

What are the Children's Justice Centers?

The Children's Justice Centers provide a warm, homelike setting where children can feel as comfortable and safe as possible while being interviewed about reports of child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, and as witnesses to crimes. Working together at the Centers to coordinate efforts to help abused children and their families are:

- The Department of Human Services Child Welfare Services
- The County Police Department
- Offices of the Prosecuting Attorney
- Victim Witness Assistance programs
- The Department of the Attorney General
- Crisis counseling and medical services
- Treatment providers
- Community volunteers
- The Armed Forces
- The Federal Bureau of Investigations

Why is a child brought to a Children's Justice Center?

After a report of child abuse is made to the proper authorities, a child is brought to the Center by a protective family member, friend, or agency staff to be interviewed by specially trained professionals. Follow-up meetings with the child and other professionals are held in the familiar surroundings of the Center.

How are these interviews conducted?

The program's goal is to help the child feel safe, comfortable, and supported. Each interview room is designed for children of different age groups and has a viewing area to minimize the number of people in the room with the child. A videotape is made of the interview to reduce the need to re-interview the child.

The County Police Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation or the proper military authority investigates all reported cases of child abuse. Because the Department of Human Services (DHS) investigates these cases if they occur in the family, trained staff from these agencies work as a team at the Center to conduct the interview.

What happens after the interview?

If the abuse has occurred within 72 hours, the child will be taken as soon as possible for a forensic medical examination with a specially trained professional. In all cases, a physical examination should be conducted to determine the child's medical and emotional needs.

The Department of Human Services is the government agency responsible for the well-being and safety of children. They work to ensure the child is in a safe environment. They will also assist the child and family in obtaining therapy from trained professionals in the community, as therapy is important to begin the healing and helping process. Local sex assault agencies provide counseling and support services to children and their families when the abuse occurred outside the family or in cases where DHS is not active.

Will the case go to Court?

The Department of Human Services may bring a case to Family Court if it appears to be in the best interest of the child. The County Police Department determines whether a case will be sent to the Prosecutor's Office for possible criminal action. Once a case is at the Prosecutor's Office, a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney and a Victim Witness Counselor are assigned to the case. The Center is available for their meetings with the child. As with the professionals from other agencies, the prosecuting attorney and advocate are specially trained to help the child and family go through the court process in as supportive a manner as possible.

[Visit the Hawaii State Judiciary CJC webpages](#) **Contact CJC**

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