

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY COALITION
RICHMOND – ANSON – SCOTLAND COUNTIES

Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) serves as an interagency response center for the coordination of comprehensive, compassionate, and professional services for children. It is comprised of a **Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)** which is a group of professionals from specific, distinct disciplines (law enforcement, Child Protective Services, prosecution, medical, mental health, victim advocacy) that collaborate to respond to child abuse allegations from the point of report and throughout a child and family's involvement with CAC.

The multidisciplinary involvement approach allows for informed decision-making to occur at all stages of the case so that children and families benefit from a coordinated response and the unique needs of children are recognized and met.

Forensic Interview Component:

The purpose of a forensic interview is to obtain information from a child that will support accurate and fair decision making by the MDT. Forensic interviews are conducted in a manner that is developmentally and culturally sensitive, unbiased, fact-finding, and legally sound. The manner in which a child is treated during the initial forensic interview may significantly impact the child's understanding of, and ability to respond to the intervention process and/or criminal justice system.

The role of the forensic interviewer must be fulfilled by a selected, supervised and appropriately trained professional, which can include law enforcement officers, CPS workers, or other MDT members who, at a minimum, must have initial and ongoing formal forensic interviewer training.

Forensic interviews shall be conducted within 24 hours of request or later as requested in order to best meet the needs of clients, their families, and MDT partner agencies.

Forensic Interviewer Criteria: (Training and Eligibility Standards)

Forensic interviewers must complete training that is approved by the National Children's Alliance, that includes the following elements:

- Minimum of 32 hours of instruction and practice.
- Evidence supported interview protocol.
- Pre- and Post-testing that reflects understanding of the principles of legally sound interviewing.
- Content that includes child development, question design, implementation of protocol, dynamics of abuse, disclosure process, cultural competency, and suggestibility.
- Practice component with a standardized review process.
- Required reading of current articles specific to the practice of forensic interviewing.

In addition, individuals with forensic interviewing responsibilities must demonstrate participation in ongoing education in the field of child maltreatment and/or forensic interviewing consisting of a minimum of eight contact hours every two years.