

Welcome to the CAC



We are here to provide you and your child a safe and supportive place where abuse concerns can be explored. Our center is special, because we exist solely to provide a **CHILD FOCUSED** approach to the investigation of suspected abuse. We want to reduce as much stress as possible for you and your child.

To help reduce stress, we use a multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach. This team is made up of professionals who are experts in their fields, and work together to share resources and minimize trauma to children.

The CAC is specially designed to feel safe and welcoming to people of all ages. While at the CAC, your child will meet with an expert who will get to know him/her and will gather information in a way that is neutral, supportive and developmentally appropriate. If follow-up services like counseling or medical evaluations are needed for your child, our staff and members of the MDT will help to coordinate those services and make referrals as necessary.

Whether or not abuse has occurred, we recognize that this may be a stressful period for you and your family. Our staff and members of the MDT will be available to provide you support and answer any questions you might have about the investigative process.

If there is anything we can do to help, please just let us know.

Our Team

Forensic Interviewer - Talks to your child in a developmentally sensitive and child friendly manner about the concerns.

CPS Worker – Works with law enforcement to determine what happened to make sure your child is safe. He/She can also assist you with referrals for services.

Law Enforcement – Investigates the concerns and gathers evidence to decide if any laws have been broken and if/what criminal charges may be filed.

State's Attorney – Reviews and decides whether the offender is charged and prosecute the case. The State's Attorney will prosecute the case if charged.

Victim Advocate - Works closely with the team and is a safe and supportive person who can assist you with questions and concerns you have. He/She can also assist you with referrals for services.

Mental Health Provider – Provides specialized therapy services for children and family members impacted by abuse and suffering from trauma symptoms. These services are important to help your family heal.

Medical Provider – Provides medical exams and gathers forensic evidence. These evaluations are conducted by specially trained medical professionals.

Appointment Reminder

Day _____

Date _____

Time _____

What is the CAC?

The Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) is a safe, child-friendly setting for children to talk with caring adults. We begin with a forensic interview and work with a team to ensure children and their non-offending caregivers get the services and support they need. When necessary, if appropriate, an appointment for therapy services may be made for the child.

Does this mean that my child was abused?

Not necessarily. When allegations of abuse are made, the multidisciplinary team (MDT) has a mandate to look into these concerns thoroughly. Sometimes these complaints are substantiated, and other times they are not. Interviews are done in a manner that is neutral and are not done to "prove" abuse occurred. A forensic interview is only one piece of an entire investigation. Other sources of information are considered and reviewed to ensure the safety of your child.

What happens during the interview?

Your child will be interviewed in a child-friendly room with a specially trained forensic interviewer. The interviewer asks neutral, fact-finding questions in a way that is sensitive to your child's age and ability. The interview will be recorded. This may help reduce the need for repeat interviews.

What should I tell my child?

Dos:

- Tell the child about their appointment. A caregiver may say, "People who talk to a lot of children will be visiting with you about..."
- Tell the child to speak the truth.
- Avoid asking questions about the abuse.
- Reassure the child that you will be there to support them no matter what happens and that they are not in trouble.

Don'ts:

- Discuss the investigation in the child's presence.
- Tell children they are coming to play.
- Lie to the child in any way about the allegations or scare them.
- Offer the child a bribe for telling about what happened.

May I stay with my child during the interview?

Caregivers are not allowed to observe the interview and are not allowed to be with the child during the interview. The interviewer must talk with your child alone. It is difficult for children to talk about abuse they may have experienced and difficult for parents to hear. Having a parent in the room may distract or inhibit children during the interview. Children may also want the parent to answer questions for them. It is best if the child can provide information independently.

What will happen after the interview?

After the interview, the MDT will meet with the caregiver, when available, to update them, answer questions and make recommendations. This may also be a good time for you to share information and your concerns.

May I bring a friend or family member to wait with me?

You are more than welcome to bring a support person with you to the CAC. However, you should not bring the person being accused of maltreatment. A victim advocate will meet with you during your child's forensic interview to provide support.

What is the advantage of having my child interviewed at the CAC?

Your child is our top priority. The CAC provides a place that is friendly, private, and safe for children to talk. The forensic interview and the MDT approach reduce the trauma your child may experience by limiting the number of times his/her story is told. Services for your family will be better coordinated, and you will have the opportunity to meet and ask questions of the people working on your child's case.

Children's Advocacy Centers in North Dakota are child-friendly settings that coordinate and provide services for children who may have been abused. The CACs help hundreds of North Dakota children each year using evidence-based practices.



Dakota Children's Advocacy Center

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