

## **Exhibit C-CRITERIA - Essential Components**

### **National Children's Alliance • Standards for Accredited Members • 2017 Edition**

#### **A. The CAC is a designated, task-appropriate facility which aligns to the following criteria:**

1. The CAC is maintained in a manner that is physically and psychologically safe for children and families.
2. The CAC provides observation or supervision of clients within sight or hearing distance by CAC staff, MDT members or volunteers at all times.
3. The CAC is convenient and accessible to clients and MDT members.
4. Areas where children may be present as well as toys and other resources are "childproofed," cleaned, and sanitized to be as safe as possible.

#### **STATEMENT OF INTENT:**

The CAC has an identified, separate, child focused space designed to provide a safe, comfortable and neutral place where forensic interviews can be conducted, and other services can be provided for children and families. CACs range from small, refurbished houses, to a renovated wing of a county office building or community hospital, to newly built facilities. A physically safe space is central to the creation of a child- focused setting. This can be a challenge as centers are host to children of a variety of ages and developmental stages. Materials and center furnishings should be selected with this in mind. To assure a physically and psychologically safe environment, children and families must be observed or supervised by CAC staff, MDT members, or volunteers ensuring that they are within sight or hearing distance at all times. Some CACs are built so that the waiting room can be seen from the receptionist's desk. Other CACs have volunteers scheduled to supervise play in the waiting room whenever the center is open for clients. When planning the location of a center, it is important to evaluate the site's accessibility for clients and MDT partner agencies. Considerations should include transportation assistance, travel distances, availability of parking, public transportation, and how welcoming a particular neighborhood is for clients of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, planning should include consideration for clients who will return to the center for ongoing services such as follow-up meetings, medical appointments, or therapy services.

#### **B. The CAC has, and abides by, written policies and procedures that ensure separation of victims and alleged offenders.**

#### **STATEMENT OF INTENT:**

The CAC has written policies and procedures that ensure the separation of victims and alleged offenders during the investigative process and as appropriate throughout delivery of the full array of CAC services. During the investigative process, logic dictates that children will not feel free to disclose abuse if the alleged offender accompanies them to the interview and/or remains on-location throughout the duration of intervention. This separation of children from alleged offenders should also extend to children and perpetrators in unrelated cases. If a CAC shares space with an existing agency that provides services to offenders, facility features and scheduling must assure separation

between children and family members and alleged offenders. Many CACs serve a vital role in their communities by providing services to children with problematic sexual behaviors. CACs that offer services to this population should have policies and procedures in place to maintain physical and psychological safety for child victims and their families. This includes protected service times during which child victims are not at the center, separate entrances and waiting areas, or off-site services through linkage agreements.

**C. The CAC makes reasonable accommodations to make the facility physically accessible.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:**

Not all centers are located in custom-designed or new buildings; however, CACs should make reasonable accommodations to make the facility physically accessible to clients and family members as needed. If the CAC cannot be structurally modified, arrangements for equivalent services should be made at alternate locations. CACs must be in compliance with guidelines stipulated in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or state legislation.

**D. The facility allows for live observation of interviews by MDT members.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:**

Multiple interviews and/or interviewers are often stressful for children, particularly those children already experiencing trauma. In lessen or eliminate the need for duplicative interviews, interviews should be observed by MDT members in a space other than the interview room, whether or not interviews are recorded. The MDT should also have the ability to communicate with the interviewer in some manner to provide input and feedback during the live interview with the child.

**E. Separate and private area(s) are available for case consultation and discussion, for meetings or interviews, and for clients awaiting services.**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:**

To assure a physically and psychologically safe environment for children and families, confidentiality and respect for client privacy is of paramount concern in a CAC. It is not acceptable for team members or CAC staff to discuss cases with children or families at a location where visitors or others not directly involved with the case may overhear them. Separate areas should also be made available for private family member interviews and so that individual family members may privately discuss aspects of their case. Care should be taken to assure that private meeting areas are not only physically separate, but also soundproofed so that conversations cannot be overheard. Some centers place soundproofing materials in walls when building or refurbishing their centers. Others place stereos or “white noise” machines in rooms to block sound.