

What agencies are involved?

The SAFE Center of Sacramento is a collaboration between various agencies dedicated to the safety and protection of children and dependent adults.

The following is a list of participating agencies:

- Sacramento County Department of Children, Family, and Adult Services
- Sacramento County District Attorney's Office
- Sacramento County District Attorney's Office, Victim and Witness Assistance Program
- Sacramento Police Department
- Sacramento County Sheriff's Department
- Elk Grove Police Department
- Citrus Heights Police Department
- Folsom Police Department
- Galt Police Department
- University of California, Davis Police Department
- California State Department of Social Services
- University of California, Davis, CAARE Center
- Sacramento County Superior and Juvenile Court
- Bridging Evidence Assessment and Resources (BEAR) Center
- Child Abuse Prevention Council

Sacramento County Department of Children, Family, and Adult Services

Child Protective Services

County of Sacramento Board of Supervisors

Phillip R. Serna, District 1
Patrick Kennedy, District 2
Susan Peters, District 3
Sue Frost, District 4
Don Nottoli, District 5

County Executive

Navdeep S. Gill



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Special Assault Forensic Evaluation Center

Sacramento County
Child Protective Services

What is the SAFE Center?

The **Special Assault Forensic Evaluation (SAFE) Center** was established in 1991 to assist children and dependent adults who may be victims of sexual or physical abuse, neglect, or witnesses to violent crimes, including domestic violence, homicide, and drug endangered children. It is operated by Sacramento County Child Protective Services.

Its goals are:

- To reduce trauma to individuals by reducing the number of interviews they must undergo
- To conduct the interviews in a comfortable setting
- To use skilled professionals to conduct the interviews.

More than 12,000 interviews have been conducted since the center opened in 1991. The SAFE Center is a member of the National Children's Alliance (NCA), which provides support to child advocacy centers across the nation.



What happens during the interview?

At the SAFE Center, a professional with knowledge and experience in child development interviews children in a welcoming, friendly environment. Interviews are videotaped and teams from various child protection and law enforcement agencies are able to observe the interviews from behind a two-way mirror. This reduces the number of times a child has to tell what happened as well as the number of people with whom the child has to talk.

What happens at the SAFE Center?

The interview process consists of:

- Giving the child a tour of the center
- Giving the child time to feel comfortable in the SAFE Center
- The interview
- A meeting between the child's caretaker(s) and members of the team to answer questions and receive referrals to agencies who may offer support or treatment for the child and family

The entire process takes one to two hours, though it may vary from child to child.

Information from the interview as well as physical evidence and eye witness testimony helps the team decide how to proceed with an investigation or if the case will move forward in the child welfare and court processes. It will also help the team decide what services the family may need.



Who are the interviewers?

Interviewers are forensic interview specialists – social workers who are trained to obtain information in an objective but gentle manner. They have training in child development, building rapport, and interview techniques. Interviewers follow guidelines that allow them to conduct interviews that are child-focused, neutral, and non-leading.

How are interviews scheduled at the SAFE Center?

Law enforcement officers may refer a case to the SAFE Center after they receive a report of suspected child abuse and they believe an interview would be helpful to the case. Child Protective Services social workers also make referrals to the SAFE Center after consulting with law enforcement.