

MINIMAL FACTS INTERVIEW

To avoid multiple interviews of child victims by investigators, the Children's Advocacy Center, Inc. (CAC) developed a *Protocol of Services*. The protocol suggests that the responding investigator taking the initial report of suspected child sexual abuse, use the *Minimal Facts Interview* to conduct the first interview of the child. This interview will be followed by a formal, in depth forensic interview done at the child friendly atmosphere of the Children's Advocacy Center.

It is understood that all investigations differ in some respect and the approach to the *Minimal Facts Interview* must be flexible and permit the responding officer or investigator to use his/her common sense in the following policy. For example, if the child volunteers detailed information, that information should be written down, or otherwise recorded, and the report should reflect the circumstances under which the child made the disclosures. If the child is not volunteering information, questioning and particularly leading questions, should be avoided and "Minimal Facts" should be developed from other sources whenever possible.

Minimal Facts Shall Include:

1. What happened? (Where on the child's body did the touching take place and how was the child forced or coerced?)
2. Where did the alleged abuse happen? (Pittsburg, Crawford county, etc.)
3. When did it happen? (First time it occurred? – Last time? – How often?)
4. Who is/are the alleged perpetrator(s)? Age/DOB of alleged perpetrator?
5. Are there other victims or witnesses?
6. What steps are necessary to protect the child or other victims? (Does the alleged perpetrator have access to siblings or other children?)
7. Is immediate medical attention necessary? If abuse has taken place within 72 hours, a medical exam is necessary to gather evidence. Medical exams should take place at Mt. Carmel Regional Medical Center. Whenever possible the exam should be performed Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. The S.A.N.E. nurse can conduct a forensic medical exam. The nurse or physician should not interview the child.

If the child doesn't need immediate medical attention or the alleged abuse took place more than 72 hours prior to the disclosure, the forensic medical exam can be scheduled by the Children's Advocacy Center staff.

8. Do not ask the child WHY the abuse happened as it infers to the child that they are to blame.

The first concern of any investigation must be the safety of the child. If, in the judgment of the officer or investigator, expansion of the minimal facts interview is necessary, the policy of avoiding in-depth interviews must give way to the investigator's on-the-scene judgment. If an arrest or apprehension of the perpetrator can be affected expanding the minimal facts interview, policy should give way to the judgment of the investigator. Every effort should be made to avoid interviews in the late evening or early morning hours. (The Children's Advocacy Center staff is available and on-call 24 hours, 7 days a week.)

The non-offending parent or caretaker should be advised that an in depth, forensic interview would take place at the Children's Advocacy Center. At the center, the child and their caregiver will meet other members of the CAC multidisciplinary team, CAC staff, and the forensic interviewer.