



The National Children's Advocacy Center

Children's Advocacy Centers – Are We Working?

The NCAC models, promotes, and delivers excellence in child abuse response and prevention through service, education, and leadership.



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Welcome to the CAC/MDT Model

Why do we do it this way?

Jones, L.M., Cross, T.P., Walsh, W.A., and Simone, M. (2005).

Criminal investigations of child abuse – the research behind “best practices”. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 6(3), 254-268.



Investigation “Best Practices”

- Multidisciplinary Team investigations
- Trained child forensic interviews
- Videotaped interviews
- Specialized forensic medical examiners
- Victim advocacy and support programs
- Access to mental health treatment
- Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs)





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We just need to talk to the kid.

Does using the CAC really help?

**Cross, T.P., Jones, L.M., Walsh,
W.A., Simone, M., & Kolko, D.J.
(2007).**

Child forensic interviewing in children's advocacy centers:
Empirical data on a practice model. *Child Abuse and
Neglect*, 31, 1031-1052.



Are Forensic Interviews worth it?

- Purpose - examine whether:
 - *CAC cases have more MDT collaboration regarding forensic interviews than comparison samples*
 - *CAC cases have fewer forensic interviews and interviewers than comparison samples*
- Part of the Multi-Site Evaluation of Children's Advocacy Centers involving the CACs in four communities and comparison communities without CAC services (Dallas, TX; Charleston, SC; Huntsville, AL; and Pittsburgh, PA).



Are Forensic Interviews worth it?

- A **forensic interview** was defined as:
 - *“a professional interview designed to assess or evaluate the truth about a suspicion of child maltreatment”*
- “Subjects” - 1,069 sexual abuse cases in which forensic interviews were conducted at the research sites
 - *Both CACs and comparison communities*
 - *Cases between December 2001 and 2003*



Are Forensic Interviews worth it?

- No significant differences between the CACs and comparison communities regarding the number of forensic interviews conducted.
- CAC communities demonstrated significantly higher rates of coordinated investigations between law enforcement/CPS
 - CAC – 81%
 - Comparison – 52%



Are Forensic Interviews worth it?

- Coordinated Interviews/Investigations:
 - *Team forensic interviews:*
 - CAC – 28%
 - Comparison – 6%
 - *Case Review:*
 - CAC – 56%
 - Comparison – 7%
 - *Video/Audio tape of forensic interview:*
 - CAC – 52%
 - Comparison – 17%

Are Forensic Interviews worth it?

- 83% of the forensic interviews in the CAC communities were conducted at the CAC – other interview settings:
 - *Medical facility* – 6%
 - *School* – 5%
 - *Home* – 4%
- Alternatively, in the comparison communities, the most common location of forensic interviews were:
 - *CPS Offices* – 22%
 - *Police Station* – 18%
 - *School* – 19%
 - *Home* – 16%



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I hope they like our new CAC!

Is this really better in the minds of
our clients?

Jones, L.M., Cross, T.E., Walsh, W.A., & Simone, M. (2007).

Do children's advocacy centers improve families' experiences of child sexual abuse investigations? *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 31, 1069-1085.



Is this working for you?

- Purpose - examine whether cases seen at the participating CACs were more likely to result in higher ratings of caregivers' and children's satisfaction with services than cases seen in the comparison communities which were not served by CACs.
- Part of the Multi-Site Evaluation of Children's Advocacy Centers involving the CACs in four communities and comparison communities without CAC services (Dallas, TX; Charleston, SC; Huntsville, AL; and Pittsburgh, PA).



Is this working for you?

- 284 sexual abuse cases (229 from the CAC cases and 55 comparison cases):
 - *Child's mother being the respondent in a majority of the cases - 79%*
 - *Alleged victim was at least 8 years old*
- 120 of these children also participated in a follow-up interview regarding their satisfaction with the case processes (90 from the CAC cases and 30 from the comparison cases).





Is this working for you?

- Caregivers from the CAC samples were significantly **more satisfied** with the interview experience than caregivers from the comparison samples
- Caregivers whose children were seen at the CAC reported **higher** rates of satisfaction than caregivers whose children were seen at the comparison sites



Is this working for you?

- Most children expressed moderate to high satisfaction with the investigation, but:
 - 20% felt “very scared” during the forensic interview
 - 11% did not think the investigators understood children very well
 - 19% did not think the investigators explained what was happening very well
 - 33% thought they had to explain things to the investigator too many times
 - Significantly more children from the CAC sample described themselves as being “not at all” or “not very” scared versus kids from the comparison communities



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**We can reassure the child and
might find some evidence.**

Who really gets a medical exam?

Does having a CAC help?

Walsh, W.A., Cross, T.P., Jones, L.M., Simone, M., & Kolko, D.J. (2007).

Which sexual abuse victims receive a forensic medical examination? The impact of Children's Advocacy Centers. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 31, 1053-1068.



Medical Exam, or not?

- Purpose - assess whether CACs influence the delivery and timing of forensic medical exams, who receives these exams, and the satisfaction of caregivers with these exams.
- Subjects - 1,220 sexual abuse cases
 - *Additionally, a subset of 143 caregivers were interviewed regarding their satisfaction with forensic medical services.*
- Part of the Multi-Site Evaluation of Children's Advocacy Centers involving the CACs in four communities and comparison communities without CAC services (Dallas, TX; Charleston, SC; Huntsville, AL; and Pittsburgh, PA).

Medical Exam, or not?

- Children who were most likely to receive a medical exam:
 - *Younger children*
 - *Those with suspected penetration*
 - *Those who were physically hurt or injured while being abused*
 - *Those with supportive non-offending caregivers*
- Received forensic medical exam:
 - *CAC cases – 48%*
 - *Non-CAC cases – 21%*



Medical Exam, or not?

- No penetration in abuse disclosure:
 - *These children seen at CACs were **4** times more likely to receive forensic medical exam versus children in the comparison sample.*
- Penetration in abuse disclosure:
 - *These children seen at CACs were **1.5** times more likely to receive forensic medical exam versus children in the comparison sample.*





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Should we have a CAC/MDT?

Does it really help process these cases?

**Walsh, W.A., Lippert, T., Cross, T.E.,
Maurice, D.M., & Davison, K.S.
(2008).**

How long to prosecute child sexual abuse for a community using a children's advocacy center and two comparison communities? *Child Maltreatment*, 13(1), 3-13.





Prosecution timelines

- Purpose –
 - *Examine the length of time between key events in the criminal prosecution of child sexual abuse*
 - *Compare the processing time for child sexual abuse cases to standards suggested for felony cases in general*
 - *Explore what case characteristics are associated with timely case resolution in child sexual abuse cases*
 - *Compare prosecution rates and outcomes in communities with a CAC vs. without a CAC*
- Subjects:
 - *160 child sexual abuse cases which were referred for prosecution and whose case was resolved during the study period were included.*

Prosecution timelines

- Charging decision in child sexual abuse cases:
 - *Cases seen at the CAC had a significantly faster charging decision:*
 - CAC – 80% within 1-60 days
 - Comparison A – 49% within 1-60 days
 - Comparison B – 58% within 1-60 days
- Case Resolution Time
 - *20% were resolved within 180 days*
 - *30% took more than two years after indictment or were still pending*

Prosecution timelines

- There were no significant differences in cases pending versus cases resolved except for the charges filed
 - *Pending cases were less likely to have an aggravated sexual assault charge*
- Total Case Processing Time:
 - *Less than one year - 36%*
 - *Between 1-2 years – 29%*
 - *More than 2 years (or still pending) – 36%*

Miller, A. & Rubin, D. (2009).

The contribution of children's advocacy centers to felony prosecutions of child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 33, 12-18.



Contribution of CAC to Prosecution Rates

- The purpose of this study was to describe trends in felony CSA prosecutions across two neighboring districts in a large urban city when one district experienced significant increase in CAC participation in CSA cases compared to the neighboring district whose use of the CAC did not change substantially.
- Data was obtained from the CACs, DA's offices, and CPS in two adjoining districts of a large urban city (1992-2002)
 - *One district dramatically increased its use of the CAC for CSA cases while the other minimally increased its use.*

Contribution of CAC to Prosecution Rates

- Child Protective Services Findings:
 - *Children with substantiated sexual abuse cases between 1994-2002:*
 - District 1 – 2,617
 - District 2 – 2,320
 - *Decrease in the number of CPS substantiated cases of sexual abuse during this time:*
 - District 1 – 59%
 - District 2 – 49%



Contribution of CAC to Prosecution Rates

- Child Advocacy Center Findings:
 - *Number of children evaluated by CACs for possible sexual abuse (1992 vs. 2002):*
 - District 1 – 295% increase
 - District 2 – 125% increase



Contribution of CAC to Prosecution Rates

- District Attorney's Offices Findings:
 - *Total number of felony prosecutions of child sexual abuse (1992 vs. 2002):*
 - District 1 – 194 to 382 (196% increase)
 - District 2 – 112 to 111 (1% decrease)
 - *When controlled for rates per 100,000 children:*
 - District 1 – 56.6 to 93.0 (164% increase)
 - District 2 – 58.0 to 54.9 (5% decrease)



Contribution of CAC to Prosecution Rates

- District Attorney's Offices Findings:
 - *The prosecution rate was similar in both districts in 1992, but **69% higher** in District 1 by 2002.*
 - *Despite increased prosecutions, the **conviction rate did not change** significantly between the districts over this time period.*





NCAC Child Abuse Online Library (CALiO)

- What?
 - *1,300+ online journals*
 - *Searchable databases*
 - *Child abuse and demographic statistics*
 - *Professional bibliographies*
 - *Grant writing resources*
- Usage statistics for June 1-August 31, 2010
 - *CALiO pages were visited over 8,600 times*
 - *3,240 visitors - 1,563 were unique visitors*
 - *Visitors to the CALiO library pages came from 51 countries.*

NCAC Child Abuse Online Library (CALiO)

New Resources:

- Section added to CALiO titled *Resources and Tools for Child-Serving Professionals*. This section provides multiple documents and resource guides for educators, child-care providers and other professionals who work with children
- Full text electronic publications has increased from 160 to 200.
- Best Practices and Protocols has increased from 20 to 30.
- Annotated bibliographies has increased from 5 to 14, including one on the ***Efficacy of Child Advocacy Centers***.
- Research to Practice Summaries: written by experts who synthesize and apply the literature on various topics to the practitioners' work

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