

What is Foothills Child Advocacy Center?

Foothills Child Advocacy Center is a child-focused setting that provides a friendly, safe space for children who are alleged victims and their families to meet with the team members who will be working on their case. Foothills provides a comprehensive assessment that includes a forensic interview, trauma screening, and a medical evaluation, if needed.

How much time will the appointment take?

You should plan for at least two and a half hours for your appointment at Foothills. The appointment is a multi-stage process that helps us learn about your child and family and helps us work with you to assess your family's safety and needs.

What should I tell my child about the assessment?

It is important to explain to your child that she or he will be meeting with a person whose job is to talk with children. You can let your child know that "it's okay to talk about anything, and it's important to tell the truth." You should not tell your child what to say. Some children may need reassurance that they are not in trouble and that they are not coming to Foothills because they did something wrong.

Can I ask my child why they are being assessed?

Do not ask your child why he or she is being assessed. If your child or someone else has already told you what happened, it is important not to press your child for details. This is very difficult, but it is crucial for your child not to talk about the event(s) before the appointment. Simply asking your child questions can put ideas and words in his or her head, which can make it harder to get accurate information from your child. Speak to Foothills staff if you need help with this.

When should I tell my child about the appointment?

Children should be given enough notice so that they don't feel surprised, but not too long a time period to worry about what they have to do. Usually a day is enough time to feel at ease. Children are most comfortable when they know what to expect.

What if my child wants to know why she or he cannot just tell me what happened and let me tell the other people?

If your child has already talked to you or other trusted adults about the allegations, tell him or her that you have found some people that can help and that they need to hear about what happened. You can also tell your child that you might not know what questions to ask and how to ask them. Tell your child that the interviewer is a safe person to talk to about these kinds of things.

Who can come to Foothills?

If you need to bring your other children to the appointment, let the Child Protective Services (CPS) worker or Foothills staff know, so that we can arrange for child care. You can bring a support person to watch your children when you are meeting with the team but make sure to tell the CPS worker or Foothills staff who that will be. The alleged offender is not allowed at Foothills.

What should I bring with me to Foothills?

Please do not bring any toys, electronic games, videos, food, drinks, or anything else from home that may distract your child before the interview. We have snacks and games at the center and will give them to your child at the appropriate time.

What will happen during the appointment?

First, you will meet with the team assigned to your child's case. The team is usually made up of a CPS Social Worker, a Detective, a Family Support Specialist, and a Forensic Interviewer. The team will gather relevant information from you and will answer any questions you have. Next, your child will be interviewed in a child-friendly, private room with a trained child interviewer. The interviewer spends time building rapport with your child before asking any difficult questions. Team members will observe the interview from another room, and the interview is recorded.

Can I stay with my child during the interview?

It is important for the interviewer to talk with your child alone. Because children are protective

of their parents or guardians, it can be difficult for children to talk about what happened with you in the room. It also can be difficult for a parent or guardian to hear the details of what happened. You may become emotional, further inhibiting the child. Children may also want their parent or guardian to answer the questions for them. It is best if the child can provide information independently.

What will I do during my child's interview?

The Foothills' Family Support Specialist will meet with you during your child's interview. This person will offer support and guidance and will ask you questions that will help assess the needs of your child and family. If needed, this person will also recommend services for you and your child to help in the healing process and will continue to support you and your family throughout the process.

What will happen after the interview?

The team will meet with you after your child's interview. This meeting is for safety planning and discussing the next steps in the investigation. In some cases, the Family Support Specialist will continue to meet with you after the team leaves to ensure that all of your questions and concerns are addressed.

Will I need to come back to Foothills?

Sometimes you will need to come back because your child was unable to complete the full assessment in one day, for a medical evaluation, or if you need further assistance from the Family Support Specialist.

Should I ask my child about the interview?

You can ask how things went, but don't press your child for specifics. The point of bringing a child to Foothills for an interview is that the child only has to tell what happened one time and doesn't have to keep repeating the details. If your child appears to want to talk about what happened, be a good listener but don't press him or her for details and don't say things to make your child feel guilty, such as "Why didn't you tell me?"

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In the past, when a report of alleged child maltreatment was made, several different professionals would question children in their schools, at the Department of Social Services, or at the Police Department. In an effort to reduce the trauma of children having to retell what happened to them, child maltreatment professionals developed a more sensitive, child-focused, multi-disciplinary team approach. This approach helps to reduce the emotional trauma of an already distressed child while also collecting information needed for the investigation and treatment plan.

At Foothills Child Advocacy Center, all of the professionals working on your case come together to meet with you and your child. You will receive support and guidance to help you through the process, and services for your family will be well coordinated. A trained child forensic interviewer will conduct a developmentally appropriate, non-leading forensic interview. In an effort to reduce the number of times the child will have to talk about what happened, the interview is observed by multidisciplinary team members and is digitally recorded. A Family Support Specialist will partner with you to establish a plan for healing your child and family.

It is our hope this brochure will give you an overview of what can be an overwhelming and scary process, as well as address possible concerns you may have. Please feel free to contact us at Foothills to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. **You are not alone during this process, and there are people to help.**

Sincerely,
Foothills Staff

Appointment Information

Date & Time: _____

Child(ren) to bring: _____

Contact Information

Child Protective Services/Phone

Detective/Phone

Victim Witness Advocate/Phone

_____ /434-971-7233

Family Support Specialist/Phone

Directions

Driving

From Rte. 250, turn onto E. High St. Turn left onto 11th St. Turn left into the first alley (you will see the sign for Foothills). Turn into the first parking lot on your left and park in a spot marked 1106.

Bus

Take Rte. 10 to the stop on E. High St. (stop #16512). Walk up the concrete steps to 1106 E. High St. Walk around to the back of the building to enter.

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A Guide for Parents and Guardians



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