



# Child Protection Policy

The primary mission of the Child Advocacy Center is to help keep children safe from abuse. Therefore, we are committed to the protection of all children and other persons participating in the programs of the Child Advocacy Center. Abuse or exploitation in any form -- physical, emotional or sexual, will not be tolerated. All staff members shall participate in the *Darkness To Light Stewards for Children* training to learn more about their personal responsibility to protect children.

## **Supervision**

Many of the children we serve have developed sexually inappropriate or aggressive behaviors with themselves or toward other children. Therefore, children who are present at the Child Advocacy Center need to be supervised at all times by employees or volunteers who have been screened in accordance with our policy as described in 2.6 of this handbook. There should never be a time when two children are left unattended to play for any period of time.

At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place or other persons are able to clearly witness the interaction by being in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is with the child or when conducting a forensic interview that is recorded.

## **Restroom Use**

Young children may request assistance from an adult in using the restroom or changing into a medical exam gown. Staff should inform the non-offending caregiver, if present, that their child needs help in the restroom. If the non-offending caregiver is not present or available, staff or volunteers may assist a young child in the restroom. When assisting a young child in the restroom, however, the door must be left open and a staff member should stand nearby and observe. At no time, should two children be allowed in the restroom together.

## **Transporting Children**

Staff should never be involved in transporting a child to the Child Advocacy Center for an interview or medical evaluation even if directed to do so by law enforcement or child protective services. Staff should never transport a child without the authorization of their legal guardian.

On occasion, staff may be requested to transport a child witness to a deposition, court hearing or therapy appointment and they have the authorization of the legal guardian to do so. Any staff member transporting a child or family member, must have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance. Seat belts must be used at all times. Staff transporting a child or taking a child anywhere off site must be accompanied by at least one other adult.

## **Communication**

Communication between child advocates and the children we serve is important in creating a trusting relationship. Communication between staff and children, as well as non-offending family members, must be professional in nature. Staff is discouraged from giving out personal information, such as their personal phone numbers and email addresses to children and families

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served at the Child Advocacy Center. Many children prefer to text their child advocate rather than engaging in a telephone call. Children or family members should be referred to the staff member's Child Advocacy Center email address, rather than text messaging. Staff should only respond to a child or non-offending family member's email through their Child Advocacy Center email account.

## **Safety**

- Running or playing chase will not be allowed within the Center
- Hard candy and lollipops will not be given to children during their visit to the Center
- Because of possible allergies or diet restrictions, staff must request prior consent from the child's caretaker or guardian before providing snacks or drinks
- All cleaning supplies must be stored in a cabinet with a child proof lock
- Sharp objects, such as scissors, and toys that present a choking hazard for young children will be kept out of reach

## **Responding to Allegations of Abuse by Staff or Volunteers**

Everyone in the organization has a legal duty to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to their attention, regardless of where that abuse takes place. If you suspect a child has been abused in any way by a staff member, volunteer or other professional working at the Center, immediately notify our Executive Director and make a report to local law enforcement.

Once the report has been made and the safety of the child is secured, our Executive Director will work closely with law enforcement in informing the accused staff member, volunteer or professional that abuse has been reported and take necessary precautions to remove the accused from further involvement with children pending the outcome of the investigation.

Our Executive Director or other staff members of the Child Advocacy Center will not conduct further interviews with the staff member, volunteer or professional accused of the abuse, nor interview the alleged child victim or any other potential witnesses. If it is determined that a forensic interview needs to be conducted with the alleged child victim, that forensic interview will not take place at the Child Advocacy Center.

Working closely with the investigating agency, our Executive Director will notify the parent or caretaker of the child involved and extend whatever resources are needed.

A written report of the steps taken by the organization in response to the reported abuse shall be generated and should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation.

Any contact with the media shall be handled by our Executive Director.

If our Executive Director is not available, his or her duties as outlined above shall fall to the Administrator on Duty who will immediately inform the board president.

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Signature

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Date