

WHAT ARE CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS?

A Children's Advocacy Center is a safe place for the evaluation of child sexual abuse. Children's Advocacy Centers enhance the response to suspected child abuse cases by combining the wisdom and professional knowledge of various investigative agencies and other professionals. These coordinated efforts provide the knowledge, skills and resources to assist suspected child abuse victims and their families. CACs maintain focus on the child and help to ensure that systems designed to protect children are able to do so effectively.

Georgia's centers provide the following services:

- Videotaped interviews of suspected child abuse victims conducted in safe, child-friendly surroundings. The interviews are completed by professionally trained forensic interviewers and coordinated with the involved investigative agencies. This reduces trauma to the child by avoiding multiple interviews and preserving statements for legal purposes
- Forensic medical exams of suspected child abuse victims utilizing specialized equipment for accurate diagnoses, offered on-site or through referral
- Crisis intervention and emotional support for victims and non-offending family members, and guidance in accessing the crime victim's compensation system
- Counseling and medical services to help child victims begin the healing process, offered on-site or through referral
- Interdisciplinary review of cases by a team of professionals, including but not limited to law enforcement, child protective services, prosecutors, medical and mental health professionals, victim's assistance staff, and child advocates
- Professional training and community education to effectively respond to child abuse

Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia is a nonprofit membership organization which sets standards, assists developing and existing centers, promotes effective public policy, compiles statistical data and is a chapter of the National Children's Alliance.

**For more information contact:
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www.cacga.org**

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OUR LOCATIONS

MEMBER CENTERS

Children's Advocacy Center of Lowndes County

Valdosta
229-245-5369

Sunshine Center

Albany
229-438-1660

Children's Tree House

Columbus
706-327-9612

The Gateway Center

Cordele
229-273-0600

The Sunshine House Children's Advocacy Center

Swainsboro
478-237-7801

The Center for Advocacy and Protection

Atlanta
404-785-3820

The Tree House

Winder
770-868-1900

Rainbow House Children's Resource Center

Warner Robins
478-923-5923

Edmondson-Telford Center for Children

Gainesville
770-534-5151

Anna Crawford Children's Center

Woodstock
770-592-9779

C.A.R.E. Cottage

Forsyth
478-994-7287

The Shelter, CASA, and Child Advocacy Center

Augusta
706-737-4631

Harbor House

Rome/Dallas
706-235-5437

Coastal Children's Advocacy Center

Savannah
912-236-1401

SafePath Children's Advocacy Center

Marietta
770-801-3465

Child Advocacy Center of the Lookout

Mountain Judicial Circuit

Fort Oglethorpe
706-866-8811

Crescent House

Macon
478-633-7044

Sexual Assault Center of Northeast Georgia

Athens
706-353-1912

Georgia Center for Children

Atlanta/Decatur
678-904-2880

The GreenHouse

Dalton
706-278-4769

Forsyth County Children's Advocacy Center

Cumming
678-208-1908

Stepping Stone

Dublin
478-275-9010

Appalachian Children's Center

Ellijay
706-273-2225

Golden Isles Children's Center

Brunswick
912-554-0609

Rainbow Connection – Child Advocacy & Assessment Center

Jonesboro
770-478-6905

Power House for Kids

Toccoa
706-886-2290

Children's Advocacy Center of Colquitt County

Moultrie
229-890-5549

Gwinnett Sexual Assault Center and Children's Advocacy Center

Duluth
770-497-9122

Child Advocacy Center of Coffee County

Douglas
912-260-1492

Satilla Advocacy Services

Waycross
912-285-7355

Children's Advocacy Center of Troup County

LaGrange
706-298-2148 ext. 102

DEVELOPING CENTERS

Harmony House Child Advocacy Center

Hartwell
706-856-2729

Ruth's Collage

Tifton
229-387-9697

NEW INITIATIVES

The Gordon County Family Resource Center

Calhoun
Pataula Center for Children
Blakely

Children's Advocacy Center of Grady County

Cairo
Mitchell County DFCS
Camillia

Bryan County Family Connection

Pembroke
Fulton County Child Advocacy Center
Atlanta



Children's Advocacy Centers
of Georgia
P.O. Box 1192
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Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia

Providing a multi-disciplinary team approach
to the evaluation and treatment
of abused children.

Chronicle
Volume V

CHRIS NEWLIN PRESIDENT

I have reached the end of my tenure as President of the Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia, and in doing so I look back at the trail traversed and ask myself, "Where have I been?" In order to truly reflect on my involvement with the Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia, I feel that I must go back to the beginning of the "trail". Before I ever set foot on our collective journey to protecting children there were many people who blazed the path for Child Advocacy Centers in Georgia, and to them I am eternally grateful. They did an incredible job of laying the foundation for what has become one of the nation's leading states in CACs per capita, something Georgia can truly be proud of.

I came to the CACGA in 1999, and my first introduction was at the 1999 Legislative Reception where I was immediately welcomed by both the Rome/Floyd County community, and the numerous CACs throughout the state. Between 1999 and 2002, I supported my colleagues in furthering the mission of the CACGA and individual CACs, and I was honored to be elected as President in 2002. It has been a privilege to serve in this capacity for the last two years, and I would like to recognize the dedicated efforts of the entire CACGA Board and CACGA Committees, especially those who served on the Executive Committee during the past two years, Phil Kouns, Amy Gaylor, and Carol Hanna.

Although we always are looking at the work that still needs to be done, we must acknowledge our past successes to maintain an appropriate course. During the past two years we have increasingly diversified the CACGA Board of Directors, bringing on numerous committed professionals from other settings. These additions to the board demonstrate the organization's growth toward more firmly rooted success. The CACGA has also made significant contributions to the professional development of individuals working in the field by sponsoring Forensic Interview Trainings, supporting Georgia's Child Advocate Dee Simms and the Department of Human Resources in the development of the Finding Words Georgia Program, developing and publishing "The Sixteen Indicators of a Healthy Multi-Disciplinary Team", providing training for Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Facilitators, and creating a MDT Self-Evaluation Instrument.

In addition to training, the CACGA also created additional standards for CACs, requiring all individuals who conduct forensic interviews at CACs to have appropriate training which will lead to improved services for children. This increased focus on coordinating quality investigations and interventions regarding allegations of abuse must always be our primary focus, and this new standard highlights our commitment to this goal. In addition to this new standard, the CACGA welcomed five new fully functioning CACs into the organization during the last two years, increasing the total number of Full Members to 31. These new CACs are located in Duluth, Douglas, Dallas, Waycross, and LaGrange, and are serving Gwinnett, Coffee, Paulding, Ware, and Troup Counties respectively.

During the last legislative session, Georgia finally passed a Child Endangerment Law, and the passage of this law was chiefly due to the tremendous efforts of Wendi Clifton and Prevent Child Abuse Georgia. The CACGA was excited to support this effort as again, this is focused on protecting children from harm and punishing those who place children at risk.

Finally, I would like to wish the new leadership of the CACGA the best of luck. I am confident that Phil Kouns, Amy Gaylor, Kevin McCamy, and Rita Rocker will do a tremendous job leading the CACGA. We have accomplished much but we need to continue to expand services in the rural areas of Georgia to fulfill our vision statement. When sexual abuse is reported, every child in Georgia will have access to the services provided by a Children's Advocacy Center.

PLEA-BARGAINING

Alan A. Cook

Director, Prosecutorial Clinic Program

Univ. of Georgia School of Law

Criminal defense attorneys are often asked, "How can you defend a client that you know is guilty?" (Fortunately for me, the answer to this question is beyond the scope of this article.) Prosecutors, on the other hand, are often asked an equally difficult question: "How can you plea-bargain with a defendant you know is guilty?" As a former prosecutor, I will attempt to answer this question in the limited space below.

Criminal defendants, even patently guilty ones, cannot be forced to plead guilty. Theoretically, then, every defendant

could insist on a trial by a jury of his peers. But prosecutors faced with enormous caseloads know that there are not enough courts, judges, prosecutors, or trial terms to try every case. If they attempted to do so, the criminal justice system would collapse under the sheer weight of the cases awaiting trial. Thus, prosecutors know that most cases must be resolved without a trial. They must prioritize cases, targeting for jury trial only those of greatest concern and settling the vast majority of the remaining cases through the process known as "plea-bargaining."

In the plea-bargaining process, both the prosecutor and the defendant or his attorney seek to negotiate a mutually agreeable, joint sentencing recommendation to the court – the so-called "plea bargain." The plea bargain, which usually recommends a sentence considerably below the maximum possible punishment for the offense charged, serves as an incentive to induce the defendant to waive his right to a jury trial and enter a plea of guilty. The defendant knows that if he rejects the plea bargain and is convicted after trial, the court is likely to impose a much stiffer sentence than originally recommended. And although the court is not required to accept the plea bargain, most courts do because, like prosecutors, judges realize that every case cannot be tried.

The most common criticism of plea-bargaining is that it results in defendants receiving a mere "slap on the wrist" for their crimes. And indeed, many sentences do appear to be disproportionately light given the nature of the crime and the character of the defendant. What is often overlooked, however, is that without the benefit of plea-bargaining, many more cases would have to be tried by a jury with the ever-present possibility of acquittal and the prospect of no punishment whatsoever! One must keep in mind that under our system of justice, the burden of proof is upon the state to prove a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt - the highest standard of proof in the law.

Negotiated or plea-bargained guilty pleas guarantee convictions and at least some degree of punishment; jury trials do not. Relatively weak cases, therefore, are typically the first to be plea-bargained. And even when the evidence is relatively strong, the backlog of pending cases dictates that some such cases must be settled so that other, more heinous cases can be tried. And in such targeted cases, tougher sentences can be meted out.

SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP

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*Supporting membership with an additional donation

Supporting Membership information
is available at www.cacga.org

