



VICTIM ADVOCACY GUIDELINES

The intent of this guide is to help you expand and enhance your Victim Advocacy services. This project was developed by the Regional Children’s Advocacy Centers in consultation with National Children’s Alliance and National Children’s Advocacy Center.



OVERVIEW

The Regional CACs have created Victim Advocacy Guidelines to help CACs provide specialized advocacy services to the children and families in your communities and to help CACs meet the Victim Advocacy Standard for Accreditation for National Children's Alliance (NCA). This is one tool to assist in your development. Additional support can be found within the document [Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide for Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members](#).

Definition. The Standard for Victim Advocacy is defined by NCA as: *Victim support and advocacy services are provided to all CAC clients and their caregivers as part of the Multidisciplinary Team response (National Children's Alliance Standards for Accredited Members, 2017 Edition)*. The goal is for the CAC and MDT partners to work together to ensure specialized victim advocacy and support services to children and their non-offending caregivers. This includes a process for seamless transition from CAC advocate to community agency advocate (if any) to prosecutor's office advocate.

Content included in this guide:

- I. Initial training requirements for NCA standards
- II. Ongoing training requirements for NCA standards
- III. To do list for creating Victim Advocacy Protocol
- IV. Resources
- V. Regional and NCA contact information
- VI. Attachments – Draft Templates
 - Attachment A: Sample Victim Advocacy Protocol
 - Attachment B: Victim Advocacy Linkage Agreement
 - Attachment C: Sample Documentation Form for Initial Training
 - Attachment D: Victim/Family Advocate Checklist

I. INITIAL TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The NCA Standards for Accreditation require that Victim Advocates have a minimum of 24 hours of training on the following topics:

1. Dynamics of abuse
2. Trauma-informed services
3. Crisis assessment and intervention
4. Risk assessment and safety planning
5. Professional ethics and boundaries
6. Understanding the coordinated multidisciplinary response
7. Assistance in accessing/obtaining victims' rights as outlined by law
8. Court education, support, and accompaniment
9. Assistance with access to treatment and other services, including protective orders, housing, public assistance, domestic violence intervention, transportation, financial assistance, interpreters, among others as determined for individual clients (National Children's Alliance Standards for Accredited Members, 2017 Edition)

This **initial** training can be obtained and documented from a variety of sources, either in person or online (sample documentation form included as Attachment C).

If training has been conducted in a more informal way, it is required that an agenda and a list of topics be outlined and documented for submission with the application for NCA accreditation. If you have multiple advocates working with the CAC (CAC Advocate, Community Advocate and Prosecutor Advocate), each Advocate must have completed and documented the 24 hours of initial training. Below are some available training opportunities to assist you in meeting the Standards and increasing your skills and knowledge related to victim advocacy.

In Person Training		
Training for Advocates Working in a Child Advocacy Center	3-day training in Duluth, MN, various dates	First Witness CAC training
Victim Advocacy in the Child Advocacy Center	3-day training in Huntsville, AL, various dates	NCAC Victim Advocacy Training
Statewide Victim Assistance Academies	Offered in some states	Statewide Victim Assistance Academies Map

Online Training (free)		
Child Victim Web	A multimedia, online training resource designed for professionals from all disciplines who work with children and adolescents who have experienced or witnessed serious violence	Child Victim Web <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Child Victimization • Psychological and Behavioral Impact • Social and Health Consequences • Criminal Justice and Child Advocacy • Assessment Strategies • Evidence-Based Treatment Planning • Case Management Skills for Treatment Success • Evidence Supported Treatments
Office for Victims of Crime - Victim Assistance Training	Foundational on-demand web-based victim assistance training program	OVC VAT training Under Basics (5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Justice System (1) • Criminal Justice System (1) • Ethics (45 min) • Types of Victim Services (1) • Victim Compensation (30 min) • Victims' Rights (45 min) Under Core Competencies (6.5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy (30 min) • Assessing Victims' Needs (45 min) • Collaboration (45 min) • Confidentiality (1) • Crisis Intervention (30 min) • Culture, Diversity, and Inclusivity (45 min) • Documentation (45 min) • Problem Solving (30 min) • Referrals (30 min) • Trauma-Informed Care (30 min) Under Crimes (1.5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Abuse (45 min) • Human Trafficking (45 min) Under Specific Considerations (2.75) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Youth (1)

Online Training (free) - continued		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrant Populations (1) • LGBTQ Populations (45 min)
NOVA Victim Assistance Academy	40 hours Meets nine consecutive Wednesdays, in a live, distance learning classroom.	NOVA Victim Assistance Academy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers all topics required for NCA standards for accreditation victim advocacy training
EduNet Webinar Series	Live and archived webinars on a variety of topics featuring experts on child abuse related topics	MRCAC webinars
NCAC Virtual Training Center	Free online trainings on a variety of topics featuring experts on child abuse related topics	NCAC online trainings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Advocacy Centers Safety Assessment • Collaboration, Consistency & Cultural Competency • Creating a Trauma-Informed System: The Important Collaboration Between CACs and the Courts • Cultural Competency: Plays Well With Others • It's a Crisis for Me Too! Helping Non-Offending Parents in Child Sexual Abuse • Strengths-Based Trauma-Informed Services • Safety Planning for Domestic Violence: The VIGOR and other family-centered approaches • Victim Assistance: Preparation and Support for Children in Criminal Proceedings

II. ONGOING TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Individuals who provide victim advocacy services for children and families at the CAC must complete and document ongoing education in the field of victim advocacy and child maltreatment consisting of a minimum of 8 contact hours every 2 years. This ongoing training may be either in person or online. Victim Advocates can meet the standard by participating in one or more of the following training activities:

1. Statewide, regional or national child abuse conference/training, including state Victim Advocate Academy
2. Free [MRCAC webinars](#) on a variety of child abuse topics
3. Free [NCAC online trainings](#)
4. Free [OVC VAT training](#)
5. Free [Child Victim Web](#)

III. TO DO LIST FOR CAC VICTIM ADVOCACY PROTOCOL

1. Identify Statewide Victim Advocacy Resources
2. Identify Statewide Victim Bill of Rights
3. Identify training needs for ongoing and new Advocates
4. Review/update Child/Victim Checklist to fit to your CAC needs
5. Identify topics to be outlined in your Protocol
6. Review draft protocol with MDT and evaluate annually

IV. RESOURCES

[Victim Rights Laws by State](#). VictimLaw is a searchable database of victims' rights legal provisions including federal, state, and territorial statutes, tribal laws, state constitutional amendments, court rules, administrative code provisions, and summaries of related court decisions and attorney general opinions.

[Confidentiality Laws by State](#). A pdf document listing out a Summary of U.S. State Laws Related to Advocate Confidentiality.

[The Advocate's Guide for Working with Parents of Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused](#). This guide is designed for sexual assault program advocates working with non-offending parents and/or caregivers of children who have experienced sexual assault. The suggestions and strategies are intended for use with children under the age of 13.

[The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#). The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) is a national organization with a mission to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for children, their families and communities throughout the United States. NCTSN has a section on Sexual Abuse with information on Effects on Children; Effective Intervention for trauma informed treatment; and [Caring for Kids: What Parents Need to Know about Sexual Abuse](#) and [Why Don't They Tell? Teens and Sexual Assault Disclosure](#).

[Victim Advocacy: A Selected Bibliography](#). This bibliography was prepared by the research librarian of National Children's Advocacy Center's (NCAC) Child Abuse Library Online (CALiO™) in consultation with the NCAC forensic interviewers for research and education.

[The Field Guide to Family Advocacy](#). A resource developed for Family Advocates at Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) to help build a knowledge foundation for this central component of the multidisciplinary team (MDT) response, promote reflections on practical applications of that knowledge, and serve as a vehicle for supervisory or peer conversations about the essential elements of advocacy.

V. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Midwest Regional Children's Advocacy Center

5901 Lincoln Drive, Edina, MN 55436

(952) 994-5277 * www.mrcac.org

Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center

300 East Hunting Park Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19124

(215) 387-9500 * www.nrcac.org

Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Center

210 Pratt Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35801

(256) 533-5437 * www.srcac.org

Western Regional Children's Advocacy Center

Chadwick Center for Children and Families, Rady Children's Hospital San Diego

MC 5016, 3020 Children's Way, San Diego, CA 92123

(858) 966-1700 ext. 6581 * www.westernregionalcac.org

National Children's Alliance

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VI. ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: SAMPLE VICTIM ADVOCACY PROTOCOL

CACs should have a written protocol that outlines the constellation of services provided by a family/victim advocate. The protocol should outline the different advocates (CAC Advocate, Sexual Assault Center Advocate, Prosecutor Advocate) that may be involved with a case and their roles and responsibilities. Please note this is intended as a SAMPLE and should be carefully reviewed by the CAC Board of Directors or other governing entity so that it can be revised appropriately to accurately reflect YOUR organization, its capacity and service provision.

Additional notes:

- *CACs use different terms for this role: victim advocate, family advocate, family services facilitator, family support services etc. In some CACs the Advocate will remain the same though the investigation and prosecution.*
- *Victim Advocacy protocol must outline the array of advocacy services, using linkage agreements if multiple agencies. Protocol also must outline how follow up services are documented throughout the life of the case.*
- *Some Victim/Family Advocates have multiple roles throughout the initial phases. Please outline in the Victim Advocacy section of the protocol if Advocates have other duties, such as intake, case tracking, facilitating case review, etc.*

DRAFT TEMPLATE

Victim/Family Advocacy services are provided at _____ through the initial investigation, follow up services, and prosecution (if any) for all child abuse cases. Advocacy services are provided to all victims and non-offending family members regardless of their financial background or ability to pay. Children and families in crisis need assistance in navigating the multiple systems involved in the CAC response such as law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, medical and mental health services. Specialized victim support and advocacy will reduce trauma to children, improve outcomes of investigations and prosecutions, and provide critical support and crisis intervention to the non-offending parent/guardian.

I. INITIAL AND ONGOING TRAINING: Victim/Family Advocates will receive on-site training by _____. Additional training is provided through various partnering agencies including _____, along with in person or online trainings through _____. The Victim Advocacy Protocol is based on the Victim Bill of Rights, _____ General Laws, Chapter _____ which provides for rights and services to crime victims and survivors within the criminal justice system. A copy of _____ General Laws, Chapter _____ is attached.

II. SERVICES PROVIDED: (A Victim/Family Advocate checklist is available – though not required – to document these services:

1. Crisis assessment and intervention, risk assessment and safety planning and support for children and family members at all stages of involvement with CAC,
2. Assessment of individual needs, cultural considerations for child/family and ensure those needs are addressed,
3. Presence at CAC during the forensic interview to participate in information sharing, inform and support family about the coordinated, multidisciplinary response, and assess needs of child and non-offending caregiver,

4. Provision of education and access to victim's rights and crime victim's compensation,
5. Assistance in procuring concrete services (housing, protective orders, domestic violence intervention, food, transportation, public assistance etc.),
6. Provision of referrals for trauma focused, evidence –supported mental health and specialized medical treatment, if not provided at the CAC.
7. Access to transportation to interviews, court, treatment and other case-related meetings,
8. Engagement in the child's/family's response regarding participation in the investigation/prosecution,
9. Participation in case review to: communicate and discuss the unique needs of the child and family and associated support services planning; ensure the seamless coordination of services; and, ensure the child and family's concerns are heard and addressed,
10. Provision of updates to the family on case status, continuances, dispositions, sentencing, inmate status notification (including offender release from custody),
11. Provision of court education & courthouse/courtroom tours, support, and court accompaniment,
12. Coordinated case management meetings with all individuals providing victim advocacy services.

III. ROLE AT FORENSIC INTERVIEW: A Victim/Family Advocate is present at the time of the forensic interview to meet with the MDT team during the pre-meeting to discuss and share information with the MDT; the advocate meets with the caregiver during the forensic interview to provide information and support. The information shared should include an overview of the visit to the CAC, including the forensic interview; medical exam options; mental health services; Victim Compensation information; names and contact information of all team members present; referrals for follow up services and any other appropriate materials for non-offending caregivers. The Advocate will meet with the team for the post-meeting with the MDT to discuss the outcome of the interview and the next steps, before bringing in the caregiver for the post-meeting. Ideally, other CAC staff/volunteer will sit with the child during this time.

IV. ROLE AT CASE REVIEW: A Victim/Family Advocate is present at Case Review to discuss the needs of the child and family and how things are going in the aftermath of the disclosure and forensic interview. The Advocate also reports on referrals made and services in place. The Advocate also discusses any concerns of the child/family about services or potential prosecution.

V. DISCUSSION OF MULTIPLE ADVOCATES: More than one Victim Advocate may perform these functions at different points throughout a case, requiring continuity and consistency in service delivery. Several examples are:

- The CAC Advocate may work with the child and family at the time of the forensic interview to provide information, support, crisis intervention, referrals and follow up calls/meetings.
- The CAC Advocate may refer the child/family to a sexual assault advocate from a community agency.
- The sexual assault advocate may continue with advocacy and crisis intervention for a period of time and then transition to the prosecutor advocate if the case proceeds to court.
- The prosecutor advocate is responsible for provision of updates to the family on case status, continuances, dispositions, sentencing, inmate status notification (including offender release from custody), provision of court education & courthouse/courtroom tours, support, and court accompaniment.

ATTACHMENT B: SAMPLE VICTIM ADVOCACY LINKAGE AGREEMENT

This sample Linkage Agreement was created to serve as a resource for CACs. Please note this is intended as a SAMPLE and should be carefully reviewed by the CAC Board of Directors or other governing entity so that it can be revised appropriately to accurately reflect YOUR organization and advocacy services provided.

LINKAGE AGREEMENT with _____ **and** _____
Name of CAC *Name of Victim Advocacy Services*

_____ Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) and _____ (victim advocacy provider) agree to collaboratively provide victim advocacy services to child victims of sexual and severe physical abuse for all children and their non-offending families. This linkage agreement outlines the following:

1. CAC Victim/Family Advocates are responsible for notifying victim advocacy provider _____ of the case information, time & location of the forensic interview.
2. CAC Victim/Family Advocates are responsible for making the initial referral to the non-offending parent/guardian for victim advocacy services for the child and non-offending family members.
3. The victim advocacy provider agrees to prioritize CAC referrals by placing these referrals at the top of waiting lists when they exist, and when no waiting list exists efforts will be made to schedule an appointment within a reasonable amount of time.
4. The victim advocacy provider agrees to protect confidentiality of their patients as outlined in their own agency policies and procedures.
5. The victim advocacy provider confirms that the advocates have 24 hours of training on the following topics and can provide documentation of their participation, as required by National Children's Alliance for accredited CACs:
 - Dynamics of abuse
 - Trauma-informed services
 - Crisis assessment and intervention
 - Risk assessment and safety planning
 - Professional ethics and boundaries
 - Understanding the coordinated multidisciplinary response
 - Assistance in accessing/obtaining victims' rights as outlined by law
 - Court education, support and accompaniment
 - Assistance with access to treatment and other services, including protective orders, housing, public assistance, domestic violence intervention, transportation, financial assistance, interpreters, among others as determined for individual clients. ([*National Children's Alliance Standards for Accredited Members, 2017 Edition*](#)).
6. The victim advocacy provider confirms that the advocates providing treatment to child victims of sexual and physical abuse and their families complete and document continuing education in the field of child abuse consisting of a minimum of 8 contact hours every two years.
7. The victim advocacy provider confirms the following constellation of services are provided:
 - Crisis assessment and intervention, risk assessment and safety planning and support for children and family members at all stages of involvement with CAC,
 - Assessment of individual needs, cultural considerations for child/family and ensure those needs are addressed,
 - Presence at CAC during the forensic interview to participate in information sharing,

- inform and support family about the coordinated, multidisciplinary response, and assess needs of child and non-offending caregiver,
- Provision of education and access to victim’s rights and crime victim’s compensation,
 - Assistance in procuring concrete services (housing, protective orders, domestic violence intervention, food, transportation, public assistance etc.),
 - Provision of referrals for trauma focused, evidence –supported mental health and specialized medical treatment, if not provided at the CAC,
 - Access to transportation to interviews, court, treatment and other case-related meetings,
 - Engagement in the child’s/family’s response regarding participation in the investigation/prosecution,
 - Participation in case review to: communicate and discuss the unique needs of the child and family and associated support services planning; ensure the seamless coordination of services; and, ensure the child and family’s concerns are heard and addressed,
 - Provision of updates to the family on case status, continuances, dispositions, sentencing, inmate status notification (including offender release from custody),
 - Provision of court education & courthouse/courtroom tours, support, and court accompaniment,
 - Coordinated case management meetings with all individuals providing victim advocacy services. ([National Children’s Alliance Standards for Accredited Members, 2017 Edition](#))
8. The victim advocacy provider confirms that advocacy services are available and accessible to all CAC clients regardless of ability to pay.
 9. The CAC will work with the victim advocacy provider to provide information about victim compensation.
 10. As mandated reporters, the victim advocacy providers agree to report all suspected cases of child sexual and severe physical abuse to state/local office of child protection.
 11. The CAC staff is responsible for notifying the victim advocacy provider or designee of regularly scheduled Case Review meetings. The victim advocacy provider or designee shall attend scheduled Case Review in order to provide consultation, expertise and input on victim advocacy issues to the MDT.

The CAC believes in protecting the client’s right to confidentiality. To that end the CAC and _____ agree that all victim advocacy records are the property of the provider, records are maintained inside the victim advocacy provider’s offices, and records can only be accessed via authorized release of information signed by the child’s parent/guardian or by court order.

_____		_____		_____
Children’s Advocacy Center	Date	Victim Advocacy Provider		Date

ATTACHMENT C: DOCUMENTATION OF INITIAL 24-HOUR TRAINING

Name: _____ Agency: _____

TOPIC AREAS REQUIRED BY NCA	TRAINING NAME & DATE(S)	TRAINING HOURS	Check if available	
			CERTIFICATE	AGENDA
Dynamics of abuse				
Trauma-informed services				
Crisis assessment and intervention				
Risk assessment and safety planning				
Professional ethics and boundaries				
Understanding the coordinated multidisciplinary response				
Assistance in accessing/obtaining victims' rights as outlined by law				
Court education, support, and accompaniment				
Assistance with access to treatment and other services, including protective orders, housing, public assistance, domestic violence intervention, transportation, financial assistance, interpreters, among others as determined for individual clients				

ATTACHMENT D: SAMPLE VICTIM/FAMILY ADVOCATE CHECKLIST

This sample Victim/Family Advocate Checklist was created to serve as a resource for CACs. Please note this is intended as a SAMPLE and should be carefully reviewed by the CAC Board of Directors or other governing entity so that it can be revised appropriately to accurately reflect YOUR organization and advocacy services provided. This is a suggested tool, not required.

	Date	Notes
Referral reviewed prior to forensic interview to assess individual needs, cultural considerations for child/family during the interview;		
Present at the CAC during the forensic interview to participate in information sharing with the MDT before/after the interview;		
Meeting with family during/after the forensic interview to support parent/guardian, provide education, information and referrals about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamics of child abuse; • Information about the MDT response, investigation and follow up; • Information about crime victim's compensation; • Referrals for trauma focused, evidence-supported mental health and specialized medical treatment, if not provided at the CAC; • Overview of safety planning including information about protective orders and domestic violence services; • Referrals to other services needed (housing, food, transportation, public assistance, etc); 		
Documentation of above referrals made;		
Discussion of family support systems available to the parent/guardian/family;		
Consent for Interview and/or information releases reviewed and signed;		
Parent folder of information was explained to the parent/guardian, including names and contact information for the MDT team members;		
OMS was offered to the parent/guardian at the completion of their visit to the CAC;		
All referral information and narrative of first visit to the CAC was entered into NCATrak as soon as possible;		
Participation in case review to: communicate and discuss the unique needs of the child and family and associated support services planning; ensure the seamless coordination of services; and, ensure the child and family's concerns are heard and addressed;		
Coordinated case management meetings with any and all individuals providing victim advocacy services to ensure seamless transition to court advocate or other;		
Coordinated access to transportation to interviews, court, treatment and other case-related meetings;		
Provided updates to the family on case status, continuances, dispositions, sentencing, inmate status notification (including offender release from custody);		
Provided ongoing support and/or referrals for caregivers throughout the case;		
Assessed the child's/family's response to participation in the prosecution of the case;		
Provided court education & courthouse/courtroom tours, support, and court accompaniment;		
All notes, contacts, attempted contacts, referrals, and outcomes are documented in NCATrak (or other tracking system) and the file.		