Children’s Advocacy Centers: The Multidisciplinary Response to Child Abuse

The NCAC models, promotes, and delivers excellence in child abuse response and prevention through service, education, and leadership.
It’s Not Just a Child Issue

• Strong link between adverse childhood experiences and adult onset of chronic illness - those with ACE scores of 4 or more had significantly higher rates of heart disease and diabetes than those with ACE scores of zero.
  – chronic pulmonary lung disease increased 390%
  – hepatitis increased 240%
  – depression increased 460%
  – suicide increased 1,220%

• Multiple ACEs connected to early death - people with six or more ACEs died nearly 20 years earlier on average than those without ACEs
  – 60.6 years vs. 79.1 years
Cost of healthcare for abuse survivors

• Total annual health care costs were higher for all groups of women who experienced some form of child abuse:
  – Both physical and sexual abuse - 36%
  – Sexual abuse only - 16%
  – Physical abuse only - 22%

Impact of Child Abuse on Medicaid $

• Children with abuse histories had significantly higher healthcare expenses - $2,635 per year.
  – Significantly higher healthcare costs for:
    • Psychiatric care
    • Inpatient hospital
    • Outpatient - physician and clinic
    • Prescription drugs
    • Targeted case management

• Estimated cost related to child maltreatment - $5.9 billion (9% of all Medicaid expenses)

Economic Impact

• Individuals with a history of child maltreatment:
  – were significantly less likely to own a bank account, stock, a vehicle, or a home;
  – earned almost $8,000 less per year than non-abused subjects.

• Women abused in childhood appear to have greater long-term economic impacts than men who were abused in childhood

The OLD Way
The Agency Centered Approach

What do I need from this child and family for my case/agency?
1. Child sexual abuse is a serious issue which must be addressed.

2. The “system” intended to protect children should “help” children, not further traumatize or cause lack of trust.

3. The protection of children must involve all agencies involved in the investigation and intervention, and these agencies must work together.

Bud Cramer
1. All services provided at the child-friendly CAC setting

2. Balance of:
   - Helping the child
   - Holding offender accountable
Is the CAC/MDT model a Best Practice?
Does using the CAC really help?

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Evaluating Children’s Advocacy Centers’ Response to Child Sexual Abuse

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Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) play an increasingly significant role in the response to child sexual abuse and other child maltreatment in the United States. First developed in the 1980s, CACs were designed to reduce the stress on child abuse victims and families created by traditional child abuse investigation and prosecution procedures and to improve the effectiveness of the response.
Coordinated Response

- CAC communities demonstrated:
  - significantly higher rates of coordinated investigations between law enforcement and CPS
  - Team forensic interviews
  - Case Review
  - Recording of forensic interview
  - Interviews in child-friendly settings

Client Satisfaction

• Caregivers whose children were seen at the CAC:
  – Higher rates of satisfaction than caregivers whose children were seen at the comparison sites
  – Significantly more satisfied with the interview experience than caregivers from the comparison samples

• Children who were seen at the CAC:
  – Significantly more described themselves as being “not at all” or “not very” scared versus kids from the comparison communities

Case Processing Time

• Charging decision in child sexual abuse cases:
  – Cases seen at the CAC had a significantly faster charging decision:
    • CAC - 80% within 1-60 days
    • Comparison A - 49% within 1-60 days
    • Comparison B - 58% within 1-60 days

Impact on Prosecution Rates

• Significant use of the CAC approach for all cases:
  – Dramatic increase in number of felony prosecutions of child sexual abuse
    • District 1 - 196% increase
    • District 2 - 1% decrease
  – Despite increased prosecutions, the conviction rate did not change significantly between the districts over this time period.

NCAC Therapy Impacts (2012-Present)
Pre- vs. Post-Treatment Scores

UCLA Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Index
Child Behavior Checklist - Parent
Child Behavior Checklist - Youth Self-Report
Cost-Benefit Analysis

• Traditional investigations were 36% more expensive than CAC investigations. The average per-case cost:
  – CAC investigation - $2,902
  – Non-CAC investigation - $3,949

What can the CACs do to help you?

• Provide services to your children
• Assist with Outreach through CAC State Chapters
  – Dissemination of communications/outreach activities
  – Anxious for AG leadership and engagement
• Expert testimony/Case Consultation
  – Expertise in:
    • Forensic Interviewing
    • Medical Impacts of Child Abuse
    • Trauma Response to Child Abuse
    • Grooming/Manipulation
When you stop here you are loved. When you stop here you are not afraid. When you stop here you have hope. When you stop here you have faith.