

What is Stevie's Place?

Stevie's Place is a child advocacy center run by the Resource Center for Parents and Children. Stevie's Place provides a child friendly, community based, neutral setting to provide the most effective and least traumatic response to allegations of child maltreatment. Children and non-offending caregivers come to Stevie's Place to receive support, crisis intervention and referrals for needed services.

Child advocacy centers work as a multidisciplinary team, this team is made up of law enforcement, child protective services personnel, forensic interviewers, advocates, prosecutors, mental health professionals and medical personnel. The multidisciplinary team meets regularly to communicate and collaborate on child maltreatment cases. These teams work to provide services that are in the best interest of the child.

What should I expect when at Stevie's Place?

Team meeting- Upon arrival at Stevie's Place you will be introduced to the multidisciplinary team that will be working with you and your child. You will meet with the team for a pre-conference to discuss the process that will take place while you and your child are at Stevie's Place and give you the chance to ask any questions. While you are meeting with the team one of our staff will provide your child with a tour of Stevie's Place. They will get a chance to view the room where they will be talking and the viewing room where the team will be able to watch the interview. This is a chance for your child to ask any questions or express any worries. The goal of this time is to help your child understand they are safe and not in any trouble.

Forensic Interview- All child interviews conducted at Stevie's Place are done by a trained forensic interviewer. Forensic interviewers receive specialized training to talk to children about difficult subjects, in a non-suggestive child led pace. Your child will not be forced to talk with us.

A Forensic Interview is a structured conversation with a child intended to learn detailed information about a possible event that the child may have experienced or witnessed.

The purpose of the Forensic interview is to

- a. Obtain information from a child that may be helpful in a criminal investigation
- b. Assess the safety of the child's environment
- c. Obtain information to determine if allegations or suspicions of maltreatment are valid
- d. Assess the need for further medical care

After the interview you will meet with the investigative team. At this time, you will be told in general terms what was learned from the interview and discuss next steps in the investigative process. You will be given a chance to ask questions and express any concerns.

All interviews at Stevie's Place are recorded to minimize the number of times that your child will have to talk about what happened. The DVD recording of the interview is provided to Law enforcement and OCS as part of their investigation.

Advocacy- While your child is being interviewed you will meet with one of our victim and family advocates. They will discuss any concerns you have for you or your family and answer any questions you may have about this process. Our advocates will listen and provide resources to help get through this difficult time.

Medical care- Based on the interview or allegation a medical evaluation may be needed. For many children knowing that their bodies are okay is a huge relief and makes them less worried or anxious. Medical services at Stevie's Place are provided by trained Forensic nurses from Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. Our Forensic nurses may want to spend time with you to collect medical history, they will also meet with your child one on one to answer any of their questions. If a medical exam is needed it is up to the child who is allowed in the room during the exam. Some children want their parent present, and some do not.

What happens after the interview?

At this point in the process it is often difficult to predict what will happen.

Your child's interview is just the first step in the investigative process. Law enforcement may need to interview other witnesses, or the alleged offender and evidence may need to be collected. All of the information will be turned over to the district attorney through law enforcement who will then decide whether or not to prosecute. Your family advocate will keep in regular contact throughout this process to check in and see how you are doing and will support you throughout the life of your child's case. If you have questions at any point during your child's case, please feel free to contact your advocate.

Will my child need counseling?

Some children will benefit from counseling, this is dependent on your child. Every child is unique in how they cope, some may not need counseling now but in the future. You may benefit from counseling more than your child to help you cope with everything that has happened. Your advocate can provide referral information to an appropriately trained mental health professional, it is important that your child see someone who is trained in trauma and maltreatment.

What we do know is that children who are believed and protected from continued abuse do well and become resilient adults.