

# Information for Parents and Caregivers regarding Forensic Interviews



*Forensic interviews*

*Information for parents/  
caregivers*

*Sexual abuse medical exams*

*Team case management*

*Victim assistance*

*Volunteer program*

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## **What to tell my child**

You may be concerned about what to tell your child about the forensic interview. We suggest that you tell him/her: "Yavapai Family Advocacy Center (YFAC) is a safe place where children who say that they have been hurt can talk about what happened to them." It is better if you do not question your child prior to the interview. If your child wants to talk about what happened, listen and be supportive. Assure your child that you will be nearby during the interview. Let your child know that it is all right to talk to the people at the YFAC and that other kids have come to the Center to talk as well.

## **What a caregiver should know before the interview/evaluation**

As the child's parent and/or caregiver you should be prepared to spend between one to two hours at YFAC. You may need to spend additional time, depending on the number of children whom you are accompanying for interviews or if a medical exam is required. The team members at YFAC, law enforcement and Child Protective Services will meet prior to the interview for a brief conference, during which they will review the allegations and exchange any information on the case. At this time you will be directed into the conference room to get briefed on what the day will entail and to talk about the case.



Prior to the interview, a YFAC staff member will greet you and direct you to the playroom and will answer any questions you may have about the process. The interviewer (a member of law enforcement or CPS) will then come to the waiting area/playroom and introduce her/himself to your child. If you have any pertinent information regarding your child's feelings, emotional/mental development, language skills or special needs (including medication), please inform the interviewer at this time. The interviewer will then escort your child to the interview room. You will be asked to wait for your child in the waiting area/playroom. For investigative purposes it is best that your child meets with the interviewer alone. Interviews usually last about 30 minutes to one hour.

After the interview is completed, the interviewer will escort your child back to the waiting area/playroom. Due to the investigative nature of the interview, the interviewer is not permitted to share what occurred in the interview, unless the interviewer is the lead detective or CPS worker on the case. At this time, the lead detective or CPS case worker will speak with the parent/caregiver about the interview.

Team members will hold another brief conference, during which they will discuss next steps to be taken based on the information learned from the interview. The lead detective or CPS worker will then meet with you briefly to inform you of what will happen next to ensure your child's safety and emotional well-being.

### **Taking care of yourself and your child**

Children often express their feelings through their actions rather than with words. If your child's actions or behaviors change, he/she may need your help with talking about how he/she feels. As a parent, you need to respect your child's feelings. Your child needs to hear that it is good to talk about safety and about

appropriate touch. Communication to your child that you are interested in hearing his/her questions and concerns. Inform your child that it is okay to talk to another safe, trusted adult. It may be uncomfortable for him/her to speak to you about things that are embarrassing, painful or personal. You may want to communicate to your child that he/she is safe now and that you will try to protect him/her. Your support is very important for your child's emotional well-being, healing and recovery.

### **Your feelings**

As a parent/caregiver you won't always be able to protect your child from harm. You should find a constructive way to express your own feelings about what happened to your child. You may wish to seek out other adults who will listen, or find a counseling resource for yourself. It is important for you to be able to express your feelings without confusing or frightening your child. It is fine for you to express your anger about what happened, while still letting your child know that you are not angry with or blaming him/her. Dealing with your own feelings will allow you to take care of your child and give him/her the support he/she needs.

**The Yavapai Family Advocacy Center will soon be offering a group for parents of children who have been assaulted or sexually abused. The group will meet for five consecutive weeks. Each session will last for an hour and a half. Child care will be provided. Issues covered will be somewhat determined by issues of concern within the group and the ages of the children who have been hurt. Past groups have discussed how children of different ages are likely to respond to trauma, how parents can help their children recover, and stages of parental grief. Call the Center for more information.**

*Adapted with permission from Safe Shores' brochure 'Information for Parents and Caregivers Regarding Forensic Interviews'.*

<http://www.safeshores.org/Brochures%20in%20PDF/Information%20for%20Parents%20and%20Caregivers%2010-06.pdf>