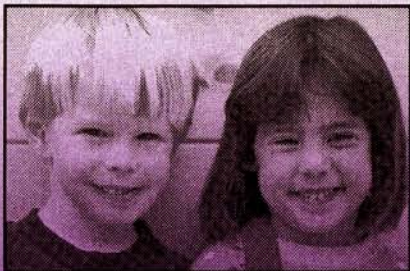


## Should I get counseling for my child?

Yes. Children may be uncomfortable discussing the abuse with their parents because of shame or guilt. Children dislike seeing their parents upset or angry. Therefore, they may try to protect their parents by not telling them about the abuse. Children may interpret a parent's negative emotions with the situation as negative feelings toward the child. Reassure your child that you are not upset with them, rather that you are upset with the situation. For the above reasons, it is important to give your child the opportunity to talk with a professional. Children have different needs that must be addressed from the incident to recovery. Should negative emotions and reactions to the abuse remain untreated, or if the child cannot properly express discomfort, a child will only experience greater suffering and trauma. Mental health therapists can apply their special training, knowledge, and experience to help ensure that your child recovers as quickly as possible. Family counseling is also a valuable tool in the road to recovery. **Allowing your child to talk to a professional child therapist is a positive step toward healing.** The CPT Advocate will supply you with a list of local mental health professionals in your community.



## YOUR APPOINTMENT

INTERVIEW DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEW TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES, QUESTIONS, COMMENTS

Blank space for notes, questions, and comments.



# WHAT DO I TELL MY CHILD ABOUT THE



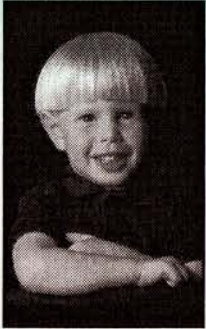
## A PARENT'S GUIDE TO CHILD ABUSE INVESTIGATION

(813) 272-KIDS

## **What happens at the Children's Justice Center (CJC)?**

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The CJC is a child-friendly interview center located in Tampa, Florida. Children of all ages come to the CJC to speak with specially trained interviewers about allegations of child abuse. The CJC process involves a team of professionals from multiple agencies such as law enforcement, social services, state attorney, etc. When you and your child arrive, you will wait in the family room. The family room has a TV, books and toys. A separate interview room is designed to make your child feel comfortable. The room has a video camera and microphones in the ceiling.



## **What do I tell my child about the CJC interview?**

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You might tell your child, "You and I are going to the Children's Justice Center. It is a special place where kids go to talk. There will be a person there who talks to lots of kids about what happens to them and that person will be talking to you too." You might also consider telling your child, "That person will need to know everything that you remember so that we can make sure you are safe and O.K. It is important that you tell the truth and only talk about what really happened." It is important for you tell your child, "YOU ARE NOT IN ANY TROUBLE."

## **Who will my child talk to?**

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Your child will talk to a Forensic Interviewer. The Interviewer has special training and experience in talking with children about difficult subjects. The Interviewer's goal is to make your child as comfortable as possible while gathering the necessary information for an investigation. Questions are asked in a non-threatening and non-leading manner. The Interviewer moves at a pace that is comfortable with your child and never forces a child to talk to them.

## **Can I watch the interview?**

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No, only those people who are directly involved in the investigation are allowed to observe the interview. This is done for two reasons. The first is to create a neutral setting to reduce the possible stress that can be placed on a child. The second is to avoid any influence the child's statements may have on your own knowledge of the crime as you may or may not have been a witness to the crime. This may come into question during the prosecution phase of the case. You may bring a support person to wait with you during the interview. This person could then wait with the child when you have your opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns you may have with the investigative team after the interview is completed. If you need support from the CJC staff during the interview, that can be arranged.

## **Will my child need a medical exam?**

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The investigative team members will decide if your child needs a medical exam. If one is needed, the Law

Enforcement will contact the Child Protection Team (CPT) to set an appointment. An Advocate will attend this exam with you and your child. You might tell your child, "We are going to see a nurse who takes care of kids. The nurse is not going to hurt you. She just needs to make sure your body is okay."

## **Can I talk to my child about what happened?**

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No, not unless your child brings up the subject and wants to talk about it. In that case, listen to your child without commenting or questioning. Be sure to reassure your child that he/she will be alright. If your child tells you something that alarms or upsets you, contact the CPT Advocate.

## **What happened after the interview?**

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You will be asked to talk to a member of the Child Protection Team. They will tell you in general terms what they learned from the interview. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and voice your concerns. When the team is finished with their investigation, they will send the reports to the State Attorney's office. The State Attorney will decide whether or not to prosecute, not the child or parent. Your child may have to go to court to testify. If this happens, the Advocate will meet with your child to prepare them.

