

Medical Evaluations

When there is a concern or report of sexual abuse, children deserve a medical evaluation performed by a doctor, nurse practitioner or nurse with expertise in this area. This part of the evaluation:

- Ensures the health and well-being of the child;
- Reassures the child that everything is okay with their body;
- Diagnoses and treats medical conditions that may be related to sexual abuse;
- Documents any possible physical and forensic findings;
- Allows for collection of evidence that may be present on the child’s body or clothing.

This medical evaluation is usually not painful or invasive. The evaluation also provides an opportunity for the child and family to be linked to other important services and resources.

Contact Information:

MassGeneral for Children at North Shore Medical Center

Scheduling: 978-354-2815
Emergency Services: 978-354-2750

Lawrence General Hospital

Scheduling and Nurse Practitioner: 978-683-4000, ext. 2030
Emergency Services: 978-683-4000, ext. 2500

Mental Health Services

A partnership between behavioral and mental health services and the Essex CAC reduces the impact of abuse and trauma on families by making resources and services accessible, sensitive, effective and coordinated.

Mental health services address the immediate and long-term effects of child abuse-related trauma. “Damaged goods syndrome,” sexually-reactive behaviors, guilt or shame, fear or anxiety, depression or low self-esteem, inability to trust, and/or acting-out behaviors are some of the most common yet complex responses children experience as they move through the healing process.

If the perpetrator of the abuse is a family member or is known by the family, the child often feels responsible for the chaos brought about by a disclosure of abuse. Re-establishing a sense of safety and control marks the early stages of therapy. Also addressed is the stress that the family may experience in many areas of their life following a child’s disclosure of abuse.

The course of therapy for the child victim varies depending on the resilience of the child and the resources of the family. Following an initial phase of treatment, children often need short-term phases of therapy as they pass through developmental stages. Educating parents to recognize the symptoms and behaviors of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder helps them seek additional mental health services when their child experiences difficulty passing through a new emotional, social and/or physical stage of development. Developmental issues are difficult for the average child. Developmental issues can present an even greater degree of stress and confusion to the abused child.



Essex Children’s Advocacy Center

978-745-6610, ext. 5096
www.essexcac.com

Essex County Child Abuse Project (ECCAP)

978-745-6610, ext. 5175

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Department of Children and Families:

Haverhill DCF	978-469-8800
Lawrence DCF	978-557-2500
Cape Ann DCF	978-825-3800
Lynn DCF	781-477-1600
Child-at-Risk Hotline	1-800-792-5200

Steering Committee

Edward Bailey, M.D.	Lt. Marie Hanlon
Jonathan Blodgett,	Kate MacDougall, Esq.
District Attorney	Linda Molchan, R.N.
Sharon Chapman	Robert Nelken, M.D.
Jill Cote, CPNP	Richard Powers
Mary Alice Doyle, Esq.	Pat Snyder-Mathews
Det. Andrea Fogarty	Susan Staples
Maria Fournier, Esq.	Cheryl Watson

Essex Children’s Advocacy Center



Essex District Attorney’s Office
Ten Federal Street, 5th Floor
Salem, MA 01970
978-745-6610, ext. 5096

The Essex Children’s Advocacy Center

The Essex Children’s Advocacy Center is a multi-disciplinary partnership of professionals that investigates allegations of child abuse and coordinates services for children and families in a child-friendly, culturally sensitive way. The Center strives to reduce the impact of trauma on victims and families, while increasing access to child and family advocates, medical and mental health evaluation and treatment, and the criminal justice system. Education, outreach and training are provided by the Center to prevent the further abuse of children and to enhance the safety of the community.

Massachusetts currently has a Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC), or a developing CAC, in every county. As independent centers, or programs of the District Attorney’s office, hospital or a human service agency, CACs focus on the needs of the child, reducing stress and improving the quality of the investigation.

The Essex CAC currently holds Associate level membership with the National Children’s Alliance under the leadership of the Essex District Attorney’s Office. The Essex CAC has partnered with local and state law enforcement along with the Department of Children and Families to conduct investigations. In addition, the Essex CAC has partnered with MassGeneral for Children at North Shore Medical Center, Lawrence General Hospital and the Pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners Program (Pedi-SANE) to provide specialized medical evaluations of children alleging sexual or serious physical abuse. The Steering Committee and Advisory Board’s mission is to develop relationships with community agencies to further enhance prevention, education, investigation, evaluation, and treatment of children and families.

Goals of the Essex Children’s Advocacy Center

- Serve children and their families when there has been an allegation of sexual or physical abuse.
- Develop a child-friendly center, with a welcoming and neutral environment to provide children with a safe place to talk to a team of professionals about what happened to them.

- Follow the best standards of practice when interviewing and investigating allegations of abuse by minimizing stress for children, maintaining a neutral stance and maximizing the quality of evidence. A specially-trained professional interviewer speaks one-on-one with a child while the remaining team members observe the interview via closed circuit TV.
- Utilize the multidisciplinary team, including DCF, police, medical and other professionals, who share information and coordinate investigation and prosecution, while making appropriate decisions regarding the safety and protection of the child.
- Provide a link to medical and mental health professionals.

Contact Information:
Essex Children’s Advocacy Center (Essex CAC)
978-745-6610, ext. 5096

Multidisciplinary Team Member Essex County Child Abuse Project

The Essex County Child Abuse Project (ECCAP) is a collaborative effort between the District Attorney’s Office, the Department of Children and Families and local and state law enforcement officials to coordinate services for children and their families when an allegation of abuse is under investigation. The project’s primary goal is to coordinate investigations among multiple agencies and reduce the number of times children need to talk with different professionals.

The team consists of social workers, police officers, assistant district attorneys, victim witness advocates, medical professionals and a child interview specialist. All of these professionals are sensitive to the difficult and confusing time that children and families may be experiencing. The social worker assesses issues regarding safety and protection of the child. The interview specialist asks the child questions and is part of the team discussion following the interview. The police officer is from the location where the alleged incident occurred, and along with the assistant district attorney, determines if a crime has been committed and what other investigative steps must be taken. The

victim witness advocate briefly informs the family of the course of action the team has recommended and is the family’s link to the court system, if and when criminal action is taken. The team’s overall goal is to complete the investigation in a child friendly and professional manner.

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District Attorney’s Office

The primary role of the District Attorney is to prosecute the 30,000 criminal cases that come through the doors of the eight district courts, three superior courts and three juvenile courts each year within Essex County. While prosecution is the District Attorney’s primary function, the District Attorney recognizes and supports child abuse prevention and early intervention efforts so critical to ensuring safe schools and communities.

Department of Children and Families

The Department of Children and Families is the Massachusetts state agency responsible for protecting children from child abuse and neglect. Allegations of sexual abuse and serious physical abuse are investigated in coordination with law enforcement and the District Attorney’s office, thereby reducing the number of interviews and reducing trauma to the victim. The DCF investigating social worker and ongoing social worker are key participants in the multidisciplinary team investigation. DCF is most often the agency that receives the initial concern reported by the child and contacts law enforcement and the District Attorney’s office to initiate a team response.

The department aims to ensure the safety of children in a manner that offers the best hope of nurturing a sustained, resilient network of relationships to support the child’s growth and development into adulthood.

ESSEX COUNTY IS SERVICED BY FOUR AREA OFFICES:	
Haverhill DCF	978-469-8800
Lawrence DCF	978-557-2500
Cape Ann DCF	978-825-3800
Lynn DCF	781-477-1600
Child-at-Risk Hotline	1-800-792-5200

Law Enforcement

The mission of the police force is to prevent crime, preserve order and to protect the rights, lives and property of all people.

The 34 police departments from cities and towns within Essex County work collaboratively with the Essex CAC in an effort to assist child victims of sexual and physical abuse, along with their families.

Law enforcement strives to effectively and thoroughly investigate these crimes, to enhance successful prosecution when appropriate. The law enforcement community also is dedicated to reducing the number of incidents of child sexual and physical abuse by educating the community regarding identification and reporting of child abuse concerns to the Department of Children and Families and the local police departments.

As members of the Essex CAC, police departments within your community will:

- Respond to the scene of the crime;
- Participate in a multidisciplinary team investigation to determine if a crime has been committed and the most appropriate action to take keeping the child’s best interests in mind;
- Interview witnesses and suspects;
- Collect evidence and ensure that the proper chain of custody is adhered to;
- Apprehend perpetrators and assist in their prosecution;
- Make referrals for the victim and their family for medical evaluations and agencies for support.