Rapides Parish
Interagency Child Abuse Protocol

Alexandria Police Department
Department of Children and Family Services
9th Judicial District Attorney’s Office
Pineville Police Department
Rapides Children’s Advocacy Center, Inc.
Rapides Parish Coroner’s Office
Rapides Parish Sheriff’s Office
I. SYSTEMS COORDINATION

A. INITIAL REPORT

1. Reports of child sexual abuse can be received by a police agency of Rapides Parish, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or the Rapides Children’s Advocacy Center (RCAC). If the suspected child sexual abuse is intrafamilial or extrafamilial, and the report comes from a public school, then the school system will report to DCFS and respective police agencies immediately.

   a. When the police agency receives a report of child sexual abuse by an intrafamilial perpetrator, they shall notify DCFS immediately, and then begin the investigation. If DCFS should arrive after the investigation begins, the police shall provide them with the pertinent information which has been obtained so far. Recognizing there is a possibility of a criminal case, the DCFS investigator will defer to the police for the initial interview of the perpetrator. If the report is extrafamilial, then the police will notify the RCAC within forty-eight (48) hours or two working days.

   b. When DCFS receives a report of intrafamilial child sexual abuse and a joint investigation is indicated, the case will be assigned to a child protection investigator. All pertinent information will be given immediately to the appropriate police agency. Extrafamilial reports received by DCFS will be referred immediately to the appropriate police agency.

   c. When the RCAC receives a report of extrafamilial child sexual abuse, the Advocacy Center will refer the caller immediately to the appropriate police agency. If the report is intrafamilial, RCAC will refer the caller immediately to DCFS and the appropriate police agency.

II. INITIAL RESPONSE

A. INTRAFAMILIAL CASES

1. In cases where a perpetrator is named or there is evidence of physical trauma to the child and the alleged offender resides in the child’s home, is a member of the child’s family or has continuing access to the child, the police investigator and the DCFS case worker should act as a team in the investigation and assessment of the report. The effort to arrange a joint investigation should be made prior to initiation of an investigation by either agency.

2. The police and DCFS will respond to any sexual abuse or physical abuse complaints which involve caretakers as defined by applicable statutes.
B. EXTRAFAMILIAL CASES

1. When the police report is alleging extrafamilial sexual abuse, the police agency will conduct the investigation.

2. The police agency and DCFS will respond to any sexual abuse or physical abuse complaints which involve caretakers as defined by applicable statutes.

III. INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW

A. The child should be interviewed within twenty-four (24) hours of the initial report when possible, with consideration given to the time of the day and the child’s emotional and/or physical condition.

B. Disclosure at school.

1. In intrafamilial cases which are disclosed at school, a DCFS case worker will go to the school. They will conduct a brief screening of the child to establish that a perpetrator is named or that there is evidence that there is physical trauma to the child. DCFS will notify the respective police agency immediately so that the agency may be brought into the investigation. The school personnel whom the child disclosed to MAY be present during the brief screening, at the discretion of the screener, but should not actively participate in said interview. The DCFS case worker will arrange with the caretaker for transportation of the child to the RCAC for a forensic interview.

2. In extrafamilial cases disclosed at school, a police officer will go to the school to conduct a brief screening of the child. The school personnel who the child disclosed to MAY be present, at the discretion of the officer, during the brief interview, but should not actively participate in said interview. If further investigation is indicated, the police officer will arrange for or provide transportation of the child to the RCAC for a forensic interview.

3. In cases of intrafamilial allegation of abuse, the school will not inform anyone that the child is to be interviewed by the law enforcement agency or DCFS.

4. The details of the abuse and determining the creditability of the child’s allegations are the responsibility of DCFS and the police agency, not of the school staff. Once a child has disclosed abuse to a teacher or other school staff member, school personnel should not interview the child further.

5. All details of the reported abuse shall be treated by school officials in the strictest confidential manner.
C. Interview Team

1. When possible, the interview team shall be comprised of the police officer, DCFS case worker and the interviewer. The police officer or Advocacy Center’s interviewer will serve as lead interviewer, in the videotaped interview as authorized by 15.440.2, et esq. In situations where the team feels it is necessary and beneficial to the child, the DCFS investigator will be present in the interview room. The DCFS investigator or RCAC interviewer may monitor the interview from outside the interview room and be allowed to give input to the interviewer through an “ear bug”. The need for continuation of the investigative interview of the child shall be determined by agreement of the police, DCFS and the RCAC interviewer after consultation with the District Attorney’s Office.

2. Whenever possible, the child will be interviewed at the RCAC. Either member of the team will notify the RCAC of the pending investigation. The RCAC is available after hours and for weekend interviewing.

3. The interview may be videotaped (as per state) as a source of case information and to prevent repetitive interviews. In all criminal investigations, the police agency will be the custodian of all evidence obtained during the interview and will retain the chain of custody.

4. In an emergency situation, whoever is available to respond will proceed and later share the information with the absent party.

5. Parents will not be present in the interview room or the monitoring room area during the interview of the child.

6. No perpetrators will be allowed at the RCAC. The team will coordinate the interview of the child and the non-offending parent. The police will coordinate the interview with the alleged perpetrator.

IV. VICTIM SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

A. The Rapides Children’s Advocacy Center will provide support and case management to child victims and non-offending parents. Support and advocacy will be made available as part of the team response, either through CAC staff or through coordination with other team members or providers throughout the investigation and subsequent legal proceedings. The Rapides Parish 9th Judicial District Attorney Victim’s Assistance Coordinator and Rapides Parish Crime Victim’s Reparations Advocate provide ongoing support and assistance to victims.
B. The following services may be provided to victims of abuse and non-offending family members when appropriate, regardless of ability to pay:

1. Crisis Intervention
2. Information and education regarding the investigation, prosecution and treatment
3. Information regarding victim’s rights and reparations
4. Court preparation and accompaniment
5. Assistance with access to public services (i.e. housing assistance, public assistance, transportation, etc.)
6. Assistance with access to medical and mental health treatment
7. Assistance with domestic violence intervention

V. PARENTAL NOTIFICATION

A. The non-offending parent will be contacted by DCFS or police agency and informed of the investigation. The DCFS investigator will talk with the non-offending parent and assess his/her ability to support and protect the child. If the non-offending parent is potentially supportive, he/she will be encouraged by DCFS to support the child through the investigative process.

B. The DCFS investigator will immediately notify the non-offending parent when protective custody or any other action is taken. The reasons for taking the child into custody will be explained. If a Child in Need of Care proceeding is initiated, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) should be appointed.

C. When possible during a criminal investigation, the police will interview the alleged offender. The police or DCFS shall interview other parents or caretakers as provided by applicable law.

VI. POLICE INVESTIGATION

A. Interview of the Alleged Perpetrator

1. The police will contact and interview the alleged perpetrator. The law enforcement agency conducting the investigation may choose to allow the DCFS investigator to be present in the interview. Where the DCFS investigator does not participate in the interview, all outcomes of the police investigator’s interviews with the alleged perpetrator shall be shared with DCFS. After the initial police interview with the perpetrator, DCFS may
conduct further interviews with the alleged perpetrator. All the outcomes of the DCFS investigator’s interview shall be communicated to the police officer.

2. The police shall decide how the confession shall be documented. The police will be the custodian of all evidence obtained during confession and will maintain the chain of custody.

B. The video tape of the victim interview shall not be shown to persons other than law enforcement officer or other person’s authorized by law, and should not be made without the consent of the District Attorney’s Office.

C. When the police investigator learns that the alleged offender in an out-of-home case is a parent/caretaker of dependent child(ren) and has reason to believe the child(ren) may have been victimized, he/she shall report this to DCFS immediately.

D. When insufficient evidence is obtained for prosecution and the police case is closed, child and parent should be encouraged to contact police or DCFS with the new information. If new information emerges and a new case is opened, the same case worker and police investigator should be assigned to the case when possible.

VII. DCFS INVESTIGATION

A. In intrafamilial situations, the DCFS investigator should use every effort to remove the alleged offender from the home rather than the child. Even when the family crisis is such that the child must be removed from the home for a short period, every effort should be made to remove the suspect and restrict his/her influence on the family.

B. In cases where no alleged perpetrator is named or there is insufficient evidence of physical trauma to the child but there is cause to suspect abuse, the DCFS investigator will continue an investigation into allegations of abuse. When there is a non-verbal child or whenever else deemed necessary, the investigation may include a medical or psychological examination of the child.

C. If the DCFS investigation should indicate a named perpetrator or should reveal physical trauma to the child, the case worker will contact law enforcement and proceed with a joint investigation as described in Section III-V.

D. When there is a need for placement due to the arrest of a parent and the parent has made no arrangements for placement of the child, DCFS will be responsible for the placement and should respond immediately.

E. During an open investigation, DCFS shall notify law enforcement and District Attorney’s Office when the child is returning to the home.
VIII. TEAM REVIEW MEETINGS

A. The purpose of the MDT meeting is to evaluate the status of each case and make appropriate recommendations on behalf of the child. Furthermore, these meetings may address issues related to the cases being reviewed including but not limited to concerns relating to the roles and responsibilities of team members in the case, to prevent duplication of services, and to ensure that cases “do not fall through the cracks”, and to resolve reoccurring problems.

B. The team shall consist of representatives from DCFS, law enforcement agencies, RCAC, the District Attorney’s Office, Coroner’s Office, medical and mental health providers and CASA.

C. The team shall meet at least monthly to review selected cases. Notice of meeting time and place will be furnished to all team members.

D. Examples of cases which will have the highest priority for review include, but are not limited to:

1. Any cases in which an investigation has been initiated by DCFS or the police during the two weeks prior to the meeting.

2. Any case which is set and likely to proceed to trial within 4 weeks of the review meeting.

3. Any case in which one of the involved agencies determines there is a problem.

E. Any member of the investigative team, CASA, other agency or person involved in the case can request a case be reviewed at the next meeting by contacting the Director of RCAC, who will coordinate and schedule the meeting.

IX. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING FINDINGS AND COORDINATING WITH THE OFFICE OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY

A. Law enforcement should notify the District Attorney’s Office of a case within five (5) days and prepare a report within thirty (30) days of an arrest when the defendant is incarcerated. In cases of an arrest where the defendant is released on bond, a report should be submitted to the District Attorney’s Office within fifteen (15) days of the initial investigation. In ongoing investigations, at least a preliminary report should be submitted within fifteen (15) days of the initial investigation.

B. Upon submission of the police report to the District Attorney’s Office, law enforcement shall notify the DCFS investigator of its decision regarding criminal charges.
C. In cases accepted for criminal prosecution, DCFS will make information regarding its investigation available to the police and the District Attorney, in accordance with R.S. 46:56 and other applicable statutes.

D. In cases presented to the grand jury, the videotape interview of the child will be available for grand jury proceeding at the discretion of the District Attorney and in lieu of the of the child’s testimony, whenever possible.

E. Only the District Attorney’s Office will authorize a re-interview of the child when it is absolutely necessary for the prosecution process.

F. DCFS will notify the District Attorney’s Office of all cases which are validated, but no custody change is made, by submitting a complete report which will be sent to the District Attorney within sixty (60) days of receipt of the report of child abuse. In all cases where an instanter order has been granted, a report shall be submitted to the District Attorney’s Office within fifteen (15) days of the instanter order.

G. In intrafamilial cases, the District Attorney’s Office will petition all child sexual abuse cases which, in their opinion, have sufficient evidence for adjudication as a child-in-need-of-care.

H. There will be additional communication between the DCFS investigator and the District Attorney’s Office when decisions are being made in the following areas:
   a. The alleged perpetrator is returning to the home;
   b. The child is returning to the home;
   c. Visitation is being initiated between the child and the perpetrator;
   d. DCFS plans to close the case on the family.

X. MEDICAL EXAMINATION PROCESS

A. Every child suspected of sexual abuse has the ability to be examined by the Coroner’s Office or his designee or licensed doctor, regardless of ability to pay, in order to determine and provide evidence as to whether rape or sexual assault has occurred.

B. The examination may also assess and refer for treatment any medical problems discovered and may also provide emotional reassurance for the child. Any question as to the appropriateness of an examination will be referred to the Coroner or his designee.

   1. It is the responsibility of the lead investigator to coordinate medical examinations.
2. When children are referred for a medical evaluation and the DCFS investigator or law enforcement officer are not present for the exam, the law enforcement officer or DCFS investigator shall send a medical release form.

3. In all acute cases, the Coroner or his designee should be contacted immediately.

4. The Coroner or his designee may respond to any emergency department to conduct his exam.

5. Multiple medical exams should be limited.

6. Findings may be communicated to the MDT through a representative of the Coroner’s office and/or through the lead investigator.

7. The need for a medical examination of the physical abuse and neglect will be determined by the lead investigative agency and the decision will be documented.

**XI. TREATMENT**

**A. INTRAFAMILIAL CASES**

1. After a report of child sexual abuse is validated, DCFS will assist the parent(s) in identifying counseling and support resources trained in child sexual abuse.

2. As soon as a case is validated and immediate therapy is indicated, DCFS will make an immediate referral for treatment.

3. All victims of intrafamilial sexual abuse shall have their treatment needs assessed. When necessary, psychological and/or psychiatric evaluations will be scheduled. The referring agency will make every effort to assure that the evaluation is scheduled within two (2) weeks of a referral.

4. If treatment is recommended and accepted, there will be personal communication between the therapist and the DCFS investigator within four (4) weeks of the beginning of treatment.

**B. EXTRAFAMILIAL**

1. In extrafamilial cases, RCAC will provide the victim and his/her family with a list of treatment resources. Treatment for extrafamilial victims is on a voluntary basis.

2. A member of the MDT will assist families in obtaining Crime Victim’s Reparation payment for the costs of treatment if appropriate and necessary.
C. MENTAL HEALTH REFERRALS THROUGH RCAC

1. Victims and their family will be provided brief information on services offered at minimum through Office of Behavioral Health, 9th Judicial Courts, and Rapides Children’s Advocacy Center, Inc.

2. Victims and their family will choose, on their own, the therapy service that best fits their needs.

3. RCAC will complete a therapy referral form and submit to the appropriate agency.

4. RCAC will contact family, through the family advocate position, to assess continued case needs and successful completion of therapy referral.

D. RCAC MENTAL HEALTH PROTOCOL

1. Therapy administered by RCAC will comply with the Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Protocol.

2. Therapy services provided by RCAC will be free of charge to victims and their family.

3. It is the goal of RCAC to maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the forensic interview and therapy programs. To that end, certain procedures are in place to ensure that information is not unnecessarily exchanged:
   a. The RCAC therapist does not have access to any information from the forensic record, and the forensic interviewer does not have access to any information from therapy records. Any exchange of information between the two programs must be with the written consent of the client and with the RCAC Executive Director’s approval.
   b. When a referral is made to the RCAC therapy program, the therapist(s) waits forty-eight (48) hours before contacting the family to set up an intake assessment.
   c. In crisis and/or emergency situations, the therapist and/or forensic interviewers may communicate with one another for the sole purpose of addressing the immediate crisis.
   d. During the course of treatment, should a therapy client disclose additional abuse allegations, the therapist will immediately contact the investigative agency. The therapist will cease providing therapy services, outside of immediate crisis intervention, until the lead investigative agency completes their investigation.
XII. JUVENILE COURT

A. All child sexual abuse cases to be petitioned will be filed by the District Attorney’s Office in Juvenile Court within fifteen (15) days of receipt of a report from DCFS.

B. At the earliest possible time, preferably at the continued custody hearing or the answer to the petition, the judge shall determine whether the alleged perpetrator should be ordered out of the residence as allowed by law and shall issue such orders as may be necessary for the protection of the child.

C. Child witness in Court

1. The District Attorney will meet with any child witness prior to the date set for trial.

2. If an Indigent Defender Board Attorney has been appointed for the child, the Indigent Defender Board Attorney for the child will be notified and meet with any child witness prior to the date set for trial.

3. The CASA worker, RCAC staff or District Attorney’s staff should provide a tour of the court for any child witness.

4. Children’s testimony should be scheduled giving consideration to ensure that:
   a. The child does not wait at the court facility any more than necessary;
   b. The duration of the child’s testimony should be appropriate to the child’s physical and psychological stamina;
   c. Breaks in the child’s testimony should be taken for the maintenance of the child’s physical and emotional security;
   d. Every effort should be made to have children testify between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon.

D. When a child is under the jurisdiction of Juvenile Court, a review hearing will be scheduled before a child or alleged perpetrator is returned to the home.

XIII. DISTRICT COURT

1. In a criminal case, it shall be a recommended condition of bond that the alleged perpetrator does not have any contact with the child. The police shall notify the judge that a child victim is involved before a bond is set.

2. If there is no existing case, a referral will be made to DCFS.

3. If the alleged perpetrator is released on bond, the RPSO must notify the child’s caregiver and the District Attorney’s Office of the release.
IV. LIAISON SERVICES

1. All agencies involved in the protocol shall be available for consultation to each other on their policies and procedures as relating to child sexual abuse.

2. Representatives from the agencies included in the protocol shall meet regularly to assure that the agreement is properly carried out and to improve system response to child sexual abuse.

3. On any case reported to the RCAC, a written report will be sent to law enforcement or DCFS for investigation and/or processing.

4. This document should be reviewed for necessary revisions in regular intervals of no less than 3 years.

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THIS PROTOCOL

1. **SEXUAL ABUSE**—any conduct or circumstances enumerated, delineated or defined as an improper sexual activity involving children by the Louisiana Criminal Code and/or the Louisiana Children’s Code.

2. **EXTRAFAMILIAL CASES**—all sexual abuse cases which do not involve alleged perpetrators in the home.

3. **INTRAFAMILIAL CASES**—those cases involving alleged perpetrators living in the child’s home, or are who are otherwise identified as a caretaker.

4. **CARETAKERS**—any person legally obligated to provide or secure adequate care for a child, including a parent, tutor, guardian, legal custodian, foster home parent, an employee of public or private day care center, an operator or employee of a registered family child day care home, or other person providing a residence for the child.

The target delay periods and procedures expressed in this protocol are goals which the subscribing agencies will attempt to meet. The failure of a subscribing agency to conform with any time line in this protocol shall not be construed civilly or criminally as a denial of due process to any alleged perpetrator of abuse, nor shall it give rise to liability in favor of any child, parent, alleged perpetrator, or any other person, firm or corporation affected by the application of these guidelines. In the case of criminal prosecution, the failure of any agency involved in this protocol to comply with the guidelines or procedures herein may not be interposed as a defense by any defendant.
charged with any crime involving children which are the subject of the application of this protocol.

**RAPIDES PARISH INTERAGENCY GUIDELINES FOR THE REPORTING OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEVERE PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Rapides Children’s Advocacy Center/Department of Children and Family Services:

1. Once DCFS completes an initial assessment and determines that further investigation is warranted, they will contact the appropriate law enforcement agency as defined by applicable statutes. DCFS will contact the RCAC as soon as it is identified through the initial assessment as an appropriate referral.

2. DCFS will contact the appropriate law enforcement agency to notify them that they are making a referral to RCAC.

3. DCFS will schedule an interview with RCAC. The interview will be scheduled no later than two (2) business days from the referral date to RCAC. When possible, the following information will be given to RCAC (verbally or in written form):

   - Names of all family members and the alleged perpetrator
   - Nicknames that may apply to the family members and the alleged perpetrator
   - Relationship of the alleged perpetrator to child (child’s understanding)
   - Other biographical data on the child
   - Age of child when living at different addresses
   - Address of the alleged perpetrator and the address where the alleged incident occurred
   - Sleeping arrangements in the home
   - How the disclosure was made, details of disclosure and who the child disclosed to (understanding the confidentially of the reporter)
   - Any cue questions about the disclosure

4. DCFS will arrange the interview time with the child’s caretaker. The DCFS investigator should explain to the child where they are going and what they are going to do while they are there. The child should be told he or she is going to a special place for children to tell about what happened to them. *(The child should NOT be told he or she will be videotaped in advance of the interview. This shall take place as part of the interview.)*

5. DCFS will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency of the interview date and time.

6. The interview shall be conducted by the RCAC interviewer. The DCFS investigator and the law enforcement officer may watch the interview via closed
circuit television which will also allow them to participate in the interview process by feeding questions to the RCAC interviewer. (A pre-interview conference may be held in order for DCFS, law enforcement, and RCAC to share information about the case. The adult caretaker may also be interviewed.) No interview may be conducted without at minimum one investigator present.

7. Only members of the MDT may monitor the interview. Parents will NOT be present in the interview room or the monitoring area during the interview of the child. Alleged perpetrators will NOT be allowed at RCAC.

8. If a medical examination of the child has not been conducted, the need for such an exam will be determined during the pre-interview conference or immediately following the initial RCAC interview.

9. Should the caretaker of the child refuse to cooperate in the interview process, the case will be docketed for the next Multidisciplinary Team meeting.

10. If the child is known to be on juvenile probation or parole, RCAC staff shall be notified.

11. If the alleged perpetrator is on probation or parole, law enforcement will contact the probation or parole officer if they are involved.

12. At the conclusion of the interview and before the child is dismissed, a post-interview conference may be held in order for DCFS, law enforcement, and RCAC to discuss the case. At this time, the District Attorney’s office may be contacted and conferred with via telephone. Decisions to interview siblings can also be made at this time.

13. At the conclusion of a videotaped interview, the videos are labeled and provided to an investigator with the District Attorney’s office, law enforcement, or DCFS investigator accompanying the child. A receipt log shall be signed by the referring agency representative verifying the exchange. The videos are then maintained by the referring agency according to appropriate evidence maintenance procedures. RCAC will keep a duplicate video for the purpose of providing a transcript. The completed transcript will then be immediately forwarded to the referring agency. A log documenting the completion and delivery of the transcript will be maintained by RCAC.

14. Each case that comes through the center will be docketed for review at the MDT meetings to be scheduled by RCAC. This team may consist of the following with additional team members determined on a case-by-case basis:
   a. DCFS investigators
   b. Law Enforcement officers
   c. Rapides Parish District Attorney or ADA
   d. Rapides Parish Coroner or designee
e. RCAC interviewer and/or Executive Director
f. CASA when assigned to a case
g. Mental health representative

The MDT shall monitor each case brought to the CAC. The purpose of this team is to evaluate the status of each case and make appropriate recommendations on behalf of the child. (See MDT procedures for further details.)

15. RCAC may be used by DCFS or law enforcement during the absence of an interviewer.

16. No alleged perpetrator is permitted on RCAC property at any time.

17. Alleged juvenile offenders may be interviewed under the following conditions:
   a. A forensic interview may be conducted with a juvenile offender for the sole purpose of gathering information related to alleged abuse committed against the said the juvenile.
   b. The forensic interview process will not be utilized to collect information pertaining to an offense committed by the alleged offender.
   c. RCAC will make appropriate accommodations to the scheduling of any other business conducted at the agency to ensure no contact is made between the juvenile offender and any victim.

RAPIDES PARISH INTERAGENCY GUIDELINES
FOR THE REPORTING OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEVERE PHYSICAL ABUSE

Children’s Advocacy Center/Law Enforcement Agencies:

1. When a law enforcement agency in Rapides Parish receives a report of sexual abuse or severe physical abuse of a child, law enforcement determines if:
   a. The perpetrator is intrafamilial;
   b. The perpetrator is extrafamilial; or
   c. The perpetrator is unknown.

2. When investigating any allegations of abuse, the law enforcement agency shall take photographs of the victim’s injuries.

3. If the alleged perpetrator is intrafamilial, a report is made to DCFS immediately. Under no circumstances, shall the report be delayed more than forty eight (48) hours. Law enforcement will notify DCFS they are making at referral to RCAC. Law enforcement will inform DCFS of the interview date and time.
4. If the alleged perpetrator is unknown, the law enforcement officer will report the case to DCFS immediately, if at all possible, and within a maximum of forty eight (48) hours.

5. If the perpetrator is extrafamilial, the law enforcement officer will report the case to RCAC within forty eight (48) hours or two business days. RCAC will schedule an interview for the child within twenty four (24) hours of the referral when possible, with consideration given to the time of day and the child’s emotional and/or physical condition.

6. The law enforcement officer may notify the child’s family of the scheduled interview. (The child should NOT be told that he or she will be videotaped prior to the interview. This information shall be disclosed as part of the interview.) The child should be told he or she is going to a special place for children to tell what happened to them.

7. If the extrafamilial case was disclosed at school, a law enforcement officer will go to the school to conduct a brief screening of the child. If further investigation is indicated, the law enforcement officer will arrange for or provide transportation of the child to RCAC for a forensic interview.

8. When possible, the following information will be provided to RCAC:
   a. Law enforcement item number
   b. Names of all family members and the alleged perpetrator
   c. Nicknames that may apply to the family members and the perpetrator
   d. Relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the child (child’s understanding)
   e. Address of the alleged perpetrator and the address where the alleged incident occurred
   f. Details of disclosure and who the child disclosed to.

9. The law enforcement agency follows its own investigative procedures with regard to the extrafamilial perpetrator.

10. The forensic interview shall be conducted by RCAC forensic interviewer. The DCFS investigator and the law enforcement officer may watch the interview via closed circuit television which will allow them to participate in the interview process by feeding questions to RCAC forensic interviewer. (A pre-interview conference may be held in order for DCFS, law enforcement, and RCAC to share pertinent information about the case.) The adult caretaker may also be interviewed.

11. Only the MDT may monitor the forensic interview. Parents will NOT be present in the interview room or the monitoring area during the interview of the child.

12. If a medical examination of the child has not been conducted, the need for such an exam will be determined during the pre-interview conference or immediately following the initial forensic interview.
13. If the child is known to be on juvenile probation or parole, RCAC staff shall be notified.

14. If the alleged perpetrator is on probation or parole, law enforcement will contact the probation or parole officer.

15. At the conclusion of the interview and before the child is dismissed, a post-interview conference may be held in order for DCFS, law enforcement, and RCAC to discuss the case. At this time, the District Attorney’s office may be contacted and conferred with via telephone. Decisions to interview siblings can also be made at this time.

16. At the conclusion of a videotaped interview, the videos are labeled and provided to an investigator with the District Attorney’s office, law enforcement, or DCFS investigator accompanying the child. A receipt log shall be signed by the referring agency representative verifying the exchange. The videos are then maintained by the referring agency according to appropriate evidence maintenance procedures. RCAC will keep a duplicate video for the purpose of providing a transcript. The completed transcript will then be immediately forwarded to the referring agency. A log documenting the completion and delivery of the transcript will be maintained by RCAC.

17. Each case that comes through RCAC will be docketed for review by the MDT. This team may consist of the following with additional team members determined on a case-by-case basis:
   a. DCFS investigators
   b. Law Enforcement officers
   c. Rapides Parish District Attorney or ADA
   d. Rapides Parish Coroner or designee
   e. CAC interviewer and/or Executive Director
   f. CASA when assigned to a case
   g. Mental health representative

   The MDT shall monitor each case brought to the CAC. The purpose of this team is to evaluate the status of each case and make appropriate recommendations on behalf of the child. (See MDT procedures for further details.)

18. RCAC may be used by DCFS or law enforcement during the absence of an interviewer.

19. No alleged perpetrator and/or offender is permitted on the CAC property at any times.

20. Alleged juvenile offenders may be interviewed under the following conditions:
   a. A forensic interview may be conducted with a juvenile offender for the sole
purpose of gathering information related to alleged abuse committed against the said juvenile.
b. The forensic interview process will not be utilized to collect information pertaining to an offense committed by the alleged offender.
c. RCAC will make appropriate accommodations to the scheduling of any other business conducted at the agency to ensure no contact is made between the juvenile offender and any victim.

RAPIDES PARISH GUIDELINES FOR FORENSIC INTERVIEW
OF A CHILD VICTIM OF SEVERE PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE

Rapides Children’s Advocacy Center

1. The forensic interviewer will maintain compliance with Children Code Article 511.

2. The forensic interview of the child victim is scheduled by the reporting agency (DCFS, law enforcement, per guidelines, or District Attorney’s office).

3. The reporting agency is responsible for seeing that the child is available for the scheduled interview which will be DCFS in cases of intrafamilial abuse and law enforcement in cases of extrafamilial abuse.

4. It is best if law enforcement and DCFS attend the forensic interview. Prior to the forensic interview, the forensic interviewer will meet with DCFS, law enforcement, and the family members (or attending adult) and the role of RCAC.

5. Law enforcement and/or will share a brief case review of the investigation to the forensic interviewer.

6. The forensic interviewer meets the child and begins to establish rapport and to explain forensic interview rules with the child.

7. Aids that may be used during the interview are currently the following: pictures to color and crayons (pictures are of white and black men, women, boys, and girls), and a pad of plain white paper, markers, and a pencil.

8. At the conclusion of the interview, the forensic interviewer returns the child to the parent/caretaker unless deemed inappropriate by law enforcement and/or DCFS.

9. If there are siblings present, they may be interviewed separately at this time if deemed appropriate by law enforcement and/or DCFS.

10. If there are siblings who may have been a witness to the abuse, arrangements may be made at this time to schedule an interview with them.
11. The forensic interviewer will complete an interview summary report which will be maintained in appropriate files at RCAC.

12. At the conclusion of a videotaped interview, the videos are labeled and provided to an investigator with the District Attorney’s office, law enforcement, or DCFS investigator accompanying the child. A receipt log shall be signed by the referring agency representative verifying the exchange. The videos are then maintained by the referring agency according to appropriate evidence maintenance procedures. RCAC will keep a duplicate video for the purpose of providing a transcript. The completed transcript will then be immediately forwarded to the referring agency. A log documenting the completion and delivery of the transcript will be maintained by RCAC.

13. No alleged perpetrator and/or offender is permitted on the CAC property at any times.

14. Alleged juvenile offenders may be interviewed under the following conditions:
   a. A forensic interview may be conducted with a juvenile offender for the sole purpose of gathering information related to alleged abuse committed against the said juvenile.
   b. The forensic interview process will not be utilized to collect information pertaining to an offense committed by the alleged offender.
   c. RCAC will make appropriate accommodations to the scheduling of any other business conducted at the agency to ensure no contact is made between the juvenile offender and any victim.

**RAPIDES CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTER**

**GUIDELINES FOR MULTIPLEDISCIPLINARY CASE REVIEW**

RCAC exists to provide multidisciplinary intervention for child victims of severe physical abuse, sexual abuse and their families. Systems comprising of the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) are: RCAC, Department of Children and Family Services, Law Enforcement, the District Attorney’s Office, the Coroner’s Office, CASA and others as decided by the team. Representatives from these systems will have regular meetings to discuss service provisions, as detailed below:

I. **PURPOSE:**

Is to share information between each discipline regarding the status of work with a child and his or her family in order to consolidate and coordinate services. The intent of the review team is to reduce trauma to the child; assist in family preservation, when appropriate; and facilitate prosecution of the case. The MDT will address concerns in the roles and responsibilities of the case, prevent duplication of services, ensure that cases do not fall through the cracks, and work to resolve reoccurring problems.
II. PARTICIPANTS:

Management or supervisory personnel from the participating multidisciplinary team agencies and RCAC staff will make up the core members of the team. Law enforcement officers and/or DCFS workers with relevant to the particular case being reviewed need to attend MDT as they possess the most recent and relevant information on a particular case. The MDT agencies will include representatives from RCAC, DCFS, Law Enforcement, Mental Health, the Coroner’s office or his designee, CASA, and the District Attorney or ADA.

III. CONFIDENTIALLY:

All children and families served by RCAC are informed that a multidisciplinary team of professionals will be involved in and discuss their case.

In case review meetings, members of the MDT will share information to the extent allowed by law and required by professional responsibilities in the case.

Each member of the MDT is bound by his or her professional ethics to share information outside the case review only to the extent allowed by law and required by professional responsibilities in the case.

IV. SELECTION OF CASES FOR REVIEW:

All cases receive a brief review after the initiation of services through the forensic interview at RCAC. More intensive reviews are scheduled as needed at any point in the process of investigation and treatment.

Some factors suggesting appropriateness for full team review are:

1. Any case in which an investigation has been initiated by DCFS or Law Enforcement during the two weeks prior to the meeting;

2. Any case which is set and likely to proceed to trial within two weeks of the case review meeting;

3. Any case in which one of the involved agencies determines there is a problem;

4. “Troublesome” dynamics (inability to be sworn, conflicting allegations, etc.);

5. Lack of anticipated progress;

6. Unusually high risk of recantation; and

7. Retrospective review for learning purposes.
V. DOCUMENTATION:

RCAC staff will maintain the work product documentation for the RCAC files; to include tracking case progression until final disposition. It will be the responsibility of RCAC to distribute agenda and/or notification of cases to be discussed. Each discipline may keep notes for planning within their agency. MDT members have the right to access RCAC’s record keeping documentation upon request.

VI. TIME:

MDT meetings shall take place, at minimum, once per month. RCAC staff shall send out notices to all team members one week in advance of the meeting.

VII. FOLLOW UP:

Any case reviewed during case review may be followed up on by any member of the MDT team. Any recommendation made during the case review will be formally followed up by RCAC staff. Communication to MDT members of implementation of recommendations will be the responsibility of the implementing agency.

MDT PROCESS

A. Purpose: To assure that the functions of the team, both investigative and service planning, are completed in a timely and efficient manner that best serves the needs of the child.

B. Areas of Concern in Review Process:

1. Progress of Investigation: What has been done, what else needs to be done, who is best person to accomplish task?

2. Protection Issues: Should the child be removed from the home?

3. Prosecution Issues: Should criminal charges be brought?

4. Support Issues: For the child victim, non-offending parents and other family members.

5. Treatment Issues: What are the treatment needs of the child and family, what resources are available to meet identified needs?

6. Turf Issues: What problems, if any, exist among and between agencies that comprise the team which prevents the team from working efficiently?
ADVANTAGES OF THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM APPROACH

A. Reduces number of interviews of child.

B. Minimized number of people involved in case investigation.

C. Enhances quality of evidence gathered.

D. More efficient use of limited resources and limited manpower.

E. Provides a mechanism for education and understanding among all agencies represented of the responsibilities of each, and thus reduces the occurrence of conflicts among agency representatives.

F. Provides motivation within the community for improving the community’s response to the problem of child abuse.
Rapides Children’s Advocacy Center
Agreement of use of Protocol

We the undersigned agree to use this protocol when investigating child sexual abuse cases, abuse and neglect cases involving allegations of the commission of felony-grade crimes against children and any other cases involving trauma to children. There will be no charge to the participating agencies.

Rapides Parish

Rapides Parish District Attorney  Rapides Parish Sheriff Office
Mr. Phillip Terrell  Sheriff William Earl Hilton

Alexandria Police Department  Pineville Police Department
Chief Loren Lampert  Chief Don Weatherford

Department of Children and Family Services  Rapides Children’s Advocacy Center
Regional Director  Executive Director
Lillian Smith  Wade Bond

Rapides Parish Coroner
Francis Brian, MD