



The New Mexico Children's Alliance (NMCA) is an accredited chapter of the National Children's Alliance. It is a resource for local communities and Children's Advocacy Centers throughout the state and helps to provide a coordinated approach to addressing child abuse issues. NMCA meets or exceeds all national standards and has been a program of the NM Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs (NMCSAP) since 2019.

Find more information about NMCA at nmcacs.org

Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) are child-friendly facilities where children and families impacted by abuse can get the help they need to begin the process of healing. The CAC provides a warm, non-threatening environment designed especially for children and adolescents.

New Mexico CACs are located throughout the state. Visit nmcacs.org for a current list and contact information.

NMCSAP

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NMCSAP

FORENSIC INTERVIEW GUIDE
For Parents and Caregivers



HOW TO TALK TO THE CHILD ABOUT ABUSE

If the child wants to talk to you about the abuse, it's fine for you to listen. However, you should not question the child about what happened or suggest things to the child either before the interview or during the course of investigation.

Give the child permission to talk to the interviewer about anything that may have happened. You might tell the child: "I'm going to take you to see someone who talks to kids. They talk to kids about all sorts of things that might have happened. You are not in any trouble. It's always important that you tell the truth."

ABOUT FORENSIC INTERVIEWS

Discovering that a child or teen in your life may have been abused or may have witnessed a traumatic event is likely to be a stressful experience. This information may help answer some of your questions about how the CAC and forensic interview process works.

Interviews are conducted by a highly trained interviewer who will talk with the child, asking non-leading questions that are age and developmentally appropriate. Other professionals, such as a social worker, police detective, and assistant district attorney involved in the case will usually observe the interview from outside of the interview room. These professionals are able to communicate with the interviewer, whether through a wireless microphone or during breaks in the interview, to ensure that they get the information they need to keep the child safe and conduct their investigation. This procedure, as well as recording the interview, reduces the likelihood that future interviews will be necessary.

Your child may need reassurance that you are present at the CAC in another room. Children may leave the interview room at any time to take a break or check on you in the other room. They are never forced to talk.

Generally, the interview will not last more than 45 minutes. However, you should expect to spend about 1.5 hours at the CAC. The length of the interview may be affected by how long the abuse lasted, the child's age, attention span, developmental level, and emotional state. If additional support such as language interpretation or other assistance is needed, that can also affect the time required.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

A team member at the CAC will discuss recommendations and next steps. Sometimes, the detective or social worker may recommend that a qualified medical professional who has experience in abuse cases examine the child. There

is no cost to you for this examination. The CAC advocate can help to explain the process, offer other resources available to your family, provide updates on the status of the case, and follow up on what else the child may need. Recommendations for therapy may be discussed with you.

You can thank the child for talking to the interviewer and listen to them if they choose to talk to you about it. It's important not to pressure the child to talk about the interview and what was said.

The investigator takes custody of the recorded interview, which is kept as evidence in the investigation.

Usually, the child will only need to come to the CAC for an interview once. However, sometimes more than one interview may be necessary. The social worker and/or detective will discuss this situation with you if the need arises.