

What are Child Advocacy Centers?

The development of Child Advocacy Centers in Illinois began in DuPage County in 1987 under the leadership of then State's Attorney Jim Ryan. In 1989, specific requirements for the establishment and operation of Child Advocacy Centers in Illinois were formalized by the passage of the Child Advocacy Center Act.

Child Advocacy Centers are child-focused, facility based programs in which representatives from responsible agencies meet to discuss and make decisions about the investigation, treatment and prosecution of child sexual abuse and severe physical abuse cases. This multidisciplinary approach brings together under one umbrella all the professionals and agencies needed to offer comprehensive services: law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, victim advocacy agencies, and the mental health and medical communities.

Core Components of the Champaign County Children's Advocacy Center

The Champaign County Children's Advocacy Center is a fully accredited member of the National Children's Alliance. In order to obtain accreditation, the Children's Advocacy Center was required to meet the NCA's standards for providing a comprehensive, culturally competent multidisciplinary team response to allegations of child abuse in a dedicated, child-friendly setting.

The following components are necessary for accredited membership in the National Children's Alliance:

- The Children's Advocacy Center provides a comfortable private, child-friendly setting that is both physically and psychologically safe for clients.
- The Children's Advocacy Center utilizes a multidisciplinary team for response to child abuse allegations that includes representation from the following: law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, mental health and medical services, victim advocacy agencies, and the Children's Advocacy Center.
- The Children's Advocacy Center has a designated legal entity responsible for program and fiscal operations and the implementation of basic sound administrative practices.
- The Children's Advocacy Center promotes policies, practices and procedures that are culturally competent. Cultural competency is defined as the capacity to function in more than one culture, requiring the ability to appreciate, understand and interact with members of diverse populations within the local community.
- Forensic interviews at the Children's Advocacy Center are conducted by specially-trained interviewers and are conducted in a manner which is of a neutral, fact finding nature, and coordinated to avoid duplicative interviewing.

- Specialized medical evaluation and treatment are made available to CAC clients as part of the team response, either at the CAC or through coordination with other specialized medical providers.
- Specialized mental health services are made available as part of the team response, either at the CAC or through coordination and referral with other appropriate treatment providers.
- Victim advocacy and support are made available as part of the team response, either at the CAC or through coordination with other providers, throughout the investigation and subsequent legal proceedings.
- Team discussion and information sharing regarding the investigation, case status and services needed by the child and the family occur on a routine basis.
- The CAC has a system for monitoring case progress and tracking outcomes for team components. On-site crisis counseling services

For more information about the National Children's Alliance, please visit their website at www.nca-online.org

The Governing Board and Staff of the Champaign County Children's Advocacy Center

The Children's Advocacy Center is administered by a Governing Board whose role is to promote interdisciplinary communication and training of personnel from various Champaign County offices, agencies, departments, and local services providers; to supervise, oversee, and promulgate policy for the operation of the Children's Advocacy Center; to make such reports to contributing officers, agencies, and departments as may be required; and to act as liaison to the multi-disciplinary professionals involved in the Children's Advocacy Center.

The following offices/agencies are represented on the CAC's Governing Board: Carle Clinic, the Champaign Police Department, the Champaign County Mental Health Board, the Champaign County Probation and Court Services Department, the Champaign County Sheriff's Office, the Champaign County State's Attorney's Office, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the Mahomet Police Department, Provena Behavioral Health at Centerpoint, the Rantoul Police Department, the Regional Office of Education, the University of Illinois Police Department, and the Urbana Police Department.

The Executive Director and Case Manager oversee the daily operations of the Children's Advocacy Center. As Executive Director, Mike Williams directs the administrative functions of the Children's Advocacy Center to ensure the provision of a coordinated, timely, comprehensive, and multi-disciplinary response to child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse allegations. Case Manager Jill Breen works through local agency and service providers to facilitate investigations, makes medical and treatment referrals, and provides support for child victims and their families throughout consequent legal proceedings.

Breaking the Cycle of Abuse...One Child at a Time

The Children's Advocacy Center is a community-based, child-focused program in which professionals from different disciplines meet to discuss and make decisions about the intervention, treatment and prosecution of child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse cases.

Our Center began accepting cases in August 2000. By partnering with other allied agencies, we have built a coordinated and united response to child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse in our community.

The mission of the Champaign County Children's Advocacy Center is to coordinate a timely, comprehensive, and multidisciplinary response to child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse allegations in a safe, agency-neutral, child-focused setting.

The Champaign County Children's Advocacy Center facilitates investigations, makes medical and treatment referrals, and assists with any consequent legal proceedings in order to protect and support the children it serves and their families. The CAC also assists in coordinating education and prevention services.

Abuse: A Community Problem

In 2002, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services received 143 reports of children being sexually abused in Champaign County. Considering that child sexual abuse is one of the most underreported crimes, an even greater number of children are victims of this horrific injustice. As part of a community that actively promotes the well-being of every child, your involvement will directly reduce the number of crimes committed against our children.

What You Can Do to Help

The growth and continuation of the Children's Advocacy Center depends upon the public's understanding of its mission. Since child abuse is a *community* problem, community support is crucial to the prevention of abuse. By working together, we can stamp out child abuse cases in *our* community.

Get Involved and Stay Informed!

We live in a time in which violence permeates our culture. If we are to make a substantial impact on violence and its cost to our communities, we have to change our methods and, in effect, our culture. Our society says it is OK to call animal protection when our neighbor mistreats his or her pet; however, we are told it is none of our business when that neighbor mistreats his or her children. It is you--the neighbor, friend and extended family member--who may see, hear and even witness child maltreatment.

These are the individuals who must be the voice of the child.

Our current child abuse intervention strategies rely primarily on mandated reporters within our schools, health care settings, social service and law enforcement agencies. Unfortunately, these agencies are not present when the abuse occurs. The prevention of child abuse ultimately occurs at the family and community level. It is our neighbors, churches, schools, friends and extended family members that need to be engaged in prevention efforts if we are able to be successful.

Volunteers

Volunteers are always welcomed and appreciated. We are also interested in recruiting student interns.

Donations

Donations are appreciated by all of us at the Champaign County Children's Advocacy Center as we strive to provide services to every child and family in Champaign County who needs them. Our Center is fortunate to receive some state and federal grants; however, these funding sources are not enough to cover all of the Center's expenses. Your support, along with the support of other loyal donors, allows us to provide an array of services for children and families in Champaign County with one goal in mind: to break the cycle of child abuse...one child at a time. Our Center is a division of Champaign County government and is tax-exempt. Your donation may be tax-deductible.

How Our Center Benefits the Community

More immediate follow up to child abuse reports. By coordinating services for the child from the moment a case opens, the Center ensures immediate follow-up on reports of abuse as well as ongoing collaboration between the agencies.

More efficient medical and mental health referrals. Open communication and case coordination facilitates the timeliness with which the child and family receive needed service. Children receive prompt and ongoing services that are tailored to their specific needs and family situations. Interagency agreements between the Center and other social service agencies assure that children receive prompt medical care and mental health therapy.

Reduction in the number of child victim interviews. The multidisciplinary team coordinates the interview of the child and non-offending family members at the Center. By coordinating the interview, the child is not subjected to multiple interviews by multiple agencies involved in handling the case.

Increased successful prosecution. More offenders are held accountable through improved prosecution of child abuse cases. By coordinating the process of how information is collected and disseminated, child advocacy centers improve the quality of information provided to prosecutors and juvenile court attorneys. Experienced professionals who have been specially-trained to interview children thoroughly investigate allegations of abuse. Their child-focused approach produces a greater quantity of reliable information used in criminal, civil and juvenile court proceedings.

Consistent support for child victims and supportive adults. More non-offending parents are empowered to protect and support their children throughout the intervention process and beyond. The Center will assure that families receive specialized services when necessary. Through the Center, each child and his or her family is assisted throughout the process in both juvenile and criminal court.