

# No leads in rape of children's caseworker

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Santa Cruz police Tuesday said they found file drawers left open in the office of a county social worker who was raped at knife point earlier this week, but are unsure whether the attack was related to any child welfare case.

After three days of legwork, detective Howard Skerry said police have been unable to turn up any solid leads, fingerprints or motive in the sexual assault Friday evening at Child Protective Services headquarters.

The social worker told police she could not think of anyone who would want to get revenge for a child welfare decision involving her.

"It's a really strange case," said Skerry. "We don't have much that's concrete yet."

Police said the victim is a children's caseworker who returned to the county's health services complex on Emeline Street around 10:30 p.m. Friday to pick up files and an infant car seat.

As she was leaving her office, a man wearing a ski mask and gloves confronted her in the darkened hallway, producing a fixed-blade knife. He slapped her several times in the face and pushed her back into the office, Skerry said, where he raped her.

The attacker fled on foot as the social

worker dialed 911.

Gail Groves, a spokeswoman for the county's Human Resources Agency, said administrators have announced that any health worker returning to the building after hours must now be accompanied by a supervisor.

The building, at 1040 Emeline St., closes

to the public at 5 p.m., and is left empty when private security guards leave at 6 p.m.

Skerry and Detective David Newman will comb neighborhoods near the complex today, hoping to find a resident who saw the attacker fleeing.

They also will distribute fliers with details of the attack and a description of the suspect. In addition, police are compiling a list of people who might have had a grudge against the local children's welfare sys-

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tem, such as fathers whose children may have been placed in foster care recently.

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The investigation is focusing on two key questions: Why was the attacker in the building? How did he gain entry?

The rapist wore a dark ski mask and brown cloth gloves, even though Friday was a warm summer night. Asked if the social worker might have stumbled upon a burglary, Skerry said police were looking into that, but have found no signs of forced entry and nothing missing.

Although the attacker could have followed the social worker into the building or climbed in a window, "there's not much to steal there anyway," Skerry said.

Officers who responded to the complex found two file drawers open. No files appeared to have been removed, said Skerry. Police said the attack was unrelated to the recent high-profile cases of Ruby Pointer, accused of child endangerment, and Cedric Blan, the infant who died while in foster care.

Rape investigators found some files scattered on a desk in the social worker's office, but, said Skerry: "I'm not convinced that it

wasn't an employee who left them out."

Skerry interviewed the social worker for more than an hour Monday, obtaining a better description of the attacker.

The man is described as age 20-30, white, 5-feet-10, 165 pounds with brown eyes. He wore black tennis shoes and new blue jeans. Anyone with information about the case is asked to call Skerry or Newman at (408) 429-3725.