



# Revisiting the Essentials: Child Abuse Fundamentals

# Disclaimer

We are offering opinions based on our own individual experiences, state rules, and protocols. Always adhere to the protocols applicable in your jurisdiction or within your organization.



# Learning Objectives

- Understand the Basics of Child Abuse: Gain a foundational understanding of what constitutes child abuse, including the different types (physical, emotional, sexual, trafficking, etc).
- Recognize Common Signs and Symptoms: Learn to identify the signs and symptoms of child abuse in children, with a focus on both physical and behavioral indicators.
- Learn the Appropriate Reporting Procedures: Understand the steps to take when child abuse is suspected, including how to report it to the appropriate authorities and the importance of timely action.
- Address Common Questions and Concerns: Explore common questions and concerns regarding child abuse, providing clarity on what to do in various scenarios and how to handle uncertain situations.



## Child Abuse 101

Types of Abuse

Signs & Symptoms of Abuse /  
Maltreatment

Impacts From Child Abuse



## Disclosure

What is Disclosure / Outcry

Process of Disclosure

Grooming & Manipulation



## After Disclosure – CAC Process

Reporting Abuse

Understanding Why CAC's  
Were Created

First Contact With The Child

CAC & FI Room

Best Practices

MDT

# Types of Abuse

Child Abuse: The CDC defines child abuse and neglect (also referred to generally as child maltreatment) as "any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver (e.g., clergy, coach, teacher) that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child."

- Sexual
  - Physical
  - Domestic Violence
  - Trafficking
  - Neglect
  - Emotional
  - Online Exploitation
  - Witnessing a violent crime
- (By no means an exhaustive list)



"At least one in four girls and one in 20 boys in the United States experience child sexual abuse"

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d).  
About child sexual abuse. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect/about/about-child-sexual-abuse.html>



# Signs & Symptoms of Abuse

- Suicidal Ideations / Self-harm / depression
- Paranoia
- Misbehaving in school, grades dropping
- High risk behaviors - running away
- Unexplained injuries - wearing long sleeves during hotter days
- Child seems scared, anxious, withdrawn from other adults or people
- Pregnant/STI
- Hygiene
- Drugs/alcohol
- Nightmares/bedwetting
- Eating and social patterns change
- Language beyond development
- Aggressive and secretive behaviors
- Perfectionism



# Impacts From Child Abuse

## The aftermath:

- Child gets removed
- Non-believing non-offending caregiver
- Child has no support
- Non-believing MDT
- Other students may find out and child may not feel safe at school
- Court

## Mental Health:

- Depression
- PTSD

## Changes in Behavior:

- Substance abuse
- Risky behaviors and increased risk of being victimized again
- Increased risk of suicide ideations



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# What is Disclosure / Outcry?

*An act to make something known, or the fact that is made known. Reporting their victimization.*

Sometimes used interchangeably with “Outcry.”

Accidental & Purposeful





## Process of Disclosure

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Denial

Tentative

Active

Recant

Reaffirm



## Examples

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Didn't happen

Minimizing

Narrating Disclosure

Taking it back

Confirmed Disclosure

## Grooming / Manipulation

*"Patterned behavior designed to increase opportunities for sexual assault, minimize victim resistance or withdrawal, and reduce disclosure or belief."* -Tanner, J., & Brake, S. (2013).



Example: Coach



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# Reporting Abuse

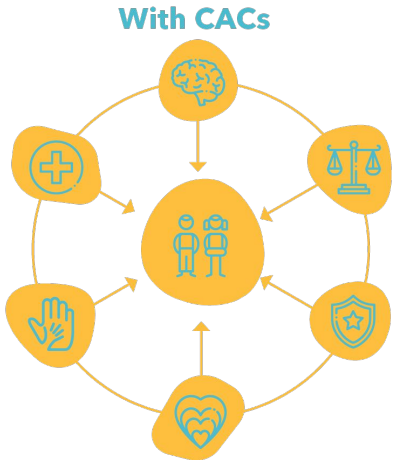


Adhere to your mandatory reporting statutes of your jurisdictions.

Based on rules and regulations, report to your Child Protective Service Investigators and/or Law Enforcement.

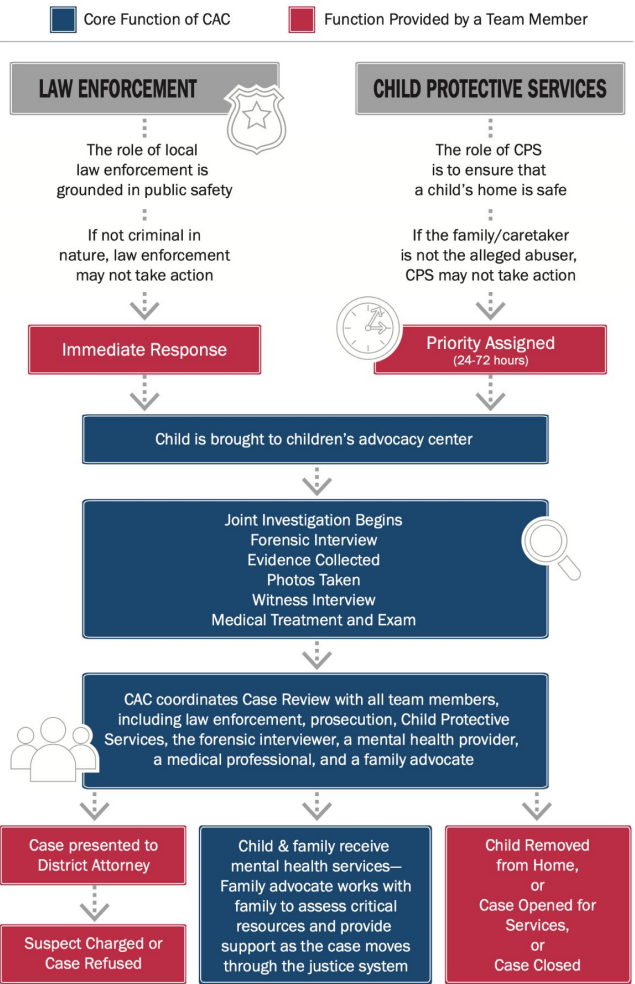
Example: An outcry at school





National Children's Alliance, Children's Advocacy Center Model, <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/media-room/old-national-statistics-on-child-abuse/>

## HOW DOES THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER MODEL WORK?



# First Contact



## Who did the child tell?

Non-Offending Caregiver  
Teacher  
Counselor  
Nurse  
Friend  
Police



## Questions to ask

First, keep your questions open-ended

Allow child to narrate, do not interrupt

Additional questions only if the child did not provide it  
EX: Determine jurisdiction, last time you saw AP, and when will you see them again (immediate danger)



## Questions not to ask

"Why didn't you tell someone sooner?"

"Are you sure this happened / was it a dream?"

"Penetration?"

"Why didn't you stop it?"

"How many times?"



## Who did the child tell?

Non-Offending Caregiver

Teacher

Counselor

Nurse

Friend

Police



## Reasons not to screen

If a child has physical injuries  
EX: child with what looks like marks, bruises, and burns

Outcry to a professional/mandated reporter  
EX: Teacher, counselor

Child is pregnant or has STI

Evidence was collected  
EX: photos, diary, pictures, texts

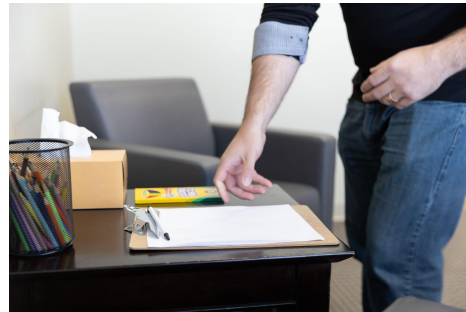
Witness to the abuse



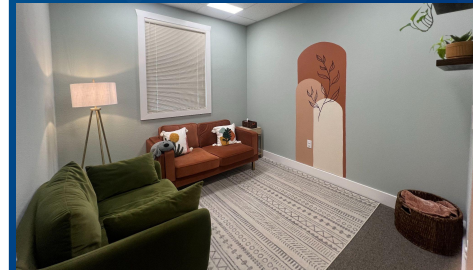
# CAC & FI Room

Now at the CAC:

- Let's talk about what's in the CAC -
  - Child friendly - soft colors
  - Waiting room setup
  - Security - an alleged offender might appear. The design of your CAC matters.
- Within the Forensic Interview -
  - Prepping for the interview
  - Furniture and camera setup
  - Tools and fidgets are available, if needed
  - Evidence in a folder, if applicable



Ellis County Children's Advocacy Center, Texas



# FI Room – Questions for Types of Abuse



## Global –

- Sexual Abuse/CSAM
- Physical Abuse
- Drugs
- Neglect
- Domestic Violence
- Witness to a crime
- Education

# Best Practices – Communicating with Children



- Anybody vs. somebody: Anybody (one, thing) is used in more broad sense where somebody is a narrow more specific person (typically what you want to use)
  - Anybody can feel less personal, or dismissive. somebody tends to suggest a more specific or valued individual. Your intention may not be dismissive, but using the anybody words can sometimes sound that way, so I'd be careful with that. Could also be cultural or colloquial based on where you live
  - **Example:** "Compliant" Victims / PSB
- Can you tell me vs. tell me - while in our culture, sometimes we ask the can you and some don't assume it literally means 'yes I can,' However, tell me elicits more cause it does not ask the permission, so I'd say try to avoid 'can you tell me'
- Littles use their words and nouns, not pronouns
- Sent photos vs received photos
- Transitions - Conversational
- Open-ended questions

# Multi-Disciplinary Team

## Reminder:

- Minimize trauma for children during the investigative process
- Enhance access to vital services for both children and non-offending caregivers
- Facilitate seamless case coordination across multiple agencies
- Boost long-term outcomes for children through improved case management
- Building trust and collaboration
- Embracing difficult conversations
- Debriefing





## From Forensic Interviewer to Expert Witness

An on demand step by step guide to prepare for trial & testify effectively for new & tenured interviewers.



**Megan Peterson**  
Senior Outreach Specialist  
Former Forensic Interviewer



## In the Hot Seat: Preparing Law Enforcement for Trial Testimony

Learn how to maintain credibility, communicate effectively with juries, and anticipate questions, enhancing your proficiency in handling cases confidently from investigation to trial.



**Brittany Ford**  
Partnership Development  
Manager



**Corey Foreman**  
Child Abuse  
Detective

## Raising their Voice: Avoiding Pitfalls in Prosecuting Child Sexual Abuse

Gain insight into the complexities of child sexual assault cases. Use evidence to propel cases forward, prepare child witnesses, & combat defense attacks.



**Demi Herman**  
Assistant Attorney General  
Nebraska



**Colleen Brazil**  
Senior Director, Children's Services  
Project Harmony



## Professionalism In & Out of the Courtroom

Learn practical tips for navigating the courtroom, dealing with sensitive cases, and conducting oneself in a professional manner that upholds the integrity of the legal profession.



**Julie McMakin**  
Senior Trial Attorney  
Jefferson County, AL



**Alana Minton**  
Lead Deputy Attorney  
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# Questions

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# Citations

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Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2019). What is child abuse and neglect? Recognizing the signs and symptoms. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

Sorensen, T., & Snow, B. (1991). How children tell: The process of disclosure in child sexual abuse. *Child welfare*, 3-15.

Tanner, J., & Brake, S. (2013). Exploring sex offender grooming. Retrieved on March, 3, 2020.

# Without CACs




# With CACs

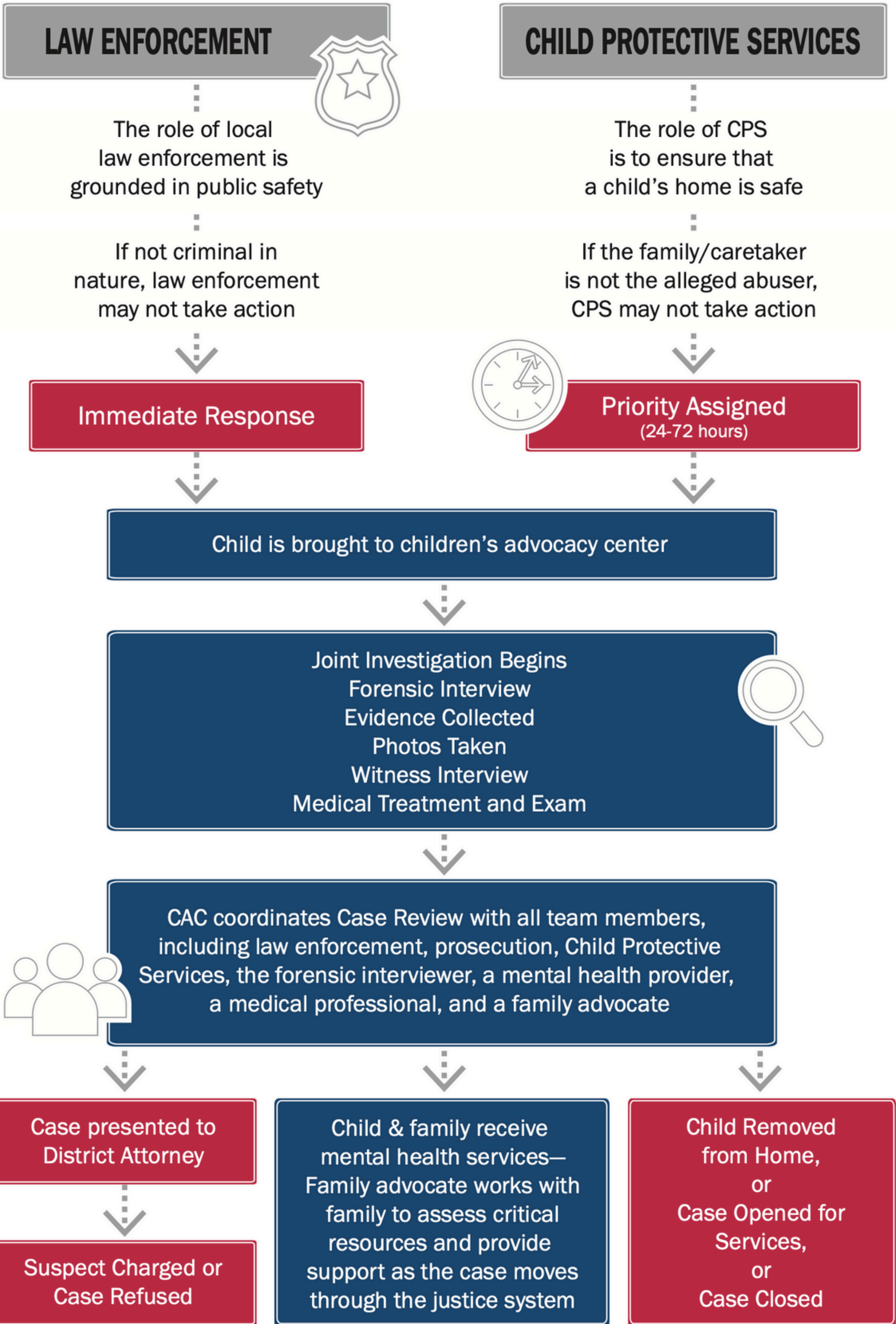




# HOW DOES THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER MODEL WORK?

 Core Function of CAC

 Function Provided by a Team Member





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