

## Health Services

The Bristol County CAC team includes an Advance Practice Nurse from the Massachusetts Pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (Pedi SANE) Program. While we realize that not everyone wants, or needs, a physical examination, a complete physical examination is available to every child or adolescent who comes to the CAC. Regardless of whether a child or adolescent chooses to have an exam, the PediSANE nurse is available to the child and/or family to answer questions, provide support and talk about next steps. Here are some benefits to meeting with a PediSANE:

- No matter how long ago abuse occurred, children and adolescents have the right to an evaluation and reassurance that their bodies are safe, whole and healthy.
- Children and adolescents receive expert examination, photo-documentation, and collection of forensic evidence as indicated and requested by guardians.
- If an exam is indicated, it is just like the exam a child or adolescent might have at a regular check up – with extra attention paid to the outside of private parts. The exam uses a special tool called a “Medscope” which never touches the child’s or adolescent’s body. In this exam, nothing enters the body. Nothing hurts. There are NEVER any shots.
- Children and adolescents sometimes have questions about their bodies that they have never asked anyone.
- Children, adolescents and their guardians receive a great deal of information and support.
- Any exam or meeting with a PediSANE is free of charge (except for any lab tests which require a small charge to your health insurance). Please bring your insurance card.

## Directions to Children’s Advocacy Center of Bristol County

The Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) is located at 139 South Main Street, Fall River. The CAC is in the building with the green awning that says University of Massachusetts – Dartmouth.

Metered parking is available on the street or parking is available in the Third Street Parking Garage.

When leaving garage, exit onto walkway next to new courthouse construction. Turn right and continue to South Main Street. #139 is across the street

### From Cape Cod and points east:

Take Rt. 195 West  
Take the Exit 6 & 7 ramp, stay to right taking exit #7, Plymouth Ave.  
Turn right at bottom of ramp onto Plymouth Ave.  
At second set of lights turn left onto Bedford St.  
Turn left onto Third Street  
Post office and Government Center on right  
Go through the next light, Third St. garage is on your right.

### From Seekonk and points west:

Take Rt. 195 East  
Take exit 5 (Rt. 79 Taunton and 138 Tiverton)  
Stay to left on exit ramp.  
At end of exit turn left onto Milliken Blvd  
Then turn right onto Connector St.  
Bear right onto Pocasset St. (Herald News is on right)  
Proceed through light crossing over South Main Street  
Take right at next light onto Third St.  
Garage is on your Right

### From points north:

Rt. 24 South to Exit 7 (Rt. 79 South Fall River/Somerset)  
Continue on Rt. 79 for 4.1 miles.  
Take Exit on right for 138 South (Tiverton) onto Broadway Street.  
Turn left on Columbia Street.  
At second set of lights, turn left onto South Main Street.  
CAC (#139) is on the left.  
For parking garage, continue to Sullivan Dr. and turn right.  
After Webster Bank, turn right onto Third Street, parking garage is on the right.



## A PARENT AND GUARDIAN’S GUIDE

The Children’s Advocacy  
Center of Bristol County is a  
child centered facility to  
assist child victims of abuse  
and their families.

139 South Main Street  
Fall River, MA 02721  
508-674-6111  
866-674-1002 (toll free)  
[www.cacofbc.org](http://www.cacofbc.org)



## Purpose of the Children's Advocacy Center:

- To reduce the trauma experienced by children and their families when a disclosure of child sexual abuse or severe physical abuse has occurred.
- To address the need for a coordinated effort among those agencies and professionals dealing with abuse.
- To provide support for the victims of abuse and their families.

## How We Can Help:

- The CAC is a facility with a child-friendly atmosphere that provides a safe and comfortable place for your child to talk about their abuse.
- The CAC provides help with community and victim support services for you and your child.
- The use of the CAC reduces the number of people and number of times your child will have to tell about the abuse.
- The CAC helps you talk to the team of professionals involved in your child's case.
- The CAC has a specially trained health care professional available to answer questions and to offer specialized health examinations for your child should you desire.
- Based on the needs of your child and your family the team will assist you with victim support and with making connections to community agencies and support services.
- All services of the CAC are free of charge.

## How many people will be in the room with my child during the interview?

Only the interviewer will be in the room with your child. All other team members will observe the interview from a nearby room either by closed circuit TV, or through a two-way mirror.

## What is a multidisciplinary team and who is on the team?

In addition to the forensic interviewer, the multidisciplinary team may include members from law enforcement, healthcare, the district attorney's office, the department of Child and Families, and the staff of the Children's Advocacy Center. By including all the members of the team in the interview child victims of abuse and their families avoid having to face many different interviews by all the agencies that may be involved the case.

## Who should I bring to the CAC? How long will I be there?

Try to bring another adult with you for support and to watch your child when you meet with the team after the interview. Avoid bringing other children with you if at all possible. You should be prepared to spend 1 ½ to 2 hours at the CAC. The interview usually lasts from 45 minutes to an hour. After the interview you will meet with the team members to discuss the findings of the interview and what comes next. Also, the team can assist you and your family based on the individual needs of all involved to ensure your child's safety and well-being, as well as the well-being of your family.

## What if my child doesn't want to talk when he/she gets into the interview room?

We recognize that talking about abuse can be very difficult for a child. At the CAC we try to provide an environment where your child will feel safe and comfortable so he/she will open up and talk more freely. However, children may be willing to talk about the abuse one day but not the next. In the event that your child is not ready to discuss what happened, the interviewer will not try to pressure your child to talk.

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Forensic Interview

### What is a forensic interview?

A forensic interview is an interview conducted by a specially trained professional who talks to your child to get as much information as possible about the allegations of abuse in an impartial, non-threatening manner.

### Do the forensic interviewers have experience working with children?

Yes. The interviewers at the Children's Advocacy Center have special training and experience talking to children about difficult subjects. They will take into account your child's emotional needs and developmental level in order to speak to your child in a manner that is as child friendly and non-threatening as possible to ensure that it causes no further trauma to your child. If you feel there is any information the interviewer should have regarding your child's feelings, development, language skills, or special needs you should inform them when you meet with them before the interview.

### What should I tell my child about the interview?

Assure your child that they are not in any trouble and that they can tell the interviewer everything that happened. However, do not have your child practice what to say and do not bring the abuse up with your child. If your child brings it up listen without commenting or questioning. Reassure your child that everyone at the CAC is here to help.

### Can I watch the interview?

No. This reduces the possible stress a child may feel if he/she knows their parent is watching. In addition, anyone who observes the interview is a potential witness should the case go to trial. If a parent is a witness, then that parent is not allowed to be with their child for support in the courtroom during the trial.