

 <p><b>Children's Services Agency</b></p> <p><b>Communication Issuance</b></p> <p><b>20-054*</b> <b>Revised 6/11/20</b> <b>Previous version obsolete</b></p>	Subject/Title	COVID-19 Response-Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Guidelines UPDATED
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	Contact Name	Colin Parks
	Email	ParksC@michigan.gov
	Phone	517-388-5125
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**This communication issuance replaces prior versions of CI 20-054.**

**Interim Policies/Protocols**

Children's Protective Services (CPS) staff should work with their local Prosecuting Attorney and Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) to create an interim protocol/process that defines how CACs will operate during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) health crisis. Interim protocols/processes:

- Should define "emergent forensic interviews" and/or "emergent forensic medical examinations" and address how and where essential services will be provided. See examples provided below.
- Should ensure that "emergent forensic interviews" be conducted by specially trained professionals (either through the CAC or the CPS worker).
- May require approval from multidisciplinary team (MDT) partners and should be communicated clearly with the MDT.
- Do not require approval from Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) central office. However, they should align with interim policies/processes in place at the time the interviews/exams occurred.

CACs are working with their multidisciplinary team (MDT) partners to prioritize urgent cases for forensic interviews. Many CACs have also implemented a number of precautionary measures, including: screening for symptoms, asking one caregiver only to accompany the child whenever possible, limiting one family per physical space, disinfecting spaces between appointments, and providing advocacy and mental health services by telehealth options whenever possible.

While CACs are typically the optimal place for interviews, in some cases, CACs may be willing to conduct forensic interviews at another location if the change in location means child victims can be better served. These changes in interview location depend on CAC availability and circumstances involved.

Attached is a list of CACs that are providing emergent on-site medical exams and/or coordinating those services with a local community partner (as identified).

### **CAC Services Considered Essential**

#### ***Emergent Forensic Interviews***

- Emergent forensic interviews should be considered essential services necessary to sustain or protect life and should be provided on site at a CAC when possible and where available.
- Emergent forensic interviews should be defined by local protocols/policies. Situations that may require emergent forensic interviews may include, but are not limited to:
  - Alleged offender is in the child's home and/or has current access to the child.
  - Alleged offender is in police custody.
  - Child is in protective custody.
  - Alleged offender and/or child's family is at risk of fleeing county/state.
  - Suspicion that last sexual abuse occurred within the last 120 hours.

#### ***Emergent Forensic Medical Examinations***

- Emergent forensic medical examinations should be considered essential services necessary to sustain or protect life and should be provided on site at a CAC when possible and where available.
- Emergent forensic medical examinations should be defined by local protocols/policies. Situations that may require emergent forensic medical exams may include, but are not limited to:
  - Suspicion that last sexual abuse occurred within the last 120 hours.
  - Concern about untreated injury or sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- In communities where multiple agencies provide emergent forensic medical exams, agencies should collaborate to identify a single location for exams to be provided.
- The location of forensic medical exams should be communicated to partners and the public to avoid victim/survivors presenting at the local hospital.

### **CAC Services Considered Non-Essential**

- Counseling/Advocacy.
  - Counseling and advocacy services are not considered essential services under Executive Order 2020-59. CACs should consider the feasibility of providing non-essential services remotely using technology such as texting, video chat, or phone calls.
- Non-emergent Forensic Interviews.
- Non-emergent Forensic Medical Examinations.

### **Safety Precautions for CACs Providing Essential Services**

If a CAC provides emergent forensic interviews and/or emergent forensic medical examinations on site, the following precautions should be taken:

- Limit the number of staff on site. Victim advocacy can be offered remotely via phone call, text, or video chat rather than in-person.
- Limit the number of children/family members on site.
- Screen children, family members, staff, and MDT members for symptoms before arrival on site.
- Maintain a 6-foot distance between persons.
- Sanitize/clean surfaces before and after a child/family arrives.
- Require that children, family members, staff, and MDT members wash/sanitize hands upon arrival and departure from the CAC.
- All MDT participants and clients/supports must follow all other CDC guidelines for appropriate screening questions and for preventing the spread of COVID-19.