

Children's Advocacy Center of Lafourche
Interagency Agreement

We, the undersigned agencies, do hereby agree to the following supporting the creation, development, and implementation of the Children's Advocacy Center of Lafourche:

We recognize that the current system dealing with child victims, although comprised of agencies committed to the protection and best interest of every child in Lafourche Parish, at times cannot meet many of their needs.

The system is designed for and oriented to adults, having few provisions and concessions to the specific needs and fragile state of those children who are, through no choice of their own, expected to enter into yet another threatening adult environment.

Having recognized these concerns, we are supportive of the creation, development, and implementation of a child-oriented program, which aids in establishing a cooperative effort between the undersigned agencies, wherein a multidisciplinary team approach can be utilized in the investigation, assessment, referral for prosecution, and referral for medical and therapeutic treatment involving child victims of sexual or physical abuse.

The mission of the Children's Advocacy Center of Lafourche is to protect the children of Lafourche Parish by providing comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated child abuse assessment and investigation in a centralized location.

Each of the undersigned agencies have specific responsibilities with regard to the investigation, assessment, prosecution, medical treatment, and therapeutic treatment of child abuse cases as outlined in statutes, administrative orders, policies and procedures. Each agency agrees to work with and assist the other agencies and the Center to ensure that the best interest and protection of children will be served. We, the undersigned, do hereby acknowledge that the multidisciplinary team approach, through the institution of the Children's Advocacy Center of Lafourche, will serve to enhance the individual efforts of each agency. We recognize that through our respective agencies and through public support and awareness, the Children's Advocacy Center of Lafourche will unify our community in the daily struggle to ensure the protection and preservation of the children of Lafourche Parish.

All reasonable efforts will be made by each agency to coordinate each step of the investigation/assessment process in order to minimize the number of interviews and interviewers to which the child is subjected, thus reducing the potential trauma to the child.

The appropriate law enforcement agency is to investigate and determine whether or not a crime is committed and to present information to the proper authorities for prosecution.

The office of Community Services provides protective services to children and their families in the form of investigations and treatment services. The Office of Community Services conducts an investigation to assess the child's safety and to provide rehabilitative services to children and their families.

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The District Attorney's Office is responsible for assessing legal aspects of the case in accordance with their prosecutorial role in criminal matters.

Agencies participating in the Center agree to immediately share pertinent information with the appropriate agency except as prohibited by law.

We note that, on occasion, exceptions to the Center's Child Abuse Protocol will be necessary.

It is expressly understood that each agency will work within its own mandates and policies. Nothing contained herein supersedes the statutes, rules, and regulations governing each agency. To the extent that any provision of this agreement is inconsistent with such statute, rule, or regulation shall prevail.

All of the undersigned agencies agree to maintain confidentiality of all records and information gathered on all child sexual abuse cases as outlined by statute. All participating agencies agree further not to release any records or other information on any child sexual abuse cases except as it relates to legitimate program operations of their respective agency.

It is the intention of the parties to this agreement that:

- 1) Cancellation of any party does not negate the agreement on behalf of the remaining parties.
- 2) A yearly review of this agreement shall take place.
- 3) Other parties may be added to this agreement as the collaboration necessitates additional participation.

Financing/Financial commitments:

The Lafourche parish Sheriff's Office agrees to provide funding to hire and maintain the position of a specially trained Forensic Interviewer within the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office.

The City of Thibodaux agrees to provide financial support to the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office in the amount of \$10,000 for the year 2025, payable on or before January 31, 2025 to offset cost of the forensic Interviewer position.

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Kristine M. Russell
CAC of Lafourche Director

Date

Kristine M. Russell
Lafourche Parish District Attorney

Date

Craig Webre
Lafourche Parish Sheriff

Date

Kevin Clement
Mayor of Thibodaux

Date

Bryan P. Zeringue
Thibodaux Police Chief

Date

Rebecca James
Department of Child and Family Services

Date

David Harrelson
Lockport Police Chief

Date

Troy Dufrene
Golden Meadow Police Chief

Date

Alexander Barnes
Nicholls State University Police Department

Date