

### Important Reminders:

Forensic Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Our next appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Anything else I need to remember:

DCAC Advocate: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: 803-358-7200

DSS Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Law Enforcement: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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## What to Expect: A Guide for Caregivers



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[www.dickersoncac.org](http://www.dickersoncac.org)

### **What is Dickerson Children’s Advocacy Center?**

DCAC is a friendly, safe space for children and their families. Our mission is to provide comprehensive assessment and treatment services to children between 3-18 years old who may have experienced physical or sexual abuse.

### **When should I tell my child, and what should I tell them, about their appointment?**

Children are most comfortable when they know what to expect. They should be given enough notice so that they aren’t surprised, but not so much to cause them to worry. One day is usually enough time.

You can tell your child that they’ll be meeting with someone whose job is to talk to children, that it’s okay to talk about anything, and that it’s important to tell the truth. Some children need reassurance that they’re not in trouble.

### **Can I ask my child what happened?**

Regarding the incident: Please do not ask your child for details. If you already know what happened, please don’t ask them about it. It is crucial for your child not to talk about the event before the appointment. Asking questions can sometimes plant ideas in their head, which can make it harder to get accurate information.

Regarding their appointment: You can ask how things went for them, but don’t push for specifics. We suggest that you remind them that they are safe and they are not in trouble for anything they might have said. Avoid phrases that could make your child feel guilty, such as “I wish you would have told me sooner”.

### **How much time will my appointment take?**

Each appointment is different, and may include meeting with our staff, completing paperwork, and time for your child’s session: Forensic interview appointments typically take 2 hours; while medical and therapy appointments last about an hour.

### **What if my child asks why we cannot talk about what happened, or why I can’t be the one to tell other people?**

Tell him or her that you have found some people that can help them and that they need to hear directly from the child what has happened. You can also tell your child that you might not know the right questions to ask, and that the interviewer is a safe person to talk to about these kinds of things.

### **What should I bring with me to the appointment? Am I allowed to bring other people with me?**

Please bring a photo ID for all adults and your child’s health insurance card. Please do not bring toys, games, or snacks that may distract your child. We provide toys in the waiting area. If needed, you may bring other children or a support person with you, however alleged offenders are not permitted in the building.

### **What will happen during the appointment?**

Before your child’s appointment, you will meet with a DCAC staff member. After completing paperwork, your child will meet with someone privately. Our staff will build rapport to help your child feel comfortable before asking tougher questions about what they may have experienced. Before leaving, you will have a follow-up meeting to discuss our recommendations.

### **Are there other services available?**

While our mission focuses on the safety and well-being of children, at times we accomplish this by offering assistance to caregivers. Our advocacy staff may be able to provide you with assistance in the following areas:

- Access to food or transportation
- After-school/summer programs
- Disability-related resources
- Early intervention services
- Education services
- Family communication
- Housing or utility bill assistance
- Individual & group therapy
- Interpersonal violence
- Medical questions/concerns
- Mental health treatment
- Parenting skill development
- Psychoeducation about trauma
- Substance use treatment