

What will happen when we get to the CAC?

When you arrive at the CAC, we will give your child a few minutes to play in the waiting room. This allows them to explore and get comfortable in the surroundings. After a few minutes, a forensic interviewer will meet you and your child. The main reason for your visit is for your child to have a forensic interview. During this interview, the Child and Family Advocate will meet with you to explain the investigative process and answer all of your questions. Following your child's interview, both the investigators and the forensic interviewer will meet with you to explain what occurred during the interview and what to expect from this point on.

What is a "forensic interview"?

A forensic interview is simply a fact finding conversation. Forensic interviewers are specially trained to speak with children, gather information, and ask questions in a non-leading manner. The forensic interview is observed through closed circuit TV by both a Child Protective Services worker and a detective. Forensic interviews are recorded on videotape or DVD for investigative purposes. To make the process easier on the child, only the child and the interviewer are in the room during the interview. This allows the interviewer to have the child's full attention as well as to protect the validity of the interview process.

Can I watch my child's interview or view the video?

Unfortunately, parents are not allowed to view forensic interviews or videotapes. Forensic interviews are investigative in nature therefore, only the investigators are permitted to view the interview and videotapes. These guidelines are not set up to keep information from you, but to protect your child and the investigative process. Following the interview, the forensic interviewer and investigators will be happy to meet with you and explain everything that happened during the interview and what your child said.

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What to Expect When You Come to the :



Williamson County Child Advocacy Center

"Serving the 21st Judicial District"

**330 Mallory Station Road
Administrative Offices - Suite 21
Client Services - Suite 15
Franklin, TN 37067**

**Administration - 615.778.0757
Programs - 615.778.0114
Client Services - 615.778.0771**

OUR MISSION:

To combat child abuse by coordinating services to child abuse victims and their families in crisis and providing community education focused on prevention and early intervention.

www.williamsoncountycac.org

“All kids need is a little help, a little hope, and somebody who believes in them.”

- Earvin “Magic” Johnson

A Kid's Point of View

Mom said I was going to talk to a really nice person today. She said I would be safe talking to them and that it was very important to tell the truth.

When I walked in it was a really cool place. It wasn't scary like I thought it would be. They have fun toys to play with, videos to watch, and a kid's table so I could color. A really nice person came in and asked if I would go talk to them. I gave my mom a hug and she said she would be right there waiting when I came back.

During the interview we sat on big, comfy pillows on the floor. We drew pictures on the biggest sheet of paper I've ever seen. The nice lady asked me lots of questions and we talked about my family, school, and what I like to do. We had one very important rule when I was talking to the lady. She told me it was very important to always tell the truth. I told her that I would tell the truth about everything she asked me today. I was a little nervous at first talking to someone I just met, but she listened when I talked and I think she really wanted to learn about me.

Back in the waiting room my mom was still sitting there waiting on me to get back. I told her what a good job I did and that I told the whole truth. The nice lady said it was mom's turn to talk now. Another worker person came out and asked if they could play with me. I said yes. We played for a little while and then I got to pick out a button to put in a giant jar. She said that every time a kid came in and talked they got to pick out a button and put it in the special jar. There were A LOT of buttons! My mom came back out and said we could go home now.

I'm proud of myself for being brave and telling the truth!

“If you don't stand up for children, then you don't stand for much.”

- Marian Wright Edelman

For Caregivers

What is a Child Advocacy Center?

A Child Advocacy Center (CAC) is a child and adolescent oriented place where families meet with professionals in the field of Child Abuse Investigations. Usually a referral of sexual abuse and/or severe physical abuse has been made to the Department of Children's Services (DCS) or a Law Enforcement Agency. When that referral is made, the agencies contact the CAC to set up a forensic interview. It is a scary and confusing time when you find out that your child may have been abused. Most people are overwhelmed and don't know what to do in Child Abuse situations because they have never gone through this experience before. Fortunately, the CAC is staffed with experienced, caring people whose job is to assist the families that come to the Center.

Why do we meet at the CAC?

The CAC is a child-friendly place that is a positive alternative to taking your child to be interviewed at the police station or a state office environment. Our goal is for your child to feel at ease from the moment they walk through the door. The Center is decorated with bright colors and children's artwork. It is a welcoming environment with toys and kid size furniture. It is also a neutral setting where the professionals who are involved in the investigation can come in order to meet with the family and gather information as a team.

What should I tell my child about coming to the CAC?

It is important to give your child some basic information about why they are coming to the CAC. Some parents tell their child that they are going to talk with a nice person whose job is to help keep kids safe, while others say that they are going for a safety lesson. You know your child best so explain it in a way that you think they will understand. It is usually helpful to emphasize the importance of telling the truth. Most importantly please don't question your child about the specific allegations.