

The medical evaluation



The medical evaluation is a complete physical evaluation conducted by a medical provider who has been specially trained in child abuse. The medical evaluation has two purposes: to ensure the health and safety of your child and to identify any evidence of sexual or physical abuse.

Making a referral

Referrals must be made by law enforcement, social services or a medical provider by calling your local CAC. Appointments will be made for the earliest opening for an interview, medical evaluation or both. Please be prepared to provide demographic information of the child, caregivers and alleged offender as well as insurance information. Alleged offenders are not allowed at the CAC and cannot participate in the medical evaluation.

When is a medical evaluation needed?

Any child or adolescent who discloses abuse may be referred for a medical evaluation. Regardless of how long ago the assault occurred, it is important that child and adolescent victims receive a check up to ensure that they are healthy. It is also important that child and adolescent victims attend all follow up doctors' appointments. Timely evaluations are particularly important for sexual abuse that occurred within the past 72 hours. In these cases, the medical provider may use a special kit to obtain evidence gathered from the evaluation, if appropriate.

How are medical evaluations conducted?

Prior to the evaluation, a staff member will show the patient and family the evaluation room and will discuss any questions about the process. At this point the patient and family can relay any pertinent information regarding your child's feelings, emotional/mental development, language skills or special needs (including medication) to the medical professional. The medical professional will meet with the child and caregiver to take a careful history and complete a physical evaluation. Tests may also be conducted to yield additional information or evidence.

The medical provider may use a colposcope during the evaluation. A colposcope will simply magnify the area to allow for photo documentation of the evaluation. The child may be referred for treatment for injuries, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), or other relevant medical problems. The medical provider will discuss the results of the evaluation with the caregiver and child, and may schedule a follow-up appointment if necessary. Medical evaluations usually last an hour to an hour and a half.



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The medical evaluation ensures the health and safety of your child.



How can I prepare my child for the medical evaluation?

There is really nothing that needs to be done to prepare for the evaluation. However, if the sexual abuse occurred within the past 72 hours, it is recommended that the child victim does not bathe or brush their teeth until after the medical evaluation is completed. There may be times where the child's clothing will be collected. In addition, parents and caretakers are urged to talk with their children in advance to tell them in general terms what to expect. The child can be told, "You are going to see a special medical provider who is going to check your whole body to make sure it's okay. They are going to listen to your heart and lungs and check everywhere there is skin."

Can I be with my child during the medical evaluation?

Caregivers are welcome to be in the room with the child if

that is the child's preference. While most children want their caregivers in with them during an evaluation, some children, especially teenagers, prefer privacy. The medical evaluations are specifically tailored to the nature of the allegation and sensitive to each child's emotional and physical state.

What happens after the medical evaluation?

The medical provider will follow up with the caregiver regarding any findings of your child's medical evaluation and any follow up that needs to happen. In addition, the medical provider will communicate the results of the evaluation to team members as required by the laws of North Dakota.

Staff and team members also review cases on a regular basis to make sure that the team is communicating effectively, sharing information and providing the best possible outcome for the child and family.

Children's Advocacy Centers in North Dakota are child-friendly settings that coordinate and provide services for children who may have been abused. The CACs help hundreds of North Dakota children each year using evidence-based practices.



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