

**CHILD ADVOCACY
CENTER MEMORANDUM
OF
UNDERSTANDING**

Revised 4/14/2016

Standards and Procedures for Operating a Child Advocacy Center

Preamble

The Child Advocacy Center (“CAC”) is hereby formed. Nothing contained herein shall be construed to supersede the statutes, rules and regulations governing each agency. Any such statute, rule or regulation shall prevail to the extent it is inconsistent with this agreement. Each agency will work within its policies and procedures to extent that same are consistent with the policies and procedures contained herein.

Nothing contained herein shall preclude the CAC from delegating its rights and responsibilities to a non-profit corporation established under the laws of the state. The CAC refers to the organization established herein and also, in some instances, to the physical location of the CAC office (s), child-friendly interview room, and observation room.

Statement of Purpose

We, the undersigned, renew our commitment to improving the County’s response to child abuse. We represent the Children Services Board, law enforcement, and the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office. We share an understanding that child abuse is a multifaceted community problem and no single agency, individual, or discipline has the necessary knowledge, skills or resources to completely serve the needs of these children and their families. We pledge to combine our skills and expertise so that all our citizens will benefit from our collective will and resources to address and respond to child abuse. We pledge to ensure that children are not unnecessarily victimized by the intervention systems designed to protect them and will work to prevent trauma to children caused by multiple, duplicative contact with different professionals.

We support the continued development and implementation of a child victim focused approach and the cooperation among the undersigned agencies. This multidisciplinary program will continue coordinating the investigation, assessment, medical and therapeutic interventions for children victims of sexual abuse and severe physical abuse or neglect. We will continue to enhance our capacity to reduce the trauma associated with abuse. Our team will focus on the needs of the child victim.

We agree to continue receiving multidisciplinary training to enhance our knowledge and skills in the areas of investigation, intervention, treatment, and prosecution of abuse cases. We acknowledge the need to educate our community about child abuse issues, dynamics, and unique service needs.

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Child Advocacy Center is to provide a comprehensive community response to individuals and families affected by abuse and neglect.

Multidisciplinary Team (“MDT”)

The following MDT is assembled:

- The Sheriff or his/her designee;
- A subscribing Police Chief or his/her designee;
- The Director County Children Services or his/her designee;
- The Prosecuting Attorney or his/her designee;
- A mental health professional;
- A medical health professional;
- A victim advocate;
- The director of the CAC

The MDT shall carry out the responsibilities and the procedures set forth herein.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall administer the CAC and shall consist of representatives of County Children Services, Crime Victim Services, County Prosecutor, the local Hospital and Medical Center and shall include other members as the Executive Committee may designate.

The Governing Board’s purposes shall be:

- To achieve the mission of the CAC;
- To promulgate and oversee policy for the operation of the CAC and make such reports to contributing offices, agencies, and departments as may be required; and
- To promote interdisciplinary communications and training of personnel from various County offices, agencies, departments and local services providers.

Each agency member of the Executive Committee shall have one vote. A majority of members shall constitute a quorum. The Executive Committee's first business shall be to appoint officers, establish bylaws for conducting business, and appoint a director of the CAC.

Client Served

The CAC will serve children who have been victims of sexual abuse, or severe physical abuse or neglect.

Children interviewed will be over two years of age and under eighteen years of age. The decision of whether a case requires a forensic interview will be determined by the CAC director and consistent with this agreement and protocols established by the Executive Committee. All reasonable efforts will be made to avoid multiple interviews of a child involving the same reported abuse.

If the referral is vague and needs clarification, a minimal facts interview is recommended. Once sufficient information is determined at a brief minimal facts interview, an in-depth interview at the CAC

shall be conducted as soon as practicable, with a goal of commencing within 2 hours but never more than 1 week after the report of the allegation(s).

The CAC may conduct interviews of abused children and adults with a determination of a developmental disability who do not fall within the above definitions or of a child who is acting out sexually or of siblings as potential victims or witnesses.

Staff participating in the CAC shall maintain confidentiality of all records and information regarding cases as determined by the state and federal law.

Forensic Interviewers

Interviews of children at the CAC shall be conducted by a forensic interviewer designated by the CAC director. Except in exigent circumstances, a forensic interviewer must:

- Have completed extensive and ongoing training (such as *Finding Words* through the state Attorney General's Office) in forensic interviews of child sexual assault victims; and
- Demonstrate favorable peer review and adherence to the principles of generally accepted methods of forensic interviews.

CAC Protocol

A. Intake & Notification

- The Child Protective Services ("CPS") supervisor will notify the CAC director of referrals warranting CAC investigation and/or review;
- The CAC director shall determine whether a forensic interview is appropriate and immediately notify the Core Group of the time of the interview. The Core Group includes the forensic interviewer, investigating law enforcement officer, CPS worker, Prosecuting Attorney, or his/her designee, and other MDT members the CAC director deems appropriate;
- The CAC director shall assure that the child is appropriately transported to the CAC. The non-offending parent should accompany the child to the CAC, if possible;
- The alleged perpetrator is not permitted in the CAC area.

B. Pre-interview Staffing

The CAC director shall arrange a pre-interview staffing, which shall begin when the Core Group is present.

C. Interview

- Reasonable efforts shall be made to limit in-depth interviews of a child to one time at the CAC. It is also understood that, due to the dynamics of abuse of a child, one interview is not always possible or in the child's best interest;
- Neither parent nor their attorney shall observe the interviews;
- The CAC shall make every reasonable effort to accommodate clients who are non-English speaking, Deaf, Hard of Hearing or visually-impaired;
- Interviews will be video recorded and the original shall be stored at the CAC.

D. Case Tracking

The forensic interviewer will prepare and complete a Case Review Tracking Form, which shall include information received upon intake, law enforcement information, Core Group present for interview, progress of prosecution, mental health, referral information, medical information, victim's assistance information, and other information necessary to complete the case reviews.

E. Medical Considerations

A sexual assault forensic medical examination should occur in cases deemed appropriate by the MDT. Protocols should be established for determining propriety, immediacy and providers for these examinations.

F. Case Reviews

The CAC director shall schedule full case reviews at a regularly specified time to track case progress. All MDT members or their representatives and case specific invitees should attend. The purpose of the case review is to evaluate the safety plan for the child and non-offending family members, receive updated information regarding the civil and criminal issues, identify service gaps, and make recommendations for services.

Role of CPS

- Investigate all reports of alleged child abuse mandated by law.
- Take the lead in investigating the child victim. Notify CAC director of cases warranting CAC investigation and/or review
- Participate in pre-interview staffing and, if not the forensic interviewer, observe the forensic interview
- Conduct the safety assessment
- Participate in case reviews

Role of Law Enforcement

- Investigate all cases of alleged child abuse as mandated by law.
- Take the lead in investigating the perpetrator.
- Initiate referral to CPS. The law enforcement officer shall avoid conducting interviews with child victim except in emergencies when an immediate referral to CPS is not possible
- Participate in pre-interview staffing and, if not the forensic interviewer, observe the forensic interview
- Participate in case reviews.

Role of Prosecuting Attorney

- May participate in pre-interview staffing and observe the forensic interview.
- May participate in case reviews
- Will determine appropriate criminal charges
- Respond to legal issues regarding criminal prosecutions in CAC cases
- Responsible for final prosecution of criminal case involving alleged perpetrator.

Funding

The CAC shall receive funds from any legal source, shall deposit all funds received, and shall keep an account of all receipts and expenditures. No signature to this agreement shall obligate the subscriber or the respective agency to any financial obligation regarding the CAC.

Affirmation

We, the undersigned, adopt the preceding operational procedures. We will continue to work together to develop the best intake, investigation and treatment practices. We recognize the need for flexibility and innovation as our respective agencies unite to develop a CAC. We will jointly meet this challenge by sharing resources and focusing on our shared mission of justice, protection and healing.

Approved:

County Prosecutor

Sheriff
County, State