

Developing an Integrated Behavioral Health and Child Advocacy Center Partnership: Benefits of a Multidisciplinary Team When a Child Discloses Abuse

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Child Advocacy Centers:

Single organization with multidisciplinary team:

- law enforcement
- prosecution
- social services
- forensic interviewers
- medical health professionals
- mental health professionals
- Serve children who experience sexual or physical abuse
- Children tell their story one time in a trauma-informed environment

CAC Directors National Survey (Wherry, et al., 2015):

- Most cases are referred for behavioral health services
- 30% CACs have in-house behavioral health services
- 65% directors reported behavioral health access difficulty

CACs' Referral Practices (Wherry, et al., 2015):

- 76% cases referred for treatment
- 63% referred for assessment
- 30% CACs provide in-house assessment and treatment

Key Benefits of Offering Immediate Mental Health Services in a CAC Setting

- Statistically significant benefit was found from all people who received treatment services while at the CAC (Gonzalez, et al., 2017)
- It is best practice to evaluate children's mental health and refer "troubled children" for behavioral health treatment ASAP (Wherry, et al., 2015)

The Central MN CAC entered a partnership with the CentraCare Pediatric Clinic IBH providers in August 2019

Integrated Behavioral Health (IBH) and Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Partnership Benefits:

- Immediate contact with a licensed mental health professional (IBH provider) after forensic interview
- Psychotherapeutic intervention provided before leaving the CAC
 - Children
 - Non-offending loved ones
- IBH providers assess for thoughts of suicide or self-harm after forensic interview
- IBH providers make recommendations regarding behavioral health services
- IBH providers bridge care while waiting to start traditional behavioral health services
- IBH providers connect and collaborate with multidisciplinary team



Importance of Supporting Non-Offending Caregivers as Part of the Healing Process for the Patient

- Parents of victims of sexual abuse have their own psychological care and parenting support needs (Cyr, et al., 2016)
- Nonoffending caregivers of children who have been sexually abused can experience a negative impact on their own mental health and parenting behaviors (Jobe-Shields, et al., 2015)

IBH & CAC Development:

January 2019 – December 2019:
Central MN CAC served 323 children

January 2020 - August 2020:
Central MN CAC served 183 children

August 2019 - August 2020:
92 patients chose IBH services

