

Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

The mission of the 23rd Judicial District Child Advocacy Center is to provide a safe and child-friendly Center so the multidisciplinary team members can provide comprehensive services to children dealing with sexual and physical abuse and their non-offending family members. The 23rd Judicial District CAC will serve to improve efficiency and effectiveness of investigations, reduce trauma to child victims, and better coordinate services to victims and their families. The Child Advocacy Center facilitates an interagency multidisciplinary approach to address the needs of abused children in a facility, which has been specially designed to create a sense of safety and security for children.

Each of the undersigned agencies has specific responsibilities with regard to the investigation, assessment, medical, therapeutic treatment and prosecution of cases of child sexual abuse and severe physical abuse. We acknowledge that through these respective agencies, and through public support and awareness, The Child Advocacy Center will unify our community in the daily struggle to ensure the protection of the children of the 23rd Judicial District.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Each agency will work and assist all partner agencies, to include the Child Advocacy Center to ensure that the best interest and protection of the children will be served.
2. The appropriate law enforcement agency is to investigate and determine whether or not a crime has been committed, and to present information to the proper authorities for prosecution
3. The Department of Children's Services (DCS) is responsible for protection of children from harm by their parents or others responsible for their care. DCS is responsible to conduct investigations to determine the degree of risk to the children, to make efforts to ensure their safety, and to provide services for rehabilitation of the family.
4. The Office of the District Attorney is responsible for assessing the legal aspects of the case in accordance with its prosecutorial role.
5. All reasonable efforts will be made by each agency to coordinate each step of the investigation/assessment process in order to minimize the number of interviews and interviewers to which the child is subjected, to reduce the potential trauma to the child.
6. All agency representatives will receive and follow the Child Protective Investigation Team Investigative Protocol.
7. All agencies participating in current investigations are expected to attend the Child Protective Investigation Team (CPIT) meetings as scheduled.
8. The locations of CPITs are as follows:
 - a. Cheatham 286 Frey Street Suite 102. Ashland City, TN 37015.
 - i. The first Friday of the month at 8:30am
 - b. Dickson 604 Spring St Charlotte, TN
 - i. The first Tuesday of every month at 1:00pm
 - c. Humphreys 102 Thompson St, Waverly, TN 37185
 - i. The first Wednesday of every month at 10:00am

- d. Houston 4725 E Main St Ste, Erin, Tennessee 37061
 - i. The last Monday of every other month at 9:00am
- e. Stewart 112 Natcor Drive Dover, TN
 - i. The first Thursday of every month at 10:00am
9. All agency representatives are encouraged to take advantage of continuing education opportunities in the areas of child sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, and multidisciplinary team dynamics. The Child Advocacy Center will provide financial support for these trainings when possible. Each agency will provide opportunity for these trainings for their Child Advocacy Coworkers when possible.
10. Each agency will work within its departmental mandates and policies. Nothing contained herein supersedes the statutes, rules and regulations governing each agency.
11. All agencies participating with The Child Advocacy Center agree to provide specially trained professionals with skills in assessment, and investigation of child sexual abuse and severe physical abuse.
12. All agencies participating with The Child Advocacy Center agree to conduct investigations and provide services in a culturally appropriately manner. The Child Advocacy Center will maintain a resource library regarding multi-cultural issues and services. Any agency representative needing information or training in a specific area should contact The Child Advocacy Center director with their specific need.
13. All personnel participating with The Child Advocacy Center, within the bounds allowed by law, agree to maintain confidentiality of all records and information.
14. All agencies participating with The Child Advocacy Center will immediately share pertinent case information with the appropriate agency as permitted by law.
15. The Child Advocacy's Center Interagency Agreement may be modified with the consent of all signatories.
16. Each individual investigating a case for their respective agency is encouraged to conduct an independent investigation, simultaneously with other partner agencies with the goal of reaching collective conclusion based on the information obtained from all investigative parties.
17. Any Conflicts or divergence from the protocols and procedures that occur between agencies regarding cases will be addressed by a meeting between CPIT Management Team.
18. As Agencies become parties to this Agreement, whether housed at The Child Advocacy Center or not, they will agree to follow the provisions as outlined in this document.
19. Signatories of this Agreement will include the following agencies:
 - a. District Attorney General's Office
 - b. All local law enforcement agencies within the 23rd Judicial District
 - c. All involved Department of Children's Services Agencies within the 23rd Judicial District.
 - d. All Juvenile Courts involved within the 23rd Judicial District.
 - e. Any other agency/organization that will house personnel or provide services for children and families through The Child Advocacy Center.
20. CPIT Management members will meet quarterly to discuss issues regarding CPIT and may call special order meetings when necessary.

Addendum A: CPIT Guidelines and Protocol

Addendum B: FI Protocol

Addendum C: Confidentiality Statement (signed before every CPIT convenes)

Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT: APPROVAL SIGNATURES 2021-2022

INTERAGENCY PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Signatures contained on this document acknowledge the participation by the agency represented and affirmation that the participating agency and all members of that agency will adhere to this agreement and protocol to the best of their ability.

As supervisors of the 23rd District Children's Protective Investigative Team, we agree that information shared among Team members during the case staffing process shall remain confidential. We also agree to provide supervision and training to each of our staff concerning the need for confidentiality about the shared information at the case staffing.

Individual signature sheets to include signatures by the following:

Ray Crouch
District Attorney General

Tad Wheeler
Pleasant View Chief of Police

Mike Breedlove
Cheatham County Sheriff's Department

Chris Davis
Humphrey's County Sheriff's Department

Kevin Sugg
Houston County Sheriff's Department

Frankie Gray
Stewart County Sheriff's Department

Tim Eads
Dickson County Sheriff's Department

Kenny Ray
Ashland City Chief of Police

Jeff Lewis
Dickson City Chief of Police

Dennis Honholt
Dover City Chief of Police

Mark Moore
Erin City Chief of Police

Eugene Ivey
Kingston Springs Chief of Police

Eric Jernigan
McEwen City Chief of Police

Bronson Morgan
New Johnsonville City Chief of Police

Grant Gillilspie
Waverly City Chief of Police

Chris Fulcher
White Bluff City Chief of Police

Jerone Holt
Burns City Chief of Police

Kathryn Norbeck
23rd CAC, Executive Director

Mary Beth Duke
CPS Statewide Director
Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, Stewart

Angel Miller
CPS Statewide Director
Cheatham

Cindy Sensing
Juvenile Court Liaison, Dickson

Patricia Miller
Juvenile Court Liaison, Stewart

Vincent Morgano
Juvenile Court Liaison, Cheatham

Lori Teffit
Juvenile Court Liaison, Houston

Karen Hurd
Juvenile Court Liaison, Humphreys

Patricia Miller
Juvenile Court Liaison, Stewart

Sue Fort White
Our Kids, Executive Director

Addendum A

23RD District

CHILD PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATIVE TEAM

GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOL

2021-2022

Department Of Children's Services

1. A child severe abuse case is reported to the Department of Children's Services (DCS). If it appears that the immediate safety or well-being of a child is endangered, that the family may flee or the child will be unavailable for purposes of conducting a child protective investigation, or that the facts otherwise warrant, DCS shall commence an investigation immediately, regardless of the time of day or night. In all other child severe abuse cases, a child protective investigation shall be commenced within 24 hours of receipt of the report. 37-1-606(a)

Immediately upon receipt of a report alleging, or immediately upon learning during the course of an investigation, that:

- (A) Child severe abuse has alleged to have occurred; or
 - (8) An observable injury or medically diagnosed internal injury occurred as a result of sexual or severe physical abuse, DCS shall notify a minimum of 2 additional CPIT team members, i.e., District Attorney and Law Enforcement, or a representative of the Child Advocacy Center (CAC), with the intent of convening CPIT and discuss the strategy for conducting the investigation. Also obtaining approval of appropriate Team Leader.
- (C) Discussion between members should address these questions;
 - 1) Is perpetrator in/out of home?
 - 2) Grounds for responding before allotted timeframe?
- (D) If the District Attorney's office is not one of the members contacted, the CPS worker will contact the DA's office via fax or direct contact, upon the opening of the next business day.

2. DCS will arrange for the child to be interviewed by the Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District's Forensic Interviewer(s) within DCS policy time frames or as the team determines in CPIT cases. It shall be the preferred procedure of the CPIT that any allegation of severe abuse, i.e., sexual, physical, drug exposure, is reported to Law Enforcement prior to the interview so that joint interviews between DCS and the Law Enforcement shall be conducted at the 23rd District Child Advocacy Center whenever possible. The CAC Interviewer will be contacted about performing the interview. The CAC forensic interviewer will perform ALL interviews of severe abuse, unless there is a scheduling conflict that will prevent them from doing so or the team determines another interview format is in the best interest of the child. A team member who has received forensic interview training may perform the interview under this circumstance. The CAC is available to any team member meeting the FI statute requirements that may be interviewing children. This will allow audio and videotaping of the interviews. DCS will share information from the initial referral and collateral sources with all CPIT partners.
3. Coordinate all investigations with the members of the CPIT. This is to include, but not limited to:
 - A. Interviews of families, witnesses and the person to whom child made initial disclosure.
 - B. Determination of safety issues
 - C. Arranging Medical Legal Exams (MLE's) when necessary
 - D. Obtaining copies of medical reports and transcripts of interviews when necessary
 - E. Forensic interviews will be performed by the 23rd District CAC, unless scheduling conflicts exist or it is otherwise determined to be contrary to the best interest of the child.
4. Participate in and present cases at CPIT staffing. Have case files reviewed and completed prior

to staffing. DCS and Law Enforcement investigators shall confer about their investigation prior to staffing to recommend dispositions. Follow CPIT Presentation Sheet when presenting cases at staffing.

5. Handle non-criminal court proceedings as related to the protection of the child and be available to assist the CPIT criminal proceedings as well.
6. Prepare paperwork for cases and send to the ADA for case preparation within 10 working days after cases are indicated for prosecution in staffing. This shall include DCS case file, medical reports, prior referral information of the child(ren) involved and the alleged perpetrator, and any other information necessary for the successful prosecution of the case that is requested by the District Attorney's Office.
7. DCS will contact the Victim Witness Coordinator or the ADA with the case status, a copy of additional records and the name of the new case manager or therapist, when applicable. Past records and other necessary information shall be provided when requested.
8. All cases of severe abuse will be brought in front of CPIT in order to comply with TCA 37-1-607. In any case investigated solely by DCS, DCS shall make a complete written investigative report, including its recommendation, within 60 days to the juvenile court. (Unless meeting exceptions as noted in Policy 14.7. Page 1 *exceptions). The District Attorney General shall also be provided a copy of any report in all cases where the investigation determines that the report was indicated. 37-1-406(i)
9. DCS shall notify the person reporting child sexual or severe physical abuse that a child protective investigation occurred as a result of the report within 10 days of the completion of the child protective investigation (if requested at the time of the report). 37-1-612(9)
10. DCS will staff case with Our Kids to determine need of a Forensic Medical Examination, or when the examination is deemed instrumental to the investigation.
11. DCS will obtain a signed copy of the CPIT form on cases being presented at CPIT staffing. If there is not a consensus (majority) rule on a case, the case will be reviewed by the Director of Investigations/designee who shall conduct a review the request. The Director of Investigations/designee will make a final classification decision, send written notification to the team and the team leader shall notify all CPIT members of the classification assigned by the Director of Investigations or his/her designee.
12. DCS will provide the CAC with non-severe meth or drug endangered referrals when DCS deems the CAC can provide a needed service.

Law Enforcement

1. Report to DCS any receipt of a case involving child sexual or severe physical abuse immediately. 37-1-605(2)
2. It shall be the preferred procedure of the CPIT that the interview of a victim be conducted by DCS or a forensic interviewer at the 23rd District CAC whenever possible. Joint interviews between Law Enforcement and DCS or the forensic interviewer are recommended and shall be conducted at the 23rd District CAC whenever possible. Should the victim interview have to be conducted by the Law Enforcement investigator, a written synopsis of the interview shall be provided to the DCS case manager prior to staffing. Interviewers shall use victim sensitive interview techniques.
3. Collect and process evidence (crime scenes, MLE's, search warrants, scene searches, computers, etc.). Evaluate the propriety of conducting scene searches and applications for search warrants as soon as possible.
4. Interview and take statements from possible witnesses and coordinate efforts with DCS, including witnesses to whom child made allegations.
5. Request copies of medical reports when necessary.
6. Interview the perpetrator prior to staffing. Notify DCS to observe perpetrator interviews when possible.
7. Participate in staffing of cases and give requested information to DCS at least one week prior to staffing. Have case files reviewed and completed prior to staffing. DCS and LAW ENFORCEMENT shall confer about their investigations prior to staffing to recommend dispositions.
8. Compile case for the ADA. Include police reports, DCS reports, MLE's, evidence, etc. prior to Grand Jury, cut off dates for presentation purposes. Also include prior criminal investigations for sexual or physical abuse, neglect or domestic violence on alleged perpetrator.
9. When possible, review case with the ADA prior to obtaining arrest warrants. Notify the ADA or Victim Witness Coordinator with family information and warrant number as soon as possible.
10. Present case to the Grand Jury.
11. Make arrests on indictments as quickly as possible and notify DCS, ADA or Victim Witness Coordinator of any arrests as quickly as possible.
12. No later than 60 days after receiving the initial report, DCS or CPIT in case of child sexual or severe physical abuse shall determine whether the reported abuse was indicated or unfounded and report its findings to the DCS abuse registry. 37-1-406(1)

District Attorney/Victim Witness

1. Be available to Law Enforcement agencies, DCS and other agencies involved in the child abuse or child neglect investigation for consultation.
2. Participate in CPIT staffing.
3. Make decision to prosecute or not prosecute at final staffing of cases.
4. Notify DCS, LAW ENFORCEMENT, 23RD DISTRICT CAC and family if cases will not be indicted within 15 days of the completion of the investigation.
5. Prepare cases for indictment 60 days after receipt of completed case file.
6. If indicted, notify LAW ENFORCEMENT.
7. Inform victim, family and DCS of indictment/arraignment and case's progress throughout the Criminal Court process.
8. The Victim Witness Coordinator in coordination with the 23RD DISTRICT CAC will arrange Court preparation for victims and their families.
9. Coordination of witnesses for trial utilizing the "on call" system when possible.
10. Discuss disposition/settlement with the family of the victim. When possible, it is recommended that the ADA discuss the disposition/settlement with LAW ENFORCEMENT.
11. Notification of witnesses, including DCS and LAW ENFORCEMENT, of final disposition of cases.
12. Provide family of victims with form letter for notification by State Board of Paroles of any parole hearings.
13. Provide Victims Compensation information to families.
14. Maintain vertical prosecution of arrest warrants cases.
15. Provide training for all ADA's to report to DCS all cases of child physical and emotional abuse or neglect cases appearing on General Sessions court dockets.
16. District Attorney's Office agrees to coordinate interviews, share relevant information and use victim sensitive interviewing procedures.

Mental Health

1. Participate as a CPIT member and attend monthly CPIT meetings.
2. Offer consultation to the CPIT team regarding the effects of trauma generally on children and non-offending caregivers, as well as their needs and interactions with other agencies and systems.
3. Support CPIT in the monitoring of treatment progress and outcomes for ongoing cases. Mental health provider will be available to consult with team as questions and concerns may arise through the life of a case.
4. Assist in special investigation when requested.
5. Provide crisis intervention when requested.
6. Mental health consultants must hold a masters degree in counseling or related field with specialized training in the dynamics of child sexual and severe physical abuse victimization and offenders, preferably with a mental health related license.
7. Assist in preparation of victims for trial process if needed.

23rd District (CAC) Child Advocacy Center

1. Provide child-friendly environment for victims of child sexual and severe physical abuse, drug endangered severe cases, as well as children who have witnessed domestic violence, to be interviewed, utilizing audio and video-taping.
2. Prepare staffing schedule for sexual and severe physical abuse cases. Drug endangered children when classified as severe, and other cases that may be moved into the severe category. Copies of staffing sheets are to be distributed 5 working days prior to staffing dates.
3. Facilitate the CPIT case staffing meetings. Meetings will be facilitated by the CAC's CPIT Coordinator or another CAC representative.
4. Provide ongoing training opportunities for the CPIT.
5. Facilitate quarterly CPIT management meetings to provide an opportunity for CPIT members to give feedback and suggestions among CPIT agencies.
6. Facilitate at least 2 CPIT trainings for all team members per year.
7. Provide trained forensic interviewers to conduct interviews with children who are referred to the 23rd District CAC, for allegations of abuse (see Forensic Interview Protocol).
8. Provide clinical services, which include therapy and family advocacy, designed to address child abuse in a child centered setting.
 - Crisis intervention and assessment to include safety planning and risk assessments for the child and/or non-offending caregivers throughout the life of the case.
 - Determination and assessment of individual needs including cultural assessments, developmental needs, etc... and ensure those needs are addressed throughout the life of a case.
 - Meet with the child and non-offending caregiver(s) during the forensic interview to support and inform the family about the multi-disciplinary response and coordinated team approach as well as to determine any immediate needs of the child or caregivers.
 - Provide education and information on accessing victim's compensation funds including help with completing and filing the application if needed.
 - Provide information and referrals for trauma focused mental health and specialized medical treatment that may be provided on-site or off-site as needed.
 - Coordinate access to transportation for interviews, court, mental health or medical treatment as needed.
 - Be engaged with the child and non-offending caregiver throughout the life of the case.
 - Participate in the CPIT case review meetings to represent and discuss the needs of the child and non-offending caregiver and support services and to ensure coordination of services and voice the concerns or questions of the child and/or non-offending caregiver.
 - Update the child and non-offending caregiver on case status, continuances, dispositions, sentencing, inmate status notification if available.
 - Provide court education and/or courtroom tours, support and court accompaniment at the request of the child/non-offending caregiver.
 - Communicate with the District Attorney's Office to coordinate any additional victim advocacy

services that may be needed or requested by the child and/or non-

9. Provide confidentiality agreement for CPIT managers to sign in order to protect sensitive information shared among CPIT members (See attachment).
10. Collect statistical information from CPIT staffing as mandated by grants and for research projects as determined by CPIT.
11. On call contact information for after- hours cases is: 931-637-5852.

Medical Examinations

All medical examinations, medical history and the preparation of the child for the medical exam will be conducted by a licensed medical doctor, nurse practitioner or other qualified medical professional. Specialized medical evaluation and treatment services are available to and coordinated with the multidisciplinary team response by Our Kids Center with the CAC. Our Kids staff has extensive training in the area of child abuse and in providing the medical legal exam (MLE). Our Kids Center shall be the preferred agency for conducting medical exams.

1. A written report of the medical evaluation will be sent to DCS or Law Enforcement within 30 days of the medical examination.
2. The medical professional shall not obtain the child's statement in an investigatory interview. However, a history for purposes of medical evaluation and treatment shall be obtained, especially when the allegations are of recent origin and/or because of the emergency nature of the exam when a DCS interview has not yet been conducted.
3. Prior to the medical examination, the medical professional shall contact DCS or Law Enforcement to obtain any pertinent information relevant to the investigation and the medical evaluation. If the victim is 5 years or younger, the DCS case manager or forensic interviewer will attempt to conduct a victim interview prior to medical examination if possible.
4. Medical exams are provided through Our Kids Center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For children for whom the investigative team has reason to believe that a sexual assault has occurred within the previous 72 hours, the team should consult with Our Kids staff to see if an exam needs to be done emergently at General Hospital by Our Kids staff. When alleged abuse has occurred outside this time frame, a member of the multidisciplinary team may schedule medical evaluations upon referral.
5. All anogenital exams conducted at Our Kids Center or the CAC will be documented in a detailed written report and will be photo documented whenever possible.
6. For children seen in the Emergency Department of 23rd District (CAC) Hospital, CAC office or Dr. McNeal's office, following an acute assault, standard procedure for rape kit collection and preserving the chain of custody for evidence will be followed.
7. Multiple exams should be avoided. Our Kids Center will continue to work on establishing and maintaining working relationships with area physicians and hospitals regarding consultation and referral. Area health care providers routinely refer patients to Our Kids Center.
8. Alleged victims of sexual abuse needing medical evaluations and/or treatment will be seen regardless of ability to pay.
9. Participate in regularly scheduled CPIT meetings.

Juvenile Court

There are complex needs for the children and families involved with the Juvenile Justice system requiring the provision of services and benefits provided by multiple agencies outside of probation that may support successful rehabilitation and return to the community.

1. Participate as a CPIT member
2. Report to DCS any receipt of a case involving child sexual or severe physical abuse immediately. 37-1-605(2)
3. Aid CPIT partners in obtaining necessary court documents (i.e., filing of charges, etc.) in juvenile court when applicable.
4. Participate in a minimum of 1 CPIT training annually.
5. Provide 1 training annually regarding the juvenile court process.



**Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District
Cheatham, Dickson, Houston,
Humphreys, and Stewart Counties**

Forensic Interview Protocol 2021

Mission Statement

To provide a safe and child-friendly Center where alleged child victims and their non-offending caregivers can obtain comprehensive services from a team of professionals.

Goals

- To provide a community based setting for the skilled and objective evaluation of children identified as possible victims of child sexual and severe abuse.
- To provide an opportunity for agencies and professionals mandated to intervene in suspected child sexual and severe abuse cases to collaborate.
- To minimize the possibility of redundant interviewing by facilitating interagency cooperation.
- To provide appropriate crisis intervention and referral for children as needed.
- To serve the community by supporting varied education, training, treatment, research and prevention efforts addressing child abuse.

Referral Criterion

A referral for the Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District (CAC) evaluation may be received from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS), local Law Enforcement officials, or other members of CPIT. The referral will meet the following criterion as part of an ongoing investigation:

- Children ages three (3) through seventeen (17) as deemed appropriate.
- Complaint is of a sex crime as defined in TCA 37-1-602.
- Complaint is of severe physical abuse.
- Child is witness to, or a victim of, a violent crime or act.
- In suspected multi-victim cases, the number of children evaluated may be limited and such limitation shall be established in consultation with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS).
- Cases with a history of prior interviews will be accepted at the discretion of the CAC.

* Courtesy interviews that **do not** meet the above criteria may be conducted at the discretion of the CAC.

Referral Procedures

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS), local Law Enforcement officials, or other member of CPIT makes a request for a forensic interview. A referral is submitted to the Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District (CAC). The referral is screened to ensure the referral meets the CAC's criteria. If criteria are met, an appointment is scheduled with the family by the requesting party for a forensic interview.

1. Referrals are accepted from DCS, Law Enforcement (LE), or CPIT members only. This is to ensure the participation of all agencies that are mandated to investigate these allegations.
2. A referral is submitted with identifying information, including a description of the allegation that was made. The interviewer shall obtain all information relevant to the interview, prior to the interview. To minimize the possibility of redundant interviewing, cases with a history of prior interviews will be discussed in detail and all documentation of prior interviews must be received. This includes previous forensic interviews, Our Kids exams/interviews, forensics in other jurisdictions, DCS interviews, law enforcement interviews, etc.
3. The forensic interviewer and DCS/LE will coordinate schedules to choose a date and time for the interview. Once the time is set, the party requesting the interview will confirm the appointment with the family.
4. A case manager from DCS shall be present to observe the child forensic interview. At least one member from the investigation shall be present for the forensic interview in order for the interview to begin, preference is for both DCS and Law Enforcement officials to observe the interview. If the assigned DCS case manager cannot be present to observe the child interview, a representative from DCS must be present. Non-CPIT members will not be allowed to observe the interview.

Evaluation Procedures

Upon arrival to the Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District (CAC), the child and parent/guardian will be introduced to the forensic interviewer. The family advocate will meet with the parent/guardian to answer any questions the parent/guardian has about the interview. The family advocate will escort the child to an interview room. The forensic interviewer shall conduct an interview with the child in room where members of CPIT can observe through closed circuit computer screen. The forensic interview is a specialized interview that follows a certain format.

All interviews will be video recorded in their entirety and are labeled and dated (See Video Recording Protocol). Recordings are to be conducted in accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated §24-7-123.

Interviews will generally be conducted at the Child Advocacy Center in Charlotte, TN or at one of the satellite offices in Cheatham county in a minimum number (one to two) sessions. In the event of a missed appointment, interviews must be rescheduled within a timely manner. If three scheduled appointments are missed, the referral will be returned to the referring agency.

Once the interview is completed, the CPIT team member(s) present for the interview, with the exception of the Forensic Interviewer, will meet with the family. This will be to inform the family of the remaining necessary steps that will need to be taken in the investigation. Whereas the DCS/LE team members are conducting the investigation, it is their judgment as to what information they give the family following the forensic interview.

Updated 5/8/2021

Written Summary

The forensic interviewer will prepare a written summary of the interview within 10 business days of the interview.

Chain of Custody for Recording

DVDs and all other pertinent information will be distributed to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services and/or Law Enforcement official as needed upon request. DVDs will be kept in the custody of the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. The recording is the property of DCS and/or Law Enforcement.

An archived copy of the interview will be kept in electronic format at the Child Advocacy Center in Charlotte, TN. Any request for the recording must be made to DCS or Law Enforcement. CAC will not reproduce the recording for any entity or organization other than DCS or Law Enforcement.

Other Duties

- Forensic Interviewer must participate in multi-disciplinary team review meetings.
- Forensic Interviewer will coordinate interview schedules with DCS investigators and LE officials.
- Provide testimony in pertinent court proceedings.
- Provide or enter data for tracking reports.
- Dedicate ten to fifteen percent of the interviewer's time to training or providing consultation to other professionals in the performance of child interviewing techniques, and current research and controversies relevant to court testimony.
- Participate in peer review assessments, supervisory evaluations, and attend periodic meetings for child forensic interviewers.

Video Recording Protocol

Monitoring the Interview

All child interviews conducted at the Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District (CAC) will be video recorded. Those monitoring the interview must pay close attention to the interview in progress and take detailed notes of the interview. Those notes may be required to supplement or explain any identified technical or other difficulties with the DVD. They are there to assist the interviewer in conducting a comprehensive and sensitive interview with the child. Generally, the interviewer should consult with those monitoring the interview. The purpose of the consultation is to ensure that the interviewer has elicited all relevant information from the child. Persons who are not CPIT members will not be allowed to monitor the interview or be present during the interview of the child, including the child's parent or guardian. Department of Children Services personnel must be present during the forensic interview process. Law Enforcement must be at forensic interviews to observe under the majority of interviews and the Assistant District Attorney is invited to observe as well.

Video Recording the Interview

The DVDs are not the property of the CAC. The CAC does not have the authority to release DVDs to persons who are not members of the investigative team. All DVDs will be labeled with the child's name and date of the interview as well as the name of the person(s) investigating the case.

Recording and Securing the DVD

Confidentiality of the DVDs will be preserved and protected. All DVDs will be kept in secure storage until released to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. DCS will be given the original DVD. A chain of custody form will be signed identifying the individual to whom the DVD is released. The form will be filed with the case information at the CAC. A copy of the interview will be made for the forensic interviewer to review for completion of the interview summary. This copy will be kept at the CAC in Charlotte, TN in secure storage. Copies of the written summary will be kept for 7 years with the archived recording being kept for at least one year after the Child's 18th birthday.

Criterion for Forensic Interviewer

The forensic interviewer employed by the CAC shall meet the following requirements as discussed in Tennessee Code Annotated §24-7-123:

- Education requirements – Graduation from an accredited college or university with a bachelor's degree in a field related to social science, education, criminal justice, nursing, psychology or other helping profession, a master's degree is preferred;
- Experience requirements – experience equivalent to three (3) years of full-time professional work in one or a combination of the following: child protective services, criminal justice, clinical evaluation, forensic interviewing, or other comparable work with children, demonstrated professional knowledge of child abuse and neglect and child development (through coursework, professional training, or higher education) and demonstrated experience with interdisciplinary team work;
- Training – 40 hours of professional forensic interview training by an approved provider, (i.e., Cornerhouse or National Child Advocacy Center);
- Minimum of fifteen (15) hours per fiscal year in continuing education pertaining to child abuse and neglect;
- Knowledge of child development through coursework, professional training or experience;
- No criminal history;
- Actively participates in peer review; and,
- Follows established forensic interview protocol

Training

Any CPIT Team member that conducts forensic interviews at the CAC must have successfully completed 40 hours of nationally or state recognized forensic interview training that includes child development. The CAC maintains documentation on the CAC Forensic Interviewer's education and training. The records are located in the FI's personnel file. Other CPIT members training documentation is located in the personnel records at their agency.

Continuing Education

The Forensic Interviewer receives a minimum of 15 hours of continuing education pertaining to child abuse and neglect during each fiscal year. The Forensic Interviewer also attends Tennessee Chapter of Children's Advocacy Center Forensic Interviewer quarterly meetings and quarterly Peer Review sessions.

- National Children's Advocacy Center 40 hour Forensic Interviewing Training in Huntsville, Alabama
- National Symposium on Child Abuse in Huntsville, Alabama
- Tennessee Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers Connecting for Children's Justice Conference in Nashville, Tennessee

- CornerHouse Forensic Interview Training
- CornerHouse Advanced Forensic Interview Training (optional)
- Quarterly Lunch-N-Learn Child Advocacy Center Trainings

Interview Process/Methodology

The Forensic Interviewer at the CAC follows the research-based guidelines from the forensic interview training provided by the National Children’s Advocacy Center in Huntsville, Alabama. This training model provides the guidelines for forensic interviews that are conducted in a manner that is legally sound, non-duplicative, non-leading, and neutral. The interviews are conducted by trained Forensic Interviewers who have completed a minimum of 40 hours of national or state recognized forensic interview training. Forensic Interviewers also receive a minimum of 15 hours of continuing education pertaining to child abuse and neglect per fiscal year.

Care is taken by the Forensic Interviewer to maintain neutrality in word, tone, and manner and to avoid leading questions, or any other practice which could undermine an interview. The interview rooms are uncluttered with no objects or decorations that could distract the child. Sometime during the interview, the forensic interviewer will take a break and allow the victim to rest, while conversing with the Department of Children Service worker and/or Law Enforcement. This allows input from MDT partners to address any questions that may need to be addressed.

Interview aids such as anatomical drawings are utilized on children under the age of 10 or those with developmental disabilities. An easel for both the interviewer and the victim to draw on is also used. In the event that evidence needs to be introduced, the Forensic Interviewer is permitted to introduce said evidence.

Forensic Interviews for Siblings

According to DCS policy, all children in a home where allegations of sexual abuse are made need to be interviewed, even if only one child is alleging the abuse. Below are some considerations that may be helpful in determining best practice for interviewing siblings:

1. Remember to be mindful of who needs a forensic interview
 - A child making statements of sexual abuse
 - A child making statements of severe physical abuse
 - A child witnessing a violent crime or act
 - A child displaying sexually inappropriate behavior

If other siblings are in the same home as the victim and the siblings have not made allegations of sexual abuse, or the victim involved has not reported that a sibling was present, the siblings do not require forensic interviews but upon the request of an agency partner, may be interviewed.

It is best practice for DCS to speak with the siblings at the Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District (CAC). If a sibling makes a concerning statement of witnessing the abuse or being abused himself or herself, a referral for a forensic interview should be made.

In the event that it is more convenient for DCS to have the victim and siblings at the CAC on the same day, please make this known when scheduling. A forensic interview will be conducted on the victim only; however,

if the victim makes a statement indicating that siblings were involved, we will interview the sibling(s) on the same day. If the victim does not indicate sibling involvement, siblings will not receive a forensic interview, but may be interviewed by DCS at the CAC.

Management of Files

All files of interviews conducted at the Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District (CAC) will be stored at the CAC office in Charlotte, TN. After the expiration of one year after the child's 18th birthday, any paper contents of the file may be removed and securely shredded. The paper reports from these interviews will be scanned and saved and backed-up onto the computer should they be needed in the future. This process will be repeated annually.

Interviewing of Children with a Developmental Disability

Specific guidelines will be followed when conducting interviews concerning a child with a developmental disability or special need. The following considerations will be made by the forensic interviewer in order to gather enough appropriate information to interview the child. This information will be obtained from the referent for the interview:

- The Forensic Interviewer needs to ask when each referral is made if the child has a developmental disability or other special needs. If it is indicated that there is a developmental disability or special need, documentation will be made on the referral received. The Forensic Interviewer will request the appropriate additional information pertaining to the child.
- The Forensic Interviewer should obtain a copy of the child's most current IEP if available. This copy will be placed in the child's file for review before the interview in order to help assess the most appropriate accommodations. (i.e., hearing impaired, the CAC has a standing MOU with Bridges of Nashville. This interpreter's service will provide sign-language during the forensic interview process in order to execute the interview.)
- Non-English speaking clients have access to interpreters through the Department of Children Services and it is the responsibility of the Department to provide those services.
- The Forensic Interviewer will need to find out what accommodations may be needed and make the arrangements.
- In addition, the following questions need to be asked by the Forensic Interviewers:
 - What is the child's cognitive or developmental age equivalent?
 - How does the child communicate and comprehend language?
 - Is there additional information needed about the child?
 - Are there any classroom accommodations for this child?

National Children's Advocacy Center's Extended Forensic Interview Protocol

In child abuse investigations the single interview model is the approach currently recommended by Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs), Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), and “best practice” resources throughout the U.S. This model assumes a child is willing and able to discuss the allegation topic and can provide sufficient detail to inform the investigation and to support case decisions. While the single interview approach is sufficient for many children and cases, a subset of children are challenged to participate in such a focused conversation with a stranger and may benefit from more time and an expanded conversation over multiple sessions. As the forensic interviewer and the child will speak on more than one occasion, it is important to insure the forensic integrity of these conversations. The National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC) offers a model for conducting a multi-session interview of a child, based on current research about the best ways to elicit information from a child. Originally developed in 1997 under the name “Forensic Evaluation” the extended interview protocol has evolved over the years to incorporate new literature and research and was officially renamed the “NCAC Extended Forensic Interview” in 2011. The NCAC offers a three-day training program which prepares professionals to implement the model in their CAC or through their MDT. Since 1999, NCAC has provided extended interview training to over 1,300 professionals nationally and internationally.

Overview of the NCAC Extended Forensic Interview Protocol

NCAC's Extended Forensic Interview (EFI) protocol provides for a flexible number of interview sessions and should be adjusted to the needs of the child; usually varying between two and five sessions. The goal of the EFI is to complete the process with the minimum number of sessions needed to acquire the child's information. Current literature recommends that the time lapse between sessions should be short; so the entire process can be completed within a week or two. EFI sessions should be recorded in the same manner as a single session forensic interview.

Pre-Interview Preparation

Prior to the first meeting with the child the Interviewer should review relevant information, which may include police reports, any report to Child Protective Services, notes or digital recording of any prior forensic interview of the child. Additionally, the Interviewer might familiarize themselves with any available information about the child developmental status and functioning which may impact the child's participation in the interview.

This preparation might include a brief meeting with a primary caregiver to obtain a brief developmental history, family make-up, and particular issues or concerns with cognitive or communicative abilities or limitations. This caregiver meeting is not intended to address issues of the investigation as that is the purview of Law Enforcement and Child Protective Services.

Foundational Session(s) with the Child

The purpose of the one or two foundational sessions is to establish rapport, learn about the child's day-to-day life, get a sense of the child's linguistic style and abilities, and familiarize the child with the unique conversational patterns of a forensic conversation (where the child is the holder of the information about their experiences and the adult is asking questions to elicit the child's information and attempt to understand their experience.)

Session 1

The goal of the first foundational session is to build rapport and encourage narrative description/explanation from the child. Guidelines are introduced and practiced. There is an attempt to focus on safe topics and topics that are enjoyable for the child to discuss.

1. Explain process.
2. Introduce guidelines.
3. Employ narrative practice.

Session 2

Guidelines are reviewed and the interviewer continues to build rapport with the child and encourage narrative elaboration about topics under discussion. Focused topics are introduced and explored (Lyon). The Interviewer should follow up on any concerns, hesitations, or questions that emerge from the child. If the child transitions to topics connected to the allegations, the Interviewer should follow the child's lead; but the discussion of allegation focused topics is not the goal of this session.

1. Review guidelines.
2. Continue Narrative practice.
3. Engage in discussion of family.
4. Identify feelings, with examples provided by the child.

Allegation Focused Session(s) with the Child

A report to a Law Enforcement agency and/or Child Protective Services is the starting point for an investigation of child abuse or some other form(s) of victimization. The initial report may be quite detailed or sparse and unclear; but typically contains a specific allegation(s). Part of that investigation includes having a trained professional question the child about people, activities, or locations mentioned in the initial report. The interviewer should not provide answers to the questions or lead the child to make particular statements or draw conclusions. If the child has not spontaneously made reference to the allegation topic, the Interviewer should initiate the discussion in the least leading manner possible. Additional prompts may be necessary if the child remains reluctant. Possible transitions can be planned in advance of this session; but the Interviewer must remain open to following the child's lead and exploring all concerning topics that emerge. The Interviewer should implement good forensic questioning practices in exploring any topics of concern.

Session 3

In this session the EF Interviewer will engage the child in more focused conversation about topics alleged in the initial report. As with any high quality forensic interview, the EF Interviewer should be as non-leading as possible and should always be responsive to any and all concerns raised by the child.

1. Review guidelines.
2. Transition to allegation topics implementing plan and attending and adjusting to child's responses.
3. Follow standard forensic interview procedures, using questions that are as open as possible.

Session 4

If additional time is needed for exploration of allegation topics, a second Allegation-focused session can be conducted. This is most likely needed when the child has a complex history and perhaps many things to talk about or a child who is fearful and needs additional time to talk about difficult topics and memories. Again, good forensic practice in use of questions and any strategies (use of free drawing, anatomical drawings, written responses) should be implemented.

Closure Session

The primary goal of this session is to allow the child to have a sense of closure with the EFI process and to have their questions or concerns addressed. This session may not be necessary with many children, particularly if the previous session allowed for the tasks/goals of this session to be accomplished.

1. Review guidelines.
2. Acknowledge previous discussions without a need to review them.
3. Ask if there is additional information that should be added or clarified.
4. Ask if child has feelings, thoughts, concerns, or questions?
5. Transition to therapy or follow-up, if appropriate.

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Addendum C: Confidentiality Statement

By signing below, I am, as a representative of the participating agency, consenting to agreement of the Child Investigation Protection Team (CPIT) Protocol and agree to abide by the protocol outlined. As supervisors of the 23rd District CAC Child Protective Investigative Team, we agree that information shared among Team members during the case staffing process shall remain confidential. We also agree to provide supervision and training to each of our staff concerning the need for confidentiality about the shared information at the case staffing.

Name _____ Date _____

Name _____ Date _____

Name _____ Date _____

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