PREPARING to Confront the Child Advocate in a Child Sex Offense Case

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Quick Facts

1. There are no specific symptoms of child sexual abuse

2. Because the examination findings of children who have made allegations of sexual abuse are within normal limits or are non-specific, the child’s statement is extremely important

3. In the United States there are no legal guideposts for the investigative interviewers to follow.
Some Child Advocacy Centers in North Carolina

1. Pat’s Place Child Advocacy Center-Mecklenburg County

Child Advocacy Center Advantages

. Reduces the number of interviews a child victim must endure, which reduces the trauma to the child

. greatly reduces the time and their families spend assisting with the investigation because all services are provided at one location-what once took weeks can often be achieved in hours

. Enables quicker prosecutions through more efficient case processing

2. The Tree House Children’s Advocacy Center/Safe Alliance-Union County

Safe Alliance operates the Tree House Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) in Union County. It is a safe place where children are listened to, respected and can disclose what happened to them.

3. Child Advocacy Center-Fayetteville, NC

Purpose: Our purpose is to alleviate the trauma children experience once a disclosure of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse occurs by creating a community of collaborating advocates.

Mission: Joining hands with community partners we provide a safe and child friendly center that supports the prevention, investigation and prosecution of child abuse.
Interesting Websites and Articles

1. Children’s Advocacy Centers of North Carolina
   cacnc.org

2. National Children’s Advocacy Center-Huntersville, Alabama
   www.nationalcac.org

3. American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children
   www.apsac.org

4. Toward a Better Way to Interview Child Victims of Sexual Abuse
Pre-Trial Preparation

1. Speak with your client
   - remember most allegations are made against people the child knows
   - get intel from your client about the child, medication, mental health issues, juvenile court, school, grades, school suspensions
   - get intel from your client about the child’s parent-arrests, convictions, mental health issues, medication, divorces, domestic violence, claims by parent that she was of victim of child sexual abuse.
   - Attitudes about nudity and sex, names for private parts

2. Review the interview between child and advocate
   - show the interview to your client

3. Google the Child Advocacy Center
   - look at the website, particularly their mission statement

4. go to the Center and Attempt to Talk with the Child Advocate

5. File pre-trial motions for CV and the basis of the expert’s opinion
At Trial

1. Interviewer’s Qualifications
   - special training-Huntsville, Alabama
   - seminars
     - who put them on – Apsac?
     - what percentage dealt exclusively with child sexual abuse
   - memberships in professional organizations
     Nothing special, send in your money and you can join
   - numbers of interviews you do in a year
     # of children you have interviewed
     # of boy’s # of girls
     # of allegations of sexual abuse v. physical abuse or children who have witnessed violence

2. The Center
   - it is called a child advocacy center for a reason
   - the mission statement
   - how does the child get referred to the center
   - types of children who are seen at the center
   - interviews are videotaped
   - D.A., police and social works can watch the interviews
   - does the Center interview children in custody and /or divorce cases

3. Prior to the Interview
   - information gathering-from police and DSS
   - interview the non offending caregiver about changes in behavior since the allegations
   - read police reports and DSS reports
   - prior to the interview with the child you know who the alleged perpetrator is
4. **The Interview**

- lasts about 45 minutes-1 hour
- not successive interviews
- you and the child are alone in a “child friendly room “
- usually 3 parts to the interview

a. introductory-at the beginning of the conversation the child and the interviewer discuss expectations and set ground rules.
   1. In this room we only talk about true and accurate things
   2. If you don’t know, don’t guess
   3. If I make a mistake correct me

d. rapport building-interviewer asks the child to talk about events unrelated to the suspected abuse

c. substantive or free recall-encourage the child to recall the target incident and talk about it in a narrative stream as opposed to answering directed questions about it.

5. **Specific areas of class examination**

a. what is the purpose of the interview
b. aware there are no symptoms that are specific to child sexual abuse
c. other explanations for the changes in the child’s behavior
d. independent investigation
e. out of the number of children you have interviewed who made allegations of sexual abuse, number you did not believe.