



COVID-19 Response

(Updated 3/30/20)

To combat the spread of COVID-19, public health authorities in the U.S. and globally have recommended social distancing—ceasing all non-essential human contact—as the only way to slow the spread of the virus and preserve the healthcare system's capacity to treat an overwhelming number of victims.

The Will County Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) provides many essential services which have, until now, been conducted in person, and many of these services critical to children's health, safety, and well-being must continue despite the outbreak.

One of the Will County CAC's mission-critical roles is to provide safety to the children we serve, and that responsibility extends beyond keeping them safe from abuse alone. Additionally, sick CAC employees and MDT partners are not able to provide the necessary response to the needs of the children. Thus, based on federal and state guidelines/recommendations:

- All non-essential CAC employees have been moved to working off-site, and non-critical activities are being cancelled or postponed until further notice.
- All CAC staff and MDT partners are expected to practice social distancing, wash hands frequently, and wipe down common surfaces after use.
- Our DCFS, prosecution, and law enforcement MDT partners are requested to minimize the number of staff in the building.

Starting immediately, the Will County CAC is implementing the following plan (developed in compliance with the National Children's Alliance's COVID-19 Guidance) to minimize the exposure of staff, MDT partners, and the children/family we serve:

FORENSIC INTERVIEWS

All cases referred for a forensic interview should be emailed to cac@willcountyvillinois.com.

Only **essential** forensic interviews will be conducted. 'Essential' is determined on a case-by-case basis with the input of the MDT members assigned to the case, using the following criteria:

- Alleged offender in custody.
- DCFS taking immediate protective custody of child/ren.
- Child/ren is requiring an immediate medical exam.
- Alleged offender is a flight risk.
- Child/ren are only in town for a certain time period

Any case in which the child is determined to be at-risk, will be scheduled at a later time.

Families may choose to schedule cases farther out if concerned.

Forensic interviews, modified as described following, will be scheduled by Intake/MDT Coordinator via phone, to occur on **Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays at 9am, 11am, and 1:30 pm.**

Forensic interviews will be covered by teams on a rotating basis by week and based on the need for bilingual personnel.

MODIFIED FORENSIC INTERVIEW with Off-Site MDT
*Only the **Forensic Interviewer, Family Advocate, and the Child & 1 Caregiver** will be present at the CAC.*

- Other MDT members (law enforcement, prosecution, DCFS and CAC therapist) will participate OFF-SITE, not at the CAC.
- Using a HIPPA-compliant ZOOM account, the CAC Forensic Interviewer will conduct a pre-interview and post-interview MDT conference, and will have the ability to consult with MDT members during the interview, in order to avoid duplicative interviewing.
- Immediately after the interview, a link to view the completed interview on the HIPPA-compliant VidaNyx system, will be sent to each MDT member. (Law enforcement and ASAs will have the option to download the interview.)

When scheduling forensic interviews via the phone, the Intake/MDT Coordinator will screen (in addition to the routine intake questions) **if the caregiver or child has been exposed to COVID-19, or is experiencing a fever, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches or has**

traveled to, or been with, a person from a high-risk area. If yes, the interview will not take place.

Attendance at the forensic interview will be **limited to one caregiver and the child(ren) to be interviewed.**

- No additional adults, siblings, or other children (besides who is being interviewed) are to accompany the family to the CAC.
- If they must come due to childcare issues, we ask that another adult come to stay with the children in the car, outside of the CAC space.

Family Advocates will contact each family scheduled for an on-site forensic interview, the day before the scheduled interview (24 hour reminder call) and will:

- Administer the Family Screening Tool via phone
- Ask same illness-related screening questions previously asked by Intake/MDT Coordinator

When the child and family arrive at the CAC for the FI, they will be placed in the front reception area which will provide the most space/distance for safety of all parties. CAC staff will not sit with the family or provide any in-person in-take services.

If the child or caregiver reports exposure to COVID-19 or has visible symptoms, they will be told that we must reschedule (1-2 weeks after symptoms first emerged).

MENTAL HEALTH/THERAPY SERVICES

CAC Therapists will provide Tele-Mental Health trauma therapy services via a HIPPA compliant ZOOM account.

If it is deemed necessary for therapy services to be provided in person, a minimum of 2 therapists will provide services concurrently.

- This will ensure back-up coverage for any crisis that may arise due to clients dealing with amplified anxiety during this tumultuous time.
- Only the child and non-offending caregiver will attend therapy sessions.
- Therapists will communicate with clients and staff via various communication outlets including email, Google Voice and Google Docs.

MODIFIED STAFFING PLAN

The Will County CAC has developed a staffing schedule designed to minimize the number of people in the building and reduce the incidences in which possibly infected individuals have contact with others.

- Direct program MDT staff have been assigned to "teams" that will include a Family Advocate, a Forensic Interviewer, and a Trauma-Therapist, and they will only be on-site on the specified days they are assigned.
- On-site work times are from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, off-site work times can mirror on-site work times or begin earlier in the morning if desired.

- Staff will serve as substitutes for other team members in their role, if an absence is required due to illness.
- Employees must be ready to be on-site within 1 hour should they be called to fill-in.
- Employees will email the Director upon the start and at the end of their off-site work day; have their office phone forwarded to their Google#/cell phone, be able to access the CAC's Outlook email and calendar appointments (via cell phone/computer).
- Off-site employees will be responsible for completing work assignments given by the Director (i.e. research expanded services, write/edit revised protocols and policies, complete accreditation-related assignments).
- All staff will be responsible for the timely and accurate entry of their role-specific data in the Collaborate system both on-site, and off-site.

CLEANLINESS

Each team will complete the following cleaning checklist for their role:

- After each forensic interview, the Forensic Interviewer will be responsible for sanitizing the MDT observation room, all equipment used to conduct the interview, and the forensic interview.
- Family Advocates and Therapists will be responsible for cleaning/disinfecting each room/space that a client/family utilizes, immediately after family departs. All surfaces, toys, door handles, light switches, etc. will be thoroughly wiped/sprayed.
- InTake/MDT Coordinator will be responsible for cleaning/disinfecting entry doors, writing tools and areas families might use, etc.

This plan is effective immediately, in place until further notice, and subject to change based on the evolving situation.