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THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM (MDT)

You will meet many people at the Midcoast Children's Advocacy Center (MCAC). It may be difficult to remember what everyone does. Here are the members of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT).

Your Family Advocate, Forensic Interviewer, and Systems Advocate are not law enforcement or DHHS. We are here to help you navigate the legal, medical, and mental health systems.



YOU & YOUR CHILD

You and your child are the heart of the MCAC. We will work with you to make sure you are safe and healthy.



FAMILY ADVOCATE

Your Family Advocate supports you through the MCAC process. They will connect you to mental health, medical, legal and other resources.



FORENSIC INTERVIEWER

Your Forensic Interviewer will have a trauma-informed conversation with your child. The interview is recorded for the investigation.



SYSTEMS ADVOCATE

Your Systems Advocate guides you through both the civil and criminal legal systems. They can also go to court with you!



DETECTIVE

Detectives are part of law enforcement. They gather facts and evidence for the investigation.



CASE WORKER

Your case worker creates a safety plan if a child is at risk. They are assigned to you by the Department of Health and Human Services.



VICTIM WITNESS ADVOCATE

Your VWA can connect you to prosecutors, investigators, and court staff. They work for the District Attorney's Office.

TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD

Many people are afraid they will say the wrong thing to a child about sexual abuse. They often say nothing at all. Children may feel like they did something wrong when we avoid talking about it. This can leave them feeling ashamed about what happened to them.

Create space for conversation to help your child feel seen and supported. You can tell them that you are glad you learned about the abuse and that you believe them. You can say it was unfair to them, that it wasn't their fault, and it has happened to other people.

Don't push, but let your child know that you will stop and listen if they want to talk. Allow your child to be in charge of how that happens. Don't expect a verbal response from them. Give them time to talk at their own pace.

DO SAY:



you believe them



the abuse was not their fault



there's no right or wrong way to feel



you're there if they want to talk



you're glad you know now

DON'T SAY:



you aren't sure it happened



you blame yourself or it's hard on you



they shouldn't talk about the abuse



they should hate the offender



they could've made it stop

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD AFTER TRAUMA

Post-traumatic stress reactions won't be the same for every child who experiences or witnesses sexual violence. Here are some things to keep in mind as you support your child through this.

Children often need support to...

identify and connect with their feelings

feel worthy of being listened to and heard

learn and use coping skills

express anger without getting hurt or hurting others

accept themselves even when they feel alone

Caregivers can help their children by...

setting clear and achievable expectations

listening to & validating their feelings

providing reliability with routine and structure

watching for withdrawal or self-destructive behavior

loving and respecting their child no matter what

Step back and take time for yourself if you feel overwhelmed. Call the Sexual Assault Helpline 24/7 at 1 (800) 871-7741 for support with anything related to sexual violence.

RESILIENCY & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Resilience is when we tap into our "inner strength to... meet challenges, heal, and thrive." Resilience helps us move forward after trauma. Here are things that help caregivers become resilient:

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Close relationships with others help us feel connected, secure, and loved. We are able to seek help when we struggle and give back when we can. This boosts our mood, but also means we are tangibly supported in times of need. We've included a "podmapping" worksheet in this binder so you can map out your social connections!

KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

No caregiver knows everything about children or is a "perfect parent." It is OK to not know everything, but it is important to know what to expect and how to provide for your children. All children benefit from routine, safe environments, and opportunities to learn by doing. Ask your Family Advocate for more information and resources!

CONCRETE SUPPORT

Everyone needs help sometimes. It is not a show of weakness to ask for help. Try identifying what services or resources may be helpful now or in the future. For example, knowing where the local food pantries are. Having a plan means it will be less stressful if/when you need to use a food pantry.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

Early childhood experiences influence adult wellbeing. Caregivers can help children grow up into happy, healthy adults by being emotionally responsive, empathetic, and creating an environment where children feel safe expressing their emotions. Setting clear expectations and separating emotions from actions ("People don't hit each other even if they are angry.") helps children learn to handle their emotions in a healthy way. Lastly, letting children solve their problems ("What do you think you should do if someone calls you a bad name?") gives them agency and problem-solving skills.

PODMAPPING

From the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective (BATJC):

"Your pod is made up of the people that you would call on in times of need or crisis. People can have multiple pods. The people you call to support you when you are being hurt may not be the same people you call on to support you when you have done something hurtful. In general, pod people are often those you have relationship and trust with, though everyone has different standards for their pods."

Who is in your pod? Check out the BATJC worksheet on the next page to keep thinking about who is in your pod and how you may want to grow or change your pod. Here's how it works:

- 1) Write your name in the middle grey circle.
- 2) The surrounding bold-outlined circles are your pod. Write the names of the people who are in your pod. Try to write the names of actual individuals, instead of things such as "my church group" or "my neighbors."
- 3) The dotted lines surrounding your pod are people who are "movable." They are people that could be moved in to your pod, but need a little more work. For example, you might need to build more relationship or trust with them.
- 4) The larger circles at the edge of the page are for networks, communities or groups that could be resources for you. It could be your local sexual violence organization, or your youth group, for example.

It's okay if your pod is small or if you can't fill out all of the circles. This exercise is meant to help you figure out who *is* or *could be* in your pod.

