

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Child abuse/assault can be one of the most traumatic events or series of events in a child's life. Most children never tell anyone about what happened and continue to be victimized, suffering in silence. For the children who do tell someone about what happened, their experience can be confusing and scary each time they talk about it.

In the past, a child who came forward with an allegation of abuse and/or assault was routinely questioned in numerous, separate interviews over the course of several weeks or months by many professionals involved in the investigation. In a response to the difficulties faced by the children in our community, child abuse professionals developed a more sensitive, child-friendly, multi-disciplinary approach.

This approach helps to reduce the emotional trauma of an already distressed child, while at the same collecting information for the investigation. Through the Loudoun CAC, a trained forensic interviewer conducts an interview with the child about what happened. The interview may be recorded and kept as evidence in the case. This interview will ideally be the only time during the investigation that the child needs to share sensitive information with a stranger about the abuse.

It is our hope this brochure will give you an overview of what can be a very overwhelming and scary process as well as address concerns you may have. You are not alone during this process. There are people who can help.

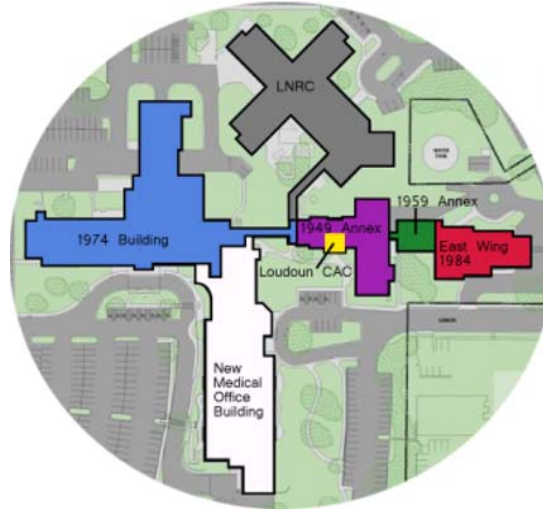
Sincerely, Loudoun Child Advocacy Center

Printing provided by:



## Directions

**Loudoun Child Advocacy Center**  
Inova Loudoun Medical Campus  
224B Cornwall St. Leesburg, VA 20176  
Phone: 703-779-5643  
Fax: 571-291-2281



Tip: Follow Hospital Signs

### Driving Directions-

#### From Sterling, Ashburn and Points East:

Take Rt. 7 West toward Leesburg.  
Continue on Rt. 7 West toward Winchester.  
Take the Rt. 7 Business exit to Leesburg.  
Go through 1st light, stay left at the fork.  
Turn left onto Memorial Drive.

#### From Purcellville, Round Hill and Points West:

Take Rt. 7 East toward Leesburg.  
Take Rt. 7 Business exit to Leesburg.  
Go through 1st light, stay left at the fork.  
Turn left onto Memorial Drive.

#### From Leesburg:

Take E. Market Street all the way through town past King St. At the next light, turn Right onto Memorial Drive.

*The Loudoun CAC is grateful to Inova Loudoun Hospital for providing space to house our child-friendly center.*

## The Loudoun Child Advocacy Center



### Information for Parents & Guardians

#### **The Child First Doctrine**

The child is our first priority.  
Not the needs of the family.  
Not the child's "story."  
Not the evidence.  
Not the needs of the courts.  
Not the needs of police, child protection, attorneys, etc.  
The child is our first priority.

Serving Loudoun County & its municipalities

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the CAC?**

The Child Advocacy Center (CAC) is a safe, child-friendly setting for child victims of abuse to talk about what happened. We begin with a forensic interview and facilitate the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) case review process to ensure children and their non-offending family members or guardians are referred to appropriate services.

### **What happens during the interview?**

Your child will be interviewed in a child-friendly room with one or two specially trained forensic interviewers. The interviewers ask neutral, fact-finding questions in a developmentally and culturally appropriate manner. The interview may be video and/or audio recorded.

### **Should I prepare my child for this interview?**

Children are most comfortable when they know what to expect. Explain to your child that he or she will be meeting with one or two people whose job it is to talk with children about what happened and make sure they are safe. You should not tell your child what to say. Reassure your child that he or she is not in trouble.

### **May I stay with my child during the interview?**

The interviewer(s) must talk with your child alone. It is difficult for children to talk about abuse they may have experienced and difficult for parents to hear it. Having a parent in the room may distract or inhibit children during the interview. Children may also want the parent to answer questions for them. It is best if the child can provide information independently.

### **What will happen after the interview?**

The detective assigned to the case and/or the Child Protective Services (CPS) investigator may want to talk with you before and/or after the interview. At this time, they may be able to tell you what may happen next regarding the investigation. This may also be a good time for you to share information and your concerns.

### **May I bring a friend or family member to wait with me?**

You are more than welcome to bring a support person with you to the CAC. The investigative team can also refer you to someone who can support you.

### **What is the advantage of having my child interviewed at the CAC?**

Your child is our top priority. The forensic interview and the MDT approach reduce the trauma your child may experience by reducing the amount of times he or she must talk about what happened. Services for your family will be better coordinated, and you will have the opportunity to meet and ask questions of the people working on your child's case.

### **Will this be the only time my child has to talk about what happened?**

Your child may have to speak to the Commonwealth's Attorney and testify in court if criminal charges are pursued. Children may also continue to talk about the abuse in counseling as a way to heal.



### **Who is on the MDT and what is their job?**

- ◉ **Forensic Interviewer**—Law enforcement and CPS investigators specially trained in forensic interviewing of children.
- ◉ **CPS Investigator**—Investigates what happened to make sure your child is safe. They will also assist you with referrals for services, such as counseling for your child.
- ◉ **Detective**—Investigates the allegations and presents the evidence to the Commonwealth's Attorney to decide if any laws have been broken and what criminal charges may be filed.
- ◉ **Commonwealth's Attorney Office**—Reviews and decides whether to prosecute the case. The Commonwealth's Attorney is the lawyer who will prosecute the case on behalf of your child.
- ◉ **Victim Support Services**—Works closely with the team and is available to assist you with questions and concerns you have regarding the case. They will also assist you with referrals for services, such as counseling.
- ◉ **Mental Health Services**—Provides counseling services, when appropriate.
- ◉ **Medical Evaluation**—Provides medical exams, when appropriate.
- ◉ **Loudoun CAC Director**—Is available to stay with your child at the CAC when you are talking with investigators. The Director also facilitates the MDT Case Review meetings to ensure children and their non-offending family members are referred to appropriate services.