

The Children's Advocacy Center for Child Abuse Assessment & Treatment



COVID-19 Protocol (3/21/20)

This Protocol expands upon the email sent out from the Children's Advocacy Center for Child Abuse Assessment and Treatment (CAC) to our Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) on March 17, 2020 regarding child forensic interviews during the COVID-19 public health emergency. It is our belief that forensic interviews qualify as Emergency Services of the Critical Infrastructure listed in the Governor's March 19, Executive Order. During the current pandemic, we must limit non-essential in-person contacts in our community, including at the CAC.

The CAC is available for "emergency" forensic interviews at the Los Alamitos site only. We anticipate that most cases will be considered "non-emergencies" for forensic interviewing purposes. "Emergency" refers to those interviews where there is an imminent danger to the public or the child. *For example*, if a suspect is currently in custody and law enforcement needs the interview in order to charge vs. release, we will conduct that interview. If a child is at risk of being detained, and the interview is needed to determine whether an immediate detention is warranted, we will conduct that interview. Short of those conditions, the interviews will be suspended until the level of public health threat has gone down and they can be safely rescheduled.

In this unprecedented time, we must balance investigative considerations with public health needs and the risk/benefits of proceeding with a forensic interview.

If one of our MDT partners has a case which needs an emergency forensic interview, please contact CAC's MDT Coordinator XXX.

The CAC's lead Forensic Interview Specialist XXX is available for further case consultation, discussion, and planning.

Victims and families may need extra support at this time, especially if there are necessary delays in investigations. Please continue to actively offer support to the children and families through CAC's Family Advocate XXX; the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Bureau of Victim Services at (800) 380-3811 or the Masonic Center for Youth and Families at (626) 251-2300.

If a forensic interview is scheduled, only ONE parent/guardian will be allowed to accompany the child.

On the day of the scheduled forensic interview, all MDT partners and the child/family will be asked the following screening questions:

1. Do you have a fever (temperature over 100°F), cough, shortness of breath, or runny nose associated with any of these other symptoms?

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2. Do you live with or have you been in close contact with someone who has a fever (temperature over 100°F), cough, shortness of breath, runny nose associated with any of these symptoms?

If the child and parent/guardian answers yes to either of the above questions, they will not be permitted to go to the Los Alamitos site and the interview will be postponed. If the MDT Partner answers yes to either of the above questions, they will not be permitted to attend the interview.

When the child and parent/guardian and MDT member arrives at the Los Alamitos site, their temperature will be taken and they will be directed to wash their hands. Interviews will be scheduled to allow for time to cleaning of surfaces before the next interview begins.

In addition to the CAC, there are 6 other Forensic Interviewing Centers in Los Angeles County. They are listed on an attachment. If the CAC is not able to schedule an interview, we encourage our MDT partners to consider calling one of the other Centers for a forensic interview.

Thank you for your patience as we balance case needs with public health concerns and the health of our MDT members. Please note that the guidance contained herein is subject to change due to the evolving nature of the virus and emerging public health guidelines, and best practice recommendations from National Children's Alliance. As soon as it is safe to do so, we will resume practice. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Thank you,
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Interim Executive Director
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