What is a Child Advocacy Center?

A child who may have been abused or neglected has many medical, legal, and mental health needs. The management of abuse is inherently multidisciplinary, and often requires involvement of multiple state agencies.

Previously, this would require abused children to visit multiple agencies, doctors, and police departments – often repeating the same traumatic history multiple times with minor variations that become legally problematic.

Now, communities organize their child abuse response around Child Advocacy Centers (CACs). A CAC is a collaborative venture among professionals in medicine, policing, child protection, mental health, prosecution, and victim’s advocacy. Through our partnership we provide a coordinated, single evaluation for child maltreatment which is therapeutic for the child and useful to the state in prosecuting child abusers.

The Division of Child Abuse Pediatrics at MUSC Children’s Hospital is pleased to partner with 2 CACs: Dee Norton Child Advocacy Center in Charleston and Dorchester Children’s Center in Summerville.

In collaboration with our partners we provide:

- A single, recorded forensic interview that is developmentally sensitive and legally defensible.
- A forensic medical evaluation to document abusive injuries and reassure children that their bodies are “normal.”
- Evidence based mental health treatments for victims of child abuse.
- Evidence based treatment for children with sexual behavior problems.
- Collaborative investigations with police, Department of Social Services, and the solicitors.
- Advocacy and case management for families with abused children.

For a consultation at one of our Child Advocacy Centers, please call the CAC at (843) 723-3600 and ask for The Division of Child Abuse Pediatrics.

Dr. John Melville joined the Child Abuse Pediatrics (CAP) Division as the Chief in the fall of 2016. He trained in both Medicine and Pediatrics at Akron General Medical Center and Akron Children’s and did his CAP fellowship at UT-San Antonio. Dr. Melville has both a Masters Degree in Computer Science and a Masters of Science in Clinical Research. Dr. Melville’s academic interests include informatics for medical forensics and forensic photography.