



Children's Advocacy Center

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small victims need **Big** voices



The staff at the Children's Advocacy Center understands that this may be a difficult time for you and your family. You may be confused, frightened and unsure of what is happening. We want to let you know that we are with you every step of the way. We are here to support you, answer your questions, and help your family as you go through this process.

Our priority is your child and his or her well being. We want to make this journey child-friendly and child-focused for them. This includes providing a non-threatening environment, trained staff and volunteers to work with your child, and strong relationships with other agencies who are also working with you.

So remember that you and your child are not alone. The Children's Advocacy Center is here for you.

The Fort Bend Children's Advocacy Center



The Children's Advocacy Center is a:

- program of Child Advocates of Fort Bend working together with CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates)
- a non-profit organization that works on behalf of child abuse victims
- a child-focused program that works hand in hand with The Child Protection Team that is comprised of Child Protective Services, law enforcement in Fort Bend county and neighboring counties, the District Attorney's office, medical professionals and therapists



Center services are available for all children at the request of CPS, law enforcement personnel and the District Attorney's office. Services are free of charge to families and partner agencies.

The services offered by the agency are:

- Coordination of CPS and law enforcement investigations
- Forensic interviews by trained personnel
- Children's Services Coordination (case management) by trained personnel
- Specialized Therapeutic Services including individual, group, family and play therapy on-site
- Medical exam referrals
- Criminal Court Advocacy
- Case Review Team Meetings
- Community volunteers creating a safe and nurturing environment for children
- All services are offered in both Spanish and English

Forensic Interviews

The Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) provides children a safe, neutral, child-friendly facility where children can share their abuse experiences and begin healing from the impact of that abuse. Although it may feel frightening to talk to a stranger, the children quickly feel comfortable due to the atmosphere at the CAC and the relief in talking about what they may have gone through.

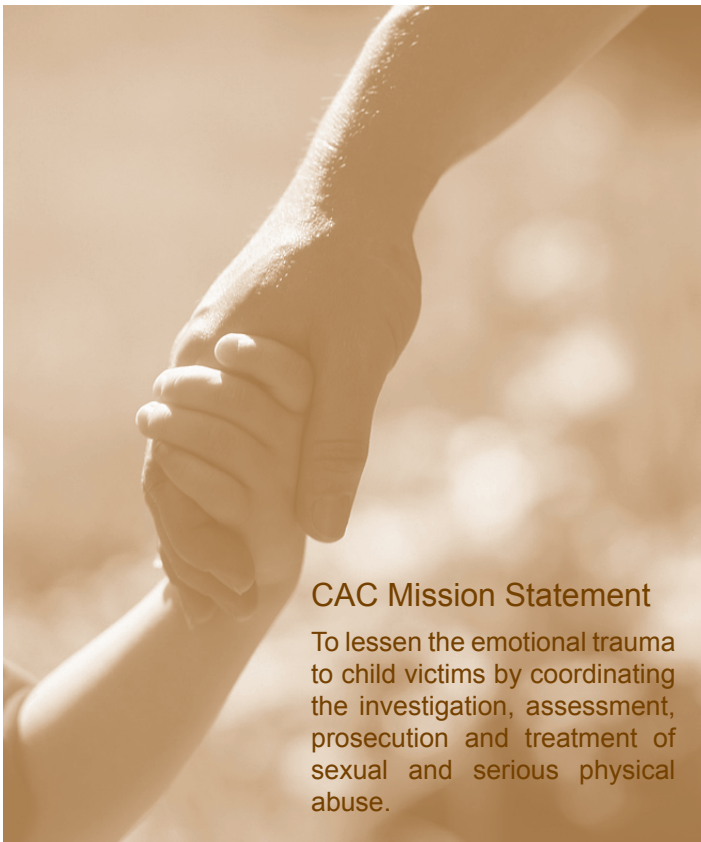


- Forensic Interviews offer children the opportunity to talk about their abuse experiences in a neutral, child-friendly environment
- Interviews are conducted by specially trained interviewers who talk with children in non-leading, age appropriate ways
- The interviews are recorded to lessen the number of times children have to be interviewed. The CAC shares the interviews with the other professionals involved in the case

Children's Services Coordinator

When children are abused, the whole family is impacted. The CAC strives to meet the needs of non-offending family members to work toward healing the family system.

- Provides crisis support and intervention to children and families
- Connects families to appropriate CAC and community resources
- Assists families with Crime Victim's Compensation (CVC)
- Maintains follow-up contact with families to ensure that the child's needs are met on an ongoing basis



CAC Mission Statement

To lessen the emotional trauma to child victims by coordinating the investigation, assessment, prosecution and treatment of sexual and serious physical abuse.

Why Therapy is Important

Children may not always show obvious signs of being traumatized by the abuse, but they may have considerable difficulty in trying to tell what they feel or how they have been affected by what they have experienced. Through therapy, the child can start to express himself/herself in a way that is developmentally appropriate for that child.

- Therapy services conducted by Masters level licensed therapists on staff
- Individual and family therapy
- Children's groups for specific age and genders
- Caregiver's groups to help guardians cope with their child's abuse



Some Feelings Your Child May Experience...

- Feel that the abuse is their fault
- That they have done something wrong
- That they should have told sooner
- Shame and embarrassment
- Feel like they are “damaged goods”
- Dirty or tainted
- Guilty or confused
- Mixed feelings toward the abuser
- Unsafe



What do I Say to My Child?

- I believe you
- It is not your fault
- I am so glad you told
- Sometimes we love someone, but hate what they do
- I am sorry this happened to you
- You don't need to take care of me

An important factor in your child's healing is your acceptance and support. Be sensitive to your child and their needs. Praise them for the brave thing they have done and encourage them through the process. Here are some tips on how to respond to your child.

- Stay calm and tell them that you are happy that they told you and that you believe them
- Listen to them without judgment. Do not initiate conversation, but listen when they want to talk
- Acknowledge your child's feelings and recognize how difficult this is for him or her
- Reassure your child that it is not their fault and that they are okay
- Respect your child's privacy. Do not pressure them for information and do not share your situation with others
- Give them constant care and love
- Try to maintain the child's normal routine
- Protect your child from any further contact with the abuser
- Never confront the abuser

Criminal Court Advocacy

Having a child involved as a victim in a criminal proceeding can feel frightening, confusing, time consuming, or overwhelming. The CAC Criminal Court Advocate provides support to children and their families during this time.

- Responsible for providing information and ongoing support to child victims of abuse or any other child who is involved in the criminal court process as a witness
- Acts as the liaison between the District Attorney's office and the family
- Provides court orientation to children who may have to testify
- Ensures that families are referred to appropriate health and social service agencies to obtain additional services as needed
- Accompanies children and non-offending caregivers to court if a child must testify



Stop Child Abuse

Stop child abuse,
Depression is not your excuse.
How can you stare into a Child's eyes,
Harm a Child's body and sore their little thighs?
To ruin their adolescent years,
The memories brings so many tears.
It took courage and bravery that we told,
All this pain you caused us put an impact on our soul.
All we wanted was to grow up happy and live the life of a
kid,
But harming and ruining us with memories is what you did.
To think and dream about that day,
I would rather have drowned and gave my soul to the bay.
All this pain and damage you did to my heart,
Is tearing me and my close ones apart.
But no more will we show you fear,
We will say this proudly and wipe our tears.
'Cause this has only made us strong and brave,
We did nothing wrong is the sentence in our head to save.
Because loud and proud we yell **WE ARE SURVIVORS
AND
HEROES.**
Because the fact we told soon child abuse will be at
the
limit zero.

Written by a child receiving therapy at the CAC.

We:

- Provide a Voice
- Heal the Hurt
- Coordinate the Process to make it easier for children & families

