



SECURING THE CORPORATE CHILD CARE FACILITY

BY STEVE KELLER, CPP

Somehow, as a security professional, I was not surprised that a terrorist had bombed the Oklahoma City Federal Building. But what did surprise me was that there was a day care center in the building and that 19 children were counted among the victims. As a self-employed consultant, I admit to being a bit removed from some aspects of the modern office environment. When I was a Director of Security, the concept of a day care center within my buildings had not yet evolved.

As a child, my parents dropped me off at grandma's before going off to work. As a pre-teenage latch-key kid, I came home to an empty house, but my support system was a group of neighbors whom I could call on to help with any problem. When my daughter was young, we took a close look at a pre-school operated by a local church, and later a pre-school that was privately owned, and felt confident that she was in good hands.

As society changes and we become more mobile, we lose the support system of neighbors and family and must rely more heavily on out-of-the-home child care providers. In recent years, agencies, institutions and corporations have developed their own child care centers as an employee benefit, adding a new dimension to the responsibilities of the security manager. And with the



growth of the two-income family, a whole industry of child care providers has developed consisting of more traditional "neighbors" who "baby-sit" for local kids, to large national franchise providers with large day care facilities located in many cities.

What surprises me most after exhaustive research on the Internet and by conventional means is that I have been unable to find any individual who claims extensive expertise in child care facility security beyond a few generalists who claim expertise in everything. The literature on the subject is non-existent. I know of no security consultant who has done extensive work in this specialized environment. Security managers are increasingly faced with full-time or part-time responsibility for children in the care of their corporations, yet little has been done to address the issue. Most corporations have policies and procedures to prevent personal computers from being carried away, but few address the security of the children in their care beyond a few basic policies prepared not by the security department but by the day care center director.

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There are other aspects to the child care issue in addition to the issue of the safety and security of the kids. In 1983, accusations were brought against the McMartin preschool in Manhattan Beach, California, accusing the son of the owner of molesting one of the children in his care. An investigation was undertaken and what can only be described as hysteria broke out. Even though there was no physical evidence, the local police department sent letters to 200 parents stating that students might have been forced to engage in sexual acts. Parents were urged to question their children. A local TV station reported that the day care center was linked to a national child porn ring and various sex industries in Los Angeles. By 1984, 340 kids were diagnosed as having been abused, and in spite of a lack of any physical evidence, a medical doctor diagnosed 120 as having been sexually abused. In typical fashion, the prosecutor jumped on the highly visible case with both feet.

Among the accusations that were made were some that can only be described as bizarre. A child had been injured by a lion and elephant on a school trip. A child had been tortured by teachers who put staples in her ears, nipples and tongue, and scissors in her eye. There was no evidence of any injury to a child. Police served 11 search warrants and found nothing. Groups of parents searched the school yard for signs of ritual abuse. Some had alleged that human sacrifice had occurred there. Tunnels were said to be located under the school where these rituals had occurred.

The result was the longest and most expensive trial in U.S. history. Fifteen million dollars were spent prosecuting 208 charges of child abuse on 42 children by seven adults. No convictions were ever won in any of the cases. The building was torn down and no evidence of tunnels or hidden rooms could be found.

In the years following, copy-cat prosecutions occurred in other cities against day care centers or their workers. Several involved satanic abuse, ritual abuse, or recovered memories. The frenzy resulted, in part, from an industry that grew up to make money on seeking out and identifying such abuse. Many of those industry experts, ranging from religious organizations which truly believe that satanic ritual abuse exists in spite of extensive studies that show that it does not, to expert witnesses who get paid only when they find evidence of abuse to testify about, had agendas. An FBI study showed no evidence of organized satanic ritual abuse in the U. S. One law enforcement officer, however, wrote a popular book and conducted seminars teaching police departments how to recognize satanic abuse and prosecute it, adding to the problem.

I don't dispute the shocking increase in child abuse in our society, from child porn to rape and incest. As a former child abuse investigator, I'm an advocate for swift prosecution and harsh sentencing of offenders. Foremost is the need for justice, but the child care worker and child care operator must also be protected.



Corporations that offer enlightened programs like day care cannot afford the publicity or expense of defending themselves against false accusations of abuse. The security manager with child care center responsibilities must develop a program that protects both the child and the day care worker. Here in Florida, if a high school student wants to play a trump card in a disciplinary matter, he or she only needs to say that the teacher made improper advances and the teacher is prosecuted. A small child called 911 when he got a spanking and the parents were put on a lifetime list of possible abusers. If it happens again, they lose the child. This has stifled the educational and disciplinary process. Without protections, who but a child molester would go into child care or teaching under these conditions?

What are some of the major areas of concern to the security manager with a child care unit in his facility? First, we have a responsibility to assure the health of the children in our care. If health is part of your security/safety responsibilities, then you must address this issue. If not, then you must make sure that someone addresses it. This often requires special safeguards and procedures. You may not be aware, for example, that under the Americans With Disabilities Act, a day care center cannot turn away a child who is diabetic or has other similar illnesses even if that means that someone caring for the child must administer or oversee injections, special meals, or be ready to provide special first aid procedures. You need to know if you have such children in your care, and

you must have contingency plans for dealing with any emergency that may occur.

Similarly, if safety is among your duties, you must have a plan for making the environment safe for the children. Children often leave the building on field trips. One corporate facility takes the kids out to the "playground", just as we went to recess several times each day as children. Your duties, then, must include identifying any environment where the children might work or play and making it safe from everything from molesters to drive-by shooters. But beyond that, children require special attention.

When I was Director of Security for a large museum with a children's gallery located in the basement level, I had to be especially alert to assigning officers to those posts who could carry a child up a flight of stairs in an evacuation. I provided special training to the security officers so that they knew what the children expected of them in an emergency. Presumably your day care center, like any good school, will have special evacuation drills just for the kids. Your officers should be involved in those drills and should know exactly what the day care teacher is telling the kids to do. If, for example, the kids are being told to hold hands and form a chain as they evacuate, then your officers must know that this is the game plan and must rehearse the drill with the kids and the teachers.

While every aspect of a fire prevention and evacuation plan should be clearly



defined for the entire facility, portions of the facility containing children need special attention. While your building plan will include dispatching officers to areas of rescue assistance, you may need extra manpower to respond to your day care area.

Security is part of your responsibilities and must be clearly addressed. The day care center needs a clear policy and procedure for every eventuality. Oklahoma City has made it clear that even the most remote event can occur in your facility. Your policy must address these issues:

1. Protecting the child from external threats such as molesters and kidnapers not associated with the corporation. This might also include drug dealers, drive by shooters, and non-related workplace violence. And, it could involve acts perpetrated by non-custodial parents.
2. Protecting the child from internal threats such as molesters and kidnapers who are associated with the corporation or the day care center including the teachers, other employees, even your security officers.
3. Protecting the child care worker from acts of violence by anyone.
4. Protecting the child care worker and the corporation from false accusations brought for whatever reason. This includes training your day care staff and, if necessary, other employees, on issues such as avoiding the perception of wrong doing.

Here are some recommendations:

1. Separate the children from anyone who is not cleared to work with them. If a child needs to be driven somewhere, the driver must be cleared.
2. A background check must be undertaken on child care workers. This must be extensive and include checks in all jurisdictions where the worker may have resided in the past. Much has been written on conducting pre-employment screening and I will not re-hash it here. But your background check must be specifically directed toward finding a type of activity that is often difficult to find. While most child care workers are good, it is important to note that if you are a child molester, you go where the children are. Many states have lists of child and sex offenders, some posted on the Internet. Be absolutely certain to take advantage of these resources. Know the difference between "checking references" and a true "background check". They aren't the same. References yield valuable information about the care giver's character but they are no substitute for an investigation. The background check is the responsibility of the security department, not the day care center's director. Non-corporate day care centers, such as privately owned small businesses without a corporate security department, need to delegate this responsibility to someone qualified to do it properly.

Many security managers have told me that they use contract security



because they may be able to pass off civil liability to the contractor if an officer is subsequently found to have a criminal record and commits a crime while on the job. While this may or may not be the case, don't assume that you can avoid problems by contracting out day care to a contractor. If you have accusations of wrong doing against a child in your care, the accusation alone can be devastating to your company.

Tom Bresson, Deputy Director of Protection Services at the Smithsonian Institution said that his office works closely on security and safety issues with the Smithsonian's Early Enrichment Center Office, which operates two day care centers in its museum complex on the Mall in Washington. Background checks on staff play an important role in the Smithsonian's security program.

3. Hire enough day care staff so that the children are under observation at all times.

4. Be sure that your staff is properly trained. Training includes not only the skills needed to care for and teach children but also the policies, procedures and expectations you have for them. This training must be reviewed and discussed at least annually. It is your responsibility to proactively manage the behavior of your child care workers. If any interaction between a care giver and a child gets out of hand in any way, it must be insisted upon that a second care giver get involved. (I recall my daughter's comment about an incident that occurred when she interned with a program involving children in crisis as

part of her graduate studies in counseling. One child was very distressed after an incident. I asked how she handled it and she said, "Sometimes you just have to give the kid a hug." In her innocence and with true concern for "her" children, she overlooked the reality that this hug can only come when a second worker is present to witness its innocence.)

5. Never leave children alone with volunteers, company employees not cleared to work with kids such as the custodian or building engineer who just passes through, or student interns. Control access to the child care area carefully to prevent "passing through". At the Smithsonian each child in the program is given a photo ID badge which enables security personnel and staff to quickly identify the child, particularly if the child is in the company of an adult not wearing a staff ID.

6. Meet the children as they arrive. Make a record of their arrival in detail. Is there anything unusual about their arrival? Are there health concerns? Is anything suspicious? Then do something about it.

Tom Bresson said his staff helped identify safe routes of travel for the kids who arrive in the building, then are taken to the child care area. Officers are trained to notice the children as they arrive and depart.

7. Insist that parents conform to your policies and procedures to the letter. Keep them informed of changes to the policies. Use of the facility must be



8. tied to parental compliance, as parental compliance is important to your plan's effectiveness. If, for example, you require that the child be picked up by a specific authorized parent, then you cannot make exceptions without extraordinary care. Parents must understand that you will not make exceptions without verifying an emergency. Bresson noted that his staff established procedures for recognizing those authorized to pick up children and they insist that procedures be followed by parents.

While it adds to the administration of the program, it is not inappropriate to include photos of the family members authorized to pick up the child in the child's record or even to laminate "mom" and "dad" photos onto the back of the child's photo ID if both parents are authorized to take the child home.

8. Even volunteers must be carefully screened. In fact, it is equally likely that a molester will infiltrate your child care facility as a volunteer than as an employee.

9. The day care staff must be supervised. If the supervisor is too busy with administrative tasks, at least allow him or her to supervise via CCTV. But some time must be set aside for actual in-person supervision by a supervisor who observes the care givers. A good program will include a probationary period for new employees and these employees will not be left alone with children until the proper period of close supervision has occurred, is documented in writing, and the new care giver "certified" to work "alone" with children.

10. Not to contradict the above, but avoid having day care workers alone with children. This does not mean that you need two workers in every room at all times. This is unrealistic. CCTV can provide a second eye on activity. But CCTV surveillance and recording cannot occur in rest rooms and other areas where privacy is expected, so a second worker, perhaps a volunteer or intern, can be used to provide potty escorts. The architectural design of the day care center must conform to CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) standards. Doors, viewing windows and walls must separate child care spaces from other spaces. Children should ONLY be allowed in areas intended for their presence. There should, for example, be a faculty rest room and a separate children's rest room. To move out of the child care areas and enter administrative areas should require use of access control devices like locks, keypads, readers, etc. No faculty member should ever take a child into a faculty only area, closet, adult rest room, etc. Child care areas must be "open" with the view unobstructed to all locations within the space. If the child care space involves many rooms, they must be contiguous and every room must conform to the safeguards recommended. Staff should make other workers aware of their whereabouts and what they are doing at all times. "Mary, I'm getting supplies from the closet," followed up a few minutes later with "I'm clear of the closet now," might be all it takes to clear up a misunderstanding later should a false accusation or misunderstanding occur.



11. Extensive use should be made of CCTV surveillance and recording. I will address this in detail later.

12. Every field trip should be subject to special guidelines and contingency plans updated and revised to meet any unique needs of that trip. Field trip plans should be reviewed by the Directors of Security and Safety in advance.

13. Every parent should be given the name, address and phone number of a security department liaison to whom they can directly report any concerns or suspicions that they may have. Unless a parent specifically objects to his or her address and phone being published, every parent should receive a directory with the names, addresses and phone number of every other parent. Networking can be instrumental in identifying problems early so they can be discussed with the security liaison. Parents should be allowed and encouraged to drop by--unannounced--to observe. Corporate day care centers should specifically excuse employees for such brief visits when practical.

14. Identify any licensing requirements for the day care center or its staff. Identify codes and standards to be met by fire and building departments. Work to exceed all standards of care for the protection of the children and the center.

15. Provide personal safety training for all children in your care. Your training should be well documented as to what it includes, who conducted it, and

when it occurred. Such programs are common in schools. Parents should know that this training is occurring. At the Smithsonian, the children themselves and the Early Enrichment staff have developed their own bomb threat and fire evacuation response procedures, enabling everyone to feel comfortable with the activity, noises, alarms and other distractions that come with an emergency. Bresson said that special attention must be given to addressing the special needs of children and to including them in the overall plan.

16. Staff must censor their comments around children. Children remember a great deal and repeat what the teacher said later in front of parents. Terms relating to sexual anatomy should be limited to specific controlled class sessions and terms like "sexy" should be avoided as unprofessional and unnecessarily risky.

17. Your policy must address who may pick up a child and under what circumstances. Exceptions should be made only with the involvement of the security department watch commander. Your policy must address what to do if a parent fails to pick up a child.

18. Have a relocation and disaster plan. Parents must know where children will be taken in the event of an evacuation or relocation.

ACCESS CONTROL

Access must be strictly controlled. Children must not be locked into the space, but their movement beyond a



designated area must be controlled. Keypads or card keys which shunt alarms and allow passage through otherwise unlocked doors, allow fire escape for all and free movement for child care workers, but alert staff if any child leaves or stranger enters.

BURGLAR AND FIRE ALARMS; OTHER ELECTRONICS

Every child care facility must have a fire detection system that conforms with Underwriters Laboratories standards. It should have smoke detection and annunciation. Fire exit doors should never be locked. Delay locking devices, even those that conform to the Life Safety Code and release after a delay period, should never be used in a child care facility. Areas of rescue assistance should be provided, as required.

As for a burglar alarm system, every door should be alarmed to detect entry or exit and local audible alarms should occur at exit doors from the day care facility and between the day care facility and the actual child care area. A panic button should be provided for the receptionist. If there is a nurse station, it, too, needs a panic button.

In corporate day care centers, consider an intercom between the primary operations desk in the center and the security control room. When field trips occur, give the group leader a cellular phone. If you give an officer a radio who is guarding your office equipment, you should give the day care worker a

radio who is guarding your children during outside recess. To do otherwise is illogical.

CCTV

The best tool for protecting both the children and the day care workers and for providing a visible deterrent to incidents is the CCTV system. And the most economical CCTV system for a typical day care facility uses a sixteen channel video multiplexer. A sixteen channel video multiplexer allows sixteen color cameras to be displayed on one 14" or 20" color monitor. A time lapse VCR records all of the cameras simultaneously, giving priority to the cameras with the most activity. The monitor view can be changed to show fewer camera views in larger size while still recording cameras that are not actually viewed on screen. Any camera can be switched to full screen and even enlarged digitally to check on special situations needing a closer look.

A CCTV system as described would have cameras viewing all of the areas where children are authorized to be and "cross over" doors between child and adult-only areas of the facility. The main entrance door and all fire exit doors would also be under surveillance as would doors to rest rooms and any private areas within the space where a molester might take a child to be alone.

It is unlikely that a child molester who sought employment with your day care facility and who knows that the points



of access and egress, crossover points to adult areas, and all doors to rooms, such as rest rooms or closets that can't be viewed by camera from within the room, are being video taped, would ever attempt to molest a child. Honest workers and parents should welcome the safeguard.

Consider the McMartin day school situation. Had the facility been video taped as described, access to the VCR been controlled and tapes retained with time and date information encoded on them, and other safeguards implemented, they could have proven their innocence--or the prosecution could have proven their guilt. The child who allegedly said (after multiple interrogations by police, prosecutors, parents, and psychologists then rewarded for the "right" answer) that an animal was brought in and sacrificed in a ritual would have had less credibility if the cameras viewing the doors had showed no animal coming in or had showed an animal coming in for "show and tell" and leaving unharmed. Certainly the video of one day care center where accusations of ritual abuse were made involving a satanic sacrifice of an elephant in the basement would have made interesting viewing.

There is another advantage to these systems. Some people are not aware that video surveillance systems can, if properly installed with microphones, carry and record sound. While there are greater privacy concerns when recording sound, some areas clearly are fair game for use of this technology.

COST CENTER VS. PROFIT CENTER

For years I have been hearing people say that "you can't measure prevention" and that security departments will always be cost centers rather than profit centers. Here is a chance for you to change that.

With a few modifications, your CCTV system can be configured to videotape, in real time and with sound, activity in the main teaching or play areas. Parents can be given the opportunity to buy copies of the week's activity in these areas so they can see their children interact in class and so instruction can be supplemented and reinforced at home. This can, over time, offset the cost of the CCTV equipment in some instances.

CONCLUSION

The security department must be closely involved with every aspect of the day care operation. While we are not qualified to address child care issues, child care workers may not be fully qualified to foresee the types of security problems that might occur. We also have a responsibility to protect our day care workers and our company from false accusations that might occur.

I have done extensive research while preparing a more detailed book I am writing on the subject. In my research, I became an active participant in an internet newsgroup devoted to child abuse issues. For anyone who thinks that the issue of false allegations of



abuse is a non-issue, a few weeks on the newsgroup will convince them otherwise. The child care industry is clearly divided into two factions strongly arguing the issue. Both factions care deeply about children. But one faction may care too deeply. Like the rogue cop who plants evidence, some child care advocates seem more interested in avenging their bad childhood or making money than in justice.

As a former child abuse investigator, I know the tragedy of removing a child from a home or subjecting him to interrogation about possible abuse. I know how easily a child can be led to testify to whatever I want him to testify. And I can imagine what it must feel like to be falsely accused of something so vile as conducting a sexually abusive satanic ritual with a child.

I read the newsgroup with great interest as two prominent child abuse advocates argued the "abuse industry". "Abuse industry" refers to the industry that has developed around making money on child abuse and includes authors on books about recovered memories, satanic rituals, and similar topics. It includes expert witnesses who testify (suspiciously) only for the prosecution and never for the defense, and child abuse investigators who accuse first and investigate later. It includes religious groups who further the myth of extensive child satanic abuse to further their religious and political agendas. And, it includes prosecutors who treat prosecutions as vehicles for re-election rather than for justice.

I participated in one exchange on the newsgroup where a prominent expert witness on child abuse and recovered memory cases stated that he would rather bring charges without substantial evidence to protect the child than take a chance of allowing the abuse to continue. When asked about the impact on and rights of the parent, accused, or day care center, his reply was, "So what if a few innocent people go down the tubes. I'd rather prosecute a hundred innocent people to save one child from molestation."

It is a dilemma. I'm bothered by the fact that his noble and altruistic approach to the problem hasn't prevented him from charging \$1500 per day for his services. On the other hand, children in our care do need protection. And unless you want this guy testifying against you, you had better put more resources into the protection of the children in your care than you do in keeping office equipment from walking out the door.

Most troubling to me is the fact that in researching this article I contacted security staff at several well known corporations to inquire about their involvement in the child care program. One large government agency representative couldn't understand why the security department would need to be involved and several reported leaving all details to the director of the child care program.