

DCF Employee Honored by DOJ for Effort with FBI to Thwart Child Sexual Exploitation; Said He Was Just Doing His Job

Although child welfare professionals work day in and day out to protect and support children and families, too often they do not get the recognition they deserve. Regardless, this work is a calling and those professionals continue to perform their duty with passion and humility.

That humble demeanor and professionalism are apparent when speaking to Richard Days who is going on almost three decades as a DCF employee. He remains modest even when discussing how he was honored by the U.S. Department of Justice for assisting the FBI with a case of child sexual exploitation.

Rich began specializing in sexual abuse cases while posted in the Norwich office. Because of his experience with the more severe cases, the "criticals", Rich went over to the DCF Careline where for the last eight years he has remained as a "primary" working the third shift and responding to all corners of the state between 5:00pm-8:00am.

"My car is my office," said Rich.

During those hours, primaries initiate the investigation and conduct intake on calls to the Careline that come in after 5:00pm and also require immediate same-day action. The primary then hands over the case to the respective DCF Regional Office once they reopen the following morning.



Rich displays his Office of the U.S. Attorney service coin.



Careline supervisors and primary investigators on a group outing at the DCF's Wilderness School.

"There's nine of us primaries who get sent out on critical same-day responses. We typically respond to hospitals or requests to assist law enforcement."

While primaries usually work with local law enforcement, Rich said it is uncommon but not unheard of to get a call from the FBI. But that's what happened one summer night in 2021. Also atypical was the prominent neighborhood in which Rich found himself when he responded that evening.

An example that child abuse, neglect and maltreatment can occur within a family regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Rich explained, "It happened so fast. The FBI called the Careline and I went out to meet the agents in a parking lot to discuss the game plan. There's always the unknown with how people are going to react when confronted. So a lot of adrenaline happens at first but then when you get out there you fall into your routine and do what you've been trained to do."

On that particular night, in an undercover capacity, an FBI Online Covert Employee was posing as a father of a teen girl and encountered a father who was sharing sexually explicit photographs of his young children. Through the encrypted app, he also disclosed he was grooming them for sexual activity. One of the photographs was a "live photo" suggesting that it was taken moments before being sent. The photograph served as confirmation that a child was in danger which triggered an immediate response from the FBI, DCF and local law enforcement that very same evening.

"Like I said, with this case it was all pretty quick. We had the element of surprise and [the father] didn't have a chance to come up with a story. When I knocked on the door, he just let it out and confessed allowing the FBI to do what they needed to do."

When Rich was notified that, because of his work on this case, he was going to receive special recognition from the U.S. Attorney's Office he said he was "totally surprised and shocked".

"To be honest when I received the email saying I was being awarded, we handle so many cases throughout the years, I had to ask myself 'what case was that?' I had check and see if they got the wrong DCF worker's name."



*(L-R) Lisa Daymonde; Rich Days;
U.S. Attorney (CT) Vanessa
Roberts Avery, and former DCF
Comr. Vannessa Dorantes.*

Rich met with the agent he partnered with that night and thanked him for the nomination. Rich explained to the agent he was surprised because he felt he had not done that much.

The agent then introduced Rich to his team at the FBI telling his colleagues that "this is the guy from DCF" he had told them to call if needed. He made it known that, thanks to Rich's contributions, the situation had worked out better than they could have hoped.

Indeed, when Rich showed up on that family's doorstep, his twenty-eight years of experience had helped stop the sexual exploitation of young children and prevented the chilling possibility of what could have come next - the father further victimizing his children by subjecting them to potential sexual abuse.

Even talking about his award Rich remains a humble guy. He was quick to add that, while he received this award, he is one member of a team - a very dedicated team.

"This could have gone to any one of the primaries who go out and do this work every night and weekends. We have a great group of supervisors and managers who are always there for us."

However, Director of the DCF Careline, Lisa Daymonde, made sure to sing his praises.

"Richard has a quiet humility about him. Never seeking attention or recognition. He's set a high standard for excellence within our team. As he showed with this case, Richard's ability to navigate challenging situations with professionalism and empathy is admirable," said Daymonde.

"The results of his work reflect those collaborative relationships he's built over the years with law enforcement, providers, DCF staff and families. Richard has a deep personal dedication to this job, to DCF and to our department's overall mission of fostering positive outcomes for the children and families we serve."