



**Standards for Accredited Members  
Revised  
Effective – 2017**

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# ***NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE***

## ***STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITED MEMBERS***

### **MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM (MDT)**

**STANDARD:** 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

#### **Rationale**

A functioning and effective multidisciplinary team approach (MDT) is the foundation of a CAC. An MDT is a group of professionals of specific, distinct disciplines that collaborates from the point of report and throughout the child and family's involvement with the CAC. The primary goal of the MDT is to assure the most effective coordinated response possible for every child and family. The purpose of interagency collaboration is to coordinate intervention so as to reduce potential trauma to children and families and improve services overall, while preserving and respecting the rights, mandates and obligations of each agency. A CAC is an interagency system response and not just a facility. All MDT representatives contribute their knowledge, experience and expertise for a coordinated, comprehensive, compassionate professional response. Quality assurance and a review of the effectiveness of the collaborative efforts are also critical to the MDT response.

Representatives of law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medical, mental health, and victim advocacy, together with CAC staff, comprise the core MDT. Some CACs, including those in small, rural communities, may employ one person to fill multiple roles. For example, the CAC Director may also serve as the Victim Advocate or a CPS worker may function as a forensic interviewer and a caseworker. What is important is that each of the above-mentioned functions is performed by a member of the MDT while maintaining clear boundaries between each function. MDTs may also be expanded to include other professionals such as guardians ad litem, adult and juvenile probation, dependency (civil) attorneys, out-of-home care licensing personnel, federal investigators, school personnel, domestic violence providers and others, as needed and appropriate for an individual child and family and the community the CAC serves.

Generally, a coordinated, MDT approach facilitates efficient gathering and sharing of information, broadens the knowledge base with which decisions are made and improves communication among agencies. From each agency's perspective, there are also benefits to working on an MDT. More thorough and shared information, improved and timely evidence gathering, and the involvement of the prosecutor from the beginning stages of the case may contribute to a more successful criminal justice outcome. An MDT response also fosters needed education, support and treatment for children and families that may enhance their willingness to participate in the criminal justice system and as effective witnesses. MDT interventions in a neutral, child-focused CAC setting are associated with less anxiety, fewer interviews, increased support, and more appropriate and timely referrals for needed services. In addition, parents and other caregivers are empowered to protect and support their children throughout the investigation and prosecution and beyond.

**Law enforcement** personnel find that a suspect may be more likely to cooperate when confronted with the strength of the evidence generated by a coordinated MDT approach. Law enforcement personnel also appreciate that support and advocacy functions are attended to, leaving them more time to focus on other aspects of the investigation. They work more effectively with **CPS** on child protection issues and benefit from other MDT members' training and expertise in communicating with children and understanding family dynamics. As a result of effective information sharing, CPS workers are often in a better position to make recommendations regarding placement and visitation, the monitoring of the child's safety and parental support, and can provide assistance to non-offending parents. **Medical providers** benefit from the history obtained during the coordinated interview and, in turn, are available to consult about the advisability of a specialized medical evaluation and the interpretation of medical findings and reports. **Mental health providers** may provide the MDT with valuable information regarding the child's emotional state and treatment needs and ability to participate in the criminal justice process. A mental health professional on the MDT helps ensure that assessment, treatment, and related services are more

routinely offered and made available to children and families. **Victim advocates** are available to provide needed crisis intervention, safety planning, referrals for additional services, ongoing support, information and case updates, and court advocacy in a timely fashion. This helps the MDT anticipate and respond to the specific needs of children and their families more effectively, lessens the stress of the court process, and increases access to resources needed by the child and family, including access to victims of crime funding. And, of course, **Prosecutors**, have a critically important role in holding offenders accountable and ensuring community safety.

## **CRITERIA**

### **Essential Components**

***A. The CAC/MDT has a written interagency agreement signed by authorized representatives of all MDT components that clearly commits the signed parties to the CAC model for its multidisciplinary child abuse intervention response. The interagency agreements include:***

- a. Law Enforcement***
- b. Child Protective Services***
- c. Prosecution***
- d. Mental Health***
- e. Medical***
- f. Victim Advocacy***
- g. Child Advocacy Center***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Written agreements formalize interagency cooperation and commitment to MDT/CAC policy and practice ensuring continuity of practice. Written agreements may be in different forms such as memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and/or interagency agreements (I/As), and are signed by the leadership of participating agencies (e.g. police chiefs, prosecuting attorney, agency department heads, supervisors, etc.) or their designees. These documents should be developed with input from the MDT, reviewed annually and must be re-executed upon change in practice, policy or current agency leadership.

***B. Written protocols and/or guidelines that address the functioning of the MDT, the roles and responsibilities of each discipline, and their interaction in the CAC are developed with input from the MDT, reviewed minimally every 3 years, and updated as needed to reflect current practice.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The involvement of the agency leaders and MDT members is critical to ensuring that the policies and procedures by which investigations are conducted and services provided are consistently followed.

***C. All members of the MDT including appropriate CAC staff, as defined by the needs of the case are routinely involved in investigations and/or MDT interventions.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The purpose of multidisciplinary involvement for all interventions is to assure that the unique needs of children are recognized and met. This means that informed decision-making occurs at all stages of the case so that children and families benefit optimally from a coordinated response. Multidisciplinary intervention begins at initial outcry or report and includes, but is not limited to, first response, pre- and post- interview debriefings, forensic interviews, consultations, advocacy, evaluation, treatment, case reviews, and prosecution.

***D. The CAC/MDT's members participate in effective information sharing that ensures the timely exchange of case information within the MDT, including CAC personnel and is consistent with legal, ethical and professional standards of practice.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Effective communication and information sharing happen at many points in a case. Both are key dynamics for MDTs in order to minimize duplicative efforts, enhance decision-making, and maximize the opportunity for children and caretakers to receive the services they need.

***E. The CAC has written documentation describing how information sharing is communicated among MDT members and how confidential information is protected.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The CAC/MDT's written documents must delineate how pertinent information is communicated and how confidential information is protected. Most professions represented on the MDT have legal, ethical and professional standards of practice with regard to confidentiality, but they may differ across disciplines. States may have laws such as the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) that govern this practice. The CAC/MDT must create written confidentiality and information sharing policies that specifically apply to the MDT, staff and volunteers.

***F. The CAC provides routine opportunities for MDT members to provide feedback and suggestions regarding procedures/operations of the CAC/MDT. The CAC has a formal process for reviewing and assessing the information provided.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** CACs should have both formal and informal mechanisms allowing MDT members to regularly provide feedback regarding the operations of the CAC, addressing operational/administrative matters (e.g., transportation for clients, use of the facility, equipment upgrades) and multidisciplinary team issues (e.g., communication, case decision making, documentation and record keeping, conflict resolution, etc.).

CACs should strive to create an atmosphere of trust and respect that fosters opportunities for open communication and enables MDT members to share ideas and raise concerns.

Feedback and/or suggestions from MDT members might also be provided utilizing the Outcome Measurement Survey tool (OMS), team satisfaction surveys, suggestion boxes, MDT meetings specifically scheduled for this purpose, among others.

***G. The CAC/MDT annually provides or facilitates, and demonstrates MDT member participation in, relevant training or other educational opportunity focused on issues relevant to investigation, prosecution, and service provision for children and their non-offending caregivers.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Ongoing learning is critical to the successful operation of CACs/MDTs. The CAC identifies and/or provides relevant educational opportunities for MDT members. These should include topics that are cross-discipline in nature, are MDT-focused, and enhance the skills of the MDT members.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY

**STANDARD:** THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER PROVIDES CULTURALLY COMPETENT SERVICES FOR ALL CAC CLIENTS THROUGHOUT THE LIFE OF CASE

### **Rationale**

Cultural competency is defined as the capacity to function in more than one culture, requiring the ability to appreciate, understand and interact with members of diverse populations within the local community. Cultural competency is as basic to the CAC philosophy as developmentally appropriate, child-friendly practice. Like developmental considerations, diversity issues influence nearly every aspect of work with children and families, such as welcoming a child and family to the center, employing effective forensic interviewing techniques, assessing the likelihood of abuse, selecting appropriate mental health providers and securing services for a child and family that is both relevant and accessible. To effectively meet clients' needs, the CAC and MDT must be willing and able to understand the clients' worldview, adapt practices as needed, and offer assistance in a manner in which it can be utilized. Striving towards cultural competence is an important and ongoing endeavor and an integral part of every facet of a CAC's operations and service delivery.

Proactive planning and outreach should focus on culture and degree of acculturation, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, gender, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation. These factors contribute to a client's worldview, unique perceptions and experiences throughout the investigation, intervention, and case management process. Addressing these factors in a culturally sensitive environment helps children and families of all backgrounds feel welcomed, valued, and respected by staff, MDT members and volunteers.

### **CRITERIA**

#### **Essential Components**

- A. *The CAC conducts a community assessment at a minimum of every 3 years, which includes:***
  - a. *Community demographics,***
  - b. *CAC client demographics,***



- c. Analysis of disparities between these populations,*
- d. Methods the CAC utilizes to identify and address gaps in services,*
- e. Strategies for outreach to un- or underserved communities,*
- f. A method to monitor the effectiveness of outreach and intervention strategies.*

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** In order to serve a community in a culturally competent manner, a CAC must have a comprehensive assessment of their entire community/jurisdiction that focuses on a range of issues including, but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disabilities, income, geography, religion and culture. The assessment should inform the development of goals and strategies that ensure that the CAC delivers high quality, relevant and accessible services to all children and families in need.

- B. The CAC must ensure that provisions are made for non-English speaking and deaf or hard of hearing children and their family members throughout the investigation, intervention, and case management process.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The ability to effectively communicate is critical in creating an environment in which children and families feel comfortable, safe, and are respected and supported. Language barriers can significantly impact the ability to obtain accurate information from the child and family, and hamper the ability for children and families to understand their roles, expectations, concerns and decisions regarding the investigation and intervention services. Language barriers may compound children and families' feelings of fear, anxiety, and confusion. The CAC must explore a variety of resources or solutions to ensure adequate provisions are made to overcome language/communication barriers. In order to protect the integrity of the investigation and services, care should be taken to ensure that appropriate translators are utilized. CACs should not utilize children or client family members to translate for MDT members.

- C. CAC services are accessible and tailored to meet the individualized and unique needs of children and families regarding culture, development and special needs throughout the investigation, intervention, and case management process.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** It is the responsibility of the CAC and MDT members to ascertain the diverse backgrounds and unique needs of the children and families being served. From the moment of first contact with the child and family, the MDT should identify any issues that may affect service delivery. Understanding the child and family's background will help to understand their perceptions of the abuse and attributions of responsibility; understand the

family's degree of acculturation and comprehension of laws; address any religious or cultural beliefs which may affect disclosure and follow-up with services, and recognize the impact of prior experience with police and government authorities both in this country and in their countries of origin.

Further, the CAC must be accessible to children with physical disabilities. Investigation and case management services must be responsive to children with cognitive delays and medical and mental health disorders.

With knowledge, preparation, and necessary skills, the MDT can obtain as complete and accurate information as possible and more effectively interpret and respond to the child and family's needs.

***D. The CAC demonstrates ongoing efforts to recruit, hire, and retain staff, volunteers, and board members that reflect the demographics of the community.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Actively seeking to recruit, hire and retain staff, volunteers and board members that reflect the demographics of the community and the clientele served is critical to achieving an overall response to children and families that is inclusive, relevant and effective.

## FORENSIC INTERVIEWS

**STANDARD:** FORENSIC INTERVIEWS ARE CONDUCTED IN A MANNER THAT IS LEGALLY SOUND, OF A NEUTRAL, FACT FINDING NATURE, AND ARE COORDINATED TO AVOID DUPLICATIVE INTERVIEWING.

### **Rationale**

The purpose of a forensic interview in a CAC is to obtain information from a child about the abuse allegations in a developmentally and culturally sensitive, unbiased, legally and fact-finding manner that will support accurate and fair decision-making by the MDT within the criminal justice, child protection, and service delivery systems. Forensic interviews shall be child-centered and coordinated to avoid duplication. When a child is unable or unwilling to provide information regarding any concern about abuse, other interventions to assess the child's experience and safety are required.

The MDT/CAC must adhere to research-based forensic interview guidelines that create an interview environment that enhances free recall, minimizes interviewer influence and gathers information needed by all the MDT members involved to avoid duplication of the interview process.

CAC/MDT protocols and practice need to be congruent. The CAC/MDT must monitor these guidelines over time to ensure that they reflect current practice.

Forensic interviews are the cornerstone of a child abuse investigation, effective child protection and subsequent prosecution, are a gateway to services for the child and family, and may be the beginning of the road toward healing for many children and families. The manner in which a child is treated during the initial forensic interview may significantly impact the child's understanding of, and ability to respond to the intervention process and/or criminal justice system. Forensic interviews must be conducted by an appropriately trained professional. Quality interviewing involves an appropriate, neutral setting, effective communication among MDT members, employment of legally sound interviewing techniques, and the selection, training and supervision of interviewers.

CACs vary with regard to who conducts the forensic interview. This role shall be filled by a CAC employed forensic interviewer, law enforcement officers, CPS workers, federal law enforcement officers or other MDT members according to the resources available in the community. At a minimum, any professional in the role of a forensic interviewer must have initial and on-going formal forensic interviewer training that is approved by NCA for purposes of accreditation. State laws may dictate which professionals can or should conduct forensic interviews.

The CAC/MDT's written documents must include the general interview protocol, selection of an appropriately trained interviewer, sharing of information among MDT members, and a mechanism for collaborative case planning. Additionally, for CACs that conduct *Extended Forensic Evaluations*, a separate, well-defined protocol must be also be articulated.

## **CRITERIA**

### **Essential Components**

***A. Forensic interviews are provided by MDT/CAC staff that has specialized training in conducting forensic interviews.***

**CAC must demonstrate that all forensic interviewer(s) have successfully completed training that includes a minimum of 32 hours instruction and practice, and at a minimum includes the following elements:**

- a. Evidence supported interview protocol,***
- b. Pre- and post- testing reflecting understanding of the principles of legally sound interviewing,***
- c. Content includes at a minimum: Child development, question design, implementation of the protocol, dynamics of abuse, disclosure process, cultural competency, suggestibility,***
- d. Practice component with a standardized review process,***
- e. Required reading of current articles specific to the practice of forensic interviewing.***

***This curriculum must be included on NCA's approved list of nationally or state recognized forensic interview trainings or submitted with the accreditation application.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** A system must be in place to provide initial training on forensic interviewing for anyone conducting a forensic interview at the CAC. Many CACs use a combination of MDT members and CAC staff to conduct forensic interviews. While many of the members of the MDT may have received general interview training, forensic interviewing of alleged victims of child abuse, and in the context of an MDT response, is considered specialized and thus requires additional specialized training prior to conducting forensic interviews.

***B. Individuals with forensic interviewing responsibilities must demonstrate participation in ongoing education in the field of child maltreatment and/or forensic interviewing consisting of a minimum of 8 hours of CEU/CME credits every 2 years.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The CAC and/or MDT must provide initial and ongoing opportunities for professionals who conduct forensic interviews to receive specialized training.

**C. *The CAC/MDT's protocols reflect the following items:***

- a. *Case acceptance criteria***
- b. *Criteria for choosing an appropriately trained interviewer (for a specific case),***
- c. *Personnel expected to attend/observe the interview,***
- d. *Preparation/information sharing & communication between the MDT and the forensic interviewer ,***
- e. *Use of interview aids,***
- f. *Use of interpreters,***
- g. *Recording and/or documentation of the interview,***
- h. *Interview methodology (i.e., state or nationally recognized forensic interview training model(s)),***
- i. *Introduction of evidence in the forensic interviewing process,***
- j. *Sharing of information among MDT members,***
- k. *A mechanism for collaborative case coordination,***
- l. *The determining criteria and process by which a child has a multi-session or subsequent interview.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The general forensic interview process must be described in the agency's written guidelines or agreements. These guidelines help to ensure consistency and quality of interviews and subsequent MDT discussions and decision-making.

**D. *MDT members with investigative responsibilities on a case observe the forensic interview(s) to ensure necessary preparation/information sharing with the forensic interviewer and MDT and interviewer coordination throughout the interview and post interview process.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** MDT members, as defined by the needs of the case, are present for the forensic interview. This practice provides each MDT member access to the information necessary to fulfill their respective professional roles. MDT members present include local, state, federal or tribal child protective services, law enforcement and prosecution; others may vary based on case assignments and the unique needs of the case.

**E. *For cases meeting the CAC case acceptance criteria as outlined in the MDT protocol, forensic interviews are conducted at the CAC, at a minimum of 75% of the time.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Forensic interviews of children, as defined in the CAC/MDT's written protocols, will be conducted at the CAC rather than at other settings. The CAC is the setting where the MDT is best equipped to meet the child's needs during the interview.

On rare occasions as determined and approved by the MDT, when interviews take place outside the CAC, the agreed-upon forensic interview guidelines must be utilized. Some CACs have established interview rooms outside of the primary CAC such as at a satellite office. In an alternate setting, MDT members must assure the child's comfort, privacy, and protection from alleged offenders or others who may unduly influence the child.

CACs are encouraged to develop policies that will provide the most comprehensive services and benefit to all children in their communities. Case acceptance criteria may include the various types of abuse which children are victims of and/or witness, other forms of violence/trauma, jurisdictional issues, or the ages of children.

***F. Individuals who conduct forensic interviews at the CAC must participate in a structured peer review process for forensic interviewers a minimum of 2 times per year, as a matter of quality assurance. Peer review includes participants and facilitators who are trained to conduct child forensic interviews and serves to reinforce the methodology(ies) utilized and provide support and problem-solving regarding shared challenges. Structured peer review includes:***

- a. Ongoing opportunities to network with, and share learning and challenges with peers,***
- b. Review and performance feedback of actual interviews in a professional and confidential setting,***
- c. Discussion of current relevant research articles and materials,***
- d. Training opportunities specific to forensic interviewing of children and the CAC-specific methodologies.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Participation in peer review is vitally important to assure that forensic interviewers remain current and further develop and strengthen their skills based on new research and developments in the field that impact the quality of their interviews. Peer review is a complement, not a substitute, for supervision, case review and case planning.

***G. The CAC/MDT coordinates information gathering including history taking, assessments and forensic interview(s) to avoid duplication.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** All members of the MDT need information to complete their respective assessments and evaluations. Whether it is the initial information gathered prior to the forensic interview, the history taken by the

medical provider prior to the medical evaluation, or the intake by the mental health or victim services provider, every effort should be made to avoid duplication of information gathering from the child and family members and ensure information sharing among MDT members.

## VICTIM SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

**STANDARD:** VICTIM SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY SERVICES ARE PROVIDED TO ALL CAC CLIENTS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS AS PART OF THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM RESPONSE.

### **Rationale**

The focus of victim support and advocacy is to help reduce trauma for the child and family members and to improve outcomes. In fact, research demonstrates that parent/caregiver support is essential to reducing trauma and improving outcomes for children and family members. Coordinated victim advocacy services encourage access to, and participation in, investigation, prosecution, treatment and support services and, thus, are a core component of the MDT's response. Up-to-date information and ongoing support and access to comprehensive services are critical to a child and family's comfort and ability to participate in an ongoing investigation, possible prosecution, intervention and treatment.

The victim support and advocacy responsibilities are implemented consistent with victims' rights legislation in the CAC's state and the complement of services in the CAC's coverage area. Many members of the MDT may serve as an advocate for a child within their discipline system or agency. However, victim-centered advocacy is a discipline unto itself with a distinct role on the MDT that coordinates and provides services to ensure a consistent and comprehensive network of support for the child and family.

Children and families in crisis need assistance in navigating the multiple systems involved in the CAC response. More than one victim advocate may perform these functions at different points in time, requiring seamless coordination that ensures continuity and consistency in service delivery. This is the responsibility of the CAC and must be defined in the CAC/MDT's written documents. Some CACs may employ staff that performs advocacy functions (e.g., family advocates, care coordinators, victim advocates, and child life specialists). Some CACs may link with local community-based advocates (e.g., domestic violence advocates, rape crisis counselors, Court Appointed Special Advocates), and/or system-based advocates (e.g., law enforcement victim advocates, prosecutor-based victim witness coordinators). And some CACs do both by employing and linking with such advocates. All advocates providing services to CAC clients must meet the prescribed training and supervision requirements.



## CRITERIA

### Essential Components

**A. Comprehensive, coordinated victim support and advocacy services are provided by designated individual(s) who have specialized training in Victim Advocacy.** The CAC must demonstrate that all Victim Advocates providing services to CAC clients have successfully completed training that includes a minimum of 24 hours instruction including, but not limited to:

- a. *Dynamics of abuse,*
- b. *Trauma-informed services,*
- c. *Crisis assessment and intervention,*
- d. *Risk assessment and safety planning,*
- e. *Professional ethics and boundaries,*
- f. *Understanding the coordinated multidisciplinary response,*
- g. *Assistance in accessing/obtaining victims' rights as outlined by law,*
- h. *Court education, support and accompaniment.*
- i. *Assistance with access to treatment and other services, including protective orders, housing, public assistance, domestic violence intervention, transportation, financial assistance, interpreters, among others as determined for individual clients.*

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Victim support and advocacy is integral and fundamental to the MDT response. The support/advocacy responsibilities may be filled by a designated victim advocate and/or by another member of the MDT with appropriate experience and training and that does not conflict with the other role they have on the MDT.

If multiple advocacy agencies share the delivery of services, the CAC is responsible for establishing protocols and linkage agreements agreed upon by the MDT that clearly define the victim advocacy roles and ensure seamless coordination of victim advocacy services.

**B. Individuals who provide victim advocacy services for children and families at the CAC must demonstrate participation in ongoing education in the field of victim advocacy and child maltreatment consisting of a minimum of 8 contact hours every 2 years.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The CAC and/or MDT must provide initial and ongoing opportunities for professionals who provide advocacy services to receive specialized training and peer support. It is vitally important that victim

advocates remain current on developments in the fields relevant to their delivery of services to children and families and to continue to develop their expertise.

**C. Victim Advocates serving CAC clients must provide the following constellation of services:**

- a. Crisis assessment and intervention, risk assessment and safety planning and support for children and family members at all stages of involvement with CAC,**
- b. Assessment of individual needs, cultural considerations for child/family and ensure those needs are addressed,**
- c. Presence at CAC during the forensic interview in order to participate in information sharing, inform and support family about the coordinated, multidisciplinary response, and assess needs of child and non-offending caregiver,**
- d. Provision of education and access to victim's rights and crime victim's compensation,**
- e. Assistance in procuring concrete services (housing, protective orders, domestic violence intervention, food, transportation, public assistance etc.),**
- f. Provision of referrals for trauma focused, evidence -supported mental health and specialized medical treatment, if not provided at the CAC.**
- g. Access to transportation to interviews, court, treatment and other case-related meetings,**
- h. Engagement in the child's/family's response regarding participation in the investigation/prosecution,**
- i. Participation in case review to: communicate and discuss the unique needs of the child and family and associated support services planning; ensure the seamless coordination of services; and, ensure the child and family's concerns are heard and addressed,**
- j. Provision of updates to the family on case status, continuances, dispositions, sentencing, inmate status notification (including offender release from custody),**
- k. Provision of court education & courthouse/courtroom tours, support, and court accompaniment.**
- l. Coordinated case management meetings with any and all individuals providing victim advocacy services.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** While the particular constellation of services required by children and families will vary based upon their unique needs and the legal requirements of any civil and/or criminal cases, all children and families need support in navigating the various systems they encounter which are often unfamiliar to them. Crisis assessment and intervention, advocacy and support services help to identify the child and family's unique needs, reduce fear and anxiety, and expedite access to appropriate services. Families can be assisted

through the various phases of crisis management with problem solving, access to critical treatment and other services, and ongoing education, information and support. Crises may recur with various precipitating or triggering events such as financial hardships, child placement, arrest, change/delay in court proceedings, preparation for court testimony, etc. Children may experience crisis and trauma, including suicidal ideation, at unanticipated times. Many CACs provide advocacy services for children and their family members on-site and/or through linkage agreements with other community agencies or system-based providers.

State and federal laws require that victims of crime, including child abuse, are informed regarding their rights as crime victims, including information about, and eligibility for, crime victim compensation. Caregivers who are affected by the crime may also be entitled to services. Generally, children and their families will be unfamiliar with their legal rights. Therefore, information regarding rights and services should be routinely and repeatedly explained as necessary and made available to all children and their caregivers.

Victim support and advocacy is integral and fundamental to the MDT response. The support/advocacy function may be filled by a paid CAC staff person or a trained MDT member serving in that designated role. Regardless of the CAC's model, appropriately trained individual(s) must be identified to fulfill these responsibilities. If more than one victim advocate is providing services to the same family, case management meetings that provide opportunities for discussion of individual and shared case responsibilities, needed services, follow-up, and ongoing assessment and intervention are required.

Often families have never been involved in this multi-system response, which can prove intimidating and confusing. Active outreach requires follow-up with families beyond initial assessment and crisis response. Follow-up services after the initial contact at the CAC must include ongoing, regular contact until the CAC concludes its involvement with the case.

In the aftermath of victimization, the child and family typically feels a significant loss of control. Education provides information that is empowering. Education must be ongoing and even repetitive as needed because families may be unable to process so much information at one time, particularly in the midst of a crisis, and their needs change over time. The family may be dealing with immediate safety issues, and may be coping with the emotional impact of the initial report and ensuing process. They may need a variety of concrete medical, mental health, and social services. As the case dynamics change, and as the case proceeds through the various systems, the needs of the child and family must continue to be assessed so that additional relevant information, support and services can be offered.

***D. The CAC/MDT's written protocols/guidelines include availability of victim support and advocacy services for all CAC clients throughout the***

***life of the case and participation of victim advocate(s) in MDT case review.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Because victim support/advocacy is a central function of the CAC response, the availability and provision of ongoing victim support and advocacy by designated, trained individuals must be included in the CAC/MDT's written documents. The manner in which services, both within and outside the CAC, are coordinated must be clearly defined, including the role of the victim advocate during the interview process, follow-up, and case review.

## MEDICAL EVALUATION

**STANDARD:** SPECIALIZED MEDICAL EVALUATION AND TREATMENT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL CAC CLIENTS AND COORDINATED AS PART OF THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM RESPONSE.

### **Rationale**

All children who are suspected victims of child sexual abuse are entitled to be offered a medical evaluation by a provider with specialized training. The collection and documentation of possible forensically significant findings are vital. However, decisions regarding the referral of children for medical examinations should NOT be limited to those in which forensically significant information is anticipated. Medical evaluations should be prioritized as emergent, urgent and non-urgent based on specific screening criteria developed by specially trained and skilled medical providers or by local multidisciplinary teams that include qualified medical representation. Some children also benefit from follow-up examinations to re-assess findings and conduct further testing.

A medical evaluation holds an important place in the multidisciplinary assessment of child abuse. An accurate and complete history is essential in making medical diagnoses and determining appropriate treatment of child abuse. Recognizing that there are several acceptable models that can be used to obtain a history of the abuse allegations and that forensic interview techniques are specialized skills that require training, information gathering must be coordinated with the MDT to avoid duplication. Because children have previous understanding of, and familiarity with, the helping role of doctors and nurses, they may disclose information to medical personnel that they might not share with investigators. In fact, some children are able to describe residual physical symptoms to medical providers even when no injury is seen. If the in-depth forensic interview is being obtained by a non-medical member of the MDT, further medical history will still likely be needed from the caregiver and/or child to complete the medical evaluation (See Appendix 1 for an example of Components of Medical History for Child Sexual Abuse Evaluation).

***A. Medical evaluations are conducted by health care providers with specific training in child sexual abuse that meets one of the following training standards.***

### ***Training and Eligibility Standards for a Medical Provider:***

Physicians, advance practice nurses, physician assistants and sexual assault nurse examiners (SANE's) without advance practice training may all engage in medical evaluation of child abuse as a medical provider. Due to differences in

foundational training in pediatric assessment by provider type (see Appendix 2), the following *Training Standards* must be met by the medical provider of a CAC (regardless of whether the exams are occurring on or off-site):

The CAC must demonstrate that its medical provider meets at least ONE of the following *Training Standards*:

- Child Abuse Pediatrics Sub-board eligibility or certification
- Physicians without board certification or board eligibility in the field of Child Abuse Pediatrics, Advanced Practice Nurses, and Physician Assistants should have a minimum of 16 hours of formal didactic training in the medical evaluation of child sexual abuse (see Appendix 2).
- SANE's without advanced practitioner training should have a minimum of 40 hours of coursework specific to the medical evaluation of child sexual abuse followed by a competency based clinical preceptorship. This means a preceptorship with an experienced provider in a clinical setting where the SANE can demonstrate competency in performing exams. (see Appendix 2 or IAFN guidelines).

Regardless of provider type, all providers should be licensed to practice (and be in current good standing) by their corresponding state board of practice regulation. Nurses must practice within the scope of their applicable state Nurse Practice Acts. A medical director (physician or advanced practice nurse) is needed for non-advanced practice nurses to assist with the development of practice protocols and treatment needs of the patient including referrals for other medical or mental health issues that are discovered during the evaluation. The medical director may or may not also meet qualifications as an "advanced medical consultant" who can perform review of examination findings. ("Advanced medical consultant" defined below in the Continuous Quality Improvement section). If the medical director does not also serve as a medical provider for the CAC, this person should, at a minimum, be familiar with the essential components of the medical standard and the mission of the CAC.

Some CACs have access to qualified medical providers as full or part-time staff while others provide this service through affiliation and linkage agreements with local providers or other regional facilities. Whether the exams occur on-site or off-site via a linkage agreement, the medical provider must meet the eligibility standard for training (above) and Continuous Quality Improvement.

***Continuous Quality Improvement for the medical component of the CAC:***

The medical provider must be familiar and keep up-to-date with published research studies on findings in abused and non-abused children, sexual

transmission of infections in children, and current medical guidelines and recommendations from national professional organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Accuracy in interpretation of examination findings is vitally important to the MDT. The medical provider must participate and provide documentation of such participation in the following Continuous Quality Improvement activities in order to stay current in the field of child sexual abuse. Continuous Quality Improvement includes continuing education and expert review of positive findings with an “advanced medical consultant.”

**B. Medical professionals providing services to CAC Clients must demonstrate continuing education in the field of child abuse consisting of a minimum of 8 hours every 2 years of CEU/CME credits.**

(Teaching in the area of child abuse that is approved to provide CEU or CME activity also qualifies for ongoing education credit.)

**C. Medical professionals providing services to CAC clients must demonstrate, at a minimum, that 50% of all findings deemed abnormal or “diagnostic” of trauma from sexual abuse have undergone expert review by an “advanced medical consultant”.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** While it is recommended that ALL examinations with findings that the medical provider deems are abnormal or “diagnostic” of trauma from sexual abuse be submitted for expert review, the medical provider must be able to provide documentation of participation in expert review with an “advanced medical consultant” on at least 50 % of abnormal exams for the purpose of CAC case tracking information that could be requested for review in the accreditation process.

The following providers qualify as an “advanced medical consultant” that could offer expert review of examination findings:

\*Child Abuse Pediatrician (preferred)

Review with a Child Abuse Pediatrician could occur via direct linkage agreement with a specific provider or through *MyCaseReview* sponsored by the Midwest Regional CAC, or other identified State-based medical expert review systems that has access to an “advanced medical consultant.”

\*Physician or Advanced Practice Nurse with the following qualifications:

1. Has met the minimum training standards outlined for a CAC medical provider (outlined above).
2. Has performed at least 100 child sexual abuse examinations.
3. Current in CQI requirements (continuing education and participation in expert peer review on their own cases).

The CAC and medical provider must work collaboratively to establish a method to track de-identified case information as part of the CQI process (see Attachment 1).

***D. Specialized medical evaluations for the child client are available on-site or through written linkage agreements with other appropriate agencies or providers.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Specialized medical evaluations can be provided in a number of ways. Some CACs have a qualified medical provider who comes to the center on a scheduled basis, while in other communities the child is referred to a medical clinic or health care agency for this service. CACs need not be the provider of primary care but they must have protocols in place outlining the linkages to a facility with a qualified medical provider and other needed healthcare services.

***E. Specialized medical evaluations are available and accessible to all CAC clients regardless of ability to pay.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** In many communities, the cost of the medical evaluation is covered by public funds. In other settings, limited public funding requires that individuals who can pay or are insured cover the cost of their own exam, or apply for reimbursement through Victim Compensation. In either scenario, ability to pay should never be a factor in determining who is offered a medical evaluation.

***F. The CAC/MDT's written protocols/guidelines include access to appropriate medical evaluation and treatment for all CAC clients.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Because medical evaluations are a critical component of the CAC's multidisciplinary response, the CAC's written protocols must detail how its clients access these services. . Many CACs provide services to victims of physical abuse and neglect in addition to sexual abuse. All CACs must have written protocols and agreements outlining how medical evaluations for all types of abuse and neglect would occur. CACs that provide medical evaluations for sexual abuse, but not specifically for physical abuse or neglect, need written procedures for how a medical evaluation will be obtained when there are allegations of physical abuse or neglect. These procedures should include how to obtain treatment for injuries and the management of emergency



or life-threatening conditions that may become evident during a sexual assault exam.

***G. The CAC/MDT's written protocols/guidelines include the circumstances under which a medical evaluation for child sexual abuse is recommended.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The purpose of a medical evaluation in suspected child abuse extends far beyond providing an evidentiary examination for the purpose of the investigation. The primary goals of the medical evaluation are to:

- Help ensure the health, safety, and well-being of the child
- Evaluate, document, diagnose, and address medical conditions resulting from abuse
- Differentiate medical findings that are indicative of abuse from those which may be explained by other medical conditions
- Document, diagnose, and address medical conditions unrelated to abuse
- Assess the child for any developmental, emotional, or behavioral problems needing further evaluation and treatment and make referrals as necessary
- Reassure and educate the child and family
- Refer for therapy to address the trauma related to the abuse/assault, if not provided by another member of the MDT/CAC.

CACs differ in their practices of how the medical evaluation is made available. The MDT's written protocol or agreement must include qualified medical input to define the referral process and how, when, and where the exam is made available. Examinations can be differentiated between those needed **emergently** (*without delay*), **urgently** (*scheduled as soon as possible with qualified provider*), **non-urgently** (*scheduled at convenience of family and provider but ideally within 1-2 weeks*), and some patients will benefit from a **follow-up** examination. (see Appendix 3)

CACs are responsible for ensuring that qualified examiners at the appropriate location and time evaluate children, minimizing unnecessary medical evaluations. This often requires initial conversations with emergency departments and primary care providers to develop a process for referral to the specialized medical provider as defined by the needs of the child. In addition, exams should be performed by experienced examiners and photo-documented to minimize repeat examinations.

***H. Documentation of medical findings by written record and photo-documentation.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The medical history and physical examination findings must be carefully, thoroughly and legibly documented in the medical

record. The medical record should also include a statement as to the significance of the findings and treatment plan. Medical records should be maintained in compliance with federal rules governing protection of patient privacy. Medical records can be made available to other medical providers for the purpose of other needed treatment of the patient and to those agencies mandated to respond to a report of suspected child abuse. Even in situations where the medical record can legally be provided without separate written consent or court order, a log of disclosures should be maintained with the medical record in accordance with federal privacy rules.

Diagnostic-quality photographic documentation of the ano-genital exam findings should be obtained in all cases of suspected sexual abuse using still and/or video documentation. This is particularly important if the examination findings are thought to be abnormal. Photographic documentation allows for review for CQI, for obtaining consultation or second opinion, and may also obviate the need for a repeat examination of the child. CACs should have policies for storage and release of examination images that protect the sensitive nature of the material. In the uncommon exception where photo-documentation is not possible due to the child's discomfort with the equipment or equipment malfunction, diagram drawings with detailed written description of findings should occur.

Detailing procedures for the documentation and preservation of evidence (labeling, processing and storing) in written protocols and agreements can help to assure the quality and consistency of medical evaluations. Such protocols can also serve as a checklist and training document for new examiners. Many states have mandated forms for recording findings of a sexual assault exam and guidelines for the preservation of evidence.

- I. MDT members and CAC staff are trained regarding the purpose and nature of the medical evaluation for suspected sexual abuse. Designated MDT members and/or CAC staff educate clients and/or caregivers regarding the medical evaluation.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The medical evaluation for suspected sexual abuse often raises significant anxiety for children and their families, usually due to misconceptions about how the exam is conducted and what findings, or lack of findings, mean. When an appropriately trained provider performs the examination, it is usually well tolerated. In many CAC settings, the client is introduced to the exam by non-medical personnel. Therefore, it is essential for MDT members and CAC staff to be trained about the nature and purpose of a medical evaluation so that they can competently respond to common questions, concerns and misconceptions.

- J. Findings of the medical evaluation are shared with the MDT in a routine, timely and meaningful manner.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Because the medical evaluation is an important part of the response to suspected child abuse and neglect, findings of the medical evaluation should be shared with, and explained to, the MDT in a routine and timely manner so that concerns can be discussed and case decisions can be made effectively. The duty to report findings of suspected child abuse to the mandated agencies is an exception to HIPAA privacy requirements, which also allows for ongoing communication.

## MENTAL HEALTH

**STANDARD:** EVIDENCE BASED TRAUMA-FOCUSED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, DESIGNED TO MEET THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF THE CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS, ARE CONSISTENTLY AVAILABLE AS PART OF THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM RESPONSE.

### **Rationale**

A CAC has as its mission: protection of the child, justice and healing. Healing may begin with the first contact with the MDT, whose common focus is on minimizing potential trauma to children. Without effective therapeutic intervention, many traumatized children will suffer ongoing or long-term adverse social, emotional, developmental and health outcomes that may impact them throughout their lifetimes. Evidenced-based treatments and other practices with strong empirical support reduce the impact of trauma and the risk of future abuse. For these reasons, an MDT response must include a trauma history, screening/assessment of trauma and abuse-related symptoms, and evidence based trauma-focused mental health services for child victims and caregivers.

Evidence also shows the importance of collaboration of community professionals to improve outcomes for children and families. The CAC case review process provides a vehicle for these collaborative discussions.

Family members are often the key to the child's recovery and ongoing protection. Their mental health is often an important factor in their capacity to support the child. Therefore, family members may benefit from counseling and support to address the emotional impact of the abuse allegations, reduce or eliminate the risk of future abuse, and address issues which the allegation may trigger. Mental health treatment for caregivers, many of whom have victimization histories themselves, are current victims of intimate partner violence, may focus on support and coping strategies for themselves and their child, information about sexual abuse, dealing with issues of self-blame and grief, family dynamics, parenting education and the impact of abuse and trauma histories. Siblings and other children may also benefit from opportunities to discuss their own reactions and experiences and to address family issues within a confidential therapeutic relationship.

### **CRITERIA**

#### **Essential Components**

***A. Mental health services are provided by professionals with training in, and who deliver, trauma-focused, evidence-supported, mental health treatment. All mental health providers for CAC clients, whether providing services on-site or by referral and linkage agreement with outside individuals and agencies, must meet the following training requirements:***

- 1. The CAC must demonstrate that its mental health provider(s) has completed 40 contact hour CEUs in accordance with the provider's license requirements, CEUs from specific evidence-based treatment for trauma training, and clinical supervision hours by a licensed clinical supervisor.**
- 2. In addition, the CAC must further demonstrate that its mental health provider(s) meets at least ONE of the following academic training standards:**
  - a. Master's Degree/Licensed/certified or supervised by a licensed mental health professional.**
  - b. Master's degree/license-eligible in a related mental health field.**
  - c. Student intern in an accredited graduate program, when supervised by a licensed/certified mental health professional. (Both the student intern and supervising licensed mental health professional must meet the previously indicated 40 hour training requirements.)**

***B. Clinicians providing mental health treatments to CAC clients must demonstrate completion of continuing education in the field of child abuse consisting of a minimum of 8 contact hours every 2 years.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Because new research constantly emerges regarding the efficacy of mental health treatment modalities, it is vitally important for clinicians to remain updated about new research, evidence-supported treatment methods, and developments in the field that would impact their delivery of services to clients.

***C. Evidence-supported trauma-focused mental health services for the child client are consistently available and include:***

- a. Trauma-specific assessment including traumatic events and abuse-related trauma symptoms,**
- b. Use of standardized assessment measures initially to inform treatment, and periodically to assess progress and outcome,**
- c. Individualized treatment plan based on assessments that are periodically re-assessed,**
- d. Individualized evidence supported treatment appropriate for the child clients and other family members ,**

- e. Child and caregiver engagement in treatment,**
- f. Referral to other community services as needed.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The above description of services should guide discussions with all professionals who may provide mental health services, whether onsite or by referral and linkage agreement. This will ensure that appropriate services are available for child clients and that the services are outlined in linkage agreements.

***D. Evidence-supported trauma-focused mental health services are available and accessible to all CAC child clients regardless of ability to pay.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** CACs have a responsibility to identify and secure alternative funding sources to ensure that all children have access to appropriate, specialized mental health services regardless of ability to pay.

***E. The CAC/MDT's Interagency Agreement/MOU or written protocols/guidelines include access to appropriate trauma-informed mental health assessment and treatment for all CAC clients.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Because mental health is a core component of a CAC's multidisciplinary team response, the CAC/MDT's Interagency Agreement/MOU or written protocols must detail how such care may be accessed by its clients.

- F. The CAC/MDT's written protocols/guidelines define the role and responsibility of the mental health professional on the MDT, to include:***
- a. Attendance and participation in MDT case review,***
  - b. Sharing relevant information with the MDT while protecting the clients' right to confidentiality,***
  - c. Serving as a clinical consultant to the MDT on issues relevant to child trauma and evidence based treatment,***
  - d. Supporting the MDT in the monitoring of treatment progress and outcomes.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Evidence shows the importance of collaboration of community professionals to improve outcomes for children and families. A trained mental health professional participating in the MDT case review process assures that the children's treatment needs are being assessed and their mental health can be monitored and taken into account as the MDT makes case decisions. In some CACs this may be the child's treatment provider; in others it may be a mental health consultant.

***G. The CAC/MDT's written protocols/ guidelines include provisions about***

***the sharing of mental health information and how client confidentiality and mental health records are protected in accordance with state and federal laws.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT** The forensic process of gathering evidentiary information and determining what the child may have experienced is separate from mental health treatment. Mental health treatment is a clinical process designed to assess and mitigate the long-term adverse impacts of trauma or other diagnosable mental health conditions. Every effort should be made to maintain clear boundaries between these roles and processes.

Each CAC should be aware that medical and mental health treatment records containing identifiable “protected health information” (or PHI) are protected by HIPAA. Records pertaining directly to an investigation of child abuse can be exempt from HIPAA and not require caregiver consent for release, but the CAC should maintain a log of disclosures of medical and mental health treatment information per HIPAA regulations.

MDT protocol must include specific guidelines for the MDT and mental health providers regarding what and how information can be shared with the MDT during case review in accordance with local laws and professional practice standards.

***H. The CAC must provide supportive services for caregivers to address:***

- a. The safety of the child,***
- b. The emotional impact of abuse allegations,***
- c. Reduce or eliminate the risk of future abuse,***
- d. Address issues or distress which the allegations may trigger.***

***Services are made available on-site or through linkage agreements with other appropriate agencies or providers.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT** Evidence clearly demonstrates that caregiver support is essential to the recovery of child victims, sibling support, and overall family functioning and well-being. CACs have long provided such supportive services through caregiver support groups, mental health services for caregivers and siblings either on-site or by linkage agreement, including ongoing follow-up.

It is important to consider the range of mental health issues that could impact the child’s recovery or safety with particular attention to the caregiver’s mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and other trauma history. Family members may benefit from assessment, support, and mental health treatment to address the emotional impact of abuse allegations, reduce or eliminate the risk of future abuse, and address issues which the allegations may trigger. Siblings and other children may also benefit from opportunities to discuss their own reactions

and experiences and to address family issues within a confidential therapeutic relationship.

***I. Clinicians providing mental health treatments to CAC clients must participate in ongoing clinical supervision/consultation.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Clinical supervision/consultation for mental health clinicians provides ongoing support and training necessary to ensure appropriate and quality services to the clients they serve. Moreover, this clinical supervision is required for licensure in many states and may include individual and/or group supervision. Options for meeting this standard include:

- a. Supervision by a senior clinician on-staff at the CAC; or
- b. When a CAC does not have more than one clinician, negotiating with a senior clinician in the community who serves children and families and accepts referrals from the CAC; or
- c. Participating in a supervision call with mental health providers from other CACs within the state, either individually or as a group; or
- d. A state chapter or one or more CAC contracts with a senior clinician to provide supervision and consultation calls.

Most clinical professions (i.e., clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, etc.) have a structure for clinicians to become clinical supervisors. CACs may wish to investigate this option in their state. CACs can also negotiate with those who are TFCBT master trainers for on-going clinical consultation. While there are many options for implementing appropriate clinical supervision/consultation, it is important to remember that having supervision on one evidence-based treatment does not necessarily include all the clinical interventions needed within a CAC. Therefore, comprehensive interventions will need to be addressed in ongoing clinical supervision.



## CASE REVIEW

**STANDARD:** A FORMAL PROCESS IN WHICH MULTIDISCIPLINARY DISCUSSION AND INFORMATION SHARING REGARDING THE INVESTIGATION, CASE STATUS AND SERVICES NEEDED BY THE CHILD AND FAMILY IS TO OCCUR ON A ROUTINE BASIS.

### **Rationale**

Case review is the formal process that enables the MDT to monitor and assess its effectiveness - independently and collectively - ensuring the safety and well-being of children and families. It is intended to monitor current cases, not as a retrospective case study. CACs must create an environment and a forum where complex issues can be raised and discussed. Case review is a formal process by which knowledge, experience and expertise of MDT members is shared and discussed, and informed decisions made, where collaborative efforts are fostered, formal and informal communications are promoted, mutual support is provided, and protocols/procedures are reviewed. The process encourages mutual accountability and helps to assure that children's needs are met sensitively, effectively and in a timely manner. Case review should occur at least once a month. It is not meant to pre-empt ongoing discussions, and ongoing discussions are not meant to take the place of formal case review.

Every CAC must have a process and set the criteria for reviewing cases. Depending on the size of the CAC's jurisdiction or caseload, the method and timing of case review may vary to fit the unique needs of a CAC community. Some CACs review every case, while other programs review only complex or problematic cases or cases involved in prosecution. Representatives from each core discipline must attend and/or provide input at case review. Confidentiality should be addressed in the written protocol or guidelines. State and/or federal law may govern information sharing among MDT members, including during case review.

### **CRITERIA**

#### **Essential Component**

***A. The CAC/MDT's written protocols/guidelines include criteria for case review and case review procedures.***

**The CAC/MDT's written documents must include:**

- a. frequency of meetings;**
- b. designated attendees;**
- c. case selection criteria;**

- d. process for adding cases to the agenda;**
- e. designated facilitator and/or coordinator;**
- f. mechanism for distribution of agenda and/or notification of cases to be discussed;**
- g. procedures for follow-up recommendations to be addressed;**
- h. location of the meeting.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** To maximize efficiency and to enhance the quality of case review, the CAC's written documents clearly define the process.

***B. A forum for the purpose of reviewing cases is conducted at least once a month.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Case review affords the MDT the opportunity to review active cases, provide updated case information, address obstacles to effective investigations and service delivery, and coordinate interventions. It is a planned meeting of all MDT partners and occurs at least once a month for cases coming from the CAC's primary service area. Case review is in addition to informal discussions and pre- and post-interview debriefings.

***C. MDT partner agency representatives actively participating in case review must include, at a minimum:***

- a. law enforcement**
- b. child protective services**
- c. prosecution**
- d. medical**
- e. mental health**
- f. victim advocacy, and**
- g. Children's Advocacy Center**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Full MDT representation at case review promotes an informed process through the contributions of diverse professional perspectives and expertise. Case review must be attended by the identified agency representatives capable of making, informing and/or advocating for decisions and providing the team with knowledge and expertise of their specific profession. All those participating should be familiar with the CAC/MDT process and the purpose and expectations of case review. The forensic interviewer, irrespective of which agency employs him/her, should be present at case review. Moreover, it is strongly encouraged for case review participants to be those who are actively working on the cases under review rather than their supervisors, in order to ensure direct communication between all parties. In those rare circumstances in which a discipline cannot be present in person, alternative means (including conference call or video conferencing) should be used to ensure the participation of all required disciplines.

***D. Case review is an informed decision-making process with input from all MDT partner agency representatives.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** In order to make informed case decisions and improve client outcomes, essential information and professional expertise are required from all disciplines. This means that decisions are made with as much information as available, interventions receive the input, discussion, and support of all involved professionals, efforts are coordinated and non-duplicative, and all aspects of the case are covered. The process should ensure that no one discipline dominates the discussion, but rather all team members have a chance to adequately address their specific goals, mandates, case interventions, questions, concerns and outcomes.

Generally, the case review process should:

- a. review interview outcomes;
- b. discuss, plan and monitor the progress of the investigation;
- c. review medical evaluations;
- d. discuss child protection and other safety issues;
- e. provide input for prosecution and sentencing decisions;
- f. discuss emotional support and treatment needs of the child and family members and strategies for meeting those needs;
- g. assess the family's reactions and response to the child's disclosure and involvement in the criminal justice/child protection systems;
- h. review criminal and civil (dependency) case updates, ongoing involvement of the child and family, and disposition;
- i. make provisions for court education and court support;
- j. discuss ongoing cultural and special needs issues relevant to the case;
- k. ensure that all children and families are afforded the legal rights and comprehensive services to which they are entitled.

***E. A designated individual coordinates and facilitates case review and communicates the recommendations for follow-up.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The person designated to lead and facilitate the meetings should have training and/or experience in facilitation. Proper planning and preparation for case review includes setting the agenda, notification of all case review participants, ensuring that all relevant information is shared and discussed and that the child and family's input is considered. A comprehensive review of cases in a well-facilitated manner helps ensure mutual accountability and quality assurance. A process for communicating recommendations and decisions from case review to the appropriate individuals for implementation must be outlined as well.

## CASE TRACKING

**STANDARD:** CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS MUST DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A SYSTEM FOR MONITORING CASE PROGRESS AND TRACKING CASE OUTCOMES FOR ALL MDT COMPONENTS.

### **Rationale**

Case tracking systems provide essential demographic information, case information and investigation/intervention outcomes. It can be used for program evaluation (i.e., identifying areas for continuous quality improvement, ongoing case progress and outcomes) and generating statistical reports. Effective case tracking systems can also enable MDT members to accurately inform children and families about the current status and disposition of their cases.

There are additional reasons for establishing a case tracking system. One is the usefulness and ease of access to data that is frequently requested for grants and other reporting purposes. The usefulness and ease of access to data, collected across programs, can be assembled locally, regionally, statewide and nationally for advocacy, research and legislative purposes in the field of child maltreatment. This data also may be required for federal funding reporting requirements. Each CAC needs to determine the type of case tracking system that will suit its needs and be supported by its available resources. Case tracking should be compliant with all applicable privacy and confidentiality requirements.

### **CRITERIA**

#### **Essential Components**

**A. *The CAC/MDT's written protocol/guidelines include tracking case information until final disposition.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Case tracking provides a mechanism for monitoring case progress throughout the multidisciplinary interagency response. Often MDT members will have a system to collect their own agency data; however, the MDT response requires the sharing of this information to better inform decision-making. The CAC/MDT's written documents must detail a process for case tracking.

**B. *The CAC tracks and minimally is able to retrieve NCA Statistical Information.***

**NCA statistical information minimally includes the following data:**

- a. demographic information about the child and family;**
- b. demographic information about the alleged offender;**
- c. type(s) of abuse;**
- d. relationship of alleged offender to child;**
- e. MDT involvement and outcomes;**
- f. charges filed and case disposition in criminal court;**
- g. child protection outcomes; and**
- h. status/follow-through of medical and mental health referrals.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** CACs are required to collect and demonstrate the ability to retrieve case specific information for all CAC clients. This includes basic demographic information, services provided and outcome information from MDT partner agencies. An, accurate, comprehensive case tracking system is only possible when all MDT members support the need to submit data in a thorough and timely fashion. Codifying case tracking procedures in CAC/MDT's written documents underscores its importance and helps to assure accountability in this area.

***C. An individual is identified to implement the case tracking process.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Case tracking is an important function of the CAC and can be a time-consuming task depending on case volume. Accuracy is critical and, for this reason, an individual must be identified to implement and/or oversee the case tracking process. Some CACs define case tracking as part of the MDT coordinator's or case manager's role. Some dedicate a position, part- or full-time, for data collection and database maintenance or assign the responsibility to an administrative assistant. Other programs utilize trained volunteers (who have signed confidentiality agreements) to input data.

***D. CAC/MDT's written protocols/guidelines must outline how MDT partner agencies access case specific information and/or aggregate data for program evaluation and research purposes.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Because case data may be useful to MDT members for a variety of purposes, it is important that they have access to aggregate and/or specific case information. Centers should also develop policies regarding how this data may be released to participating agencies or parties other than the MDT that adheres to confidentiality requirements.

***E. CAC has a mechanism for collecting client feedback to inform client service delivery.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Continuous quality assurance is the hallmark of a well-functioning CAC. This requires seeking feedback directly from caregivers regarding the services they received so that improvements may be made in service delivery on an ongoing basis. Client feedback may include client satisfaction surveys and/or outcome data. Care should be taken that survey instruments are valid and reliable. CACs may use a variety of valid instruments and assessment tools to meet this requirement. However, those Children's Advocacy Centers who actively participate in NCA's OMS (Outcome Measurement System) may be assured that they meet and exceed this requirement.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

**STANDARD:** A DESIGNATED LEGAL ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROGRAM AND FISCAL OPERATIONS HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AND IMPLEMENTS BASIC SOUND ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

### **Rationale**

Every CAC must have a designated legal entity responsible for the governance of its operations. The role of this entity is to oversee ongoing business practices of the CAC, including setting and implementing administrative policies, hiring and managing personnel, obtaining funding, supervising program and fiscal operations, and long-term planning.

There are many options for CAC organizational structure depending upon the unique needs of its community. CACs may be an independent non-profit agency, affiliated with an umbrella organization such as a hospital or other non-profit human service or victim service agency, or part of a governmental entity, such as prosecution, social services, law enforcement. Each of these options has its strengths and limitations, and implications for collaboration, planning, governance, community partnerships and resource development. Ultimate success requires that, regardless of where the program is housed or under what legal auspices, all agencies in this collaborative effort feel equal investment in, and ownership of, the program.

### **CRITERIA**

#### **Essential Components**

**A. *The CAC is an incorporated, private non-profit organization or government-based agency or a component of such an organization or agency.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The CAC has a defined organizational identity that ensures appropriate legal and fiduciary governance and organizational oversight. This can be an independent not-for-profit, a component of such an entity, or a government-based entity.

**B. *The CAC maintains, at a minimum, current general commercial liability, professional liability, and Directors and Officers liability as appropriate for its organization.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Every CAC must provide appropriate insurance for the protection of the organization and its personnel. Nonprofit CACs, including those that are a component of an umbrella nonprofit or nonprofit hospital, must carry, at a minimum, general commercial liability, professional liability, and Directors and Officers liability insurance. Government-based CACs must carry, at a minimum, general commercial liability and professional liability insurance or provide documentation of comparable coverage through self-insurance. CACs should consult with appropriate risk management professionals to determine appropriate types of insurance and any additional levels of coverage needed such as renters, property owners, and automobile insurance.

***C. The CAC has written administrative policies and procedures that apply to staff, board members, volunteers and clients.***

Every CAC must have written policies and procedures that govern its administrative operations. Administrative policies and procedures include, at a minimum:

- a. **job descriptions,**
- b. **personnel policies,**
- c. **financial management policies,**
- d. **document retention and destruction policies,**
- e. **safety and security policies.**

***D. The CAC has an annual independent financial review (Budget is equal to or less than \$200,000) or financial audit (Budget exceeds \$200,000).***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Confidence in the integrity of the fiscal operations of the CAC is critical to the long-term sustainability of the organization. An annual independent audit is one tool to assess for fiscal soundness and internal controls for financial management. A financial review is sufficient for those CACs with annual actual expenses equal to or less than \$200,000.

**Reporting Requirements for Audited Financial Statements:**

All centers with annual actual expenses (as determined by United States generally accepted accounting principles) in excess of \$200,000 are required to have an audit of their financial statements. If a management letter is prepared by the independent accountant (CPA), it should be included with the audit report.

**Reporting Requirements for Reviewed Financial Statements:**

All centers with annual actual expenses (as determined by United States generally accepted accounting principles) equal to or less than \$200,000 are required to have a review of their financial statements. The review must be in compliance with SSARS 19. If a management letter is prepared by the independent accountant (CPA), it should be included with the review report.



***E. The CAC has, and demonstrates compliance with, written screening policies for staff and volunteers that include criminal background, sex offender registration, and child abuse registry checks and provides training and supervision to staff and volunteers.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Due to the sensitive and high-risk nature of CAC work, it is imperative that, at a minimum, the CAC conducts a formal screening process for staff. This process should be documented in a written policy. Staff must receive initial and ongoing training and supervision relevant to their role.

Volunteers perform a wide variety of functions within CACs. Sometimes, CACs can attract people who may not be emotionally prepared for the activities of the CAC and/or may attract potential or actual offenders. Due to the sensitive and high-risk nature of CAC work, it is imperative that, at a minimum, the CAC conducts a formal screening process for onsite volunteers as well. Volunteers must receive training and supervision relevant to their role.

***F. The CAC has a written Succession Plan to insure the orderly transition and continuance of operation of the CAC.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** A succession plan will assist in safeguarding the CAC against unplanned or unexpected change. This kind of risk management is equally helpful in facilitating a smooth leadership transition when it is predictable and planned. A succession plan outlines a leadership development and emergency succession plan for the CAC, and reflects its commitment to sustaining a healthy functioning organization. The plan should be developed specific to the uniqueness of the CAC, and include at a minimum;

- a. **Temporary staffing strategies,**
- b. **Long-term and/or permanent leadership replacement procedures,**
- c. **Cross-training plan,**
- d. **Financial considerations,**
- e. **Communication plan**

***G. The CAC has addressed its sustainability through the implementation of a current strategic plan approved by the governing entity of the CAC.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** In order to assure long-term viability of the organization, the CAC should have a plan that addresses programmatic and operational needs. The governing entity could be an oversight committee or a board of directors, as appropriate for the CACs organizational structure.

***H. The CAC promotes employee well-being by: providing training and information regarding the effects of vicarious trauma; providing techniques for building resiliency to its employees; and maintaining organizational and supervisory strategies to address vicarious trauma and its impact upon staff.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** To reduce employee burnout and improve employee retention the CAC should develop practices that identify and mitigate against those factors impacting staff well-being, quality of services, and staff turnover. This includes not only identifying the risk of vicarious trauma for front-line staff but also techniques for building resiliency in workers. Furthermore, the CAC must develop and maintain organizational and supervisory strategies to address vicarious trauma when it arises in staff.

**I. The CAC promotes MDT well-being by providing access to training and information on vicarious trauma and building resiliency to MDT members.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** CACs have an important role in strengthening the functioning of the MDT. A highly functioning multidisciplinary team is one in which vicarious trauma can be acknowledged and addressed. While MDT partner agencies have primary responsibility for the health of their workers, the CAC is responsible for providing access to training and information regarding vicarious trauma and resiliency to team members. Moreover, the health of the MDT directly impacts service delivery to children and families. Therefore, attention given to this issue can improve outcomes for abused children and their caregivers.

## CHILD-FOCUSED SETTING

**STANDARD:** THE CHILD-FOCUSED SETTING IS COMFORTABLE, PRIVATE, AND BOTH PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE FOR DIVERSE POPULATIONS OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS.

### **Rationale**

A CAC requires a separate, child-focused setting designed to provide a safe, comfortable and neutral place where forensic interviews can be appropriately conducted and other CAC services can be provided for children and families. While every center may look different, the criteria below help to define some specific ways that the environment can help children and families feel physically and psychologically safe and comfortable. These include attending to the physical setting and assuring it meets basic child safety standards, ensuring that alleged offenders do not have access to the CAC, providing adequate supervision of children and families while they are on the premises, and creating an environment that reflects the diversity of clients served.

There is no one “right” way to build, design or decorate a CAC. The CAC should have adequate square footage and conform to generally accepted safety and accessibility guidelines, fire codes, etc. Consideration should be given to future growth and the need for additional space as caseloads increase and additional program components are needed. Care should be taken to ensure that MDT members have access to work space and equipment onsite to carry out the necessary functions associated with their role on the MDT including, but not limited to, meeting with families and appropriate sharing of necessary information.

Special attention should be given to designing and decorating the client service areas. The appearance of the CAC can help facilitate the participation of children and families in the process, largely by helping to alleviate anxiety and instill confidence and comfort in the intervention system. It should communicate, through its design, decor and materials, that the CAC is a welcoming and child-oriented place for all children and their non-offending family members.

### **CRITERIA**

#### **Essential Components**

***A. The CAC is a designated, task-appropriate facility or space which includes the following:***

- a. The CAC is maintained in a manner that is physically and psychologically safe for children and families,**
- b. The CAC provides observation or supervision of clients within sight or hearing distance by CAC staff, MDT members or volunteers at all times,**
- c. The CAC is convenient and accessible to clients and MDT members,**
- d. Any areas where children may be present, and toys and other resources are “childproofed” and cleaned and sanitized to be as safe as possible.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The CAC has an identified location that is a separate, child-focused setting designed to provide a safe, comfortable and neutral place where forensic interviews can be conducted and other services can be provided for children and families. CACs range from small, refurbished houses, to a renovated wing of a county office building or community hospital, to newly built facilities.

A center that is physically safe for children is central to the creation of a child-focused setting. This can be a challenge as centers are host to children of a variety of ages and developmental stages. Materials and center furnishings should be selected with this in mind.

To assure a physically and psychologically safe environment, children and families must be observed or supervised by CAC staff, or MDT members, or volunteers ensuring that they are within sight or hearing distance at all times. Some CACs are built so that the waiting room can be seen from the receptionist’s desk. Other CACs have volunteers scheduled to supervise play in the waiting room whenever the center is open for clients.

When planning the location of a center, it is important to evaluate the site’s accessibility for clients and MDT partner agencies. Considerations should include transportation assistance, travel distances, availability of parking, public transportation, and how welcoming a particular neighborhood is for clients of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, planning should include consideration for clients who will return to the center for ongoing services such as follow-up meetings, medical appointments, or therapy services.

***B. The CAC has written policies and procedures that ensure separation of victims and alleged offenders.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** The CAC has a setting that is physically and psychologically safe for child clients and separation for children and alleged offenders is ensured. During the investigative process, logic dictates that children will not feel free to disclose abuse if an alleged offender accompanies them to the interview and sits just down the hall in the waiting room. This

separation of children from alleged offenders should also extend to children and perpetrators in unrelated cases. If a CAC shares space with an existing agency that provides services to offenders, facility features and scheduling must assure separation between children and family members and alleged offenders.

The CAC has written policies and procedures that ensure the separation of victims and alleged offenders during the investigative process and as appropriate throughout delivery of the full array of CAC services.

Many CAC's serve a vital role in their community by providing services to children with problematic sexual behaviors. CAC's offering services to this population should have policies and procedures in place to maintain physical and psychological safety for child victims and their families. This includes protected service times when child victims would not be at the center, separate entrances and waiting areas or providing services through linkage agreements at off-site locations.

***C. The CAC makes reasonable accommodations to make the facility physically accessible.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Recognizing that not all centers are located in custom-designed or new buildings, CACs should make reasonable accommodations to make the facility physically accessible. If the CAC cannot be structurally modified, arrangements for equivalent services are made at alternate locations. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or state legislation provides guidelines on accessibility and CACs must be compliant with those guidelines.

***D. The facility allows for live observation of interviews by MDT members.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** Understanding that multiple interviews and/or multiple interviewers is often stressful for children, interviews should be observed by MDT members in a space other than the interview room to reduce or eliminate a need for duplicative interviews, whether or not interviews are recorded. The MDT should also be able to communicate with the interviewer in some manner to provide input and feedback during the live interview with the child.

***E. Separate and private area(s) are available for those awaiting services, for case consultation and discussion, and for meetings or interviews.***

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** To assure a physically and psychologically safe environment for children and families, confidentiality and respect for client privacy is of paramount concern in a CAC. It is not acceptable for team members or

CAC staff to discuss cases with children or families where visitors or others not directly involved with the case may overhear them. Separate areas should also be made available for private family member interviews and so that individual family members may privately discuss aspects of their case. Care should be taken to assure that segregated meeting areas are not only physically separate, but also soundproofed so that conversations cannot be overheard. Some centers have placed soundproofing materials in walls when building or refurbishing their centers. Others have placed stereos or “white noise” machines in rooms to block sound.