



## **BACKGROUND**

**Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)** are healing places for young victims of violence and sexual abuse. CAC's offer a one-stop caring, protective environment where children feel safe to tell their stories – just once- to physicians, police, counselors, and expert professionals who care, who can help stop their abuse, and begin their process of healing and bring justice. CAC's bring this multidisciplinary team together to create a child-focused approach to child abuse cases. Guiding a family from crisis to hope and help them navigate the complex criminal justice and child welfare system is an important outcome that CAC's provide. We as a state and as a nation are in a fight for our children's lives and the need to do a better job at intervention for suspected criminal-level child sexual or physical abuse before a child fatality or permanent disability is caused usually at the hands of those that are responsible for the child's care and nurture.

For more than three decades, CACs have been at the forefront of efforts to improve, refine and define the way victims are interviewed, and to create a research-based methodology for forensic interviewing techniques.

## **BENEFITS OF A CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER**

### **Advantages for having interviews take place at a Children's Advocacy Center:**

The National District Attorney's Association stated that police, prosecutors, and child abuse prevention professionals should "increase their efforts to stop child abuse through proven, effective and cost-effective methods. Multidisciplinary child abuse investigation teams ("MDTs") in association with child advocacy centers ("CACs") show the greatest potential for cost-efficient and effective prosecution."

CACs are significantly more likely to record the forensic interview than non-CAC agencies conducting interviews. Recorded forensic interviews are more accurate than notes taken by interviewers, who are focused on the interview itself and not on providing a complete summary. Children's disclosures provide a powerful incentive for suspects to confess, and recorded disclosures provide direct, reliable – and often the only – evidence to corroborate the allegations and prosecute crimes.

Research demonstrates that caregivers in CAC cases are more satisfied with the investigation than those from non-CAC comparison sites. 97% of caregivers would tell others to seek help at a CAC.

### **CACs Help Child Victims Heal:**

- Child victims of sexual abuse who receive services at CACs are twice as likely to receive specialized medical exams, and four times so in cases not involving penetration.
- Children seen at CACs are more likely to receive referrals for specialized mental health treatment.
- Children seen at CACs were more often referred for behavioral health assessments than those communities without CACs.
- The CAC movement has advanced the use of proven behavioral health treatment methods, including Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

### **For more information contact:**

Seth Dawson [sethdawson@att.net](mailto:sethdawson@att.net) 360-754-3290  
Paula Reed [director@cacwa.org](mailto:director@cacwa.org)  
Karen Winston [kwinston40@comcast.net](mailto:kwinston40@comcast.net)