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For Children's Advocacy Centers

Resources:



Using the Children's Advocacy Center model for military-connected cases

This guide provides an overview of how CAC and military partners work together when a CAC case involves a military family.



The Children's Advocacy Center, or CAC, model is used by **nearly 1,000 communities across the U.S.**

Many of these CACs are **near a military installation.**



Together, we serve

hundreds of thousands of children every year when there's been an allegation of abuse.

MORE THAN
700

CACs have signed on to a national agreement (memorandum of understanding) to work with military Family Advocacy Programs (FAPs) and Military Criminal Investigative Organizations (MCIOs).

This collaboration ensures that military-connected children and families get the same services civilian families receive, while including military partners as part of the multidisciplinary team (MDT) to provide coordinated care that meets the unique needs of military families.



First, let's understand the partners involved:

These are the three types of agencies that may receive initial reports of suspected abuse, problematic sexual behavior in children and youth (PSB-CY), and other forms of child maltreatment.



LAW ENFORCEMENT (LE):

The role of LE is grounded in public safety. Therefore, if the complaint is not criminal in nature, LE may not take action. They may initiate an investigation. LE includes local, state, and federal agencies, including military.



CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS):

Known by various state and county agency names across the U.S., the role of CPS is to ensure child safety and protection. Therefore, if the child's family is not involved in the allegation, CPS may not take action. They may also initiate an assessment or investigation.



FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM (FAP):

FAP offices within military branches are responsible for efforts to prevent and address child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and problematic sexual behavior in children and youth in military families. FAP may initiate an assessment and report incidents to CPS and military LE.

The following section features a process map illustrating how CAC and military partners collaborate on a case.

How does the CAC model work for military-connected cases?

FIRST:

Someone discovers suspected child abuse, neglect, problematic sexual behavior in children and youth, or domestic violence involving a military family.

Reports may come from a variety of sources: the families themselves, school personnel, medical professionals, or other trusted adults. For military families, several military-affiliated programs may be the first to identify concerns, initiate a report, and serve as the initial reporting point of contact for children who may need services from a CAC. These include agencies like Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), Child and Youth Programs (CYP), and Child Development Centers (CDC).

THEN:

The reporting party makes a formal report to...

... LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT such as police or sheriff:

- Local LE reports to Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Local LE may initiate an investigation
- Local LE may report to military



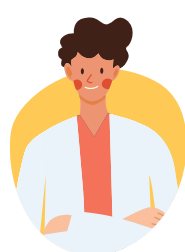
... MILITARY LAW ENFORCEMENT such as military police or military criminal investigative organizations (MCIOs):

- Military LE reports to FAP and CPS
- Military LE may initiate investigation
- Military LE may report to servicemember's command



... CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS):

- CPS reports to local and/or military LE
- In some states, CPS is required to cross-report to military entities. See *Defense State Liaison Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Page* for additional information
- CPS initiates an assessment or investigation if report meets criteria



... FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM (FAP):

- FAP reports to military LE and CPS
- FAP may report to servicemember's command
- FAP initiates an assessment to determine family needs and gather information needed to present at the Incident Determination Committee (IDC)



NEXT:

The child is brought to the local CAC



The child and family are welcomed to the CAC and oriented on CAC services and processes, typically by a victim/family advocate, child life specialist, or other professional. Child forensic interviews and other services typically happen on site at the CAC.



The multidisciplinary team (MDT), including civilian and military members, convene to review the initial report and other case information, clarify roles, and plan the MDT response.



The MDT uses the CAC as the base for the investigation, including conducting and reviewing child forensic interviews, documentation, collection of physical evidence, and any required medical exams or treatment.

THEN:

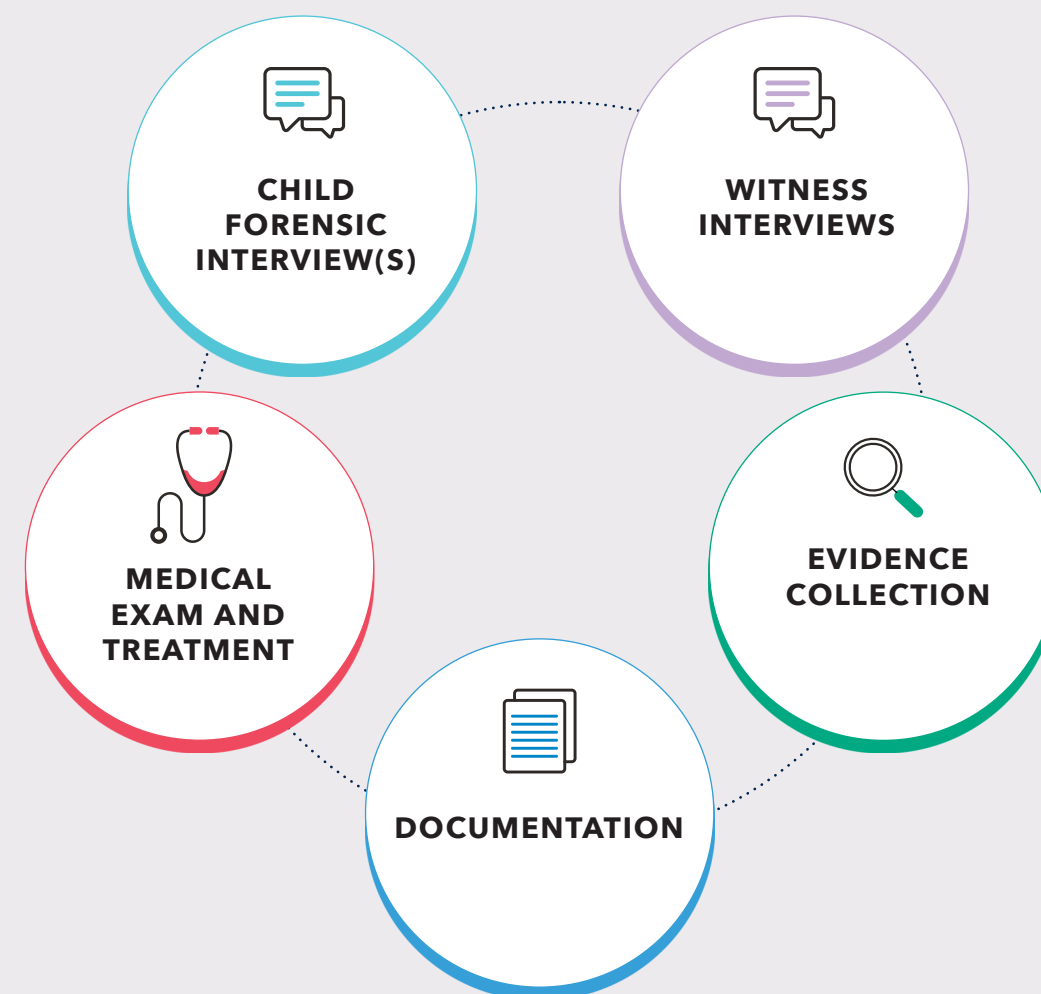
The CAC coordinates the child abuse response

The local CAC coordinates ongoing MDT coordination and response for the child and military family, including the civilian/military LE prosecution, CPS, forensic interviewer, mental health provider(s), medical professionals, CAC and FAP family or victim advocate(s).

CAC personnel may participate in military MDTs, particularly in instances of problematic sexual behavior in children or youth as the military convenes MDTs to meet the unique needs in these cases.

MDT partners, including CACs, may also be involved in providing information for the military installation's Incident Determination Committee, which determines if child abuse and neglect and domestic violence cases meet criteria and should be entered in a central registry.

If criminal, the case is presented to the prosecutor's office (civilian or military Office of Special Trial Counsel). Prosecutors may decline a case or charge the suspect, initiating court proceedings. For servicemembers facing potential charges, outcomes may also include non-judicial punishments or discharge from the military.



FINALLY:

The team ensures ongoing services and safety

Family/victim advocates (CAC, FAP, and military legal system) coordinate response to assess needs of the family and ensure referrals are made for family to access resources and supports. The child and family may receive evidence-based mental health services from the CAC or a partner program.

CPS assesses safety, works with family to address safety issues and ensures access to necessary services. If safety cannot be attained within the family, removal and placement may be initiated.

If case is prosecuted, advocates collaborate to support the child and family as the case moves through the justice system. CAC and military advocates and mental health professionals may continue to collaborate and provide services even after any justice system involvement concludes.

CPS may open a case for longer-term services, or close the case after making a determination of finding.

FAP may maintain an open case following assessment to monitor safety, provide treatment, and case management.



National Children's Alliance is committed to ensuring military families have access to the coordinated care they need through strong CAC-military partnerships. NCA is here to support your efforts and meet the needs of your team as you expand access to coordinated care for military families.

To learn more about strengthening your services to military families, please contact our federal partnerships team at militarypartnerships@nca-online.org.

