

Grant Proposal by Collin County Children's Advocacy Center

CCCAC Mission:

Collin County Children's Advocacy Center takes action to identify, protect, and improve the lives of abused and neglected children.

Agency Overview

Collin County Children's Advocacy Center is a qualified 501(c)3 nonprofit agency with the mission of taking action to identify, protect and improve the lives of abused and neglected Collin County children. CCCAC opened its doors to clients in January 1993, and since then has offered services to over 18,000 children and their non-offending family members. We can be found on the internet at www.cacplano.org.

The Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) concept originated with Alabama Congressman Bud Cramer. In 1985, while serving as a District Attorney, Congressman Cramer reached the conclusion that many systems in place to support children victimized by abuse were actually re-victimizing them. Children who were the victims of abuse were shuffled from police stations to social service offices, and other facilities created for adults, where they faced repeating the details of their abuse nightmare over and over.

Congressman Cramer's idea was to create a child friendly environment where children could tell their story as few times as possible, ideally just once. His vision led to the creation of more than 400 CAC's throughout the nation and 59 in Texas. Today children are able to visit a CAC designed specifically for them where they can feel safe as they describe their nightmare. They speak with a trained forensic interviewer and the interview is videotaped to minimize the number of times they must detail their trauma. The videotaping also results in increasing the accuracy of information provided to professionals investigating the case.

Since beginning, the CCCAC's program services have evolved to meet the needs of the community. A Strategic Alliance has been shaped that works collaboratively to increase services and reach a greater number of children victimized by abuse. This Alliance, housed under one roof, includes all of Collin County Child Protective Services, law enforcement representing 13 Collin County jurisdictions, members from the District Attorney's office, medical sexual assault nurse examiners, therapy providers and community resource representatives. In addition to these services, other multi-disciplinary team members housed at the Center include a family violence unit (created in conjunction with the Plano Police Department), as well as a representative from Plano Family Services. The Alliance is comprised of over 130 trained professionals dedicated to serving 100 percent of Collin County children victimized by abuse who come to us for the help and healing CCCAC through services which include the following:

- forensic interviews, which alleviate the need for multiple interviewing and questioning of already traumatized abuse victims;
- medical exams;
- crisis counseling;
- a wide array of therapy options for abuse victims and their non-offending family members;
- community resource assistance;
- assistance in accessing Crime Victim's Compensation funds;
- community education;
- foster family and adoption recruitment;
- extensive community volunteer opportunities and training;
- supervision of court ordered visitations for foster children and their families;
- ongoing in-house professional education;
- a case management system to ensure that no client "falls between the cracks"; and
- a multidisciplinary approach coordinating services among Child Protective Services, Law Enforcement, medical and therapeutic providers and the District Attorney's Office.

The Collin County Children's Advocacy Center provides counseling at no cost to child victims of abuse and their non-offending family members. Therapy is provided through the use of many different modalities of psychotherapy including: Individual and group settings; family therapy; play therapy; art therapy; music therapy; bi-lingual therapy; "Moms Only" therapy group (moms of children abused by an adult male in the household, usually father, stepfather, or boyfriend); kinship therapy (for grandparents with custody of grandchildren); intensive summer therapy programs; specialized therapy groups; and parent education.

We have an educational, collaborative approach enabling us to work with children on their own terms. Utilizing a child-focused, systemic model of treatment we provide children with many ways to resolve and heal from trauma without having to re-experience the trauma by having to tell their story over and over. Additionally, we believe that child abuse also traumatizes and deeply affects non-offending family members. It does not occur in a vacuum that touches only the child. The therapy process is much more effective when the entire family is engaged, so we work with non-offending family members whenever possible.

Our Clinical program particularly and specifically addresses the improvement of the lives of children who have been the victims of abuse or neglect by providing the therapy necessary to heal trauma abuse and regain control of their lives.

Susan Etheridge the Executive Director of the Collin County Children's Advocacy Center brings 21 years of experience in dealing with child abuse. Our clinical department is directed by Dan Powers, a nationally known expert in the area of child maltreatment. Dan is a frequently sought after speaker on the state and nation level in the areas of clinical services for abused children, leadership and ethics.

Program Summary

We at the Collin County Children's Advocacy Center have the unique opportunity to be housed with all of Child Protective Services for our county as well as county law enforcement which deals with child abuse, neglect and domestic violence. Our relationships with these public agencies are based on collaboration and team work giving us the opportunity early on to identify children and families in need of our therapy services. We are able to facilitate the healing process as soon as possible, continuing to work with them throughout the process. Additionally, our services are provided at no cost to the clients, enabling us to continue the process based on the clients' individual needs rather than any limitations based on whether or not the client is insured.

The clinical program at the Collin County Children's Advocacy Center is seen as a leader in the nation in the treatment of abused and traumatized children. Our unique program brings together a state of the art therapy center with cutting edge programs that meet the needs of traumatized children. Because of community and corporate support we are able to offer services with the child's needs coming first. Our specialized treatment model is not available in Collin County from any other agency.

The play therapy program at the Collin County Children's Advocacy Center utilizes a theoretical model in which trained therapists use the therapeutic powers of play in a unique child friendly environment to help children heal from the trauma of sexual and physical abuse. This service is offered at no cost to the child's family. Play is a child's natural form of communication. Children, even children who are quite talkative, express themselves more fully through their play. Emotions are often difficult to understand for children and even more difficult to articulate. Play provides a non-threatening way for children to express themselves. It allows children a safe psychological distance from their problems by allowing them to convey their true thoughts and feelings in ways best suited to their developmental level. As in all therapy at Collin County Children's Advocacy Center, the ultimate goal of Play Therapy is to reduce the effects of the trauma of sexual and physical abuse and empower the child to feel more in control of his or her life. Goals leading up to this include developing a more positive self-concept, assuming greater responsibility, becoming more self-directing and self-accepting, becoming more self-reliant, engaging in self-determined decision making, experiencing a feeling of control, becoming more sensitive to the process of coping, developing an internal source of evaluation, and becoming a more trusting self.

Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

Children will attend weekly play therapy sessions at the Collin County Children's Advocacy Center. This allows trained play therapists to assess and understand children's play, to use it in assisting the child in coping with difficult emotions, and to facilitate the healing process. Our primary goal is to give children the means to heal from abuse. Improving self-esteem is a major goal in our treatment model. During that process children learn to be self-sufficient and self-reliant, both very important skills to help ensure that a child is not victimized in the future.

Therapeutic intervention for child victims of sexual and physical abuse is very specialized. Although there are a number of well qualified social service agencies in the Collin County area, the level of particularized expertise found at Collin County Children's Advocacy Center in combination with the inestimable value of the coordination of social

services and assistance, any criminal or law enforcement actions, and medical components makes a huge difference in the progress which can be made. Moreover, our professional services are provided without cost to children or their families and without being put on a waiting list. Immediacy of intervention is a critical factor to its success.

The ultimate objective of the play therapy program is to decrease the trauma symptoms experienced by a child victim of sexual and physical abuse. Secondary objectives include insuring the child is safe, improving family functioning, ensuring family self-sufficiency and prosecution of the offender. Goals (expected change) will be based on an assessment of each individual child to determine the level and areas of need and leading to defined, specific goals for each child.

We have two types of program evaluation. First, for objective measure, outcomes for each child will be based on an assessment of that child's individual goals. No less often than every 10th session, accomplishments will be noted, goals will be re-evaluated in light of progress made, and new goals may be established. Programmatic goals accomplishment data is maintained on an annual basis and is available as requested by donors.

Second, on a subjective level, from the client's point of view, we ask each client to respond to a survey after therapy services have been completed so that we can be sure that we are meeting needs as understood by the client. (In the case of Play Therapy, it is usually a parent or responsible adult who will be responding.) Survey results are utilized in program development.

Population and Numbers

Any child who experiences abuse in Collin County may be referred to our program. Child Protective Services and Law Enforcement are our primary referral sources. Last fiscal year 735 clients received therapy services totaling 15,551 hours. Approximately 70% of the clients seen were under the age of 10. This year we experienced an increase in the number of services provided of 21%. We estimate an increase in services provided of 16-20% for next year translating into approximately 600 children under the age of ten who will receive play therapy next fiscal year.

Beneficial Change

Short term and on an individual level, these youngest victims of sexual and physical abuse will be empowered to live productive lives, freed of the crippling traumatic effects of abuse which left untreated will not ever be resolved. Long term, the availability of these services for abuse victims dramatically reduces the likelihood that they will either become abusers themselves or will engage in other delinquent or otherwise unlawful behavior. Absent therapeutic intervention, victims of abuse are 67% more likely to be arrested when they reach their teens, so the long term impact is not merely felt on a personal, individual level but also on a societal level.

Child abuse tears away at the very fabric of a child's innocence, but these children can regain control of their lives. Through our play therapy program we help a child gain back their self esteem, self worth and happiness.

Amount Requested: \$20,000

Other Funding Sources:

<u>Funding Source*</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Status</u>
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[names, amounts, and status omitted]

Although provision of therapy services to our clients is not a collaborative project per se, Collin County Children's Advocacy Center itself is fundamentally a collaborative entity. We work on a daily basis with other agencies, including the various law enforcement jurisdictions represented at the Center, Child Protective Services, S.A.N.E. (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners program), C.A.S.A. (Court Appointed Special Advocates for children), Family Services of Plano, Family Outreach of Plano, Hope's Door and private foster care placement agencies as well as the many community volunteers associated with CCCAC and cooperating agencies. Additionally, we have a new collaborative relationship with Children's Medical Center which will allow us to provide expanded services farther north in the county as Children's provides us with space to provide clinical therapy services at their new ambulatory care center on Preston Road north of Legacy. While not collaborative in actual provision of therapy services, the relationship is allowing us to expand services where we would not otherwise be able to have a presence at this time.