



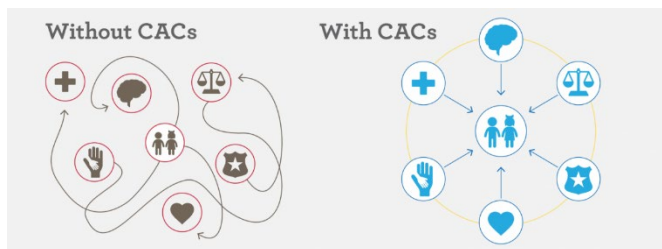
# S.a.M. Child Advocacy Center

Together, healing begins here...

## Why A Child Advocacy Center?

Child Advocacy Centers offer a child-focused approach that coordinates the investigation, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse, while allowing children and families to heal. CACs emphasize the coordination investigation and intervention services by bringing together professionals and agencies as a multidisciplinary team to create a child-focused approach to child abuse cases. The location of the CAC is to create a sense of safety and security for children.

Without the use of CACs, children are often interviewed about traumatic events multiple times. CACs offer the ability for the child to receive one interview that is available to all agencies involved to be present and also offer a video/audio copy of the interview.



CACs provide intervention and support services. CACs also share the goal of stopping abuse before it even begins. S.a.M. provides community outreach in school, church and other community settings. Allowing a chance to educate not only children, but adults and

leaders on what child abuse can present as in the classroom and in the community. Educating adults and leaders on how to take the proper steps in reporting, what to do and what not to do. This will allow for a chance for children to hear about, identify and even be able to disclose abuse.

CACs save money. When multidisciplinary teams meet to review cases that are being investigated, this allows for reduction in duplication, ensuring that cases do not fall through the cracks, and resolving more cases successfully. MDTs allow for wider viewpoints into decision making and help to identify more resources for children and families. A cost-benefit analysis showed that a traditional investigation cost 36% more than a CAC collaborative approach.

**Abuse carries a heavy cost.**

Each year, total lifetime costs of new cases of child abuse reach approximately **\$124 billion**<sup>2</sup>

The lifetime cost for each victim is **\$210,012**

With treatments, CACs help society and children avoid enormous economic costs.

CACs also hold offenders accountable. Increased use of CACs and use of MDTs have resulted in an increased successful prosecution rate of child abuse perpetrators. In a study comparing two districts of a large urban area over a period of 10 years, felony prosecutions of child sexual abuse doubles in the district in which the use of CACs remained constant.

Other studies have shown that communities with CACs were able to make faster decisions to charge criminals with crimes against children. Research also shows that defendants convicted of sex crimes against children were sentenced to longer prison terms when they had been investigated via the CAC-multidisciplinary model.

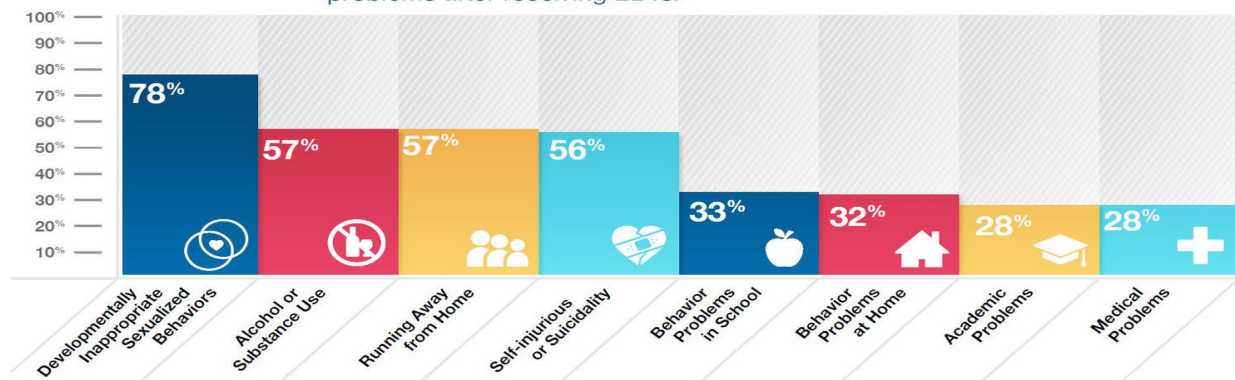
What accounts for these differences? Over the last three decades, CACs have been at the forefront of efforts to improve, refine and define the way victims are interviewed, and to create a research-based methodology for forensic interviewing techniques. The methods that specialized interviewers now use are based on extensive research showing the best ways to interview children to increase their accuracy and completeness and produce sound evidence. There is a considerable agreement among experts about best practices.

Moreover, CACs are significantly more likely to record the forensic interview than non-CAC agencies conducting interviews. Recorded forensic interviews are more accurate than notes taken by interviewers, who are focused on the interview itself and not providing a complete summary. Children's disclosures provide a powerful incentive for suspects to confess and recorded disclosures provide direct, reliable and often the only evidence to corroborate the allegations and prosecute crimes. Recording also makes the interview process transparent, so that all parties know exactly how the child was questioned. And recording pushes interviewers to become more proficient and self-aware. Not only are offenders held accountable, but the system itself adheres to higher standards, ensuring a true measure of justice.

CACs help victims heal. Child victims of sexual abuse who receive services at CACs are twice as likely to receive specialized medical exams, and four times so in cases not involving penetration. Children seen at CACs are also more likely to receive referrals for specialized mental health treatment.

## Evidence-based treatments (EBTs) improve outcomes for children.

Below are percentages of children who stopped experiencing these major life problems after receiving EBTs.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> NCTSN Core Data Set Report on Evidence-Based Treatment, February 2018. More available at [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org).

Prompt medical examinations of suspected child victims are critical to collect physical and other disclosure evidence, to begin treatment for sexually

transmitted infections and to provide reassurance to the victims. Sexual abuse victims are very likely to experience emotional trauma. They need-and deserve- appropriate mental health help. Here again the studies show that children seen at CACs were more often referred for behavioral health assessment than those from communities without CACs.

Children are referred to specialized medical exams, mental health services, and the child and family are followed closely by a child advocate working continuously with the family.

The forensic interview. The forensic interview is conducted in a single session at the CAC in a child friendly, non-threatening environment. This interview follows the NCAC model that is non-leading, flexible for children of various ages. Each step of the interview protocol is research based.

*Some quotes and photos have been borrowed from the following:*

*Cherish.org*

*National Children's Alliance*

*Child Advocacy Centers of North Carolina*

*National Children's Advocacy Center*