larry Phillips, Jr. and Emil Matasareanu robbed a bank in North Hollywood, California and engaged in one of the longest, most famous shootouts resulting in a suicide-by-cop incident. Eleven police officers and seven civilians were injured and the offenders shot approximately 1,100 rounds of ammunition. The two offenders were shot by police, but Phillips being shot only in the hand, died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

In these immediate moments when law enforcement engages someone, offenders may ask themselves questions such as: Can I overtake them? Can I run faster? Can I get to my gun and control the situation to escape? If there is a shootout, can I shoot faster? Am I willing to kill others to get away? If I can't get out, am I willing to kill myself? Is there anyone else around who could help me to get away or can I use them to negotiate my release? During an altercation which becomes violent, the results might come down to a final question: Who has a greater will to live (desire) and is committed to action for survival?

Much of what we have learned about how offenders respond to stress events can also be applied to CSOs. Not unlike other types of offenders, CSOs are processing a large amount

of data during their initial contact with law enforcement and are experiencing tremendous stress impacting how they might respond to law enforcement. They are usually unprepared for this event and therefore will respond with some degree of stress. This stress response impacts the CSO's physiological, psychological and behavioral reaction to law enforcement officers. Unfortunately, law enforcement does not consistently apply the concepts of stress response during search and arrest warrants of CSOs possibly due to the perception that CSOs are less dangerous and less violent.

In some cases, a CSO may consider acting out violently towards law enforcement or against himself. He is likely considering a number of factors in his decision to act out: How many law enforcement officers respond to the scene, prior experience, skills or abilities of law enforcement officers, access to weapons, his mental state; his will to live; and his ability to weigh the impact of each potential decision. The CSO may be focused on crimes he has committed of which law enforcement is unaware, getting through the next few moments of this situation and/or how this search or arrest might impact his life. These factors can impact his reaction to law enforcement.

A number of incidents in the BAU study resulted in the CSO discharging his firearm within close proximity to law enforcement.



The Mindset of Child Sex Offenders:

3 Risk to Self and Others

Law enforcement officers were executing a search on the residence of a Caucasian male for the possession of child pornography when the offender came home from walking his dog. He was informed that there was a search being conducted of his residence and was given a copy of the search warrant affidavit, which showed the items to be seized including any evidence of child pornography. He was also informed that he was being arrested for Internet-related violations. He asked the officers if he could put his dog in the house prior to being arrested and taken to the police station to be processed. After placing his dog in the house, he quickly obtained a firearm that was hidden in the residence and shot himself while the officers were standing in close proximity.

The FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) has been analyzing the behavior of CSOs for over 30 years and has developed the Sex Offender Typology which has been instrumental in assisting law enforcement in understanding the sex offenders they investigate (Lanning, 1986, 2010). The BAU has recognized the need for law enforcement to increase their awareness of the potential risk of violence among CSOs (Hoffer, Shelton, Behnke, & Erdberg, 2010). Because the Internet-related CSO who sexually exploits children is typically an older Caucasian male with no criminal history or documented report of violent behavior, (Seto, 2008) they often appear to be less of a risk to themselves or others.

CSOs may pose an additional risk of danger to themselves due to the stigmatizing nature of the violation. To some offenders, the loss of their job, home, reputation, and freedom, as well as family and friends seems inevitable and suicide might be viewed as the preferred alternative (Hoffer, et al. 2010). It is not uncommon for CSOs to state during interviews that they wished law enforcement was investigating them for any other crime, like drug-trafficking or homicide. When individuals are confronted by the potential likelihood that their lives will be destroyed and they have everything to lose, they are likely to experience anxiety, shame and/or desperation due to the ultimate loss of identity or loss of face (Brophy, 2003).

Law enforcement should consider that elevated stress and an increased risk for harm are present at each step of the legal process instead of at one particular stage. Acceptance followed by adjustment is required after each legal decision

Violence Risk Factors (Meloy, 2000)

Individual/Psychological Domain

- Male Gender
- Ages 15-24
- Past history of violence, frequency, recency, severity
- Paranoia
- Intelligence below average
- Anger/fear problems: frequency, intensity, severity
- Psychopathy and other attachment problems

Social/Environmental Domain

- Family of origin violence
- Adolescent peer group violence
- Economic instability or poverty
- Weapons history, skill, interest, and approach behavior
- Victim pool
- Alcohol and/or psycho-stimulant use
- Popular culture

Biological Domain

- History of Central Nervous System (CNS) trauma
- CNS signs and symptoms
- Objective CNS measures
- Major mental disorder

or development (e.g. awareness, arrest, detention, release, indictment, preliminary hearing, trial, plea agreement, sentencing and incarceration). In a study conducted by Pritchard and King (2005) of 95 CSOs, 15% eventually took their own lives, which was 183 times higher than the general population. Although little empirical research exists confirming that these types of offenders are at higher risk for suicide, it is apparent that many CSOs experience high levels of fear, anxiety, shame and helplessness after learning they are being investigated. Within the BAU sample of 106 CSOs who committed suicide, 26% died within 48 hours of becoming aware of the investigation against them, which indicates that this was a significant stressor.

Additional factors must also be taken into consideration when assessing the potential for aggressive behavior. The risk of violence to others includes danger to family members or close associates, danger to others in the community who might be in close proximity to the offender and danger to the law enforcement officer who is interacting with the offender. Though CSOs may not exhibit a majority of the risk factors for violence towards others as reported in Meloy (2000)'s Violence Risk and Threat Assessment Biopsychosocial Model, they may display a unique array of variables that could increase their risk of violence.

An additional motivation for CSOs to become noncompliant or act out aggressively against law enforcement is to prevent further disclosures of crimes that have yet to be revealed to law enforcement. There appears to be a high rate of confessions among CSOs during initial interviews with law enforcement (Seto, 2008). The perception by law enforcement is that this information is just the tip of the iceberg as the offender may only reveal what they think law enforcement already knows. This concept that CSOs continue to hide other criminal acts is supported by research results from a sample of Internet-related CSOs who were incarcerated solely for online violations and were part of a treatment program at the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). This BOP study revealed that the majority (85%) of offenders in the sample disclosed that they had also engaged in hands-on offenses with children after many had been administered a polygraph (Bourke, 2009).

Upon initial contact with law enforcement, the CSO may imagine life as he knows it coming to an end, and the offender might become desperate to prevent revealing his activities. A study is being conducted at the BAU in which 106 cases were examined where CSO's committed suicide after being informed that they were being investigated for a child sex crime. In the BAU's sample of CSOs, almost half (45%) of the sample was married, and 60% had children.

FBI Study of CSO Suicide

The FBI's BAU III-Crimes Against Children has examined 106 cases of individuals who committed suicide after becoming aware they were being investigated for a child sex crime.

Offender Characteristics:

- Gender: 100% Male
- Average Age: 48 years old
- Age Range: 24-71 years
- Race: 97% Caucasian
- Prior Criminal History: 44%
- Married: 45%
- Children: 60%
- College Degree: 52%
- Employed: 62%
- Military History: 45%

Offender Categories:

- Child Pornography Traders: 79%
- Child Molesters: 43%
- Travelers: 21%
- Child Pornography Producers: 18%
- 50% became aware of the investigation at time of search warrant; 32% at time of knock and talk; 14% at time of arrest; 4% other means.
- 49% used a firearm; 22% ligature; 10% drug overdose; 9% carbon monoxide.
- 54% committed suicide within 30 days from awareness of the investigation.
- 10% committed suicide in the presence of, or in close proximity to, law enforcement.

In addition, 52% of the sample was college educated and 62% of the CSOs who committed suicide were employed. These factors indicate that the majority of the CSOs in the study had much to lose when the investigation revealed their sexual crimes involving children. When individuals are desperate, they become stressed and can frequently

make decisions based on emotion, resulting in their actions becoming more unpredictable. This unpredictability stems from the extreme circumstances coupled with the offender's perceived potential to lose everything, which could result in the offender acting out in a violent manner risking his life and/or the lives of others.

As stated above, risk is a term that has typically been applied to assessing the likelihood an individual will engage in violence perpetrated on another. However, the offender could also pose a risk of violence to himself. This potential for risk is typically not included in the definition of a risk assessment. Byrne (2009) argued that the definition should be expanded to include the risk by the individual to commit suicide or self-harm. A suicidal person is willing to cross the strong prohibition of self-preservation and subsequently may be willing to take another person's life through self-destructive or violent behavior. Some offenders might not want to die alone, or might engage in behaviors threatening the lives of others to elicit an escape. The BAU sample of CSOs who committed suicide revealed that nearly 59% were living with someone at the time of the suicide, thereby resulting in a potential risk to those who reside with the offender as well as the law enforcement officer affecting the warrant. Although murder-suicide and suicide-by-cop (SBC) scenarios occur less frequently, law enforcement should be aware of these possibilities when executing search and arrest warrants. Similar risk factors, such as subjects being male and having a history of depression, are found in the general suicide samples, as well as the murder-suicide and SBC offenders.

The following case example demonstrates how complex these situations are and how quickly they can change from a typical execution of a search warrant to a violent altercation.

Case Example

During the routine execution of a search warrant, the law enforcement officers knocked on the door to announce their presence. The wife of the offender answered the door and the officers made entry. They announced that they were there to serve a search warrant on the residence. The husband ran upstairs and a standoff ensued when the offender grabbed a gun. The agents initiated a negotiation with the offender to attempt to calm him down and solicit cooperation with the offender to give up his gun and surrender to law enforcement. When the officer said that they were just there for the computer, the offender reacted strongly and became quite emotional, knowing he had child pornography on his computer. He raised his weapon up and it was not clear if he was going to shoot law enforcement, commit suicide, or engage in suicide-by-cop. The result was the offender shot himself at virtually the same time that law enforcement shot the offender.

4 Suicide Research and Risk Factors Applicable to CSOs



Shame & potential loss of everything can increase a CSO's risk for self-destructive and/or aggressive behavior.

There are many theories that have been developed to understand the mind of the suicidal person and the factors involved in someone choosing suicide. Edwin Shneidman is considered the father of suicidology. His seminal work leads the field for many other suicide researchers, all of whom identified factors that increase a person's risk for suicide. His Cubic Model incorporates three factors impacting suicidal behavior: 1) Press (e.g., external events that impinge on the individual), 2) Pain (e.g., thwarted psychological needs such as autonomy or avoidance of humiliation), and 3) Perturbation (e.g., state of being upset and possibly a cognitive constriction). Subsequently, commonly held risk factors were developed and include feelings of helplessness

or hopelessness, depression, anxiety, anger or past suicidal ideations, threats or attempts. In some cases, warning signs indicate that individuals might be looking for a method to commit suicide, such as purchasing a weapon, storing up pills, talking or writing about suicide, death or dying, or making more direct threats of wanting to hurt or kill themselves (www.suicidology.com, Schneidman, 1987; Schneidman, 1993).

Incorporating these theories, Dr. Thomas Joiner (2005) developed his Interpersonal Model of suicide. Joiner highlights three important features that typically characterize people who commit suicide: 1) Individuals who lack a sense

of belonging with others and thus experience isolation, 2) Individuals who feel they are a burden to their family, friends or community and believe that others would be better off if they were dead, 3) Individuals who have acquired the capability to take their lives. This capability is often multi-layered and includes a familiarity with weapons, and desensitization to pain through exposure to other physical pain, such as suicide attempts. The fear of pain must be overcome in order to act upon suicide (Joiner, 2005).

At the moment that CSOs become aware of the investigation, they are in acute crisis and are likely experiencing the three elements described by Joiner: 1) Lack of Belonging - CSOs often feel different from others knowing that their sexual interest in children is not acceptable to society. This could leave them feeling quite isolated, thus lacking a sense of belonging, 2) Burdensomeness - feeling stigmatized, they might see themselves as a burden to society, having nothing to contribute. They may also believe the disclosure of this information will humiliate and thus burden their families, 3) Acquired Capability - Researchers believe the CSOs in the BAU sample may have acquired the capability for suicide through a variety of avenues. Many had chronic and/or current health problems at the time of their death and nearly half had prior military experience and were familiar with firearms.

The factors surrounding the CSO and the potential risk to law enforcement include the physiological, psychological and behavioral impact of stress which can influence a CSO's response when confronted by law enforcement. The additional issues of shame, embarrassment and the potential loss of family and job may also contribute to the CSO's response and could increase his risk for self-destructive or aggressive behavior. The potential for CSOs to act out violently during the interaction with law enforcement must be considered in every case and at each phase in the legal process (e.g., awareness, arrest, detention, release, indictment, preliminary hearing, trial, plea agreement, sentencing and incarceration).

The FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) has examined 106 cases of CSOs who have committed suicide. Over 80 interviews with law enforcement were conducted by the BAU to explore factors impacting CSOs' responses. Law enforcement interviews provided additional information which the authors have incorporated into this handbook.

In the next section, the authors will address the mindset of the law enforcement officer during initial contact with the CSO and will offer considerations for law enforcement prior to, during and following the execution of a search, arrest warrant or "knock and talk" with CSOs.

A knock and talk involves law enforcement knocking on the offender's residence and asking for consent to interview him and/or review his computer for any evidence of illegal activity.



5 Mindset Of Law Enforcement Officers

The mindset of law enforcement agents/officers during the interaction with CSOs should be grounded in their training and experience. Training and experience assists law enforcement in responding with increased awareness and rational decision-making abilities, as well as in controlling emotional and physiological stress reactions, such as fear, enabling him/her to make more rational decisions (Joyner, 2011). Since the law enforcement officers are armed, any interaction with the offender guarantees that this firearm, if it is not retained, could pose a potential danger to the officer.

During a shooting incident, law enforcement officers frequently describe the physiological and behavioral responses they experience. There appears to be a sensation of tunnel vision, where everything else around them fades away and time slows down around them. The officers' visual clarity is increased with the focus on the threat in front of them, which improves their performance. On the other hand, sound is diminished.

Although people commonly evaluate their environment and individuals within their sphere and organize vast amounts of information into manageable chunks of data, it is not feasible to evaluate all the information we are constantly processing with any detail or depth. Law enforcement officers use analytic skills to decide if someone is dangerous and make decisions about the safest method to respond to the danger. They are trained extensively on tactical approaches and are trained to look for indicators of danger, such as if the person has a weapon. At times law enforcement officers have limited information at their disposal to fully evaluate the situation. The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin published an article titled "The Deadly Mix: Officer, Offenders, and the Circumstances That Bring Them Together" (Pinizzotto, Davis, & Miller, 2007). Pinizzotto, et al. (2007) indicated that many of the officers in their sample

who were injured or killed believed they had a greater accuracy in reading people and assessing situations.

Most officers have learned that offenders exhibiting a certain demeanor, or providing other nonverbal cues, are potentially dangerous. There is much information that remains unknown to law enforcement. Only the offenders know how serious the situation is for them and what effect an arrest will have on their lives. Only the offenders know if they are prepared to take their own lives or the life of another, including law enforcement.

Law enforcement evaluates the degree of danger, or risk, along with life and death matters in every situation they approach. Biases impact our perceptions of different situations. How accurate we are in making decisions based on this evaluation may impact the safety of the community, law enforcement and the offenders.

Consequently, Pinizzotto, et al. (2007) reported that some of the assumptions and misperceptions by law enforcement officers typically lead them to be less vigilant, potentially contributing to their injuries or death. Many officers who were injured may have taken unnecessary safety and procedural shortcuts, unintentionally making them vulnerable to attack. The perceptions and assumptions regarding the offenders, either correctly or incorrectly, also can lead to what the authors referred to as the deadly mix. How does law enforcement typically perceive CSOs? Does law enforcement see the stereotypical CSO as a threat? Who does law enforcement perceive as more dangerous and how do they evaluate these different offenders? Is the 22-year-old male, who is a known gang member in a drug area seen at nighttime, climbing a fence, and reaching for something perceived as more dangerous? What about the 54-year-old man who works as a schoolteacher and has no criminal history? Is the potential for danger as evident to law enforcement as they approach his residence to execute



It's important that law enforcement not become complacent toward a CSO who they perceive to be "low risk."

a search warrant? CSOs that appear to "only" collect child pornography images are often perceived as somehow less dangerous than other CSOs.

In addition, after several years of service, many officers might become complacent particularly on those occasions where they perceive the CSO to be a "low risk." Consider the difference between the mindset of a hard-core violent criminal versus a CSO. A hard-core criminal is familiar with the criminal justice system, through his antisocial lifestyle and/or his re-occurring contact with law enforcement. CSOs are often leading a double life and they feel they have so much more to lose. In addition, they might not be as familiar with the criminal justice system, except for depictions of it

through the media. Any contact with law enforcement is perceived as being unacceptable and potentially intolerable.

Even among the broader group of CSOs, law enforcement may be less alert to the danger of the Internet-related CSO whom they perceive as less dangerous. This may result in the officers letting their guard down. Examples of this include not wearing a protective vest during the execution of a search warrant or "knock and talk," allowing the CSO to walk around his residence during the execution of a search warrant, not checking the CSO's residence thoroughly for any potential danger, such as firearms, and allowing the CSO to do certain things such as going to the restroom or putting his dog away.

The following are comments that have been made by law enforcement officers to the authors about their thoughts prior to initiating an arrest of a CSO:

“He has never indicated he is violent.”

“He can’t hurt anyone; he is just a computer geek.”

“There is no need to wear a protective vest. It’s not like we’re going after a gang banger.”

With this mindset, these officers might be unprepared if the CSO attempts to flee, resists arrest, or uses deadly force. Unfortunately, the biases and the possible complacency experienced by law enforcement officers can reduce one’s ability to prepare for an effective tactical response if warranted. It is clearly preferable to take all necessary steps to prepare for any and all contingencies that could occur during an interaction with a CSO to prevent any risk of violence to law enforcement. In addition, taking the life of a CSO or even the offender’s suicide often takes a toll on officers. It has been reported by law enforcement that even when officers take the life of an offender, they can exhibit reactions, such as sleep difficulties, emotional instability, angry outbursts, depression, guilt or increased alcohol or drug usage (Pinizzotto, et al., 2007). In addition, some officers report that they continue to have concerns about taking another person’s life.



Though there are many stereotypes of CSOs, in reality they look like everybody else. When law enforcement knocks on the CSO's door, the secrets he has worked so hard to hide are now exposed and the potential loss of job, home, reputation, and freedom creates feelings of shame, fear and helplessness.





6 Law Enforcement's Response To The Child Sex Offender

At this crisis moment, the law enforcement officer will need to quickly assess the best way to de-escalate any intense emotions in these situations. Law enforcement should attempt to elicit more rational or objective thinking from the offender rather than an initial impulsive, fight or flight response, which could lead to a violent altercation. At times when an individual becomes increasingly irrational and aggressive the situation could result in a barricade or a SBC scenario. The FBI's Law Enforcement Online Hostage Barricade Database System (HOBAS) reported 54 SBC cases that occurred between 1983 and 2009. In such instances, law enforcement may have to engage in negotiations in order to attempt to decrease the emotionally loaded situation and to obtain the cooperation of the offender (Lanceley, 2003). Unfortunately, when law enforcement officers do not perceive CSOs as threatening they treat these offenders with much less caution. Having the mindset that every offender, if given a chance, could injure or kill the officer or someone else could reduce the risk to law enforcement. Particularly with Internet-related CSO cases there is usually plenty of time for proper planning and preparation. Failing to do so could result in serious injury to law enforcement officers or even result in death. When time permits, an arrest or search operational plan should be prepared. Taking the time to carefully draft a plan decreases liability, increases professionalism, increases the understanding of the nature of the arrest, and most importantly, increases officer safety.

Simply by completing and briefing on the specifics of the arrest or search plan, officers are better prepared to successfully resolve a dangerous situation. If time does not permit for a written arrest plan to be completed, at a minimum, a verbal arrest plan should be briefed to all participants depending upon the law enforcement agency's protocol. A briefing entails the thorough explanation of the entire arrest plan to the arrest team and supporting personnel and can include how to identify and address any potential risk factors for suicide or other violent acts during the execution of the warrant. Clarity and confidence in a plan comes from knowing the roles of everyone involved. An additional benefit is any deficiencies in the plan can be identified and addressed prior to approach or entry. To ensure all officers clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, a proper briefing and brief-back should be conducted. The unique risk factors related to CSOs should

be addressed during the arrest or search warrant briefings, including the potential for suicide. One member of the team should be tasked with talking with the CSO to de-escalate the situation and to explore potential suicide or violence risk factors.

A debriefing should be performed as soon as possible after the operation. The debriefing is an excellent opportunity for training, recognizing deficiencies, and improving performance. It is impossible to conduct a perfect operation, and the debriefing should reflect as such.

Unfortunately, during executions of search or arrest warrants, there are countless events in which a law enforcement officer has been injured or killed. Following these tragic events, law enforcement management sometimes comment on the lack of indicators that the suspect was potentially violent. Whether or not the CSO indicates the potential for violence, the actions of law enforcement should consistently treat every situation as potentially dangerous and should conduct themselves in a safe, tactically sound, and professional manner on every search/arrest warrant or "knock and talk." Law enforcement officers should not assume the offender will comply, but instead should expect and prepare for the offender's resistance.

Case Example

The team executed a search warrant on the residence of a male CSO and his roommate. A subsequent forensic review revealed child pornography images on his computer. When they returned to the residence to arrest him, his roommate told the officers that the CSO was in the basement area. As they continued their approach they heard a gunshot. The CSO had committed suicide. It was clear that the potential for a law enforcement officer being injured or killed was viable during this situation.

7 General Suggestions for Law Enforcement

Contact with Child Sex Offenders

If time permits, it would be prudent for the law enforcement officer to take into consideration the violence risk factors in their evaluation of the CSO's increased potential for violence to himself or others. Although these factors cannot predict the CSO's response, they can assist law enforcement in preparing for the potential for violence prior to their contact with the offender. When executing search or arrest warrants or conducting "knock and talks," law enforcement should recognize the serious threat that CSOs could present.

The following suggestions are focused on interactions law enforcement might have with CSOs, to include "knock and

talks," search and arrest warrants. However, some of the more dangerous incidents reported have occurred when law enforcement attempts to make contact with the CSO after he did not show up for a court hearing or other mandated legal proceeding. The suggestions listed below are considerations for law enforcement, but they are in no way legally mandated or required. Any suggestions should be reviewed by the law enforcement agency's management or legal counsel. These recommendations have been developed through the authors' investigative experiences with CSOs and discussions with numerous local, state and federal law enforcement agencies across the country.



8 Before Contact With The Child Sex Offender

Prior to executing a search warrant or conducting a “knock and talk” at the CSO’s residence there are many steps law enforcement can take to better prepare the team for the situation. The investigators should attempt to obtain any and all background information about the CSO such as past law enforcement contacts (e.g., criminal history, NCIC off line searches, officer calls to the residence), current/past employers, marital status, children and/or access to children. If possible, find out any details about the prior law enforcement contacts as this information could help evaluate how the CSO might respond to law enforcement in the future based on how he responded in the past. For example, has the CSO refused to cooperate, resisted arrest, indicated any self-destructive behavior and/or responded aggressively towards law enforcement in the past?

Information should be obtained to determine whether the CSO is isolated, feels alone, or tends to be a loner. Some indicators include his living situation, type of employment, lack of activity or contact with others. Conducting surveillance might reveal the level of contact he has with others, which could be a source of support to help him through the investigative process or might make the CSO think he will be a burden on them. Information indicating that the CSO may react to the investigation as if he is a burden on others, such as his family, would be helpful for law enforcement to obtain. CSOs with a high level of conscientiousness, such as being an upstanding citizen who is well respected in the community, duty and honor bound and who has no criminal history may indicate that the CSO feels he has a lot to lose and does not want to tarnish his reputation as an upstanding citizen and/or be a burden on his family.

If possible, obtain information about gun ownership or hunting licenses, such as conducting surveillance to see what firearm activities the CSO is involved in. Law enforcement frequently makes a ruse phone call to obtain information about the CSO’s Internet service provider. During this telephone call, law enforcement could also obtain information about what activities or organizations the CSO is involved in that may increase his acquired capability to take his life.

Inquiries could be made about the CSO’s past or current military history. Based on the BAU’s study, a large percentage

Before Contact with CSO

- Conduct surveillance and other techniques to obtain information about the CSO.
- Use the Situation, Missions, Execution, Administration and Communication model (SMEAC) to organize search/arrest plan.
- Prepare the team for the state of mind of a CSO.
- Brief the team on the plan, along with any contingencies.
- Emphasize the importance of wearing safety gear, such as body armor.
- Plan for how the approach and tactical response will impact the interview and balance with safety concerns.
- Consider what themes could be utilized if the CSO responds negatively and the team must negotiate with him.
- Consider if or when the SWAT or Crisis Negotiation Team would be requested.
- Discuss and plan for seizing weapons.

of subjects who have committed suicide had prior military experience. Individuals with prior military experience often maintain a strong sense of honor and an expectation of proper conduct. For those CSOs with military backgrounds, these expectations might increase their feelings of shame and guilt. Military history could also elevate the possibility that the CSO has firearms in his residence or has experience with the use of firearms.

A thorough briefing should include any information on the CSO’s background and state of mind, which might increase his risk for acting out violently against himself or others. The shame and embarrassment of being found out may increase a CSO’s feelings of desperation and the perception that he will lose everything, such as his job, wife, children, friends, financial security and self-image. He most likely has struggled with prior feelings of stress, anxiety and internal conflict from his sexual arousal to children, downloading child pornography, and/or molesting children, which could

have contributed to any prior suicidal ideations, gestures, or attempts. Information about prior suicide attempts could be obtained through local law enforcement agencies who might have responded to the emergency scene. He may have already thought about getting caught and might have made mental or actual preparations for his response to law enforcement. He might react with desperation, which could increase his instability and potential risk to himself and others. Law enforcement should be briefed about the risk that suicidal people could pose to others around them, including law enforcement.

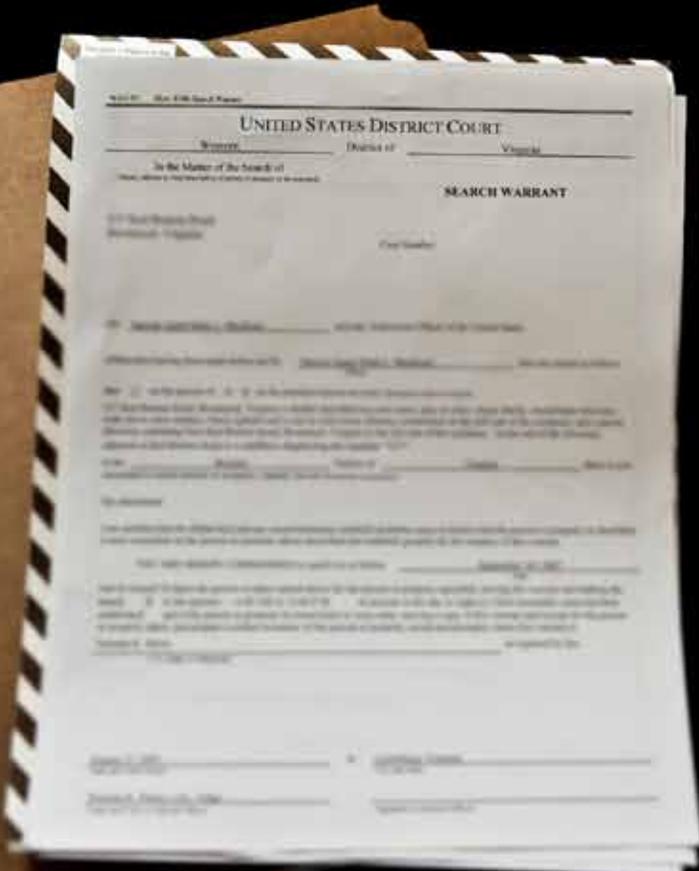
Most search warrants utilize an operational plan that covers the pertinent information about the CSO and his residence, as well as any contingencies law enforcement might make. Employ a best practices approach incorporating the most effective tactical steps to keep the team safe, such as wearing a vest at all times during contact with the CSO. The authors' have interviewed a number of agents and officers in the field who report that safety vests were not always used during search warrants and even less frequently utilized during "knock and talks." The authors clearly advocate that body armor, even undercover vests, be utilized during every interaction with CSOs.

In the BAU sample of 106 offenders, 10% of the CSOs posed a danger to law enforcement officers affecting the search or arrest warrant when the CSO committed suicide by shooting

his firearm while in close proximity to law enforcement. Some teams might need additional training regarding how to respond when the search team knocks and announces themselves at the CSO's door and they hear a gun shot. Consideration could be given to notifying the SWAT and Crisis Negotiation Team about the upcoming operation being executed at the offender's location. This prepares the teams in the event the CSO responds aggressively towards law enforcement or towards himself.

In most situations where law enforcement is contacting a CSO, an interview is vital to obtain additional information and evidence of the CSO's criminal activity. Law enforcement should carefully weigh how the different approaches and tactical responses will impact the offender's cooperation during the investigation, agreement to submit to the interview and/or consent to search and take the computer. It is important to weigh these issues along with officer safety. Information obtained about the CSO will help law enforcement to develop potential themes for building rapport with the CSO and/or use if the situation results in a barricade and negotiations become necessary.

In order to avoid any confusion or delay, the team should discuss the options regarding seizing firearms found in the CSO's residence prior to executing the search warrant or "knock and talk." Consider utilizing the data published on the CSOs who have committed suicide to support the fact that almost 50% of offenders use firearms to take their lives. In addition, one study (Pritchard & King, 2005) found that subjects who only offended against children were 183 times more likely to commit suicide compared to the general population. For the offender's safety and the safety of the team, it could be argued that seizing any and all firearms is a reasonable course of action. Law enforcement should consult with their legal counsel to discuss the options regarding obtaining the firearms. Some options include giving them to a family member, the CSO's attorney, contacting local law enforcement to seize the weapon(s) or taking them into evidence.



9 During Contact With The Child Sex Offender

During contact with the CSO, law enforcement should be continually looking for any signs indicating the potential for violence by the CSO against others in the vicinity, or against himself. Initially, the offender should be handcuffed for officer safety and placed in a secure area until any and all weapons can be secured. The offender should not be allowed to freely roam around the area. Ask the offender if there are any firearms in his residence and secure them based upon the approved plan regarding firearms. For example, place it in the law enforcement officer's vehicle until the team clears the residence. Seize the firearm(s) located in the CSO's residence, if prior approval and arrangements have been made or immediate circumstances warrant. If the firearm cannot be seized, secure it by removing the magazine and bullets from the firearm or giving the firearm to a family member or friend for safe-keeping. Prior to leaving the residence, obtain the layout of the residence in order to address future contingencies when the team returns to affect an arrest warrant.

From anecdotal reports, it appears the risk for suicide of the CSO or a SBC scenario might be greater than the risk to law enforcement. The BAU is currently working on Volume 2 of this handbook to assist law enforcement in conducting an interview to explore salient factors that could increase a CSO's risk for suicide.

The initial contact with the CSO allows law enforcement a preliminary observation of the offender's demeanor and reaction. As with other law enforcement contacts, the goal is to slow down the process and decrease the heightened emotions which might be elicited. Law enforcement should attempt to increase the CSO's ability to make rational decisions by engaging in ways to decrease his stress response, such as getting him to cooperate and agree to be interviewed (Noessner, 1997). If the offender refuses to be interviewed and wants to leave the residence during the search, consider posting an agent or officer at the front of the residence in case the offender returns.

The interview of a CSO can offer law enforcement an opportunity to obtain information about his additional stressors and potential risk factors for violence. Consider separating the interview of the CSO into two parts. The

During Contact with the CSO- Operational Suggestions

- Handcuff the CSO and place him in an area that has been searched for weapons. Remove the handcuffs as soon as the area is clear. Do not allow the CSO to freely roam around the area.
- If the CSO leaves the home during the search, an officer can be posted to ensure he does not unexpectedly return.
- Ask about firearms in the residence and their location. Secure all weapons until the team has vacated the premises by clearing the weapon, emptying the magazines & separating the magazines from the gun, or placing the gun in an officer's vehicle. Consider giving the firearm to a family member to secure.
- Contact the supervisor & prosecuting attorney regarding seizing the firearm(s) and retaining them until the CSO is seen for his initial court appearance.
- Assess the residence, such as the layout of the house for when/if law enforcement needs to return to the residence.
- Discuss and plan for seizing weapons.

initial part would focus on the CSO's criminal activities and the second part would focus on asking pertinent questions regarding the CSO's state of mind, his support system and any risk factors related to suicide. If the same law enforcement officer is not able to conduct both parts, consider identifying a law enforcement officer who is able to conduct this specialized interview.

Law enforcement can explore with the CSO how he will be impacted by this investigation and can observe his reactions

The interview is an opportunity to obtain information about any additional stressors & potential risk factors for violence.



and responses to these questions. Some investigators interviewed in the BAU study discussed how the offenders who later committed suicide were extremely shut down, did not talk much, and almost seemed “resigned.”

It is not uncommon for people to think that by asking someone about suicide it could prompt the person to choose suicide. Research has found this is not true (Lanceley, 2003; Juhnke, Granello, & Granello, 2011). More than 8 million people in the United States reported having suicidal ideations in a 12 month period between 2008-2009, and 1 in 100 adults (2.2 million or 1% of the U.S. adult population) reported that they had planned to commit suicide the prior year (Crosby, Han, Ortega, Parks & Gfroerer, 2011). Thus, the CSO should be asked directly if he has ever thought about suicide or has attempted suicide. Obtain information regarding any past suicidal behavior, such as when he attempted suicide, what triggered the incident and the details of his suicide attempt. Ask the CSO what occurred that resulted in him surviving the past attempt. Ask the CSO directly if he is presently thinking about suicide. Consider asking the offender if he is currently in therapy and obtain consent to contact his therapist and/or a family member to obtain support for the CSO and notify them about the potential risk for suicide.

During Contact with the CSO- Interview Suggestions

- Conduct an initial evaluation of the CSO’s reaction to law enforcement. Continue to evaluate stress levels throughout the period of contact.
- Decrease the CSO’s stress response and increase rational decision-making by being calm and controlled.
- Build rapport by treating him with respect. This encourages him to cooperate with the interview in order to obtain information regarding potential risk factors or stressors.
- Ask how the CSO will be impacted and observe his reaction and response.
- Ask about prior thoughts of suicide or attempts, and details regarding the incidents, such as where, when he attempted and what triggered the suicidal behavior.
- Ask directly about current thoughts of suicide. Asking about suicide will not put the idea in his head. If he is suicidal he has already thought about it.
- Obtain contact information for family member or close friends and notify him/her if the CSO exhibits any concerning behaviors or makes any remarks that indicate elevated risk.
- Ask if he has seen or is currently being seen by a mental health professional and request consent to talk with him or her.

10 After Contact With The Child Sex Offender

After completing the search, the CSO is left with the full weight of the future legal process and the exposure of his sexual activities. He has time to think about other alternatives to being incarcerated. Law enforcement should depart from the residence expeditiously in order to prevent any potential altercation with the offender. Some agents and detectives that were interviewed for the BAU project indicated in some cases law enforcement teams stood outside discussing the case instead of leaving immediately.



Consider making contact with local law enforcement to inform them of the search warrant/knock & talk in case an emergency call is made from the residence.

If local law enforcement was not involved in the initial contact with the CSO, consider making contact after leaving the CSO's residence in the event they receive an emergency call from this residence. Inform them of this contact and any concerns regarding potential risk factors for violence from the offender against others or himself.

If the CSO's firearm was seized by law enforcement, secure the weapon in evidence or other safe location and document the reason for the seizure, such as offender safety, to check on the serial number of the firearm, or if the firearm was not legally owned by the CSO. The prosecuting attorney can argue at the court hearing to maintain the weapon due to the CSO's potential risk of violence or suicide as well as to detain the CSO for his own safety and the safety to others close to him. The study conducted by the FBI's BAU can be utilized to support this argument.

If the search was based on a federal warrant, consider requesting the local law enforcement task force member to maintain the firearm until it can be given to a responsible

family member or the offender's attorney. Consider contacting the therapist or family member about any concerns you have regarding the CSO's state of mind or potential for violence.

At the CSO's initial court appearance, consider adding the concern for the offender's safety as an additional argument to detain the CSO. In response to a number of suicides of pretrial sex offenders in two California federal districts, a pilot program has been established to lower the risk of suicide among CSOs. The program allows for a multi-disciplinary approach with mental health providers and the criminal justice system working together in crisis intervention, therapy and incarceration preparations (Byrne, 2009). On a positive note, no suicides have occurred among participants since the program's inception and the program exemplifies why new and innovative strategies can prevent suicide among this population of offenders.

After Contact with the CSO

- Leave premises expeditiously.
- Contact local law enforcement in the area to inform them of your contact with the CSO.
- Secure any firearm(s) that were seized.
- Conduct a debriefing and discuss any potential issues regarding risk.
- Following the arrest of the CSO, argue for detention at his initial court appearance due to his potential risk to himself or to others.



11 Conclusion

Society might feel mixed emotions when a CSO commits suicide, including a positive feeling that the CSO can no longer engage in behaviors that harm children. When CSOs die by suicide there is a widespread impact on others (Hoffer, et al., 2010). The suicides of CSOs often elicit a range of conflicting emotions including anger, guilt, confusion, betrayal and loss from family, friends and victims of the offenders. This handbook explored how CSOs react to the stress of the law enforcement contact and law enforcement's perception of CSOs. CSOs are often perceived as being less dangerous and nonviolent. Therefore, the danger that law enforcement faces is often underestimated when initiating search/arrest warrants and "knock and talk" contacts. Hoffer, et al., (2010) argue that the

risk CSOs pose to themselves is considerable and there is also potentially a danger to law enforcement. The authors advocate that law enforcement prepare for the interview with the CSO prior to making contact, and to brief the team on issues related to suicide or violence risk. In addition, law enforcement should ask the CSO directly about past or current suicidal ideations and to consider making contact with a family member or therapist if the CSO endorses any risk factors. Finally, plan for the possibility of seizing any firearms in the residence, argue to detain the CSO for his safety and contact local law enforcement regarding any concerns. When involved in any contact with a CSO, law enforcement should always treat the offender as someone who could be volatile, suicidal and highly dangerous.



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Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) Tia A. Hoffer has a doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology, and prior to her work with the FBI, she conducted psychological assessments, individual, and group psychotherapy. She has been with the FBI since 1998 and is currently assigned to the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) III, which deals specifically with Crimes Against Children. SSA Hoffer provides operational support to federal, state, and local law enforcement through case consultations and on-site deployments. She has trained criminal justice and mental health professionals in matters involving child abductions, child homicides, and sexual victimization of children. She is the Principal Investigator on research projects including Suicide among Child Sex Offenders, Criminal Histories of Animal Cruelty Offenders and the General Assessment Questionnaire Validation project.

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Joy Lynn E. Shelton, B.A., is a Crime Analyst in the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) III- Crimes Against Children. She joined the unit in 1999 and serves as the Principal Researcher for the BAU's study on maternal filicide. She has co-authored three articles on the topic of neonaticide – the killing of a child within 24 hours of birth. She is also a co-researcher for the Suicide among Child Sex Offenders project. In addition, she provides analytical support for other crimes against children research and operational support for investigations. Mrs. Shelton presents at a wide-variety of national training venues and is an instructor at the FBI's National Academy at Quantico, VA.

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Chuck Joyner was a Special Agent with the FBI from 1987 until his retirement in 2011 where he spent many years on the S.W.A.T. Team and trained agents as the Principal Firearms Instructor and Defensive Tactics Instructor. He created Survival Sciences, LLC to serve the law enforcement community by providing scientific and practical solutions to Use of Force issues. Chuck has lectured internationally and throughout the U.S. on a myriad of law enforcement topics. He is the author of *Advanced Concepts in Defensive Tactics: A Survival Guide to Law Enforcement*, and a frequent contributor to law enforcement publications. He can be reached at www.SurvivalSciences.com.

The National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) Behavioral Analysis Units (BAU)

The NCAVC provides behavioral-based operational support free of charge to federal, state, local and international law enforcement agencies investigating unusual and/or repetitive violent crimes, communicated threats, or other matters of interest to law enforcement. The center is a component of the Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG) located at the FBI Academy, Quantico, Virginia.

The NCAVC is comprised of four units: the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP), the Behavioral Analysis Unit - I (Counterterrorism and Threat Assessment), the Behavioral Analysis Unit-2 (Crimes Against Adults), and the Behavioral Analysis Unit 3 – (Crimes Against Children). Utilizing a tool developed by the BAU called Criminal Investigative Analysis, the BAU assists law enforcement in the solution of unsolved crimes. A variety of Criminal Investigative Analysis services are available to law enforcement and include: Crime Analysis, Profiles of Unknown Offenders, Personality Assessment, Interview/Interrogation Strategies, Investigation Suggestions, Media Strategies, Prosecutorial and Trial Strategies, Threat Assessment, Statement Analysis, Search Warrant Assistance, Expert Testimony, Critical Incident Analysis, Linkage Analysis, and Geographic Profiling. The responsibilities of each BAU are detailed as follows:

BAU-1, Counterterrorism and Threat

Assessment: BAU-1 resources are focused on matters involving terrorism, threats, arson, bombings, stalking, and anticipated or active crisis situations.

BAU-2, Crimes Against Adults: BAU-2 resources are primarily focused on serial, mass, and other murders, sexual assaults, kidnappings, missing person cases, and other violent criminal acts targeting adult victims. BAU-2 also provides assistance in potentially non-violent investigations such as white collar crime, public corruption, organized crime and civil rights matters.

BAU-3, Crimes Against Children: BAU-3 resources are focused on cyber-related violations and crimes perpetrated against child victims including: child abductions, mysterious disappearances of children, child homicides, and child sexual victimization.

BAU-1: 703-632-4333

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BEFORE Contact with CSO

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- Use the Situation, Missions, Execution, Administration and Communication model (SMEAC) to organize search/arrest plan.
- Prepare the team for the state of mind of a CSO.
- Brief the team on the plan, along with any contingencies.
- Emphasize the importance of wearing safety gear, such as body armor.
- Plan for how the approach and tactical response will impact the interview and balance with safety concerns.
- Consider what themes could be utilized if the CSO responds negatively and the team must negotiate with him.
- Consider if or when the SWAT or Crisis Negotiation Team would be requested.
- Discuss and plan for seizing weapons.

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- Conduct an initial evaluation of the CSO's reaction to law enforcement. Continue to evaluate stress levels throughout the period of contact.
- Decrease the CSO's stress response and increase rational decision-making by being calm and controlled.
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- Ask if he has seen or is currently being seen by a mental health professional and request consent to talk with him or her.

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- Handcuff the CSO and place him in an area that has been searched for weapons. Remove the handcuffs as soon as the area is clear. Do not allow the CSO to freely roam around the area.
- If the CSO leaves the home during the search, an officer can be posted to ensure he does not unexpectedly return.
- Ask about firearms in the residence and their location. Secure all weapons until the team has vacated the premises by clearing the weapon, emptying the magazines & separating the magazines from the gun, or placing the gun in an officer's vehicle. Consider giving the firearm to a family member to secure.
- Contact the supervisor & prosecuting attorney regarding seizing the firearm(s) and retaining them until the CSO is seen for his initial court appearance.
- Assess the residence, such as the layout of the house for when/if law enforcement needs to return to the residence.
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AFTER Contact with the CSO

- Leave premises expeditiously.
- Contact local law enforcement in the area to inform them of your contact with the CSO.
- Secure any firearm(s) that were seized.
- Conduct a debriefing and discuss any potential issues regarding risk.
- Following the arrest of the CSO, argue for detention at his initial court appearance due to his potential risk to himself or to others.



Operational Safety Considerations
While Investigating Child Sex
Offenders

A Handbook for Law Enforcement, Volume I

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