



**National
Children's
Alliance®**

*The Force Behind
Children's Advocacy Centers*



Getting Started with Military Partnerships

**A GUIDE FOR CHILDREN'S
ADVOCACY CENTERS**

Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) can play a critical role in ensuring military-connected children have access to the full scope of military and civilian services when they experience abuse.

For many CACs, it can be difficult to know how to begin establishing the partnerships necessary for providing a coordinated civilian-military response for military families. The purpose of this resource guide is to help CACs get started. By following the seven steps outlined in this guide, CACs will be well positioned to ensure that military families in their community have access to the coordinated response they deserve.

SEVEN STEPS to building a military partnership



Acronym Key

CAC	Children’s Advocacy Center
CGIS	Coast Guard Investigative Service
CID	Criminal Investigation Command
DOD	Department of Defense
FAP	Family Advocacy Program

MCIO	Military Criminal Investigative Organization
MDT	Multidisciplinary team
NCA	National Children’s Alliance
NCIS	Naval Criminal Investigative Service
OSI	Office of Special Investigations



Step 1: Develop an Intake Screening Practice and Track Military-Affiliated Cases

Develop an intake screening practice

When CACs gather information on a new case, it's an opportunity to ask whether the child involved is in a family affiliated with the military—whether that means a parent or caregiver who is on active duty, a member of the National Guard or Reserves, or a veteran. Doing this ensures that children in military families can be connected to the full array of services available to them and have access to a coordinated investigation. There are two opportunities where CACs should consider adding mechanisms for military affiliation screening for families: when the CAC receives a referral from a partner agency and when the CAC is working with the family at intake.

1) Referrals from partner agencies

First, the process through which CACs receive referrals from partner agencies should include screening questions about family military affiliation. In some states, child protective services and other agencies have a mandate to screen for military connection. Ensuring that your CAC is prompting partner agencies to share this critical information is key to identifying military connections from the start.

2) Family intake process

Second, intake forms completed by families and/or intake interviews of families should include questions aimed at identifying military affiliation. This provides another opportunity for identifying military connection in the event the affiliation is not identified or communicated by the referring agency upon CAC referral.

Track military-affiliated cases

Once military affiliation is identified, CACs should track this information alongside other demographic information. This allows CACs to assess their progress in ensuring military families are accessing CAC services in their community over time. NCAtrak has a comprehensive tracking system for client military affiliation, and these can be added as custom fields in other case tracking systems.

Explore the [Preparing for CAC-Military Collaboration: Identifying Military Families and Tracking Military Affiliation](#) webinar on NCA Engage (login required). Hear from two CACs already doing this essential step in serving military families and from our team on how to use NCAtrak to track military affiliation and run reports. Don't miss the sample intake and information forms on the webinar handouts tab!



Step 2: Learn About Military Systems

Military culture and systems are unique and multifaceted. Each branch of service has its own distinct programs, terminology, and norms. Military partners do not expect CACs to be experts on the details of military life. But, having a general understanding of the key programs and systems involved in incidents or cases of abuse involving military families can provide a helpful foundation for working together. The [CAC-Military Partnership Webinar Series](#) on NCA Engage includes sessions on the main programs involved in child abuse response for military families. In each of these webinars, experts from the field introduce military programs involved in child abuse response, program roles, and key considerations for CACs. Additionally, NCA's fact sheets on [Air Force](#), [Army](#), [Marine Corps](#), and [Navy](#) key roles in child abuse response provide an overview to these important systems and programs.

Step 3: Identify and Maintain Points of Contact



While CACs may work with the military health and legal systems, the initial military points of contact will typically be the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) and

Military Criminal Investigative Organizations (MCIOs) including Criminal Investigative Command (CID) for Army, Office of Special Investigation (OSI) for Department of the Air Force, Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS), and Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) for Navy and Marine Corps. For MCIOs, CACs will want to connect with the special agent in charge or resident agent in charge as a starting point.

For FAP, each service uses slightly different language for the person supervising the program, but terms include Family Advocacy Program managers, officers, outreach managers, specialists, or educators. FAP personnel providing direct services may be victim advocates, clinicians, treatment managers, or case managers. See the Additional Resources section at the end of this guide for a link to locate contacts at the installation near you. Once contacts are established, it is a helpful practice for CACs to maintain contact lists for the multidisciplinary team, including military partners, that can be shared amongst the team and regularly updated.

Step 4: Make Introductions and Build Relationship/Awareness



CACs know how important relationship building and orientation are to the success of the multidisciplinary team. The same is true for military

partnerships. It is critical for CACs to build relationships with all relevant military programs and orient them to CAC services and protocols. A tour of the CAC and an introduction to the services the CAC provides is an excellent first step in relationship building. The same can be done for CACs by military partner programs. CACs can coordinate with civilian multidisciplinary team partners to participate in military program open houses and orientations to learn about military resources, processes, and protocols. Military partners may also be able to orient the CAC and multidisciplinary team on trends related to where military families reside and other important considerations for outreach.

In addition to program orientation related activities, CACs can partner with FAP and other military programs on community awareness and education efforts. Collaborating on education and awareness events provides relationship-building opportunities while helping increase visibility of CAC services for military families.



Step 5: Learn Each Other's Processes

Understanding how each system responds to reports of child abuse is the foundation to establishing a collaborative approach. CACs and military partner programs must understand how each other's processes work independently before developing a plan for coordination. CACs can facilitate a process mapping exercise with military partners in which each program provides a detailed overview of their case activities from start to finish. It is essential to allow for adequate time to thoroughly present and discuss each program's process. Be sure to include a visual presentation of the process, whether handwritten on easel paper in person or on a flow chart document virtually. This process should be repeated when major changes in practice arise, which may happen with military programs based on policy shifts and changes.



Step 6: Establish Protocols for CAC-Military Collaboration

Once CACs and military partners understand how their systems work independently, it's time to establish procedures for working together to provide a coordinated response for military families. Since every CAC has their own multidisciplinary team protocols and operating procedures, protocols for CAC-military collaboration will look different from community to community, based on the needs of families and partner programs. CACs can work with their multidisciplinary teams, including military partners, to establish the protocols they need to provide comprehensive coordinated services for military families, which may include:

- Who can refer a case to the CAC
- Services offered by the CAC
- Information sharing and mandated reporting
- Determining law enforcement jurisdiction
- Case staffing protocol
- Who observes or receives a copy of the forensic interview
- Who provides family advocacy and mental health services and referrals
- Participation and expectations for CAC case review
- Ongoing case tracking and updates on active-duty family transfers
- Record maintenance and destruction
- Maintaining contacts and planning for personnel transitions



Step 7: Establish Practices and Systems to Account for Turnover

Some key military contacts for CACs are active-duty positions, which may mean that they have expected turnover—sometimes every two to three years—built into their role. CACs must be proactive about planning for this inevitable change and put systems into place to ensure continuity of partnership, even when our contacts move on to the next duty station.

A facilitated introduction from the initial point of contact to the next is best practice for ensuring that CAC-military coordination continues even when our contacts transition. Including this expectation in protocols is essential. CACs can request that their partners notify the CAC of changes and make the introduction when possible.

Challenges often arise when CACs only have contact with military partners when a case is referred. If considerable time passes between referrals, CACs may lose connection with their military points of contact and the relationship development must begin from the beginning. Ongoing relationships with military contacts as multidisciplinary team partners naturally support effective transitions. For example, if CACs invite military participation at CAC community events, case review, continuing education trainings, and quarterly update meetings, the regular contact this provides will prompt notification of upcoming changes in personnel.

Every CAC can take action to ensure military families have access to the services they deserve. By taking the steps outlined here, you can be proactive in identifying military families, establishing military partnerships, and developing protocols for coordinated services. For support with starting or strengthening a CAC-military partnership, please contact **Heather Provencher**, Coordinator for Services to Military Families, at hprovencher@nca-online.org.

Additional Resources

Fact sheets: Military child abuse response roles

For CACs, understanding the roles played by key military programs involved in child abuse response is a critical first step in providing a comprehensive response for military families in the community. NCA's four fact sheets provide an introduction to the systems and programs that CACs should be familiar with in the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy. The fact sheets are publicly available on [NCA's website](#).

- How Key U.S. Air Force Roles Support Children and Families in Child Abuse Response
- How Key U.S. Army Roles Support Children and Families in Child Abuse Response
- How Key U.S. Marine Corps Roles Support Children and Families in Child Abuse Response
- How Key U.S. Navy Roles Support Children and Families in Child Abuse Response

Children's Advocacy Center-Military Partnerships Webinar Series

Coordination between CACs and military partners requires foundational knowledge of the systems and programs involved in child abuse response and key elements of effective case collaboration. This webinar series is designed to lay the groundwork and support effective CAC-military partnerships that provide coordinated care for military families. Webinars are available to NCA members and their military partners on [NCA Engage](#), NCA's professional networking and learning community. (Login required.)

NCTSN Spotlight: Children's Hospital of the Kings Daughters

Provides a focus on Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters (CHKD) Advocacy Center. This [program spotlight](#) offers an overview of CHKD's work with military families, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and Military and Veteran Families Program, the NCTSN/Department of Defense Academy on Child Trauma, the CAC model, National Children's Alliance, and NCA's CAC-Military Partnership Project, as well as recommended resources from the NCTSN and NCA.

DOD Family Advocacy Program Locator

Department of Defense (DOD) victim assistance directory and 24/7 hotline information. Find [FAP information](#) for nearby installations via the search function.

Military Installation Information

Use this [searchable resource](#) from Military One Source to find information about the installation near your CAC.

Common Military Acronyms List

A brief [guide](#) to common military acronyms that may arise in your work with military families.



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