



The Children's Assessment Center

The mission of The CAC is to provide a professional, compassionate and coordinated approach to the treatment of sexually abused children and their families and to serve as an advocate for all children in our community.



In 2021, we provided services to **5,000 children and families** in our community.

1 in 10 children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.

About **90%** of children who are victims of sexual abuse **know and trust their abuser.**

No age, race, religion, or socioeconomic class is spared from the effects of child sexual abuse.



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Simply put, The Children's Assessment Center (The CAC) exists to protect children, heal families, and prevent abuse. There are over 900 child advocacy centers nationwide, including over 70 in Texas, dedicated to helping children and families affected by child sexual abuse. The CAC was established in 1991 in Houston, Texas. We are the only children's advocacy center serving Harris County and the largest in the nation. In 2000, The CAC was accredited by the National Children's Alliance, becoming one of the nation's first accredited advocacy centers.

Sadly, before the implementation of children's advocacy centers, there was not a streamlined process for children. After an outcry of sexual abuse, children were often interviewed multiple times by various law enforcement agencies, medical professionals, and mental health professionals. Here at The CAC, we know that recounting abuse several times can be retraumatizing and sought to find a solution to make this process as trauma-informed as possible.

The goal of The CAC is to provide all of the services children need in one place. We provide space in our building for dozens of other agencies that we collaborate with to meet the needs of children. We provide training in the community to children, families, schools, medical professionals, and other organizations who strive to protect children from abuse. We train the partners within our building on how to work together for the most effective, collaborative multidisciplinary approach to child abuse cases. Within our building, we provide forensic interviewing, family advocacy, mental health services, and medical services free of charge to our clients. Our staff are trauma-informed, evidence-based practitioners who believe in the child-centered, multidisciplinary team approach to child sexual abuse. We recognize the courage necessary to walk through our doors, and we strive daily to give our personal and professional best to every child and family who finds their way to us. We also recognize that relationships with our partners – law enforcement, child protective services, medical, county and district attorneys, and other community agencies – are fundamental to collaboration and successful outcomes for our clients. Thus, we bring the same dedication and passion to the success of our partnerships as we devote ourselves to our work with children and families.

Our hope is that our process will provide children and families with the tools necessary to help them on their journey to heal from abuse. We exist to help our community become a better, safer place for each child of Harris County.

We believe that all children deserve to feel safe and to live a life free from sexual abuse. We are proud to be part of the national effort to end child sexual abuse and hope that you will join us in this endeavor. Our vision is a world free of child sexual abuse. With your help, we believe it's possible.

Kerry McCracken



Executive Director

The Children's Assessment Center



The Children's Assessment Center provides an array of services designed to meet the physical and emotional needs of sexually abused children, their siblings, and non-offending caregivers. We employ bilingual interviewers and clinicians to ensure that all abused children have access to our services, which includes the following:

- **Family Advocacy:** Masters level social workers help the families of children that have been sexually abused navigate through the investigation process, reduce trauma for the children and non-offending family members, coordinate victim services, and encourage participation in the investigation, treatment, and support services available to children and families.
- **Forensic Services:** Forensic interviewing program enables children to disclose their abuse while being digitally recorded, allowing all professionals involved to view the recorded statements rather than subject the child to repeated interviews. The forensic interviewer is usually the first professional a child encounters at The CAC after a report of child sexual abuse. Extended Forensic Assessments are also provided in cases where there is no disclosure from the child, but there is other evidence suggestive of abuse or concerns regarding the child's statement.
- **Medical Services:** Pediatric physicians administer sexual abuse examinations and rape-evidence collection, utilizing state-of-the-art, non-invasive equipment. This helps minimize the child's discomfort and fear during the exam and provides digitally recorded evidence that can be utilized during court hearings.
- **Mental Health Services:** The CAC offers a variety of services ranging from crisis intervention and psychological evaluations to group, family and individual therapy of child victims, siblings and non-offending caregivers. Using a holistic approach helps restore the child's sense of self, comfort and safety. Expressive therapies including play, movement, art and music therapies allow children to express their feelings in creative ways. Therapy teaches children that they are not alone, helps them understand that the abuse is the responsibility of the offender, and ultimately provides a healthy, guilt-free way to avoid long-term trauma. Upon referral, every child is evaluated and therapists, caseworkers, the victim's family and/or caregivers design a unique, coordinated treatment plan. Regular review meetings are conducted throughout treatment to monitor progress.
- **Multidisciplinary Team Enhancement Program (MEP):** The MEP program improves the coordination of investigative activities between CPS and Law Enforcement; and understanding the 3 C's (communication, coordination, collaboration) that enhance and ensure safety, justice and healing for child abuse victims.
- **Training & Community Outreach:** The Training and Community Outreach departments present to schools, religious organizations and other social service agencies to educate professionals and parents about how to identify the signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and equip them with the knowledge to protect children. We continue to provide extensive community outreach including educational programs, community and professional trainings and expert court testimony.

As a collaboration of Harris County Commissioners' Court and The Children's Assessment Center Foundation, The CAC represents a true partnership between the public and private sectors for the most effective service delivery to children and families. Located at 2500 Bolsover St., our 144,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility was specifically designed to provide an environment that will meet each child's need for warmth, support and protection.

The Children's Assessment Center is an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance and part of a national movement to create child-friendly intervention systems for sexually abused children. The CAC is the only children's advocacy serving Harris County and the largest in the nation.

The Children's Assessment Center houses professionals from **57 partner agencies**, which include law enforcement, medical and mental health professionals, nonprofits, and governmental investigative entities, all with the common goal of protecting children.

The CAC's Partner Agencies:

Baylor College of Medicine/Texas Children's Hospital	U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas	Jacinto City Police Department
Child Advocates, Inc./Court Appointed Special Advocates	Aldine ISD Police Department	Jersey Village Police Department
Communities In Schools, Houston, Inc.	Alief ISD Police Department	Katy Police Department
Crime Stoppers of Houston	Baytown Police Department	Katy ISD Police Department
Federal Bureau of Investigation	Bellaire Police Department	Lakeview Police Department
Harris County Attorney's Office	Cypress Fairbanks ISD Police Dept.	LaPorte Police Department
Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences	Deer Park Police Department	Memorial Village Police Dept.
Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults	Friendswood Police Department	Nassau Bay Police Department
Harris County District Attorney's Office	Galena Park Police Department	Pasadena Police Department
Houston Area Women's Center/Children's Court Services	Harris County Juvenile Probation	Pasadena ISD Police Dept.
Houston Metro Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC)	Harris County Precinct 1	Seabrook Police Department
Memorial Hermann Healthcare	Harris County Precinct 3	South Houston Police Dept.
Texas Center for the Missing	Harris County Precinct 4	Southside Place Police Dept.
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services	Harris County Precinct 5	Spring ISD Police Department
	Harris County Precinct 6	Spring Branch ISD Police Dept.
	Harris County Sheriff's Office	Spring Valley Police Dept.
	Hedwig Village Police Dept.	Stafford Police Department
	Homeland Security Investigations	Texas Dept. of Public Safety
	Houston Police Department	Tomball Police Department
	Houston ISD Police Department	U.S. Postal Inspection Service
	Humble Police Department	Webster Police Department
		West University Police Dept.