

National Children's Alliance Accreditation Standards (Child Advocacy Centers)

The purpose of children's advocacy centers is to provide a comprehensive, culturally competent, multidisciplinary team response to allegations of child abuse in a dedicated, child-friendly setting. A child appropriate/child-friendly setting and a multidisciplinary team are essential for accomplishment of the mission of children's advocacy centers and for full membership in National Children's Alliance.

The team response to allegations of child abuse includes forensic interviews, specialized medical evaluations, trauma-informed mental health services, victim/family support and advocacy, case review, and case tracking. These components may be provided by children's advocacy center staff or by other members of the multidisciplinary team. To the maximum extent possible, components of the team response are provided at the CAC (children's advocacy center) in order to promote a sense of safety and consistency to the child and family.

The following components are necessary for accreditation by the National Children's Alliance:

1. **Multidisciplinary Team (MDT):** A multidisciplinary team for response to child abuse allegations includes representation from the following:
 - law enforcement
 - child protective services
 - prosecution
 - mental health
 - medical
 - victim advocacy
 - children's advocacy center.
2. **Cultural Competency and Diversity:** The Children's Advocacy Center provides culturally competent services for all CAC clients through out the life of the case. Cultural competency is defined as the capacity to function in more than one culture, requiring the ability to appreciate, understand and interact with members of diverse populations within the local community.
3. **Forensic Interviews:** Forensic interviews are conducted in a manner that is legally sound, of a neutral, fact-finding nature, and are coordinated to avoid duplicative interviewing.
4. **Victim Support and Advocacy:** Victim support and advocacy services are provided to all CAC clients and their caregivers as part of the multidisciplinary team response.
5. **Medical Evaluation:** Specialized medical evaluation and treatment services are available to CAC clients and coordinated as part of the multidisciplinary team response.
6. **Mental Health:** Evidence based trauma-focused mental health services, designed to meet the unique needs of the children and caregivers, are consistently available as part of the multidisciplinary team response.
7. **Case Review:** A formal process in which multidisciplinary discussion and information sharing regarding the investigation, case status and services needed by the child and family is to occur on a routine basis.
8. **Case Tracking:** Children's Advocacy Centers must develop and implement a system for monitoring case progress and tracking case outcomes for all multidisciplinary components.
9. **Organizational Capacity:** A designated legal entity responsible for program and fiscal operations has been established and implements basic sound administrative policies and procedures.
10. **Child-Appropriate/Child-Friendly Facility:** The child-focused setting is comfortable, private and both physically and psychologically safe for diverse populations of children and their family members.