

Crisis Response and Victim Advocacy at the Denver Children's Advocacy Center (DCAC)



Victim advocacy – of family support – plays a crucial role in minimizing trauma for children and their families. Our staff are on call around the clock to respond immediately to child victims and families in crisis when a crime has been committed. After the crisis, victim advocates are just a phone call away during business hours. They provide continuity and coordination from the moment families are first referred to DCAC to the time the criminal case is resolved or the child's treatment is complete. At DCAC, we use the terms victim advocacy and family support interchangeably. The victim advocate is the family's point of contact – no question is too trivial or too complex – just ask.

At DCAC, victim advocacy includes:

- Crisis response at the time of the forensic interview. For families in a state of shock or crisis, the victim advocate helps to reduce anxiety by answering questions and explaining what is happening/will happen.
- Coordination with child sexual assault investigations, forensic interviews, and medical evaluations including arranging transportation for families as needed.
- An explanation of the criminal process and the child and family's rights as victims.
- Coordination with other victim advocates (in the District Attorney's Office, the Police Department, and the Department of Human Services) so that families do not feel "bounced around" or receive conflicting information.
- Support for child victims and their families during the investigative process and any legal proceedings, including preparation for court.
- An explanation of crime victim compensation, and assistance with obtaining all applicable benefits and follow-up services.

At DCAC, we know that vulnerable families need more than a list of phone numbers. We also believe that support services must extend to every facet of the family's need if the child is to heal and the family is to regroup to prevent abuse from recurring. We focus on the full spectrum of physical and mental health needs for the child, including referrals medical and dental care, and help with other basic needs such as shelter, food and clothing.