



## How do I prepare my child?

You may explain to your child that the CAC is a special place where kids go to talk. Reassure her or him that the people at the Center speak with many other children about difficult topics such as violence in the home, or physical or sexual abuse. Make sure it is clear that he or she is not in trouble, but that it's important to tell the whole truth. Emphasize the importance of telling everything, as best as can be remembered, so that the CAC staff can help to ensure that everything is okay and everyone stays safe.

## Who will talk to my child?

Your child will talk to a CPS worker, law enforcement investigator, or both. These individuals have special training and experience in talking with children about difficult subjects. The interviewer's goal is to make your child as comfortable as possible while gathering the necessary information for an investigation. Questions are asked in a non-threatening and non-leading manner. The interview room, like the waiting room, is designed to make your child feel comfortable. There is a closed-circuit camera so other team members can listen to and observe the interview from a separate room. This is so your child is not overwhelmed with too many people in the room and helps reduce the number of times your child has to tell his/her story.

## Can parents or caretakers watch the interview?

Only those people directly involved in the investigation are allowed to observe the interview. This is done to provide a neutral setting and to preserve the integrity of the investigation. It can also reduce the possible stress that may be placed on a child. During the interview and throughout the investigation the advocate will be available to provide support to you. The advocate will keep you informed, assist with referrals and resources and help alleviate your concerns.

## What happens after the interview?

You will talk to members of the investigative team. They will discuss with you in general terms what they learned from the interview. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and voice your concerns. When the team is finished with the investigation, they will decide whether or not to prosecute. In the event that the case goes to trial, your child may have to testify in court. If this happens, the advocate will provide support and assistance throughout the duration of the case.

## Can I talk to my child about what happened?

You should not discuss the subject unless your child brings it up and wants to discuss it. If so, listen to your child without commenting or questioning. Reassure your child that he/she will be alright. If your child tells you something that alarms or upsets you, contact the CAC victim advocate.

## Will my child need a medical exam?

If a medical exam is recommended, a team member will assist in scheduling an appointment with a specially trained medical provider. A team member will attend this exam with you and your child. In preparing your child, you can explain that, "We are going to see a special doctor who takes care of kids. It won't hurt and will ensure that your body is okay."

Prior to the examination, the medical provider will explain exactly what to expect. Afterwards, the provider will discuss the results and next steps.

## Does my child need counseling?

Yes. All children can benefit from counseling. Often they are uncomfortable discussing the abuse with their parents or people they know. They dislike seeing their parents upset and may try to protect them by withholding information about the abuse. Reassure your child that you are not upset with them, but with the situation. It is very important to give your child the opportunity to talk with a professional who is trained to assist children with their recovery. A licensed therapist has special training and can apply specific knowledge, skills and experience to help your child recover as quickly as possible. Abuse affects the entire family and you also may benefit from speaking with a counselor to aid in your own recovery. The CAC victim advocate can assist in helping you find a therapist who will meet your needs.

# What happens at the CAC?

*The Child Advocacy Center (CAC) is a child-friendly center where children, up to 18 years, come to speak with a specially trained team of experts about allegations of child abuse.*

*The team is made up of a law enforcement investigator, a child protective service (CPS) worker, a prosecutor, a medical provider and a victim advocate.*

When you arrive, you will be welcomed into a waiting area designed to make your child feel as comfortable as possible. Toys, books and games are provided for all ages, and a TV/DVD player is available for use. Snacks and beverages are also offered.

You will have an opportunity to speak with the CAC team members both before and after your child's interview and discuss any questions or concerns you may have.



NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE®  
ACCREDITED MEMBER

## Abuse hurts.

We're here to help.

*The Child Advocacy Center (CAC) of Putnam County provides comfort, support and protection.*

*Our experienced and trained professionals are here to assist you and your child. We will guide you through a process which may include medical, psychological, social and legal support.*

