

**New York Times  
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By Donatella Lorch**

**The “Care With Bears” program was started in October of 1987 in the San Francisco Police Department. Lt. Alexander Stevens said that “having an object like a Teddy Bear really gives them a little friend.”**

**The next were Seattle and New York Police Department to follow. The bears are meant to provide solace as well as forge a bond between the officer and the child. Sgt. Nellie Torres, commander of the Sex Crime Liaison Unit, said “It’s a way of hugging the child without physically hugging them. “ It is not meant to be a replacement for professional therapy, but it’s the first step.” The bears were originally offered to the children under the age of 11 with the consent of the Parent or Guardian.**

**Caring for Children Inc. is a nonprofit organization dealing with preventative mental health, works with the police department and the social service agencies because of their frequent contact with abused and traumatized children. President Samantha said “It’s not a toy. It’s a therapeutic tool. It gives the child the impression somebody cares.” They have donated several thousand bears over the years to New York, Los Angeles, and Staten Island. They also have donated over 3,000 bears in orphanages in Bolivia and El Salvador through Save The Children – U.S. and the Salvation Army.**

**The bears were originally a foot high, soft and light brown hair and were originally used for sex crime victims. They have since expanded to bears of any shapes and size and are used for victims of fires, accidents, and in domestic violence situations.**

**The Care with Bears program relies solely on donations. Most of these come from Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and other church organizations.**