

Mesa County Specialized Assessment and Outreach Team Overview

Specialized Assessment and Outreach [SAO] is a team of certified social caseworkers focusing on four main areas of Child Welfare in Mesa County, Colorado. The skills developed in each area of focus strengthens the caseworkers' abilities in the other areas, creating a well-rounded, proficient team with expertise in investigative interviewing, information gathering, forensic medical knowledge, emergent decision making, and community partnership.

Hotline Calls/ Child Abuse and Neglect Reports:

The SAO team processes all ways an individual can report concerns of abuse or neglect in Mesa County. This includes law enforcement reports, emails, mailed letters, walk-in reports made in person, and -most commonly- the Child Abuse Reporting hotline. As investigative workers, the team is able to gain expertise in many areas including family systems, domestic violence, substance abuse, impactful living conditions, medical concerns, physical injuries, and child development. The team then utilizes this expertise to expand referrals beyond a reporter's initial statements to capture a global perspective of the family's situation. The additional details allow for screening teams to have greater confidence in the decision to assign a referral to an investigating worker or to refer to a preventative service.

Egregious, Near Fatal, and Fatal [ENFF] Investigations:

The SAO team investigates reports of head trauma, egregious instances of abuse/neglect, and situations where a child is in a near-fatal or fatal state due to suspected abuse/neglect. The team is given specific training in relation to child-specific death investigation, including investigative interviewing, forensic elements in an investigation, advanced medical factors in child abuse, legal processes, and frequent implausible explanations used by perpetrators.

Institutional Investigations:

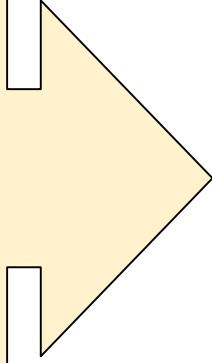
The SAO team investigates suspected abuse/neglect occurring in licensed facilities. This includes foster homes, kinship homes, residential facilities, daycares, youth detention centers, licensed summer camps, and some after school programs. The team combines in-depth training and collaboration with licensing agencies to navigate the intersection of licensing requirements and allegations of abuse/neglect.

Community Outreach:

The SAO team provides trainings on topics such as indicators of child abuse/neglect, how to report, the Child Welfare process in Mesa County, head trauma, specific training for law enforcement officers when responding to child abuse, and general question/answer sessions. These trainings help establish partnership and trust with community agencies like medical offices and schools. It also helps the public understand the nuanced process of Child Welfare and have trust in Child Welfare; this trust leads to the public making reports and seeking preventative services with greater confidence.

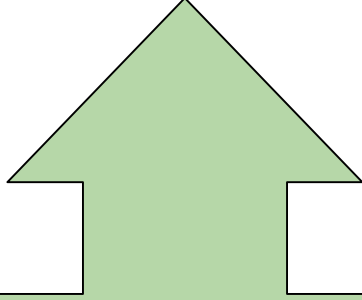
Hotline Calls

- Utilize Interviewing and Assessment Skills to Ask In-Depth, Detailed Questions While Evaluating for All Areas of Child Safety
- Utilize Training/Experience to Recognize Emergent Concerns for Child Safety
- Utilize Experience and Training to Answer Questions/Connect to Alternative Resources



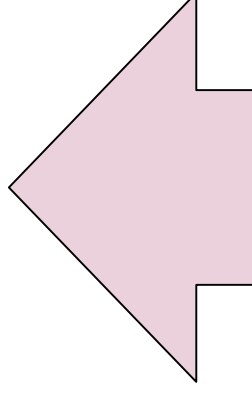
ENFF Assessments

- Utilize Information Gathering Skills to Make Emergent Safety Decisions
- Utilize Experience in Urgency to Evaluate Information Quickly and Accurately
- Partner with Community Experts for Treatment and Information Gathering
- Use Specialized Training to Evaluate Plausibility of Information



Institutional Assessments

- Utilize Information Gathering Skills to Make Safety Decisions and Facility Recommendations
- Utilize Specialized Training to Understand Context and Licensing Requirements of Facilities
- Partner with Community Experts to Facilitate Change and Support for Institutions



Outreach

- In-depth Training for Community Partners on Child Abuse Definitions, How to Report Detailed Information, and DHS Process in Mesa County
- Establishing Trust and Communication with Partnering Agencies and the Community
- Demystifying the Child Welfare Process for the Public

