



# False Allegation of Child Abduction

A Handbook for Law Enforcement Investigators

# Foreword

The Behavioral Analysis Unit 3 (BAU-3), a component of the FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), provides behavioral-based investigative and operational support to law enforcement agencies involved in the investigation of missing/abducted children, child homicides, sexual victimization of children, and other criminal acts targeting child victims.

BAU-3's operational services are supported and enhanced by its behavioral research program. BAU-3 staff members, in conjunction with other government and academic entities, conduct research from a law enforcement perspective, designed to gain insight into criminals' thought processes, motivations, and behaviors. Insights gained through BAU-3 research are refined into investigative techniques and applied to improve law enforcement's effectiveness against criminals who offend against children.

One of BAU-3's research projects is focused on the problem of parents and other caregivers who are responsible for the death of a child under their care, and then falsely claim that the child is missing or has been abducted. The child's death can be the result of a planned murder, chronic physical abuse, or an unplanned accidental death. The parent/caretaker recognizes that an investigation into the child's death would potentially result in criminal charges against them, so the false claim of a missing or abducted child enables them to provide an explanation for the child's disappearance, and to cover up their complicity in the child's death.

These cases can be extremely challenging for responding law enforcement agencies, as it can be difficult to distinguish between a legitimate missing or abducted child, and a falsely reported one. The purpose of this report is to furnish information from BAU-3's experience and research in false allegations of child abduction, in order to inform early responders in missing child cases of factors that represent an increased risk of false allegation, to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of these types of cases, and to identify investigative strategies that may be helpful in their resolution.

---



# False Allegation of Child Abduction

## A Handbook for Law Enforcement Investigators

Behavioral Analysis Unit 3  
National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime  
Critical Incident Response Group  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Published in March 2013

SSA Mark A. Hilts  
SSA William H. Donaldson  
RC Yvonne Muirhead

This document is intended for use by law enforcement agencies investigating cases of missing children and is not intended for distribution to the general public.

## Table of Contents

3	Introduction
4	Research Protocol
5	Victim Characteristics
6	Offender Characteristics
7	Victim/Offender Relationship
8	Family Dynamics
9	Motivation
10	Offense Characteristics
12	Body Disposal
14	Investigative Factors
15	Parental/Caregiver Interaction with Law Enforcement
16	Risk Factors
17	Child Abduction Response
18	Investigative Recommendations
23	Conclusion
24	References



# 1 Introduction

The report of an abducted child, or a child missing under suspicious circumstances, generates an immediate law enforcement response and initiates an investigation that will involve and significantly affect not just the victim's family, but the surrounding neighborhood and community as well. These cases can be extremely challenging for investigators, as there are many potential explanations for a child's disappearance, and multiple avenues of investigation that must be pursued quickly. Children who are missing may have run away, become lost or injured, or may have fallen victim to a family abduction, a non-family abduction, or a homicide and a falsely alleged abduction.

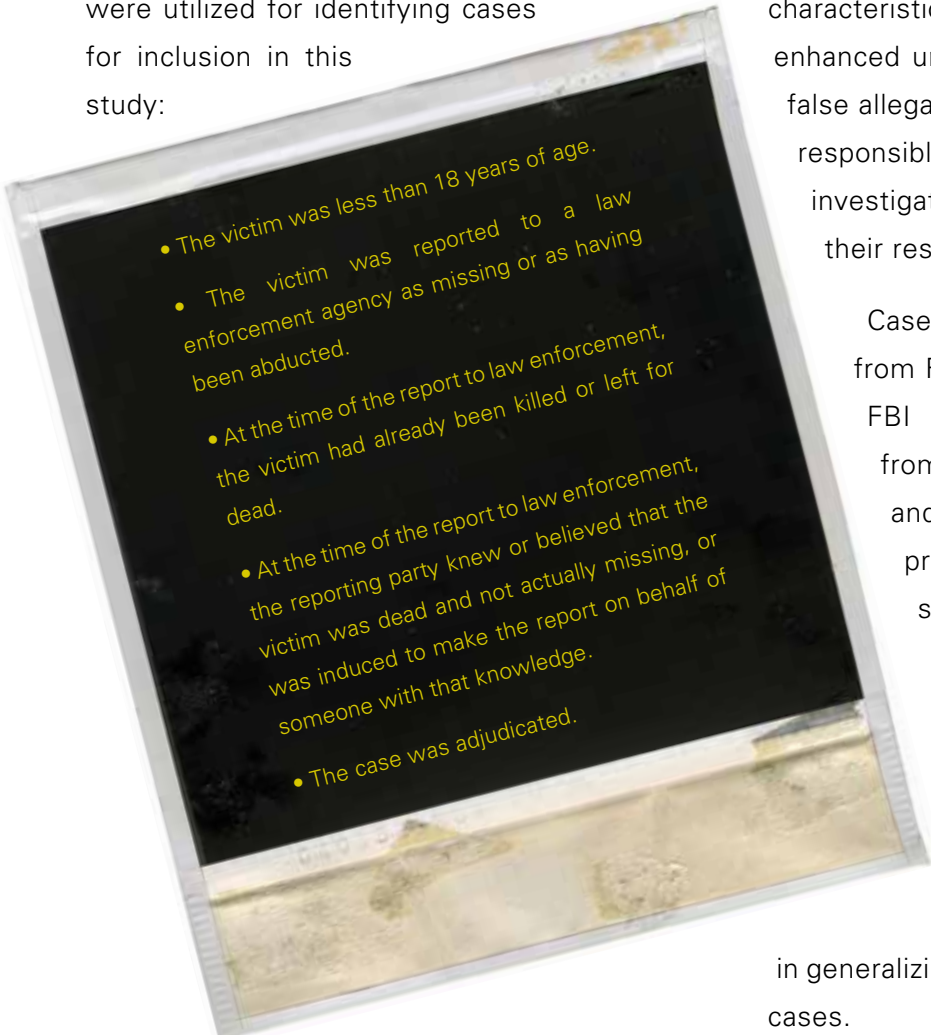
In most instances in which children are reported missing or as having been abducted, there is little immediately-obvious evidence that a crime has been committed. The child is simply gone from where they were last seen or where they were supposed to be. Early responders have to take the report of the child's disappearance at face value, and base their early investigative efforts on information provided by the reporting party.

But there are times when the initial information provided by the reporting party is false. There are times when a parent or other caregiver is responsible for the death of a child, and they then falsely report the child as having been abducted in order to explain the child's disappearance, and to cover up their complicity in the child's death. In those instances, the searches, canvasses and other investigative efforts may be focused in the wrong direction. The early recognition of factors suggestive of a potential false allegation case can assist investigators in focusing their efforts on investigative methods effective in resolving the case, whether the offender is an unknown abductor or a family member.



## 2 Research Protocol

BAU-3 research into false allegations of child abduction is based on a study of 66 offenders responsible for the homicide or attempted homicide of 71 victims. The following criteria were utilized for identifying cases for inclusion in this study:

- 
- The victim was less than 18 years of age.
  - The victim was reported to a law enforcement agency as missing or as having been abducted.
  - At the time of the report to law enforcement, the victim had already been killed or left for dead.
  - At the time of the report to law enforcement, the reporting party knew or believed that the victim was dead and not actually missing, or was induced to make the report on behalf of someone with that knowledge.
  - The case was adjudicated.

BAU- 3 staff members identified cases fitting the above criteria, reviewed case materials and completed questionnaires on the cases.

The case materials were obtained from the original investigating agencies and information from the case materials was supplemented by contact with the original investigators. Patterns and characteristics were identified which provided an enhanced understanding of the dynamics of the false allegation cases studied and the offenders responsible for them, as well as specific investigative protocols that were effective in their resolution.

Cases for this project were identified from FBI case files, media searches, other FBI research projects, and information from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The project includes cases from 29 states, spanning the years from 1979 to 2010.

The overall number of false allegation cases is unknown; therefore, the percentage of all false allegation cases which are represented by this study is also unknown. Caution should be used in generalizing data from this study onto unsolved cases.

The results from a review of the first 61 offenders/66 victims were published in May 2011 in the Journal of Forensic Sciences.

# 3 Victim Characteristics



The single most significant indicator of a false allegation case is the age of the victim. While false allegation cases can occur with children of any age, *infant and toddler-aged victims were at the highest risk for family victimization and false allegation.* The median age of the victims in the false allegation study is 3.4 years. Over two-thirds of the victims were younger than five years of age. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies, which reflect that young children are victimized most often by family members.

These results contrast with cases of actual non-family abduction homicide, in which the victims are generally older, averaging between 11 to 12 years of age. Additionally, victims of non-family abduction homicides are predominately female, whereas there was no significant difference in the gender of false allegation victims (55% female/45% male).

# 4 Offender Characteristics

The majority of the cases in the study (77%) involved only one offender. The median age of primary offenders was 27 years of age. Primary offenders<sup>1</sup> were split almost equally between males and females (51.5% male/48.5% female).

The offenders typically suffered from a variety of financial, relationship, employment, and other challenges.

Primary offenders in this study suffered from the domestic problems shown in Table 1:

Table 1  
*Domestic Problems of Offenders*

Relationship problems .....	61%
Criminal History .....	62%
Financial problems.....	56%
Drug/Alcohol abuse.....	36%
Domestic violence.....	32%
Unemployment.....	24%
Mental illness.....	12%
Employment problems .....	8%

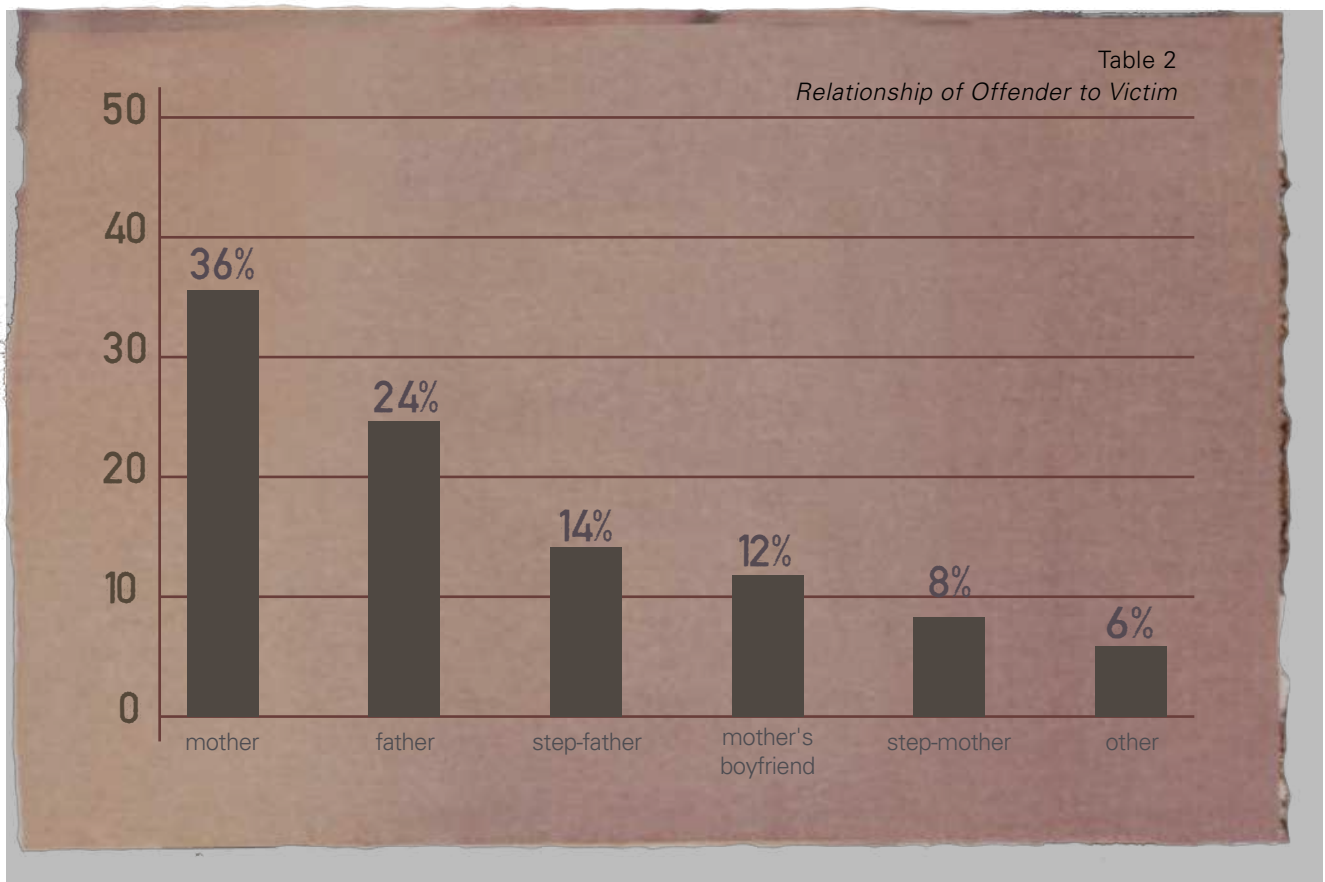
Note. Only 3 of the 66 offenders had no documented criminal history or domestic problems.

<sup>1</sup> The primary offender is the individual who caused the death of the victim, first discovered the death of the victim, or was the sole offender.



# 5 Victim/Offender Relationship

The individuals most likely to perpetrate a false allegation of child abduction were the biological parents of the victim. They accounted for almost two-thirds of the offenders in the BAU-3 study. Other offenders included step/foster/adoptive fathers and mothers, mothers' boyfriends, and other relatives or acquaintances. All of the offenders were involved in some type of caregiver relationship with the victim and/or were residing in the same household as the victim. Table 2 represents the relationship of the primary offender to the victim, based upon the results of this study.



## 6 Family Dynamics



Since the offenders in false allegation cases were primarily family members or other individuals living in the household with the victim, an assessment of the family structure and household dynamics can be significant in the investigation of false allegation cases.

In addition to general domestic problems suffered by the offenders, there was often evidence of household instability. In 58% of the cases, there was a change in the make-up of the family household within six months prior to the offense, including someone moving into or out of the family residence, or the birth of a child (including the victim). In 52% of the cases, there were periods of prolonged separation from the household in which the victim was killed, or the victim had not always resided within that household.

False allegation victims were often maltreated within their families prior to the offense. Nine percent (9%) were victims of physical abuse that was officially reported to law enforcement or social service agencies, and 34% were victims of physical abuse that was not officially reported, and was observed and described by family, neighbors, teachers or other witnesses. Forty-two percent (42%) of victims had been described by the offender as having special needs or characteristics that placed an increased burden on the offender in caring for the victim, putting the victims at increased risk for abuse or neglect.

# 7

## Motivation

Offenders can have complex and varied reasons for committing their crimes and it can be difficult to classify a crime as having a single motivating factor on behalf of the offender. However, sufficient information was available, including confessions or other statements made by the offenders, witness statements, forensic evidence, autopsy reports, and other information, to assess the most likely motivations or intentions of a majority of the offenders in this study.

Sexually motivated cases represented a small percentage of the overall study, but it is noted that all of the sexually motivated cases involved female victims that were slightly older than the average victim age in the study, and were killed by male offenders who were not biologically related to them.

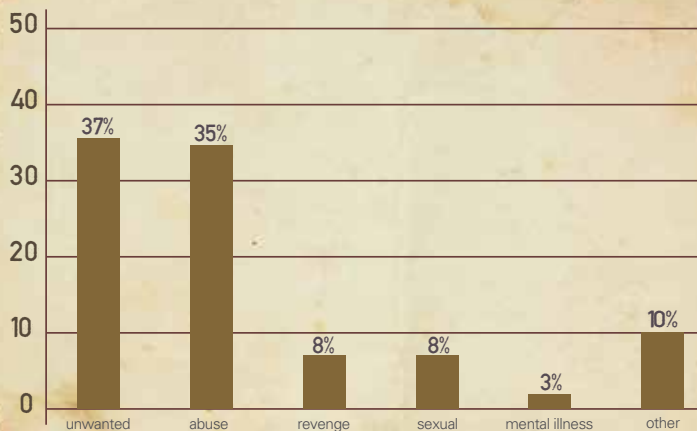
There were two primary motivations related to false allegation cases identified by this study. The largest percentage of victims were killed because they were unwanted. In the minds of the offenders, the victims represented a burden, or were viewed as an impediment to a goal. Many of these cases involved pre-planning on behalf of the offender regarding the methods of killing the victim and of disposing of the body afterwards.

The second most likely scenario was the death of the victim as a result of physical abuse. In these cases, the intent of the offender was to physically punish or abuse the victim, and the result was the victim's death. The offenders recognized that the visible injuries on the victims caused by their fatal

abuse would likely result in some type of charges, precipitating their decision to cover up the death with a false report of abduction.

Other false allegation cases involved revenge against a current or former spouse, sexual gratification, mental illness, or other motivations. Table 3 represents the percentages of the motivations which were identified for 63 out of the 71 false allegation cases within this study.

Table 3  
*Motivations of Offenders\**



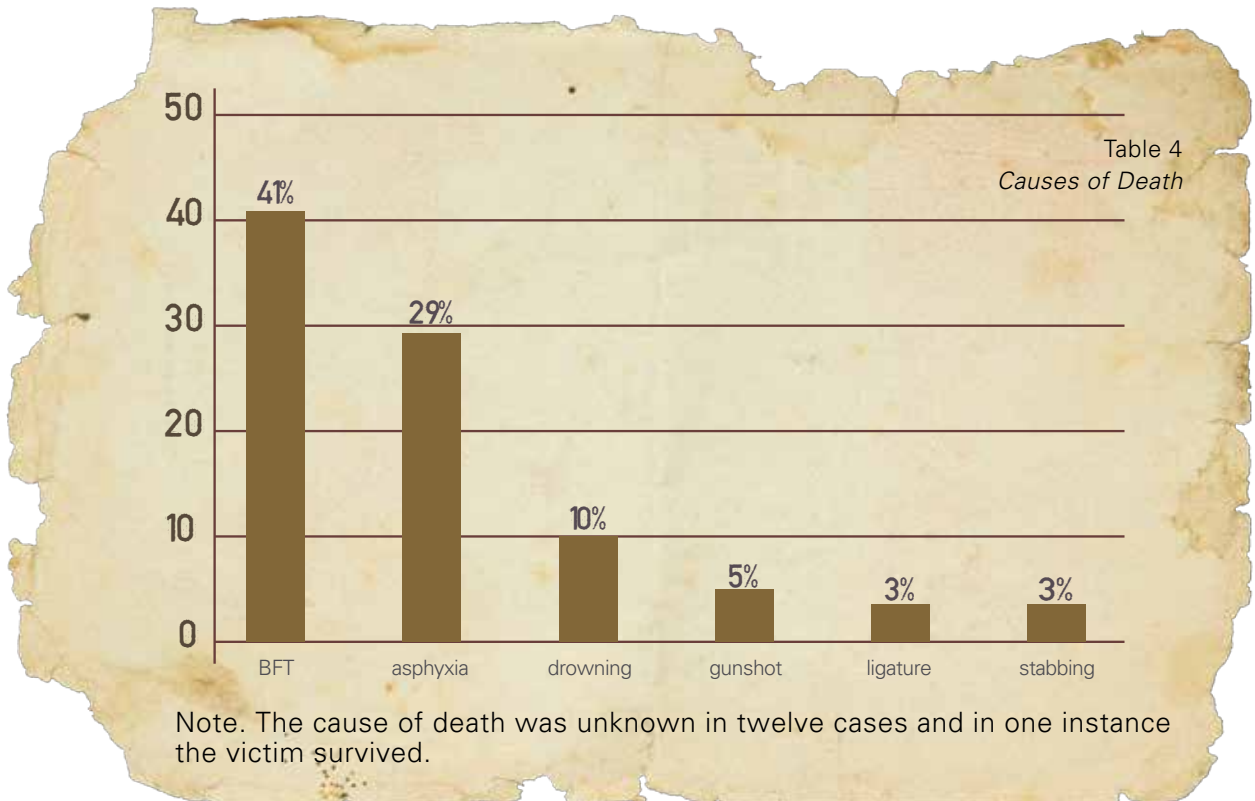
# 8

## Offense Characteristics

The majority of the victims in this study were killed within their own homes, which is consistent with most incidences of family-related violence. When the location of the homicide was known, 68% of the victims in this study were killed inside their own residence.

Homicides of infant and toddler-aged children are primarily caused by family and other caregivers, and the most common causes of death are blunt force trauma and asphyxiation or suffocation. Young children spend most of their time in the company of their family members and other caretakers, and they have less of the characteristics (money, possessions, sexual development) that would make them attractive targets for victimization by strangers. Their small stature leaves them vulnerable to acts of violence that would not necessarily be fatal for older children or adults.

Table 4 represents the causes of death which were identified for 58 out of the 71 victims in this study.



**CRIME SCENE**

# 9 Body Disposal

One of the most challenging aspects in the investigation of false allegation cases is that the bodies of the victims are often well-hidden. While many of the deaths were spontaneous and/or unplanned, once the offender made the decision to cover-up the death by alleging the child was missing/abducted, many offenders were able to plan and execute an effective means of body disposal.

The bodies of 63 of the 71 victims in this study were recovered. The locations of 28 (44%) of the recovered victims were furnished by the offenders during statements to authorities. Another 32% were discovered accidentally by hikers, hunters, and other individuals who were not searching for the victim. Only 21% of the victim's bodies were recovered by searchers who were actively looking for them.

Offenders utilized a wide range of body disposal methods, including putting the bodies in dumpsters or trash cans, placing them into bodies of water, hiding them under brush or trash, burying them in graves, or simply leaving them in a rural area where no one would be likely to discover them. Based upon their location and the method of disposal, it is estimated that 20 of the 28 victims whose recovery locations were furnished by the offenders would never have been recovered without the offender revealing their location. Therefore, when those 20 are considered along with the eight bodies that were never recovered, approximately 44% of the total victims were either never recovered, or were only recovered due to statements made by the offender. This is a significant impediment to a successful investigation.

This study identified several patterns which may assist in the direction of search efforts:

- \* In the vast majority of cases, the bodies were disposed of outside. Only 13% of the bodies were recovered inside a residence, garage, or other enclosed structure.
- \* Some offenders traveled significant distances to dispose of bodies outside of the expected search areas. While 41% of the bodies were located within a mile of the location from which they were reportedly abducted, slightly less than a quarter (24%) of the bodies were located more than 10 miles away from where they were reported missing, and 16% of the bodies were recovered more than 30 miles away.
- \* A high percentage (77%) of the bodies that were recovered outdoors were located along or near roadways. Forty-seven percent of those bodies were located within 100 feet of a paved road, and another 24% were located within 100 feet of an unpaved road. Six percent were located in parking lots.



\* Burials were done more often by male offenders, who accounted for eight of the twelve buried bodies.

\* All six victims that were placed in trash cans or dumpsters were five years of age or younger.

\* Younger victims were more likely to be found closer to the reported abduction site than older victims. Over half of the victims age five or under (52%) were found within a mile of the reported abduction site, whereas less than 16% of victims older than age five were located within a mile of the reported abduction site. Almost half (47%) of the victims older than age five were found between two and ten miles from the reported abduction site.

# 10 Investigative Factors

There were multiple factors related to the successful resolution of the false allegation cases in this study, but the key factors were the recovery of the victim's body, and the confession of the offender. The recovery of the victim's body was a key factor in the resolution of 65% of the cases, and the offender's confession was a factor in 64% of the cases. A total of 83% of the successfully resolved false allegation cases in this study involved either the timely recovery of the victim's body, a confession, or both.

Observations made by non-offending witnesses were another important factor in the successful resolution of false allegation cases, assisting in the resolution of 33% of the cases in this study. In most instances, the witnesses did not directly observe the victim's death, body disposal, or other overtly criminal act. Those activities generally occurred in private. In most cases, the witnesses were unaware and did not suspect that the activity that they were observing was part of a crime. But these witnesses were often able to provide information which refuted the statements or alibis of the offenders, or were able to document past incidences of physical abuse of the victim.

Another investigative tool that was effective in some cases was the use of the polygraph. Polygraph examinations of offenders were a factor in the successful resolution of 24% of the cases in this study. Of the 31 offenders who took a polygraph test, 90% were judged to be deceptive, 3% were inconclusive, and 6% were found to be non-deceptive. It is noted that 37% of offenders were never asked to submit to a polygraph, indicating that a potentially useful tool was not utilized in a significant number of investigations.





# 11 Parental/Caregiver Interaction with Law Enforcement

Crucial information about the victims and the circumstances of their disappearance, the family dynamics, and other details important to a missing child investigation, may only be available from the parents, family or caretakers of the victim. When those individuals are also considered suspects in the victim's disappearance, their interaction with investigators can become extremely complicated, and in some cases, their communication and cooperation with investigators may cease altogether.

Parents/caregivers who are falsely reporting a child as missing often feel pressure to at least give the appearance of cooperation with the investigation. Even though they may be providing false information, the fact that they continue to interact with investigators provides opportunities for investigators to obtain information important to the resolution of the case.

In some cases, parents or caregivers may exercise their rights to legal representation very early in missing child investigations, due to their concerns over law enforcement actions. While certainly within their rights, the decision by parents or other caregivers to cease direct cooperation with the investigation and to communicate primarily through their attorneys, can hinder law enforcement efforts to obtain complete information and to successfully resolve the cases, whether they are false allegations or actual abductions.

It generally takes at least a few days before investigators are able to develop a complete picture of the family background and dynamics and to review and evaluate information obtained from neighborhood canvasses, searches, and other investigative efforts. If the suspected offender has already ceased cooperation by that time and is no longer available for interview, the chances of a successful investigation can be significantly reduced.

It should be noted that there may be times when a parent or caregiver of a missing child provides false information to investigators, even when they are not responsible for the disappearance and/or death of the victim. Because parents and other caregivers generally want to be viewed as caring, responsible, and attentive caretakers, they may provide false or misleading information about the timing of the disappearance, the level of supervision provided to the victim, and/or some other aspect of the case that they believe may negatively affect their image. In other cases, parents/caretakers may have specific theories about the reasons for the disappearance, and they may make up stories or distort the facts in order to support those theories.

# 12 Risk Factors

The research conducted by BAU-3 has resulted in the identification of several factors commonly observed in false allegation cases that may assist investigators in assessing whether a case is an actual abduction or a false allegation. Taken in conjunction with other aspects of the case, the presence of one or more of the following factors may reflect an increased risk that a reported missing or abducted child could be the victim of a false allegation:

- The victim is under the age of five, although it could occur with a child of any age.
- There are no confirmed witnesses to the alleged abduction, other than the reporting party.
- The victim's family environment is suffering from financial, relationship, employment and/or other stressful domestic problems.
- There was prior criminal activity by parents/caregivers.
- There is instability in the make-up of the family household in which the victim was residing at the time of their disappearance, including individuals moving in/out of the household within six months prior to the offense.
- There were periods of prolonged separation from the family household in which the victim was residing at the time of their disappearance, or the victim had not always resided within that household.
- There was prior physical abuse by parents/caregivers.

The presence of one or more of the above factors does not necessarily indicate that a particular missing child case is actually a false allegation. But the presence of multiple factors should alert investigators to the possibility of a false allegation, which should be addressed through investigation.

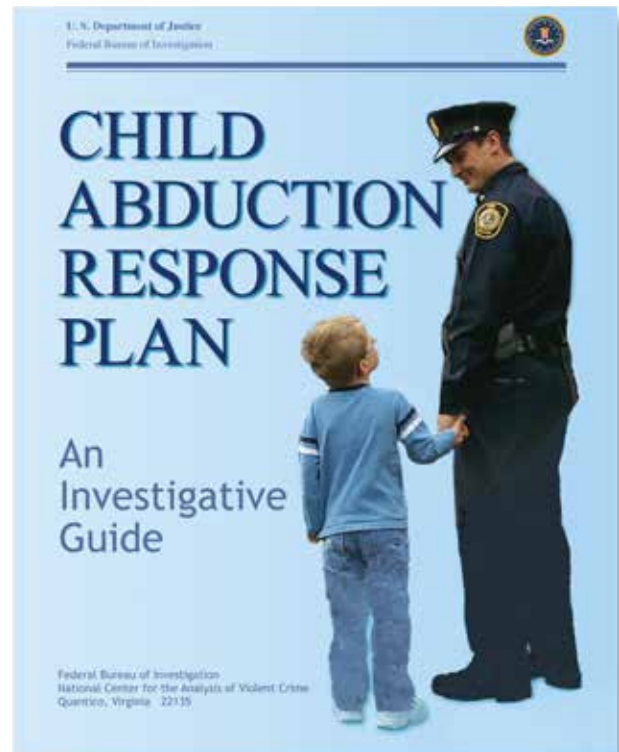
# 13 Child Abduction Response

Any report of a missing or abducted child should receive an immediate investigative response utilizing all appropriate resources and agencies. It is FBI policy that any child abduction or mysterious disappearance of a child receives an immediate, aggressive investigative response.

The FBI's Child Abduction Response Plan (CARP) is an excellent resource for missing/abducted children investigations. The CARP provides useful information regarding different aspects of child abductions, specific investigative suggestions in a checklist format, sample canvass forms, and descriptions and contact information for resources available in child abduction investigations. It is recommended that the CARP be utilized as a template for the investigation of any reported missing or abducted child, even if it is suspected that the report may be a false allegation.

The CARP has multiple resources that can be useful in gathering comprehensive information on the victim and victim family members, key factors in suspected false allegation cases:

- \* Child Victim Background Questionnaire: For gathering information regarding the victim.
- \* General Assessment Questionnaire: For gathering information regarding parents, caregivers, or other persons of interest developed during the investigation.
- \* Free Narrative template: For parents, caregivers, or other persons of interest to write individually-prepared statements about their specific activities during the pertinent time frame. *If a free narrative statement is going to be prepared, it should be done early in the investigation and prior to any confrontational interviews or polygraphs.*



# 14 Investigative Recommendations

As a supplement to the investigative guidance provided in the Child Abduction Response Plan (CARP), the following observations and suggestions are provided for investigations into suspected false allegation cases.

**INITIAL RESPONSE:** Any report of a missing or abducted child should receive an immediate and aggressive investigative response utilizing all appropriate resources. First responders should keep an open mind as to what may have happened and treat all reported missing or abducted child cases as valid. Investigators should allow the facts and circumstances of the case to determine the direction of the investigation, rather than early judgments based on incomplete information. Early responders have to quickly obtain basic information regarding the victim and the circumstances of their disappearance and will not generally be in a position to engage in lengthy interviews or to assess the credibility of the initial reports.

Different individuals can react to stressful situations in vastly different ways. Investigators should not attach significant meaning to the presence or lack of emotions.

**AREA SEARCHES FOR THE VICTIM:** Searches for the victim should immediately be conducted of any space, container, or area large enough to contain the victim. False allegation victims are

often very young, and their bodies are often well-hidden in small spaces or covered by debris, trash, or other materials. The following are additional suggestions regarding searches in potential false allegation cases:

- \* Searchers should initially focus on searching the area within one mile of the reported abduction site or the location where the child was last seen, and expand from there. The area surrounding the victim's residence and any other areas developed by the investigation should also be searched.
- \* As the search for the victim expands further from the residence or the location where the victim was last seen, searches should be prioritized for the areas along roadways and in bodies of water. Over three-quarters of false allegation victims' bodies that were recovered outdoors were found within 100 feet of a roadway or in a parking lot, and almost one-fifth were found in bodies of water.
- \* Trash cans and dumpsters in the areas of the reported abduction site, the victim's residence, and other areas developed by the investigation should be secured and searched. Local waste management companies should also be contacted as soon as possible to freeze trash pick-up until trash cans and dumpsters can be searched,

and to segregate incoming trash in order to minimize the potential volume of trash at collection locations, should information be developed that necessitates a search of those areas.

### **CRIME SCENE SEARCHES FOR EVIDENCE:**

A significant number of false allegation victims were killed in or around their residences. Crime scene searches of the victim's residence are recommended, even if the victim was not alleged to have been kidnapped from there. Crime scene searches should also be conducted in the area where the victim was reportedly abducted or was last seen, any vehicles that the parent/caretaker had access to, and any other specific locations developed by the investigation.

Offenders in false allegation cases will sometimes manipulate physical evidence in order to support their story of what happened to the victim. This manipulation may take the form of broken windows, open doors, cut window screens, or other changes to the scene. Careful documentation and processing of crime scenes will ensure that evidence is preserved for future analysis.

**NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTIGATION:** All persons in the vicinity of the area where the victim was last seen, the victim's residence, and any other

locations developed by the investigation, should be identified and interviewed. Observations made by non-offending witnesses directly assisted in the resolution of one-third of the cases in this study. Witnesses may not have observed any obviously illegal activity, but they may be able to confirm or refute statements, alibis, or timelines provided by suspects. A standardized questionnaire should be utilized to ensure complete, consistent information is obtained from all individuals. Investigators should also obtain copies of any video surveillance coverage in the pertinent areas, and identify cell towers for potential data exploitation.

### **FAMILY DYNAMICS/BACKGROUND:**

Concurrent with the searches and other investigative efforts, parents, caretakers, family members, and other close associates should be subjected to comprehensive interviews regarding the facts surrounding the disappearance of the victim, general information about the victim, and information regarding the family dynamics and background. A thorough understanding of the victim and their family history will assist investigators in identifying and assessing risk factors from both inside and outside the family, as well as in developing investigative and interview strategies.

Information regarding the victim and the victim's family should come from a variety of sources, including:

- \* Other family members
- \* Caretakers of the victim, including current and former babysitters and daycare providers
- \* Current and former friends, neighbors, teachers, and other associates
- \* Current and former spouses or significant others of parents and caregivers
- \* Law enforcement and child protective services records

**EARLY FAMILY CONTACTS:** During the time when background information is still being gathered, investigative interaction with the family should generally be supportive and non-confrontational in order to keep the lines of communication open. While information may be developed early in the investigation which suggests that a parent or other caregiver is a valid suspect, it may be counterproductive to confront them before more

There is no generic template for determining when circumstances are appropriate for making an accusatory approach to a suspected parent or caregiver. Investigators on-scene are in the best position to assess the optimal time for an approach and should make that decision based upon the totality of the circumstances available to them at the time.

comprehensive information is available. Early interviewers should generally avoid confrontational interactions or expressions of disbelief that may adversely affect the relationship between law enforcement and the family, and/or induce family members to obtain legal representation.

**WRITTEN STATEMENTS:**

Parents, family members, and other caregivers can be requested to provide separate written statements in a free narrative format, detailing their specific activities during the pertinent time frame. The preparation of these statements can be encouraged as a means of calming the parent/caregiver while simultaneously providing useful information to investigators. These statements can provide important information to the investigator from the parent or caregiver’s perspective, can assist in identifying any discrepancies in their story or timeline, and can facilitate the development of interview themes. If a free narrative statement is going to be prepared, it should be done early in the investigation, and prior to any confrontational interviews or polygraphs.

**REENACTMENT OF ACTIVITIES AT THE TIME OF THE DISAPPEARANCE:**

Parents, family members, and other caregivers can be requested to conduct a reenactment of their specific activities during the time period that the victim disappeared, if the circumstances of the disappearance suggest that they were in the same residence or area where the victim disappeared. Much like a written statement, reenactments can assist investigators

in identifying discrepancies in the parent or caregiver's story, and facilitate the development of specific questions or interview themes.

### **SUSPECT INTERVIEWS/INTERROGATIONS:**

Interviews of suspects should be conducted by experienced investigators with comprehensive knowledge of the details of the case, including the victim and offender timelines, the presence of any physical evidence, information from previous statements made by the suspect(s), and the results of the suspect and family background investigation.

Interviewers should utilize the factual case information in conjunction with an assessment of the suspect's personality and background, as affected by any recent or ongoing stressors, in order to identify the potential motivation for the crime.

Interview strategies should be based upon the interviewer's assessment of the suspect and the suspect's motivation for the crime. While each case and each individual is different, a low-key, non-judgmental approach is generally recommended. Interviewers are cautioned against suggesting that the suspect did not love or care for their child, or labeling them as a "bad" parent or caregiver.

Recommended areas to explore when developing interview strategies include:

- \* The date, time and location of the last independent, corroborated sighting of the victim by someone other than the reporting

party and/or outside the immediate family

- \* The nature and extent of the suspect's relationship with the victim

- \* The family dynamics of the household where the victim was residing

- \* The nature and extent of new or ongoing stressors in the household, including financial, relationship or employment problems, drug/alcohol abuse, or any other family problems

- \* Whether the victim could be considered unwanted or as an impediment to a particular goal in the suspect's life, such as a particular lifestyle or romantic relationship

- \* Whether there was evidence of neglect, or physical or sexual abuse of the victim by the suspect or any other member of the household

- \* Whether the victim was considered to be difficult to handle, suffered from any physical or mental problems, or was otherwise considered a burden to other family members

The interviews and interrogations with suspected offenders in false allegation cases can sometimes develop into a multiple-contact process, rather than a single "make or break" interrogation. Offenders often provide a series of lies and/or alibis that must be investigated and disproven before they can finally be persuaded to provide a truthful statement.

**POLYGRAPH EXAMINATIONS:** Polygraph examinations have proven to be effective tools in helping to elicit truthful statements in false allegation cases. However, due to the emotional aspects of missing child cases, investigators should remain aware of the potential for false positives. There have been cases in which parents who were not responsible for their child's disappearance were judged deceptive on polygraphs. Investigators should consult with experienced polygraph examiners who are familiar with the unique issues associated with missing child cases. Investigators are cautioned against the inclusion or exclusion of suspects based solely on the results of a polygraph examination.

All investigative efforts to locate and recover the victim and to identify and apprehend any potential offender(s) should continue until the case is resolved.



# 15 Conclusion

The presence of one or more of the factors discussed in this report does not automatically indicate a false allegation and the intent of this document is not to place every parent or family member of a missing child under suspicion. The purpose of this report is to inform early responders in missing child cases of factors that may represent an increased risk of false allegations of child abduction, provide investigators with a better understanding of the dynamics of past false allegation cases, and document investigative strategies which may be successful in their resolution.

Questions or comments regarding this report may be directed to Supervisory Special Agents (SSA) William H. Donaldson or Mark A. Hilts, Behavioral Analysis Unit 3 (BAU-3), National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), FBI Academy, Quantico, Virginia, (703) 632-4347.

BAU-3 staff members are also available for immediate consultation or response to suspected false allegation cases, as well as any other missing or abducted child investigations.

BAU-3 research into false allegations of child abduction is an ongoing project. Any law enforcement agencies with adjudicated cases fitting the criteria of false allegations of child abduction are encouraged to contact BAU-3 to facilitate entering the data into this study.

The authors offer special thanks to Intelligence Analyst (IA) Whitney Sloan, Office Services Specialist (OSS) Rebecca Ross, ORISE Research Fellows Adrienne Hoffman-Lewis and Laura Wyatt, as well as members of the NCAVC Research Working Group, other NCAVC personnel and interns for their critical contributions to this project.

# 16 References

Adams, S. H. (1996). Statement Analysis: What do Suspects' Words Really Reveal? *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 12-20.

Beasley, J. O., Hayne, A. S., Beyer, K., Cramer, G. L., Berson, S. B., Muirhead, Y., et al. (2009). Patterns of Prior Offending by Child Abductors: A Comparison of Fatal and Non-Fatal Outcomes. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 32, 272-280.

Behavioral Analysis Unit. (2008). *Serial Murder: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives for Investigators*. Quantico, VA: Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Boudreaux, M. C., Lord, W. D., & Dutra, R. L. (1999). Child Abduction: Aged-Based Analyses of Offender, Victim, and Offense Characteristics in 550 Cases of Alleged Child Disappearance. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 44 (3), 539-553.

Brown, K. M., Keppel, R. D., Weis, J. G., & Skeen, M. E. (2006). *Investigative Case Management for Missing Children Homicides: Report II*. Washington State Attorney General's Office; U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Canning, K. E., Hilts, M. A., & Muirhead, Y. E. (2011). False Allegation of Child Abduction. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 56 (3), 794-802.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011, May 10). *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved February 27, 2012, from Child Maltreatment: Risk and Protective Factors: <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/childmaltreatment/riskprotectivefactors.html>

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2011). *Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities 2009: Statistics and Interventions*. Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare Information Gateway.

Douglas, J. E., Burgess, A. W., Burgess, A. G., & Ressler, R. K. (2006). *Crime Classification Manual* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

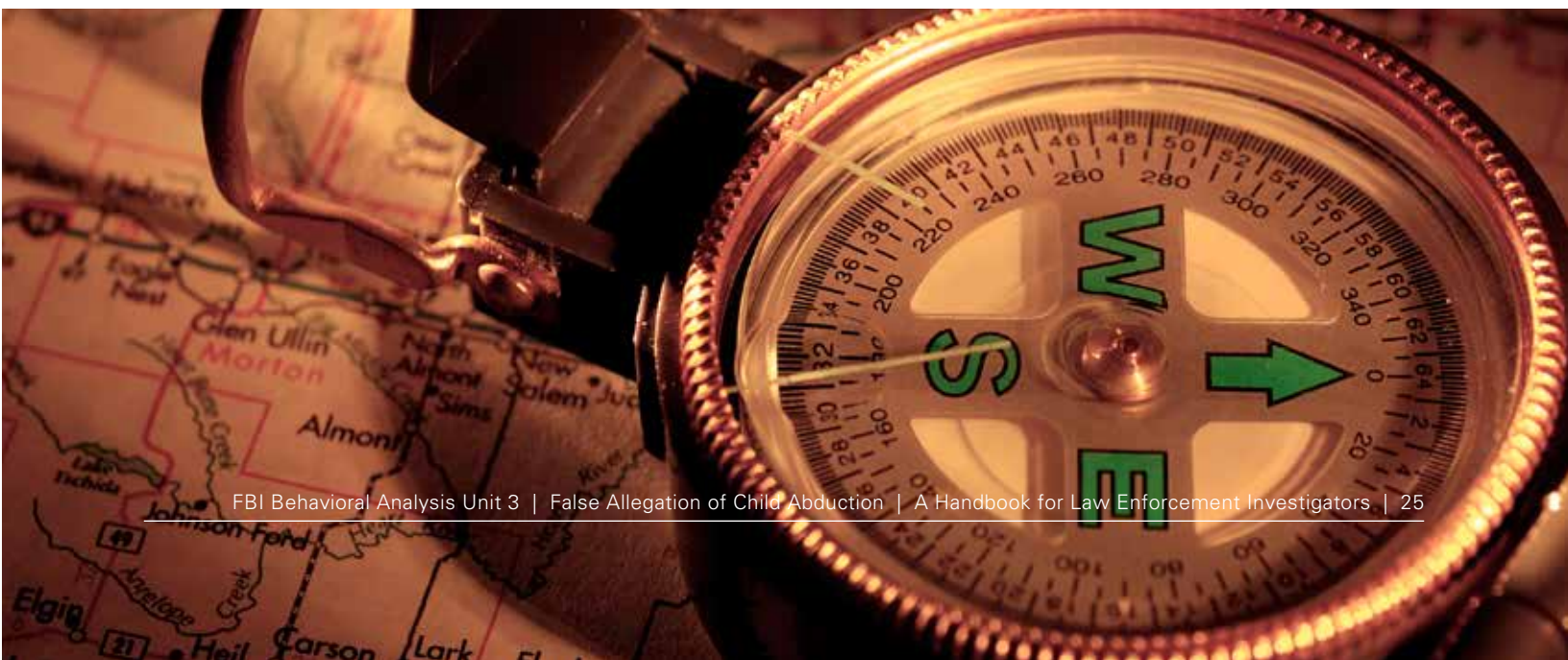
Durose, M. R., Harlow, C. W., Langan, P. A., Motivans, M., Rantala, R. R., & Smith, E. L. (2005). *Family Violence Statistics: Including Statistics on Strangers and Acquaintances*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2008). *Child Abduction Response Plan: An Investigative Guide* (2nd ed.). Quantico, Virginia: Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime.

Finkelhor, D. (1997). The Victimization of Children and Youth. In *Victims of Crime* (pp. 86-107). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Finkelhor, D., & Ormrod, R. (2001). *Homicides of Children and Youth*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Sedlak, A. J., Finkelhor, D., Hammer, H., & Schultz, D. J. (2002, October). *National Estimates of Missing Children: An Overview*. Retrieved from National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children.





Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Behavioral Analysis Unit 3  
Crimes Against Children