

A Medical Protocol for Drug Endangered Children in Georgia
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Until recently, children located at or near clandestine, methamphetamine (meth) production sites were not always considered victims or witnesses of a crime. Additionally, the medical risks posed to these children were not always realized. Although many children were discovered living at home-based laboratories, they were rarely interviewed or medically evaluated. We now know that because of the many toxic substances used in the manufacture of methamphetamine, children are at risk from exposure to the hazardous chemicals by inhalation, ingestion, or direct skin contact.

Children who are exposed to the meth lab sites are subject to health and safety risks, which include emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and neglect. These risks also include immediate dangers to children from fire and explosions, or they may be subjected to the continuing effects of chemical contamination. Other risks to children involve hazardous lifestyle, which may affect a child's normal psychological/social development.

In November 2004, representatives from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia Department of Human Resources, and Georgia Poison Control Center created a taskforce to identify appropriate and standardized procedures for managing children exposed to meth labs. A written document outlining the recommended guidelines for law enforcement officers, social service case-managers, healthcare providers, and other personnel involved in the safety and welfare of children was then developed. The guidelines include protocols for managing children in high, moderate, and minor risk situations.

The [Guidelines for Managing Children Found at Clandestine Methamphetamine Laboratory Sites](#) was officially adopted by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia Department of Human Resources, and Georgia Poison Control Center in August 2005. It is important that law enforcement officers be knowledgeable about the guidelines and use these protocols when they discover children at meth lab sites. The guidelines can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.ganet.org/gbi/>.