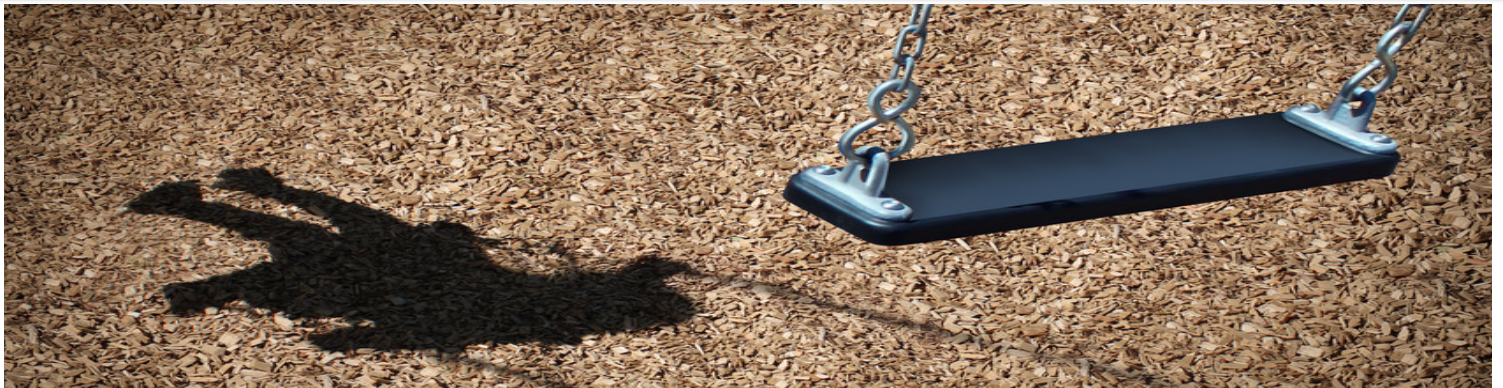




# Child Abduction T.I.P.S. (Training, Information, Practices & Strategy)

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## Child Advocacy Centers

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Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) are safe, child-focused environments that are dedicated to serving child abuse victims and their caretakers. The mission of these centers is to promote dignity and respect while minimizing trauma to the child and maximizing criminal prosecution. This mission is accomplished through a coalition of public and private agencies dedicated to serving child victims.

There are many benefits to having a child abuse victim participate in services offered through a Child Advocacy Center. Prior to dedicated centers for child abuse victims, children told the worst story of their life over and over again, to law enforcement, medical professionals, social workers, teachers, prosecutors, therapists, and many others. Telling their story multiple times was traumatic for them and led to inconsistent statements from the victims. The reasons for the inconsistent statements stemmed from not having a specialized abuse professional conduct the interview with the child, or because the child was traumatized and tired of repeating his/her story. In the end, having inconsistent statements made it very difficult for prosecutors to take the case to court.

Fast forward to today – when law enforcement or child protective services believe a child is being abused, the child is brought to a Child Advocacy Center. At the CAC, the child tells their story to “one” trained interviewer who knows the right questions to ask the child. Then, based on the interview, a multidisciplinary team (MDT) that includes law enforcement, medical professionals, social services, prosecution, victim advocacy and other professionals make the decisions together on the best course of action to take place in order to help the child. Finally, the victim and their family is offered a wide range of services such as therapy, medical exams, courtroom preparation, advocacy, case management and much more.

Child Advocacy Centers must include the following components:

- Child appropriate facility
- Multidisciplinary team
- Designed legal entity responsible for program and fiscal operations
- Culturally competent policies and practices
- Forensic interviews conducted in an objective, non-duplicative manner by a trained professional
- Medical evaluation and treatment
- Therapeutic intervention
- Victim support/advocacy
- Case review and tracking

Child Advocacy Centers can be an excellent resource for law enforcement agencies when a victim has been recovered on a parental abduction or stranger abduction. The center can provide a safe and inviting location to interview the child and collect any evidence needed for the criminal case as opposed to an intimidating police interview room. Focusing on the well-being of the child’s mental health is imperative in cases dealing with child trauma.

There are over 850 Child Advocacy Centers throughout the United States that provide services to hundreds of thousands of children every year. The reason Child Advocacy Centers work is that each of the professionals involved never forget that this work is about a child who needs someone to believe them, to protect them, to get them justice, and to help them heal from their ordeal.

# HOW DOES THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER MODEL WORK?



Core Function of CAC



Function Provided by a Team Member

## LAW ENFORCEMENT



The role of local law enforcement is grounded in public safety

If not criminal in nature, law enforcement may not take action

Immediate Response

## CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

The role of CPS is to ensure that a child's home is safe

If the family/caretaker is not the alleged abuser, CPS may not take action

Priority Assigned  
(24-72 hours)



Child is brought to children's advocacy center

Joint Investigation Begins  
Forensic Interview  
Evidence Collected  
Photos Taken  
Witness Interview  
Medical Treatment and Exam



CAC coordinates Case Review with all team members, including law enforcement, prosecution, Child Protective Services, the forensic interviewer, a mental health provider, a medical professional, and a family advocate



Case presented to District Attorney

Suspect Charged or Case Refused

Child & family receive mental health services—Family advocate works with family to assess critical resources and provide support as the case moves through the justice system

Child Removed from Home, or Case Opened for Services, or Case Closed

## The Use Of Polygraph In Child Abduction Cases

The correlation between physiology and deception dates back over 2,000 years. The FBI has utilized polygraph in criminal investigations since the 1970's. Like a tape recorder, the polygraph monitors and records the autonomic nervous system (the involuntary fight, flight, or freeze response). No law enforcement tool is infallible, but the more specific and memorable the event, the more reliability we expect on single issue operational testing. For this reason, suspects in child abduction cases make very good candidates for polygraph testing regarding direct involvement and/or guilty knowledge.

Investigators who have never utilized polygraph as an investigative tool might say that polygraph is not reliable, not admissible, or not likely that a guilty person would ever agree to take such a test. In reality, the opposite is much closer to the truth. The real value of using polygraph in a child abduction investigation is the enormous psychological leverage gained. When a guilty subject is faced with the reality of failing a polygraph exam, the evidence suddenly becomes magnified in the subject's eyes. A good polygraph examiner has two jobs: 1) Conduct a fair and accurate test, and 2) Conduct a thorough post-test subject interview. A legally obtained confession by a polygraph examiner is always admissible in court.

The best time to set up a subject polygraph examination is before you are lied to in your interview. In other words, plan ahead whenever possible by having your polygraph examiner briefed and in the building during the initial or follow up interview with the subject. The offer of a polygraph exam should be made in a neutral, non-accusatory manner in order to put the subject at ease and minimize the risk of false positive results. The immediacy of the offer to "clear your name", coupled with investigators expressing confidence in the subject's ability to pass, will get most guilty subjects to consider the polygraph. It is important to work with your polygraph examiner to insure the proper time to conduct the examination to obtain the proper physiology and an accurate result (ie: If the examinee has been awake for 24 hours or more it may not produce the best physiology). It is also important to work with the polygraph examiner important to develop the appropriate single issue question because if you do not have the proper question you may not have an accurate result. In addition to the single issue test, there is also an examination known as the Peak of Tension. This test may be helpful to find or narrow down the location of the missing child. You should discuss the possible use of a Peak of Tension examination with your examiner.

Nothing is more important than the safety of children and the critical work done by the investigators charged with finding and bringing them home. The FBI Polygraph Unit stands ready to assist our state and local partners in child abductions and child exploitation cases. Call your nearest FBI office to speak with an FBI Polygraph Examiner for more information. The more we work and train together, the more effective we are as a Law Enforcement Community.

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