

Advocacy

Advocacy focuses on the needs of the children and non-offending caregiver(s). Advocates provide needed support, referrals and information along with a compassionate, listening ear. The goal of advocacy is to help the family navigate the system while supporting them through a difficult time.

Making a referral

Advocacy services are available for all children and caregivers affected by trauma, such as child abuse, neglect, witness to violence and any other traumatic event even if they have not received other forensic services.

Referrals for advocacy services can be made by any multidisciplinary team member, parent or other agency concerned about the child's wellbeing by calling the Dakota Children's Advocacy Center (DCAC) at (701) 323-5626 to speak with an advocate. If one is not available, someone will return the call as soon as possible. All clients coming to the DCAC will be provided advocacy services by staff during their visits and ongoing as needed. Alleged offenders are not allowed at the DCAC and cannot participate in advocacy. An advocate may contact the family prior to their forensic interview or medical exam to answer any questions they may have and to give them important information about coming to the DCAC. **When scheduling an appointment for the family, please let the DCAC know if it is OK to contact them directly.**

How does advocacy happen?

Staff at the DCAC will visit with the non-offending caregiver to offer services, education and support and provide a listening ear. When appropriate, they will conduct an in-depth assessment which will help determine appropriate services for the family. The DCAC offers a variety of resources to support children and families in crisis. Advocacy may include, but is not limited to:

- Crisis assessment and intervention, risk assessment, and safety planning and support for children and family members



- Assessment of individual needs and cultural considerations for the child and family
- Presence at CAC during the forensic interview
- Provision of education and access to victims' rights and crime victims' compensation
- Assistance in procuring concrete services
- Provision of referrals for specialized, trauma focused, evidence-supported counseling and medical treatment
- Access to transportation to interviews, court, treatment and other case-related meetings
- Engagement in child and family response regarding participation in the investigation and/or prosecution
- Participation in case review in order to discuss the unique needs of the child and family and plan associated support services, 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, and inmate status notification
- Provision of court education and courthouse/courtroom tours, support, and accompaniment
- Coordinated case management meetings with all individuals providing victim advocacy services.



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