



**Adult Advocacy
Centers**

Understanding the AACs' Staff and MDTs

Adult Advocacy Centers' (AACs') Staff

- **AACs' Director:** The director will be in charge the staff at the regional AACs location. They will also be the contact person for the regional MDTs. The director will make sure that your experience is as trauma-informed as possible. The director will be involved in outreach, training and education opportunities in the community.
- **Forensic Nurse Examiner:** The forensic nurse examiner is a specially trained nurse who will collect physical evidence from you if you are a victim of crime with disabilities, if you give them consent. In addition, the forensic nurse examiner will check your body to make sure that you get any other medical care you need. They will also be able to answer questions about how your body may respond to trauma. Another role for the forensic nurse examiner is to testify in court about the evidence that they collect.
- **Doctor:** The doctor may help with medicine, if necessary, and will answer any medical questions you may have. The doctor may also collect evidence, with your consent, and may testify in court.
- **Counselor:** The counselor will either be a social worker or a therapist. This person will help you come up with ways to cope with your feelings and will talk to you about what things that are important to you. The counselor will talk to you at end of your time at the AACs and will help create a safety plan that you can use when you leave. They will also help you find community supports, like support groups or trauma counseling. The counselor will follow up with you after you leave the AACs to see how you are doing and if you would like any additional help.
- **Victim Advocate:** The victim advocate can support you through the criminal justice process and assist with asking for accommodations, if you need them. Victim advocates will also help you with getting your basic needs met. This could be making sure you have a safe place to live or have food to eat. This is different from a self-advocate, who is someone with a disability who advocates for their own rights. A victim advocate may not be someone who has survived a crime themselves.
- **Intake Coordinator:** Before you arrive at the AAC, an intake coordinator will talk to you and make sure that your experience at the AACs is trauma informed and all of your needs are met. They will be the first person you see when you come to the AAC and the last person you see when you leave. Their job is to explain the AAC process and be the person you can contact if you have any questions that you think of later.
- **Security:** Security staff will make sure that people inside the AACs are safe. No one can get inside an AAC unless security lets them inside.

- **Forensic Interviewers:** Forensic interviewers will be specially trained to interview crime victims with disabilities. The interviews they do will allow you to share your experience in whatever way you are comfortable communicating, and the interview room will have any accommodations you need. The forensic interviewer will gather information that may be used as evidence, if necessary. Forensic interviewers can also interview witnesses of the crime.

Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Members

- **Prosecutors:** Prosecutors will be the lawyers who have your case. They work for a city, county, state or the federal government. Any evidence that is gathered will be shared with them. Prosecutors will work closely with you, law enforcement and victim advocates in the criminal court process.
- **Law Enforcement (Police):** The local police department will probably investigate what happened to you, and your case may be assigned to a detective. Other law enforcement agencies can also be involved, like the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) or county Sheriff's Office. If the crime occurred in a state-run facility, like a Developmental Center or State Psychiatric Hospital, then the State of Ohio Highway Patrol will lead the investigation. Law enforcement will gather information from you about what happened. If you need an accommodation for your disability, it is important to tell law enforcement or have someone tell law enforcement for you.
- **Local Hospitals:** You will go to a local hospital if you have any physical injuries that need to be seen by a doctor or if you have medical needs that require a visit to the emergency room. If you need an accommodation in the hospital, make sure you ask the hospital staff how to request an accommodation. Hospitals have social workers on call, and they can help with the accommodation process, if no one else is able to give you information. Hospitals will work with your MDT to make sure all information is shared.
- **Disability Specific Investigative Agencies:** There are many different agencies that may be a part of your MDT, depending on your situation. Those agencies include: the County Boards of Developmental Disabilities; the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD); Disability Rights Ohio (DRO); Adult Protective Services (APS); Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Boards (ADMH); the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS); the Ohio Department of Health (ODH); and the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA).
- **Victim or Survivor:** A victim or survivor is a person who has been directly harmed by a crime that another person committed. This could be a crime that caused physical (bodily) harm, emotional harm, property damage or stolen money. We use both the words *victim* and *survivor* because some people like to be called one or the other. Everyone should get to choose which word they prefer. We want to respect the wishes of everyone we work with.
- **Non-Offending Support People (when appropriate):** This is a person you select to support you through the process. It could be a family member, a friend, a guardian, a caregiver or someone else you trust.
- **Non-Profit Partners (when applicable):** These agencies assist other agencies working with you. They would only be part of the MDT if you requested it and if it was needed and appropriate. Some of these agencies could be support service agencies, educational agencies or respite care agencies.

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