Effective Child Abuse Investigation and Interventions

Best Practices and Core Competencies Within the MDT/CAC Model

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Investigation “Best Practices”

- Multidisciplinary Team investigations
- Trained child forensic interviews
- Videotaped interviews
- Specialized forensic medical examiners
- Victim advocacy and support programs
- Access to mental health treatment
- Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs)
Who is the Multidisciplinary Team?

- A multidisciplinary team for response to child abuse allegations includes representation from the following:
  - Law Enforcement
  - Child Protective Services
  - Prosecution
  - Medical
  - Mental Health
  - Victim Advocacy
  - Children’s Advocacy Center Staff
What are Forensic Interviews?

- Forensic interviews are conducted in a manner that is legally sound, of a neutral, fact-finding nature, and are coordinated to avoid duplicative interviewing.
What is a forensic interview?
Child Being Interviewed at Children’s Advocacy Center
Interviewing a Young Child Sexual Abuse Victim
Medical Evaluation

- Specialized medical evaluation and treatment services must be routinely made available to child victims and coordinated with the multidisciplinary team response.
Medical Exam Room at a Children's Advocacy Center
Victim support and advocacy services must be routinely made available to all victims and their non-offending family members as part of the multidisciplinary team response.
Children’s Advocacy Centers: A Best Practices Response
Benefits of the CAC model

- Consistent and fast follow-up to abuse reports
- Dramatic reduction in the number of interviews
- Effective medical and mental health services or referrals
- Increased successful prosecutions
- Effective victim advocacy and follow through.
Children’s Advocacy Center Concepts

- Primary focus on the child victim and family
- Agencies working together in a coordinated community response to child abuse
- Physical plant to serve as a neutral facility
- Warm, non-threatening environment
All 750 Children’s Advocacy Centers look different because every community is different.

Waiting area in a Children’s Advocacy Center.
A CAC is a place that:

- Feels safe and friendly for children
- Has private interview space
- Has a place for the team to meet
Waiting area within a Children’s Advocacy Center
A CAC IS ALSO A:

- PLACE THAT REALLY BELONGS TO THE CHILDREN...AND TO NO SINGLE AGENCY
- NEUTRAL SPACE
Organizational Structure of CACs in the US

- CACs are primarily Independent not-for-profit organizations (71%)
- Government based (18%)
- Of the umbrella organizations hospital based is most common (11% overall)
CAC

Child-Appropriate
Child-Friendly Facility

- Therapeutic Intervention
- Forensic Interviews
- Victim Support/Advocacy
- Medical Evaluation
- Case Tracking
- Case Review

Cultural Competency & Diversity

Organizational Capacity

Multidisciplinary Team
Locations of Children’s Advocacy Centers in the US
What do children and families think of Children’s Advocacy Centers?

Is this really better in the minds of our clients?
284 sexual abuse cases (229 from the CAC cases and 55 comparison cases):

- Child’s mother being the respondent in a majority of the cases - 79%
- Alleged victim was at least 8 years old

120 of these children also participated in a follow-up interview regarding their satisfaction with the case processes (90 from the CAC cases and 30 from the comparison cases).
Caregivers whose children were seen at the CAC reported higher rates of satisfaction than caregivers whose children were seen at the comparison sites.

Caregivers from the CAC samples were significantly more satisfied with the interview experience than caregivers from the comparison samples.
Most children expressed moderate to high satisfaction with the investigation.

Significantly more children from the CAC sample described themselves as being “not at all” or “not very” scared versus kids from the comparison communities.

- Suggests “child-friendly environment” is working
Drawing While Waiting for Mom
Training

- National Children’s Alliance  
  www.nationalchildrensalliance.org

- National District Attorneys Association  
  www.ndaa.org

- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children  
  www.ncmec.org

- Fox Valley Technical College  
  www.amber-net.org,  
  www.icactraining.org

- National Children’s Advocacy Center  
  www.nationalcac.org

- Videostreamed training  
  www.mrcac.org
It’s All About the Kids!