



Forensic Medical Assessments

A forensic medical assessment of your child goes beyond the well visit physical examination your child receives from his or her primary care physician. A forensic medical assessment is performed by a doctor specially trained in child sexual and physical abuse and uses highly specialized equipment not found in most pediatricians' offices.

When is a forensic medical assessment needed?

Regardless of how long ago the assault occurred, it is important that child and adolescent victims be medically assessed. Medical assessment are a critical component of a multidisciplinary CAC response. The medical evaluation can ensure the health and safety of the child, identify and treat medical conditions related to abuse and can reassure the child and family. All children who are suspected victims of child abuse should be assessed to determine the need for a medical assessment and treatment.

Will a forensic medical assessment prove whether or not my child was abused?

More often than not, an abused child will not have medical findings. In fact, 95% of children with a history of sexual abuse will have a normal physical examination without any evidence of abuse. This does not mean that no sexual abuse has occurred.

In the 5% of cases where there are positive physical findings, healing begins within days. The genital and anal areas heal very quickly and often leave absolutely no sign of injury.

What happens during the assessment?

The physician will meet the child and non-offending parent/caregiver to explain the procedure. The actual physical exam includes a thorough medical assessment in which a colposcope may be used. The colposcope is non-invasive and does not hurt the child. Diagnostic tests, x-rays or culture specimens may be obtained to yield additional information or evidence.

The child may be treated for injuries, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or other relevant medical problems. The physician will discuss the results of the examination with the non-offending parent/caretaker and the child, when appropriate, and may schedule a follow-up appointment, if necessary. The physician may also communicate the results of the examination to investigators from the police and the Department of Children & Families (DCF), and to the Child Abuse Unit of the District Attorney's office.

Let your child know the medical provider will take as much time as necessary to help children throughout the medical assessment by explaining each step of the check-up and finding ways to put the child at ease.

The Children's Advocacy Centers in Hampshire and Franklin counties have signed linkage agreements with each of these facilities, which specialize in child sexual and physical abuse assessments. The Child Abuse Coordinator or Family Service Advocate can assist the family in arranging medical appointments with any of these facilities.

Children's Advocacy Center °
of Hampshire County
593 Elm Street
Northampton, MA 01060
(413) 570-5989

Children's Advocacy Center °
for Franklin County and North Quabbin Area
56 Wisdom Way
Greenfield, MA 01301
(413) 475-3401

° The Children's Advocacy Centers can only be accessed by appointment. Contact Northwestern District Attorney's Office Child Abuse Unit for scheduling

UMASS Memorial Child Protection Program*
55 Lake Avenue North
Worcester, MA 01655
(508) 421-1600

Family Advocacy Center*
Baystate Children's Hospital
50 Maple Street
Springfield, MA 01199
(413) 794 - 6626

*After normal business hours both UMASS Memorial and Baystate Medical Center shall be accessed via the respective emergency departments for each facility.

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The SAIN Forensic Interview And Forensic Medical Assessments A Guide for Parents and Caretakers



Northwestern District Attorney's
Child Abuse Unit
One Gleason Plaza
Northampton MA 01060
(413) 586- 9225

Northwestern District
Attorney's Child Abuse Unit
56 Bank Row
Greenfield, MA 01301
(413) 774-3186

Children's Advocacy Center
of Hampshire County
593 Elm St.
Northampton, MA 01060
<https://cachampshire.org>

Children's Advocacy Center
of Franklin County and North Quabbin
Area 56 Wisdom Way
Greenfield, MA 01301
www.cacfranklinnq.org

NorthwesternDA.org

The SAIN Forensic Interview

The Sexual Abuse Intervention Network (SAIN) of the Northwestern District is a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) developed as a collaborative effort between the District Attorney's Office, Department of Children and Families and state and local police departments to coordinate services for you and your family. The primary goal of the Team is to reduce the number of times your child will have to be interviewed by different professionals. The Team is also designed to quickly respond to the needs of your child and family, as well as to allow you the earliest opportunity to obtain information about the various agencies working with your family.

Below are some of the questions most frequently asked by parents whose children have been involved in similar investigations. We hope this information will help to answer your questions and concerns.

Who are the Multi-Disciplinary Team members?

The Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) generally includes staff members from the District Attorney's Child Abuse Unit, such as Assistant District Attorneys and Family Service Advocates, investigators from the Department of Children & Families and members of state or local police departments. Teams always include a Forensic Interviewer who is specially trained to conduct a child centered, developmentally appropriate and legally sound interview of a child. Teams may also include specialized social workers and psychologists. Specific members of the Team are determined by the needs of each individual case.

What should I tell my child about this meeting?

Children are most comfortable when they know what to expect. We suggest the following:

- Explain to your child that s/he will be meeting with a concerned adult to talk about what happened to her/him.
- Tell your child that the person who will be talking with her/him talks to lots of children and it's that person's job to make sure kids are safe.
- Do not tell your child what to say. Simply tell your child to tell the truth.
- Reassure your child that s/he is not in trouble and is not going to this meeting because s/he has done something wrong.
- Tell your child that the interviewer will spend time with her/him during the interview to explain the process and answer her/his questions.
- Do not ask your child questions about the abuse. While you should not discourage your child from talking, it is important that you only listen.



How does the interview work?

- Only one member of the Team will interview the child.
- Other Team members observe through a one-way mirror.
- The Team is able to communicate with the interviewer to ensure all necessary information is obtained.
- The interview is electronically recorded by a camera on the other side of the one-way mirror. The child may be told that s/he is being recorded.

What is the advantage of having my child interviewed by the Team?

- Having Team members observe the one-on-one interview reduces the number of times your child must recount what happened to her/him.
- Services for your family will be better coordinated because all agencies comprising the Team share information.
- As the parent or caretaker, you will meet the Team before the interview of your child and ask any questions that you may have.

Will this be the only time my child will have to talk about the abuse?

- It is important to understand that this interview does not mean that your child will never have to speak about the abuse again.
- Children may continue to speak about their experiences as they work through their feelings.
- The SAIN interview starts the investigation that may generate criminal charges. If charges are brought, you should expect that your child may have to testify.

Can I sit with my child during the interview?

- A parent or caretaker is not permitted to sit with their child during the interview.
- It is important for the interviewer to talk with your child alone.
- Since it is difficult for children to talk about these issues, a parent or caretaker's presence may inhibit or distract the child during the interview.
- It is best if your child is able to provide the information herself or himself.

Can I sit with the Team during the interview?

- Parents are not permitted to sit with the Team during the interview.
- Because this is an investigation, Team members need to assess and document the interview. They would be unable to respond to your immediate concerns.

What will happen after the interview?

- Team members will meet briefly to discuss the information disclosed during the interview.
- You will meet with the Team to discuss information about your child's interview and hear the Team's recommendations.
- The Family Service Advocate will consult with you and may discuss your child's involvement in the court process.