

*Alabama Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, Inc.*  
**STANDARDS**

***Clarifications, Definitions, and Best Practice Recommendations***

**AS FOUND IN ARTICLE XV OF THE BY-LAWS OF THE  
ALABAMA NETWORK OF CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS**

In order to become eligible for full membership in the Alabama Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, Incorporated (ANCAC), child advocacy centers in this state shall:

**1. Be a private, non-profit incorporated agency.**

The ANCAC by-laws further require the agency be incorporated as a children's advocacy center with a separate and independent board of directors, operating under its own 501 (c)(3) non-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service.

**2. Have a neutral, child-focused facility where joint Department of Human Resources and law enforcement interviews take place with children in appropriate cases of suspected child sexual and physical abuse. All multidisciplinary agencies shall have a place to interact with the child as investigative or treatment needs require.**

The ANCAC by-laws further require the facility to be free-standing with space inhabited only by the children's advocacy center program in order to maximize security and maintain confidentiality.

**BEST PRACTICE:** No alleged child abuse perpetrator shall knowingly be allowed on CAC campuses while children are present.

**3. Have a minimum designated staff that is supervised and approved by the local board of directors.**

**BEST PRACTICE:** Medical exams should be conducted by certified Medical Doctors, Certified Registered Nurse Practitioners, or Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners. Mental health counseling should be provided by professionals with a minimum of a Masters degree, or clinical interns supervised by a licensed clinician, in the fields of Social Work, Counseling, Marriage and Family Therapy, Psychology, or Psychiatric nursing. Individuals conducting Forensic Interviews should have a minimum of a Bachelors Degree plus 40 hours of forensic interview training provided by a recognized, professional provider (i.e. Corner House, NCAC, FoxValley, APSAC).

The ANCAC by-laws further require that the executive director or equivalent report directly to, and be supervised by the Child Advocacy Center Board of Directors. **BEST PRACTICE:** CAC staff must be paid and report directly to the executive director or equivalent. Each CAC should have a written financial policy in accordance with commonly accepted standards of bookkeeping/accounting.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Adhere to the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988. Further, consumption of drugs, including alcohol, and other substances which are linked by research to child maltreatment, are prohibited on CAC premises.

4. **Have a Multidisciplinary Case Review Team that meets on a regularly scheduled basis or as the case load of the community requires. The team shall consist of representatives from the District Attorney, Department of Human Resources, mental health, law enforcement, and the Child Advocacy Center staff. Medical personnel and a victim's advocate may be part of the team.**

The ANCAC by-laws further require the Child Advocacy Center caseload to be productive with quality and quantity that supports a **[BEST PRACTICE:]** regular scheduled team review. Other professionals, as needed on a case by case basis, may participate after signing a confidentiality agreement.

5. **Provide case tracking of child abuse cases seen through the center. A center shall also collect data on: the number of child abuse cases seen at the center by sex, race, age and other relevant data; the number of cases referred [BEST PRACTICE: by the team to the District Attorney's Office] for prosecution and case outcomes; and the number of cases referred for mental health therapy.**

The ANCAC by-laws further require CAC's to maintain data for referrals on medical examinations.

6. **Provide referrals for medical exams and mental health therapy. The center shall provide follow-up on cases referred for mental health therapy.**

The ANCAC by-laws further require CAC's to utilize a portion of state-appropriated funds to provide free therapy resources for children who have no insurance, payment means, or are not eligible for Victim's Compensation. In the event that state funding is not forthcoming, CAC's are required to make every reasonable effort to provide these services. CAC's are required to follow-up on medical exams. **BEST PRACTICE:** Written documentation of the follow-up should be located in client chart/file(s).

7. **Provide training for various disciplines in the community that deal with child abuse.**

The ANCAC by-laws further require these trainings to be held at least once yearly which would include child protective services, law enforcement and prosecution.

8. **Have an interagency commitment covering those aspects of agency participation in a multidisciplinary approach to the handling of child sexual and severe physical abuse cases.**

The ANCAC by-laws further requires said commitment to be updated and revised as major interagency personnel changes or new needs arise.

**9. Provide assurance that volunteers at the center are trained and screened by appropriate resources.**

The ANCAC by-laws further require that criminal background checks eliminate any volunteer who has had charges or convictions relating to any crime against or involving a child. A broad interpretation will further be left to the individual Child Advocacy Centers.

**The ANCAC by-laws further require each full member to complete an ANCAC Annual Site and Survey Form for documentation of standards and to be subject to deadline notice at end of state fiscal year.**

*\* Standards for the Alabama Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, Inc. were revised and best practices added by the Board of Directors on May 16, 2006.*