**Penquis Children’s Advocacy Center (PCAC) Referral/Forensic Interview and Post Interview Protocol**

**REFERRALS:**

* At this time, referrals will only come to PCAC from either the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Law Enforcement (LE) or the District Attorney’s (DA) Office.
* PCAC will serve children from the ages of 4 through 18 and, when deemed appropriate by referring agencies, younger children or older individuals with developmental limitations that align with this age group.
* When a referral comes to the CAC, the Family Advocate or CAC designee will complete a minimum fact information form and will coordinate scheduling the CAC interview with the appropriate MDT partners, within 72 hours (when necessary and appropriate). At a minimum, the Family Advocate will contact the District Attorney’s Office, law enforcement and DHHS to inform them that an interview has been scheduled.
* The Family Advocate will also make contact with the non-offending caregiver to confirm the interview time, answer any questions and ask about any special considerations for the child and/or non-offending caregiver (including need for interpreter or transportation services, and other cultural considerations).
* If interpreter services are needed, the referent will be responsible for ensuring they are in place for the child and non-offending caregiver throughout the process of the investigation per the referring agency’s policies. The referent will also be responsible for any financial obligations associated with the interpreter services.
* If transportation services are needed, the Family Advocate will make every effort to make arrangements with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Transportation Services. In circumstances where \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is not able to provide transportation, the referent will be responsible for making transportation arrangements for the child and non-offending caregiver. If \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is not available and alternative arrangements have been made, the referent is also responsible for any financial obligations associated with the transportation services.
* Every effort will be made by the CAC and the referring agent to ensure that the alleged offender is not accompanying the child to the interview and that they are not present during the visit at the CAC.

**PRE-INTERVIEW/FORENSIC INTERVIEW**

* Prior to the child interview, there will be a pre-interview meeting, in which, all MDT partners involved in the case participate, when possible. The purpose of the pre-interview meeting is to inform partners, including the forensic interviewer, about information relevant to the case. The information shared may include, but is not limited to: relevant history with MDT partners, nature of disclosure, special consideration (including interpreter services and cultural considerations) for the child and an exploration of alternative hypotheses. This is also an opportunity for the MDT partners to inform the forensic interviewer about other concerns that they would like addressed during the interview, in order to minimize the likelihood that the child will have to be interviewed again.
* The Family Advocate will greet the child and non-offending caregiver at PCAC. The Family Advocate will accompany the family to the waiting area of PCAC. The Family Advocate will have the non-offending caregiver sign the Consent to Record and answer any questions that the child or the non-offending caregiver may have at that time.
* Prior to the child interview, the non-offending caregiver will be invited to meet the MDT members and to see the CAC space. The meeting with the MDT members is an opportunity for the non-offending caregiver to ask questions about the process and for the MDT members to gather additional information that may be helpful for the interview and/or investigation. Taking into account the best interest of the child, this meeting will be brief. (Time limit?)
* The Family Advocate or CAC designee will accompany the child while the non-offending caregiver participates in the pre-interview meeting.
* The interview will be conducted by the CAC forensic interviewer unless there is a conflict of interest or other extenuating circumstances. If such circumstances exist, another trained interviewer will be selected to conduct the interview by the MDT members involved in the case.
* Forensic Interviews will only be conducted by MDT members who have documentation of satisfactory completion of a nationally recognized, research and evidence based training that includes a child development component.
* Only MDT members involved in the case may witness the forensic interview. This may include, but is not limited to: DHHS, Law Enforcement, Prosecution, mental health providers and medical providers. Non offending parents/caregivers will not be allowed to witness the forensic interview as it takes place at the CAC.
* The forensic interview will be conducted in a child centered, legally sound, neutral and fact finding manner (see the Forensic Interviewing Protocol).
* During the time the child is being interviewed, the Family Advocate or CAC designee will accompany the non-offending caregiver. The Family Advocate will provide the non-offending caregiver with information including, but not limited to: the process at the CAC, referrals to medical, mental health or confidential support/advocacy services, the Maine Crime Victim’s Compensation program and other social services or agencies that may be relevant. The Family Advocate or CAC designee with also ask if there are cultural/developmental considerations with regards to any referrals made by the CAC.
* The Family Advocate or CAC designee will abide by all Mandated Reporting Laws while accompanying the non-offending caregiver.

**POST INTERVIEW:**

* Immediately following the forensic interview, the MDT team will meet to discuss follow up actions, including making a recommendation for a medical evaluation at the Spurwink Child Abuse Clinic. The investigators will decide what information will be shared with the non-offending caregiver, taking into consideration the safety of the child and the integrity of the investigation.
* Following the MDT post interview meeting the non-offending caregiver will be invited to share and additional information relevant to the case. The non-offending caregiver will also be provided with an appropriate amount of information gathered during the interview and an opportunity to ask questions. The amount of information that will be shared will be decided by the MDT team, taking into consideration the safety of the child and the integrity of the investigation.
* The Family Advocate or CAC designee will accompany the child while the non-offending caregiver participates in the post interview meeting.
* The Family Advocate or CAC designee will abide by all Mandated Reporting Laws while accompanying the child.
* The DVD of the forensic interview will be given to the lead investigator, either a DHHS representative and/or Law Enforcement agent, of the case by the forensic interviewer at the end of the forensic interview. No copies of the recorded forensic interview will be kept at the CAC site or in the possession of CAC staff members once the interview has concluded.
* The CAC will only keep records of the initial intake information acquired at the time of the referral, releases, consent to record, consent to use the DVD for training purposes, and follow up referral forms for appropriate agencies.
* The Family Services Coordinator will make referrals (when necessary and appropriate) to outside MDT partner agencies to assist the non-offending caregiver and /or the client of the CAC in their future healing. These referrals will be guided by the needs disclosed by the non-offending parent/caregiver and/or child of the CAC at the time of the interview.
* The CAC will be responsible for tracking each case from the beginning through final disposition and follow up plans as it relates specifically to the CAC case for the child and non-offending parent/caregiver. The Family Advocate is not a case manager or providing clinical support, this role purely serves as a coordinator for the scheduling of the forensic interview, support during the interview process and for the purposes of referrals to MDT partners. The Family Advocate will provide a follow up phone call with the non-offending caregiver at one week and one month post interview.