

# Lincoln County Coalition Against Child Abuse & Child Advocacy Center

## Volunteer Manual

### What is Lincoln County Child Advocacy Center

The Lincoln County Child Advocacy Center (also known as the LCCAC ), brings professionals together in one location to investigate reported child abuse and neglect. The LCCAC creates a child-friendly environment to carry out this sensitive work, with the goal of reducing trauma for victims of child abuse and neglect. LCCAC helps children and their families in three ways: by coordinating a multidisciplinary team to promote collaboration among agencies in Lincoln County, by providing a forensic interview for the child in a friendly environment to reduce trauma, and by providing the facilities for completion of sexual and severe physical abuse exams. It is the policy of LCCAC that no suspects/alleged offenders/perpetrators are allowed at the center. The Lincoln County Coalition Against Child Abuse and Child Advocacy Center is a private, non-profit organization, funded by grants, and donations.

### What is a multidisciplinary task force?

LCCAC coordinates the expert evaluation services of a multidisciplinary team, (commonly referred to as the MDT). The MDT consists of professionals from multiple law enforcement jurisdictions, Lincoln County Sherriff's office, Lincoln County Police, Lincoln County Child Welfare, the District Attorney's office, mental health professionals, a medical expert, juvenile services, and Lincoln County School System, CMC Lincoln, and LCCAC staff. The MDT Team member agencies promote more effective identification, investigation, prosecution and treatment of child abuse and neglect cases. The agreement between agencies was and is based on the belief that an inter-agency, inter-disciplinary response will reduce or limit trauma to the child victim and family, and insure that their best interests are served.

### The investigative process

Historically, without an advocacy center, a child would be interviewed about allegations by multiple professionals. This often required a child to tell his or her very personal story to numerous grown-up "strangers" at unfamiliar institutions, such as a police station, emergency room, child welfare office, and doctor's office or hospital. Children in Lincoln County no longer need to face such prolonged and frightening experiences in clinical settings. LCCAC is located in a residential home and allows the child to talk one-on-one with a professional, trained to conduct an interview on behalf of the investigative team. The house itself is a comfy setting, filled with toys and stuffed animals to play with before the interview takes place. Victim Advocates interact with the children to help them feel more comfortable when they first arrive.

## LCCAC: A History

In 1991 a group of concerned members of our Community became aware that instances of child abuse were steadily rising significantly each year in Lincoln County. Melinda Houser of the Cooperative Extension and Ola Mae Foster a school social worker began to organize efforts to create an organization that would provide awareness, prevention and education about child abuse to the citizens of Lincoln County, particularly the children.

In 1994 the LCCACA received its letter of determination from the IRS. In July of 2007 they opened the Child Advocacy Center which coordinates investigative and treatment efforts for children who are victims of child abuse here in Lincoln County. Since that date more than 1500 children and their non-offending family members have received assistance from the CAC.

### What do our volunteers contribute?

LCCAC has many diverse opportunities for volunteers. All types of volunteers are needed to make LCCAC services available to our families. The time and effort that comes from volunteers has a direct impact on the lives of children. Listed below are some volunteer opportunities which are flexible and allow for a wide range of time commitment, abilities, and level of involvement. The Executive Director can help you decide which opportunity is just right for you!

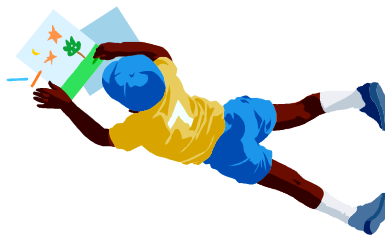
#### Child Advocacy

(Example-giving out materials to parents and running games for children at special events in community)

#### Special Projects

Community Outreach(Teaching)  
Fundraising

### Victim advocacy



# Policies and Procedures

## How an Interview Works

- When an allegation has been made, the child is brought to The Lincoln County Child Advocacy center for an interview.
- The child enters the house and is welcomed by staff and volunteers. They may play for a few minutes.
- The forensic interviewer introduces themselves, and explains that they will be taking the child into the interview room to talk.
- Once the child has become accustomed to the environment, the interviewer returns to take the child to the interview room.
- The interview may last anywhere from 20 minutes to a couple of hours, but is generally 30-40 minutes.
- During the interview the forensic interviewer will collect information. The child is asked different details about the incident(s) and shown pictures to help identify body parts involved
- The parent/guardian stays in reception and talks with the Victim Advocate, whose job is to make the parent/guardian's involvement and education as smooth and comfortable as possible. The Victim Advocate is a neutral third party here for the parent/guardian's use. She helps with information and referrals to other services, and provides the parent/guardian with a parent packet.
- If there is only one child:
  - The Victim Advocate speaks with the parent/guardian during the interview and you may excuse yourself from the room for their comfort level
- If there are siblings:
  - You will supervise all children until interviews begin, then you will switch children as they go to be interviewed.
  - Siblings may go for a separate interview or may play the whole time, depending on their involvement in the case
- Sometimes a child is unwilling to talk in the interview room, may become too upset, or be too distracted by thinking of all the toys in reception. In this case we will take a quick break, return to the playroom for a short break and try to go to the interview room again. Sometimes distractions become too great and we have to reschedule the interview for a different day.
- After all interviews are done, investigators will take the parent/guardian to the conference room to make safety recommendations for the child, and explain how the DHS and law enforcement processes will work for them. We don't talk to them about what the child disclosed, unless there is a particular safety measure that needs to be taken to prevent further abuse.
- While the parent/guardian is talking with the investigators, continue to let the children play (even if they did not have an interview.), and offer a drink and snack, if pre-approved by the parent/guardian. This speeds up the "leaving" process.

## Your Job as Child Advocate

- Our job is to make the child feel as comfortable as possible at The Lincoln County Child Advocacy Center (LCCAC). You will welcome and interact with the child to put them at ease as they come in.
- If the child is hesitant to interact with you and wants to be near a parent/guardian, give them time. **If at any time the child becomes upset (crying, screaming) and doesn't want to leave the parent/guardian to do the interview, let staff handle the situation**
  - When parent/guardian goes into conference room and the child is not satisfied by playing or is very upset, knock on the door and let the investigator handle the situation
  - If you can hear the conversation in the conference room between parent/guardian and investigator, you may turn on the radio or TV to cover the noise

## What we don't want to do

- We don't want the children to tell any of their story reception – let them know that it's good to talk, but to wait until they go to the interview room.
  - For example: “I bet you're anxious to talk about this, but you'll talk about everything in the interview room with (name the interviewer). In reception we are just here to play.”
- We don't want to do anything that can be considered a bribe:
  - **We can't say...**  
“If you go to the interview room, I'll play with you when you get back.” (*You can't make conditions like “if you do \_\_\_\_\_, then I will do \_\_\_\_\_.”*)
  - Instead say...**  
“I will keep all the toys/games how you leave them and if you want, we can continue our game when you get back.” *Let the child know nothing will change while they're in the interview room.*
  - We don't want the children to know they get a drink and snack until after the interview. This can be considered a bribe and can also be a huge distraction for them during the interview
- We don't want to take the child to the bathroom, let their parent/guardian do it, or let the child go into the bathroom alone.
- We don't want to offer hugs to the children before they leave. Depending on your comfort level, you may do a “side hug” if a child initiates it first. If you do not feel comfortable doing either, feel free to offer a handshake instead.

## Principles for creating a comforting environment

- Volunteers strive to develop a warm, friendly relationship based on unconditional caring.
- Volunteers should present themselves as interested but separate persons.
- Volunteers maintain a warm, supportive atmosphere with children offering encouragement and praise whenever possible.
- Volunteers should respect the child's need for privacy, and not engage in an inquisition.
- Volunteers should not attempt to direct children's feelings but reflect them.
- Volunteers should remember that children deserve respect and have integrity to maintain.
- Volunteers should avoid entering into a competitive relationship or controlling situations. It is important for children to make decisions on their own.
- Volunteers must be flexible enough to meet the specific and unique needs of each child.

## Confidentiality

You may be excited about what you do at LCCAC as a volunteer and you may want to tell your friends and family about it. Don't share any information obtained while volunteering at LCCACA related to children, families, and their cases. Remember that it is easy to release information but it is impossible to take it back. So the rule is: If in doubt...DON'T!

It is possible that you may know some of the people that you see at LCCAC. If you know someone when they come in the door, let the staff know so we can assess the situation and take appropriate action. If it will make the family wary of sharing details in front of you, we may send you home.

Protecting our clients' confidentiality while in the community is just as important as protecting it when you are at LCCAC. If you play with a child at the LCCAC and later run into them at Wal-Mart or another public place, confidentiality is an issue there as well. We cannot acknowledge that we know the family in any way without their permission. That means waving, approaching them, or even saying hello. If they

approach you first, that gives you permission to respond discreetly. If the parent/guardian *doesn't* acknowledge you or give you permission, please respect that.

### **Volunteer Dress**

It is recommended that volunteers should wear casual, comfortable, "play" clothes suited for active floor play. Please make sure that T-shirt logos are suitable for children's eyes and the midriffs, lower backs, and cleavage areas are covered. This skin should not be visible when reaching high or bending over. Keep in mind that we deal with a particularly sensitive population, and your understanding on this issue is greatly appreciated. If you come directly from school or work and need to change upon arrival, feel free to do so. Please come ready to play!

### **Policy on Substance Abuse**

LCCAC is a **drug-free workplace**. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited at LCCAC. The use or possession of alcohol on LCCAC premises is strictly prohibited. Future Volunteer Involvement is conditional on adherence to this policy.

### **Smoke Free Work Environment**

LCCAC is a smoke free facility. Use of tobacco products in the facility is prohibited. Smoking is permissible in designated areas outside the building.

### **Violence and weapons Policy**

The use of violence or possession of weapons is strictly prohibited on LCCAC premises. Future Volunteer Involvement is conditional on adherence to this policy.

### **Volunteer Requirements/Responsibilities**

In order to volunteer at LCCAC you must agree to undergo and/or agree the following:

- **Complete** a volunteer Application
- **Undergo** a criminal background check through the Lincoln County Sheriff's Department- A negative Criminal history report is required prior to any volunteer work being initiated.

**You are making a difference in the life of a child!  
THANK YOU!!**



# Appendices

## What is Child Abuse?

Child Abuse is defined as harm or threatened harm to a child's health and safety. Harm or threatened harm includes:

- Physical Abuse: non-accidental physical injury to a child
- Neglect: failure or omission to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision or special care made necessary by the physical or mental condition of the child
- Sexual Abuse or Exploitation: includes, but not limited to rape, incest, lewd or indecent acts or proposals and allowing, permitting or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution or pornography
- Emotional Abuse: mental injury from incessant rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting, corrupting, and denying emotional responsiveness

## Results of child abuse and neglect

- Child abuse and neglect can result in many physical and mental health problems in children, such as a mental and behavioral disorders, delayed development, permanent disabilities, poor academic performance, delinquency, depression, alcoholism, substance abuse, deviant sexual behavior, suicide, teen pregnancy, and domestic and criminal violence
- Research indicates that victims of child abuse are at a higher risk of abusing their own children when they become parents
- There are enormous economic consequences of child abuse and neglect, including but not limited to the cost of foster care, court services, counseling, specialized education, medical care, correctional facilities, child welfare, and deaths.

## Facts about child abuse

### Risk Factors for Child Abuse

#### Community/Societal

- High crime rate
- Lack of or few social services
- High poverty rate
- High unemployment

#### Parent Related

- Personal history of physical or sexual abuse as a child
- Teenage parents
- Single parents
- Emotional immaturity
- Poor coping skills
- Low self-esteem
- Personal history of substance abuse
- Know history of child abuse
- Lack of social support
- Domestic violence
- Lack of parenting skills
- Lack of preparation for the extreme stress of having new infant

- History of depression or other mental health problems
- Multiple young children
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Denial of pregnancy

#### Child Related

- Prematurity
- Low birth weight
- Handicap
- And with sexual abuse, previously abused

## What is the Law?

**Who must report child abuse?** NC State law requires EVERY PERSON, private citizen or professional, who has reason to believe that child under 18 has been abused is mandated by law to report the suspected abuse. Failure to do so is a crime. No person, regardless of their relationship with the child or family, is immune from reporting suspected abuse. A person reporting in good faith, however, is immune from both civil and criminal liability.

**When to report:** A report of suspected abuse is only a request for an investigation. A request for an investigation should be made when there is a reasonable cause to believe that a child or adolescent has been abused or neglected or is danger of being abused. *The person making the request for investigation does not need to prove the abuse.* Investigation and validation of child abuse reports are the responsibility of the Department of Human Services or law enforcement personnel. If additional incidents of abuse occur after the initial report has been made, make another request for investigation. This could change their priority system and get the child help faster.

#### How to report:

- Know your agency's policy and procedure for reporting
- Lincoln County DSS 704 -732-0738. Lincoln County Sherriff Department 704 -732 -9050 City of Lincolnton Police Department 704 736-8900 or in an emergency 911
- When reporting, the following information will be requested:
  1. Name, age and gender of child and other family members
  2. Address, phone numbers and/or directions to child's home
  3. Parent's place of employment
  4. Description of suspected abuse
  5. Current condition of child

You have the option of reporting anonymously, but it is most helpful to tell them who you are and what your relationship is to the child.

## Physical Abuse

Any non-accidental injury to a child under the age of 18 by a caretaker. May include beatings, shaking, burns, human bites, strangulation, or immersion in scalding hot water which results in bruises, welts, broken bones, scars or internal injuries. Some indicators may be clear instances of physical abuse such as broken bones (spiral fractures), burns (cigarette burns), or the results may be more subtle.

### Physical indicators

- Unexplained bruises (in various stages of healing), welts, human bite marks, bald spots, pinch marks
- Unexplained burns, especially cigarette or immersion burns (glove like)
- Unexplained fractures, lacerations, or abrasions
- Any injury whose severity doesn't match the child's explanation, and/or which the child seems uncomfortable talking about, and/or their explanation changes from telling to telling.

### Behavioral indicators:

- Uncomfortable with physical contact, overly shy or overly clingy
- Cries excessively or is unresponsive
- Arrives at school early and stays late if afraid to go home
- Complains of soreness or move uncomfortably
- Wears clothing inappropriate to the weather to cover body
- Requests or feels deserving of punishment
- Suggests that other children should be punished in a harsh manner
- Behavioral extremes: withdrawn – aggressive
- Chronic runaway (adolescents)
- Reports injury by parents

### Myths

The majority of parents who abuse their children are mentally ill

Physical abuse only occurs in lower socioeconomic families

Young children have frequent accidents that result in broken bones

A physician's opinion is needed before a report of physical abuse can be made

Children who are being abused by their parents will ask someone for help

### Facts

Fewer than 10% of abusive parents have a severe mental disorder

Reports of physical abuse have been confirmed in all socioeconomic levels

Many broken bones in children under 2 are the result of intentional injury

Proof of injury is not necessary to make a request for investigation

Children are usually afraid to talk about their injuries or are too young to ask for help



## Sexual Abuse

The exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of an adult as in rape, incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism, and the use of children in the production of pornographic materials

### Physical indicators:

- Torn, stained, bloody underclothing
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia
- Venereal disease
- Frequent unexplained sore throats, urinary or yeast infections
- Pregnancy

### Behavioral indicators

- Withdrawal or chronic depression
- Secrecy
- Bathroom fears
- Excessive seductiveness or sexualized behavior
- Overly concerned for siblings
- Poor self-esteem
- Massive weight change
- Suicidal attempts
- Lack of emotional support
- Sudden school difficulties
- Inappropriate sex play or knowledge beyond age
- Peer problems
- Threatened by physical contact
- sleeping problems/nightmares

### Myths

Sex offenders can easily be identified as they are strangers who offer rides or candy to children.

Children often lie about being sexually abused

Sex offenders are severely mentally disturbed, homosexual, or mentally retarded

The lack of physical violence in child sexual abuse means children are willing participants

### Facts

80-90% of sex offenders are known to the child, they are usually family members and friends, neighbors and babysitters

Children typically do not have the experience or vocabulary to accurately describe adult sexual activity

Many sex offenders appear to be responsible and respectable citizens. They may be married and appear to function well in life

Threats and coercion are frequently used to force children to participate and keep the secret

## Neglect

Neglect is the failure of a parent or caretaker to provide a child under 18 with basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, educational opportunity, protection and supervision. It is estimated that the incidence of child neglect may be five times greater than that of physical abuse. At least 50% of child neglect reports are confirmed.

### Physical indicators

- Child abandoned or left with inadequate supervision
- Untreated illness or injury
- Consistent lack of supervision or warm, sanitary shelter
- Consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene
- Lice, distended stomach, emaciated
- Developmental lags
- Height and weight significantly below age level (failure to thrive)

### Behavioral indicators

- Regularly displays fatigue or listlessness, falls asleep in class
- Habit disorders such as biting, rocking, head banging, thumb sucking in an older child
- Poor peer relationships
- Behavioral extremes: overly compliant - demanding, withdrawn - aggressive
- Irrational and pervasive fears
- Steals, begs, or hoards food from classmates
- Reports no caretaker is at home
- Dull, apathetic appearance
- Frequently absent or tardy
- Self-destructive, oblivious to hazards and risks
- “Parentified” child (assumes adult responsibilities)

### Myths

Most poor families neglect their children

Children will outgrow the effects of neglect

Neglect is not as serious a problem as abuse

The children are automatically removed from the home if neglect is reported

### Facts

Poverty is not neglect. Families with limited resources can provide basic care for their children by using free clinics or social services

Long standing psychological, intellectual, and neurological deficits may result from neglect

Both physical abuse and neglect pose a serious health problem for children. Over 50% of child abuse reports are for neglect

Children are removed only if there are conditions that threaten their life or safety

## Psychological Maltreatment/Emotional Maltreatment

Two types of psychological maltreatment is generally recognized: psychological abuse which is a chronic pattern of behaviors such as belittling, humiliating, and ridiculing the child and psychological neglect which is the failure of a caretaker to provide a child with appropriate support, attention, and affection.

Examples of this form of abuse include a parent or caretaker who chronically:

- Takes little or no interest in the child and the child's activities
- Criticizes the child for behavior that is developmentally normal
- Blames the child for things over which the child has little or no control
- Use the child as a scapegoat when things go wrong
- Treats the child differently from other children in the household
- Engages in bizarre acts of torture or torment, such as locking the child in a closet
- Imposes extreme forms of punishment

The signs of psychological maltreatment may be less obvious than other forms of abuse. Psychological maltreatment is suspected when a child exhibits impaired development, destructive behavior or chronic somatic complaints that cannot be explained medically or circumstantially

Physical indicators

- Speech disorders (stuttering)
- Delayed physical development (failure to thrive)
- Delayed development
- Substance abuse
- Ulcers, asthma, severe allergies
- Eating disorders, problems
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares
- Inappropriate wetting or soiling

Behavioral indicators

- Habit disorders (rocking, sucking, head banging)
- Antisocial, destructive, and/or self-harm behaviors
- Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play)
- Passive and aggressive behavioral extremes
- Apathy
- Irrational and persistent fears

## Ten Ways to Prevent Child Abuse in Your Community

Preventing child abuse should be everyone's concern. In your own community you can help to strengthen families who are responsible for the well-being of their children. Every small effort can bring big rewards and will make a difference in the quality of life in your community. Here are 10 ways to get started:

1. Support activities that raise public awareness during April, National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Contact a local agency for information on becoming involved.
2. Volunteer at a local child abuse program. Parent support groups, crisis centers, and hotlines are typical programs that often welcome volunteers. Check your telephone directory for names of agencies in your area
3. Report suspected abuse or neglect. Keeping children safe means that each of us has an obligation to inform authorities if you have a reasonable suspicion that children are being harmed. Your concern may mean that children are protected from an abusive environment.
4. Advocate for services to help families. Communities need comprehensive services that address issues that affect families. Parenting programs, health care, and housing needs are all important to maintaining healthy children and families.
5. Speak up for non-violent television programming for children. Let local television stations and sponsors of network programs know that you consider excessive violence inappropriate for impressionable young viewers.
6. Make a contribution to a child abuse prevention organization. Your donations are put to good use in much-needed community programs. Prevention services are critical to preventing child abuse and to strengthening families.
7. Help a friend, neighbor, or relative. Someone you know may be struggling with his or her parenting responsibilities. Offer a sympathetic ear or a helping hand. Assisting occasionally with child care or offering to locate sources of community help can be a tremendous boost to someone under stress.
8. Help yourself. Recognize the signs that indicate outside help is needed. If you feel overwhelmed, constantly sad, angry, and out of control, get some help. Remember, it is a sign of strength, not weakness, to ask for help.
9. Encourage Support of programs on child abuse prevention sponsored through organizations. Rotary, Kiwanis Clubs, Exchange Clubs, PTA's, church groups, and women's and men's clubs all offer excellent opportunities for raising public awareness in the community.
10. Promote programs in schools. Teaching children prevention strategies can help to keep children safe from those who would perpetrate abuse on them.

## WHAT TO SAY OR DO WHEN PARENTS ABUSE THEIR CHILDREN IN PUBLIC

Don't criticize the parent or give them harsh looks; this will only make them angry with the child and possibly make the situation worse. Help the child by doing one of the following things:

Strike up a conversation with the adult. See if you can redirect his/her attention away from the child.

Say to the parent:

1. "He seems to be trying your patience."
2. "Is he tired? Does he need a nap?"
3. "Your child has such beautiful eyes!" (To get the parent in a positive mood).
4. "My child used to get upset like that."
5. "Children can wear you out, can't they? Is there anything I can do to help?"
6. If you know the parent, offer to watch the child while he/she takes a break.

Say to the child:

- I. Divert the child's attention by talking to him or her.
- II. Say things to the child like "You seem tired and ready to go home" or "I bet you're ready to get out of that cart!"

If you are concerned about the physical safety of the child, alert the store manager.

**REMEMBER: YOUR GOAL IS TO HELP CALM BOTH THE PARENT AND THE CHILD. NOT REPRIMAND THE PARENT.**

How to report:

- Lincoln County DSS 704 -732-0738. Lincoln County Sherriff Department 704 -732 -9050 City of Lincolnton Police Department 704 736-8900 or in an emergency 911
- When reporting, the following information will be requested:
  1. Name, age and gender of child and other family members
  2. Address, phone numbers and/or directions to child's home
  3. Parent's place of employment
  4. Description of suspected abuse
  5. Current condition of child