FY 2018 Program Accomplishments

(Statistical Data Covers March 1, 2017 to September 30, 2017)

1. The Children’s Assessment Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

On October 11, 2017, The Children’s Assessment Center held a ribbon cutting ceremony and open house to celebrate its newly expanded, state-of-the-art facility. The expanded facility allows for additional partner agencies to co-locate at The CAC and expands the size of the training capabilities so that The CAC can educate additional first responders and the community on how to recognize, respond and report child abuse. The CAC Expansion Team: Gensler, Irvine Team and Tellepsen as well as Harris County Engineering and Public
Infrastructure. The total square footage of the newly expanded and renovated campus is 144,000 square feet.

The CAC houses approximately 336 campus employees including 40 Harris County District Attorney’s Office personnel recently displaced after Hurricane Harvey. In addition, the expansion has increased space for the growing Houston Metro Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force and other partner agencies such as the Houston Police Department, the Harris County Sheriff’s Office and the Texas Center for the Missing. The expanded facility separates the Client Intake area for children and families from the Training Center to allow for client confidentiality.

Executive Director Elaine Stolte and CAC staff and partners welcomed the large crowd of approximately 375 distinguished guests. Ra'Shandra Stewart-Adams, Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Supervisor, performed Whitney Houston’s The Greatest Love of All and Pershing Middle School Chorale sang the Star Spangled Banner and We are the World, directed by Choir Director Marcus Jauregui. Guest speakers included: Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Katy ISD Police Officer and Miss Texas United States, Officer Shannon Dresser and Christopher DeClaire, CAC Board Member and Building Committee Chair, provided the closing remarks. Tours for attendees were provided after the ceremony.

2. **CAC Forensic Interviewing Program continues to increase services to children presenting with allegations of sexual abuse and other violent crimes against children. Services increased by 10% in 2016 and 6.5% in 2017**

CAC Forensic Interviewers are charged with one of the most difficult roles at the advocacy center: obtaining children’s accounts of abuse in a sensitive, child-friendly and legally defensible manner. CAC Interviewers are well trained in the use of state and national protocols, maintain rigorous standards, are trauma informed, and are grounded in applicable research. In 2016, CAC interviewer requirements were elevated to include master’s level education and licensure in social worker, counseling, or a related field, and an additional full-time Interviewer was added for a total of (6). Services increased by 10% in 2016 and increased again in 2017 by 6.5%.

- **2,406** Children interviewed
- **1,589** Disclosed child abuse
- **1,776** Females (630 Males)
- **404** Spanish-speaking children
- **382** Under the age of six
- **257** Children with disabilities

3. **CAC Conducts 1,321 Interviews of Adolescent Victims ages 10 – 19 (55% of all CAC Interviews), up 5% from 2016**
One of the most difficult aspects of a criminal investigation involving child exploitation can be the investigative interview of the child. When the child is an adolescent, the interview can be even more challenging. In addition to intrafamilial sexual abuse, adolescent maltreatment cases often include more challenging issues such as: computer facilitated crimes, trafficked and prostituted teens, sibling-on-sibling abuse, compliant victims, and chronic runaways. These interviews require special considerations in preparation, interview environment, and post-interview procedures, which requires experienced interviewers, specialized training, and additional time to conduct comprehensive interviews.

4. The Children's Assessment Center hosted Press Conference and Round-table with U.S. Senator Cornyn, HCDA Ogg, Sheriff Gonzalez, Chief Acevedo to discuss successful program to protect children from online predators
On June 16, 2017, U.S. Senator John Cornyn joined Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg, Sheriff Ed Gonzalez, Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, and Executive Director of The Children’s Assessment Center Elaine Stolte to discuss the success of the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program in protecting children from online exploitation, and Sen. Cornyn’s legislation that passed the Senate Judiciary Committee to reauthorize the program. The Houston Metro Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force announced metrics on the success of these efforts specific to the Greater Houston Region.

Sen. Cornyn’s PROTECT Our Children Act reauthorizes the ICAC Task Force Program, a coordinated group of 61 task forces representing 3,500 federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies engaged in investigations across the country. The program helps local and state law enforcement respond to technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and internet crimes against children, and offers guidance on victim support, forensic investigative components, training and technical assistance, and prevention and community education.

Sen. Cornyn held a roundtable at the recently expanded Children’s Assessment Center, which partners with the Houston Metro ICAC, and local law enforcement about their challenges and successes in protecting Houston-area children from online exploitation, specifically as it relates to Sen. Cornyn’s PROTECT Our Children Act. The ICAC task force also highlighted results of the ICAC Task Force Program’s coordinated investigative operation to identify and arrest suspected child sexual predators called Operation Broken Heart IV.

5. **The Children’s Assessment Center Training and Prevention Program continues to increase prevention and professional trainings in the community and for the Multidisciplinary Team**

The Children’s Assessment Center has conducted 370 trainings and is dedicated to providing prevention programs that meet the needs of the Harris County Community. The CAC provided the following prevention and professional workshops and trainings:

**Prevention Trainings**

- The CAC provided *Camp Safety - Awareness and Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse* for 83 camp counselors in 5 workshops.
- The CAC provided 3 *P.S. It’s My Body* workshops for 44 children.
- The CAC provided 8 on-site workshops for 351 school representatives in the community about *Child Sexual Abuse Case Process in Harris County, Dynamics of Child Sexual Abuse and Child Abuse Reporting Laws for Texas*.
- *Netsmartz* is an internet safety training for children and parents. The CAC has provided 9 on-site workshops for 128 people from the community.
Stewards of Children is a Child Sexual Abuse Prevention training by Darkness to Light to raise awareness of Child Sexual Abuse and provide tools to adults to prevent, recognize, react responsibly to, and report child sexual abuse. The CAC has provided 10 on-site workshops for 71 people.

Talking to Children about Sex and Sexuality training equipped parents with the necessary information and resources to conduct safe sexuality conversations with their children. The CAC provided 5 on-site workshops for 24 people.

Professional Trainings

The CAC collaborated with the Harris County Child Abuse Task Force by providing two workshops in March and August addressing: 1) Managing Your Emotions and Professionalism While Serving Children and Families and 2) Extracurricular Activities. Inappropriate Relationships between School Personnel and Students”.

The CAC and Houston Metro Internet Crimes against Children Task Force partnered together providing a workshop entitled Internet Crime against Children (ICAC) Workshop for Law Enforcement Officers and Prosecutors conducted by Justin Fitzsimmons, Program Manager, High-Tech Crime Training Services, with SEARCH. The training was rescheduled due to Hurricane Harvey for November 28, 2017.

The CAC conducted 4 workshops for 174 nurses from Prairie View A&M Nursing School, Texas Women’s University (TWU) Nursing School, and the City of Houston Health Department. We provided information about The CAC, the case process for sexual abuse cases in Harris County, the dynamics of child sexual abuse and Texas child abuse reporting laws.

The CAC conducted 7 workshops for the Child Safety Check Alert List Classes (CSCAL) for Houston Police Department for 400 patrol officers and 285 cadets. The CSCAL is a method for Child Protective Services to report the names of children and their legal guardians who they are attempting to locate for the purpose of investigating allegations or providing services. Per HB 2053 and sec. 1701.402 of the Occupations Code, this course is a requirement for an intermediate or advanced proficiency certificate issued on or after January 1, 2016.

Seventeen members of the ICITAP Ukraine Model Police Project Study visited The CAC and participated in a tour and training with CAC staff members, Houston Police Department representatives, and Houston Metro Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

The CAC continues to partner with the U.S. Attorney’s Office to host an annual workshop for the Houston area on Crime Victims Compensation and Presumptive Eligibility during the month of June and 38 people attended for 2017.
6. **The Children's Assessment Center and Community Partners Kick-Off April Child Abuse Prevention Month**

April marks an important time to call attention to the issue of child abuse. The Children’s Assessment Center’s Executive Director Elaine Stolte was joined by Crime Stoppers of Houston’s Executive Director Rania Mankarious, Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg, Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan, Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez and Art Acevedo, Chief of Houston Police at a press conference to recognize April as Child Abuse Prevention Month and to bring much needed attention to the issues of child abuse intervention and prevention.

During the press conference, The Children’s Assessment Center discussed the importance of educating the community about the signs and symptoms of child abuse and will highlight its Keeping Children Safe Trainings and Internet Safety for Families Trainings that were held free to the public throughout the month of April. Crime Stoppers of Houston launched their April Safe Community Program Highlighting Child Abuse Fugitives in Harris County. Supporting comments were made by Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg, Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan, Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez and Houston Police Department Chief Art Acevedo.
7. **Senate Bill 1806 Passes Unanimously**

In 1995, the Legislature officially adopted the CAC model as the best-practice approach to investigating sexual and physical abuse of children and providing recovery services to the victims.

In the 22 years since it was formally adopted in Texas, the CAC model has spread across the state, growing in size, scope and influence. Today, 70 centers reaching into most Texas counties blend the efforts of some 1,000 CAC child-abuse professionals with the support of countless community volunteers and donors to stem the tide of abuse.

Senate Bill 1806, authored by Sen. Joan Huffman, which requires child sexual-abuse cases reported by professionals (e.g., doctors, teachers, counselors, day care workers) and those involving child fatalities with surviving children in the home to be addressed with a CAC-facilitated joint investigation with CPS and law enforcement. While many of these cases already benefit from CAC involvement, this bill emphasizes the critical importance of CAC-facilitated joint investigations, and reinforces CACs as a best practice approach to child abuse investigations. In terms of that child welfare safety net, Senate Bill 1806 shrinks the gaps into which some children had fallen.

In addition, Legislators from both chambers collaborated on a package of bills including S.B. 11 House Bill 249 and H.B. 5 which consolidates and standardizes child abuse and neglect investigations under CPS oversight. Regardless of where alleged abuse occurs, this legislation ensures every child will receive the same type and quality of investigation. Enabling cases of abuse in foster-care homes or residential treatment centers to more seamlessly reach the pipeline of services provided by CACs is of the utmost importance.

8. **Family Advocacy Program provided services to 1,238 children and families, maintaining service delivery to first time clients but increasing follow-up communications by 48% and bilingual services by 15%**

In response to emerging needs of CACs statewide for a liaison between the MDT and victims’ families, The CAC Family Advocate Program continues to grow. Family Advocates provide much needed crisis intervention, supportive counseling, and resource linkage for ongoing therapeutic services during initial visits to The CAC. In 2017, direct client services remained the same, but bilingual services increased by 15%, and follow-up contacts to clients increased by 48%.

1,238  Children & families served at The CAC  
1,299  Follow-up services provided after initial interview  
303  Spanish-speaking children and families served
9. **Houston Regional CST Collaborative Workgroup participation impacts Forensic Services yielding a 104% increase in commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) cases: 21 identified victims interviewed in 2016, 43 in 2017**

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children is a very real and growing problem across the US; a heinous crime that exists in alarming numbers in our community. The collaborative efforts of members of the Houston Regional CST Collaborative Workgroup led by the Governor’s Office (including HCDAO, DPS, HPD, CPS, SI, JPD, and others) has ensured our community are leaders in anti-trafficking efforts.

Due to the complexity of these cases, The CAC continues to support advanced trainings to ensure Forensic Interviewers have the resources necessary to effectively serve this special population. Curriculum and trainings are designed for tenured interviewers with a level of experience and understanding of the unique aspects of human trafficking cases and special considerations, such as the time, resources and MDT collaboration necessary to conduct thorough, trauma informed forensic interviews.

10. **Governor’s Office Initiative to Combat the Commercial Sex Trade Industry**

Early in the year, The Children’s Assessment Center began working with the Governor’s Office to establish a comprehensive response to Human Trafficking in the State of Texas. This initiative included various committees made up of numerous groups from law enforcement to county departments to non-profit agencies. Together with Harris County Juvenile Probation, Harris County Children’s Protective Services, law enforcement jurisdictions both State and local and Texas Children’s Hospital new protocols are currently being written and reviewed in order to collectively respond to human trafficking in Harris County. The vision of the Governor’s office is to have a comprehensive Advocate Program to accompany these children when identified by law enforcement, an initial site for these individuals to rest and receive immediate crisis intervention as well trained foster care homes to provide safety and care. Unfortunately, statistics indicate that many children are lured into human trafficking within 48 hours of running away from home. Many times they are running from foster care or an abusive family member. The Children’s assessment Center looks forward to a formal launch of this program with the Governor’s office at The CAC in January 2018.

11. **Super Bowl Crisis Response and Emergency Childcare Plan**

In January 2017, The Children’s Assessment Center launched a 24/7 response to child sex trafficking victims recovered in conjunction with the Super Bowl in Houston. Starting January 30 and ending the morning of February 6, the Children’s Assessment Center provided 24/7 access to its services such as crisis counseling, forensic interviews, sexual
assault exams and coordination of other medical care and mental health services, and coordination with law enforcement for investigations and DFPS for custody and child protection matters.

12. **The CAC Therapy and Psychological Services Division implemented the Standing for and Achieving Youth Empowerment (SAYE) training**

The SAYE training is designed to prevent adolescent girls from becoming victims of sex trafficking. It teaches them how to recognize the manipulative tactics commonly used to lure children and empowers them to use this knowledge in the service of standing strong against this horrific form of human victimization. The training is being implemented with adolescent girls in the Harris County Protective Services Kinder Emergency Shelter.

13. **The CAC Therapy and Psychological Services Division (T&P) signed a new Evaluation and Treatment Services Contract**

The Therapy and Psychological Services Division completed the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) Open Enrollment Application to provide mental health services in the Region. After months of diligent work on this project, the team successfully secured a new Evaluation and Treatment Services Contract that solidifies the longstanding collaboration with TDFPS and ensures that Child Protective Services (CPS) clients continue to have access to mental health services at The Children’s Assessment Center. In short, this collaborative relationship improves the quality of child welfare here in Harris County. The Contract is effective from August 25, 2017, through August 31, 2021.

14. **Harris County Youth Collective is Launched**

With generous funding from Houston Endowment, The CAC was selected to oversee grant funding to improve outcomes for dual status youth.

With a broad group of stakeholders in Harris County all with a common goal to improve outcomes for dual status youth. Dual status youth, also referred to as “crossover youth,” are defined as youth who both experience maltreatment (and become involved in the child welfare system) and engage in delinquency (and become involved in the juvenile justice system). These youth face even worse outcomes than those youth involved in only one system, including higher rates of recidivism, substance abuse and failure in school. This initiative currently includes representatives from the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department (HCJPD), the Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS), Harris County Protective Services (HCPS), academic institutions, philanthropy, and several community-based organizations. This group has articulated an ambitious vision for the future success of dual status youth in Harris County: “Our vision is that all dually-involved youth
can thrive in the areas of wellness, education, and transition to adulthood. In support of this vision, we aim to create an aligned and data-driven system that is inclusive of families and caregivers, committed to equity, and responsive to youths’ individualized needs.”

After many meetings and MOU’s an Executive Director was hired and the Dual Status Youth Initiative was renamed to the Harris County Youth Collective. Working with an incredible team of stakeholders, the CAC looks forward to many accomplishments involving this population of children.

15. **Designed to improve coordination of investigative activities and strengthen collaboration between local law enforcement partners and DFPS, The Multidisciplinary Enhancement Program (MEP) received 22,273 Statewide Intake Reports (4,807 with allegations of Sexual Abuse) from March through September 2017**

The MEP continues working with Law Enforcement agencies Houston PD, HCSO and Pasadena PD. In September 2017, MEP expanded receipt of Statewide Intake Reports to Baytown Police Department and in December 2017 will expand receipt of Statewide Intake Reports to La Porte Police Department. MEP collaborated with Forensic Services Department, CPS and Law Enforcement to discuss process of scheduling forensic interviews and how to best ensure that all partner agencies are notified and working closely on several cases. Successful case examples included:

- MEP assisted CPS and HCSO with a CPS case that involved a child who left Harris County and went to Florida; MEP staffed case information with LE and an investigator was assigned to the CPS case; LE investigator contacted CPS in Florida to ensure the forensic interview was completed. HCSO is working this investigation due to the alleged perpetrator residing in Harris County.

- MEP worked together with Forensic Services, CPS and HCSO in a case that involved a 15yo child who traveled from California to Texas to meet a man she met online; she was sexually assaulted and had to receive services at Ben Taub Hospital and Harris County Psychiatric Center. MEP coordinated with Forensic Services, CPS and HCSO that everyone had current and accurate information regarding case events. Harris County CPS and California CPS were in communication with one another. Local LE (HCSO) was provided contact information for local CPS staff.

- MEP assisted CPS Conservatorship Unit by following up with Law Enforcement regarding criminal charges for sibling children who made a disclosure of sexual abuse months after the victim sibling disclosed sexual abuse in a forensic interview. The alleged perpetrator was sent to prison for the victim sibling’s disclosure of sexual abuse. MEP pulled reports for Law Enforcement who was able to look in to
possibility of additional charges on the alleged perpetrator for the sexual abuse toward the victim’s siblings. MEP followed up with the Harris County District Attorney’s Office and coordinated with Law Enforcement to ensure that all parties had necessary information and reports.

16. **The Children's Assessment Center launches its Central Intake Area in May 2017**

The goal of Central Intake is to simplify the process of gathering and recording client information, as well as streamline CAC service delivery. Every client arriving at The CAC for a forensic interview, medical exam or mental health services must check-in with Central Intake and complete necessary paperwork, prior to being escorted to the appropriate department.

17. **Children’s Services Volunteers, Interns and Events**

The CAC is extremely delighted to showcase the many organizations and individuals that have stepped up to become involved in helping to support our efforts throughout the year. Volunteers from many local colleges, churches, corporations, and dedicated individuals have given their skills and time to The CAC. Volunteers are not only working in the playroom but within many other departments, on special projects and numerous events throughout the year. Thanks to the dedicated support from these generous people, we have been able to not only provide exemplary care to our daily clients in the playroom but also we have hosted many exciting parties and activities as well.

Volunteers have contributed over 2,831 hours of service (March – September 2017)

- National Charity League-Heart of Texas Chapter
- Clinical Leadership Society
- CAC Young Professionals
- Houston Baptist University
- Houston Community College
- Rice University
- Stephen F. Austin
- University of Houston
- University of Houston, Downtown
- University of Houston, Clear Lake
- University of St. Thomas
- Baylor College of Medicine
- Sam Houston State University
- Congregation Beth Israel
Back to School Events – 1,000+ children served, 132 volunteers

In efforts to prepare children for the 2017 school year, The CAC held the Annual Back to School Party sponsored by ConocoPhillips. Children and families enjoyed free haircuts, face painting, crafts, photo booth, lots of food, a DJ, free dental hygiene lessons, ice cream booth, and so much more. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo’s Miss Moo joined the children and families at this special party. At the end of the party, each child received a backpack filled with all the things necessary to start their school year off on the right foot. Some of our donors included UBS Financial, Petrobras Americas, Westbrae USPS, NCL-Heart of Texas, and various other individuals.

Halloween Parties – 85 children served, 17 volunteers

This year, because of generous donations of costumes and candy, children were able to enjoy 2 Halloween Parties. We celebrated with spooky treats, ghoulish games, edible crafts, tons of candy and of course costumes galore. Unified Sales Associates and theirs vendors volunteered and donated more than 105 costumes, 92 lbs. of candy, 4 boxes of masks/accessories, and trick-or-treat bags/buckets for everyone. After picking their costumes and getting their face painted, children and staff traipsed through the second floor trick-or-treating throughout the afternoon hours. Volunteers from Gunda Corporation joined us for our 2nd Halloween Party and brought fun treats to eat and more candy. Children continued to enjoy the festivities until the very end. Thanks to so many corporate and individual donors and volunteers this year, we were able to outfit lots of little fairies, witches, super heroes, and scary creatures of all ages.

18. Approximately 100 investigative officers, caseworkers, prosecutors and CAC Staff attend The CAC’s 4th Annual “Best Practices” MDT Training

In April 2017, The CAC hosted the 4th Annual Best Practices MDT Investigations Training during Child Abuse Prevention Month with approximately 100 investigative
partners and staff in attendance. Partners included: Children’s Protective Services, District Attorney’s Office, Houston Police Department, and Harris County Sheriff’s Office. The primary goal of the MDT Training was to highlight the CAC Model of collaborative case investigation and to facilitate communication and collaboration amongst MDT investigators. Unique challenges, key components, and coordinated investigations were the focus of the 6-hour training.

19. **Therapy and Psychological Services continues to be trained on different modalities for treatment of trauma and childhood sexual abuse**

Majority of our T&P staff has been trained and is working on certifications in three evidence based modalities widely used in the treatment of trauma and childhood sexual abuse: Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Play Therapy.

20. **The CAC continues to partner with The Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University, Houston Campus**

Baylor University opened a School of Social Work satellite campus in 2015 to students pursuing a Master of Social Work degree in Houston. The program is unique as it helps social workers develop an ethical integration of faith and social work practice. In May 2017, The CAC placed a second-year MSW student into a yearlong internship in Family Advocacy in the Forensic Services Division, under supervision of Alexis Tate, LCSW-S. Field internship placements provide students the opportunity to apply the knowledge, values, and skills learned in the classroom to real life interactions with individuals and families at The CAC. It is here, where theory and practice meet and the competence of social work students is enhanced.

21. **The Psychology Team submitted the self-study for review by the American Psychological Association (APA)**

In June of 2016, the Psychology Team began the initial stages of completing a self-study on our doctoral psychology internship program. Sixteen months later (October of 2017), we are proud to announce that we have successfully completed and submitted our self-study for review by the American Psychological Association (APA). Once approved for a site visit, we hope to eventually obtain the gold seal of approval from APA and obtain accreditation for our doctoral psychology internship program.

22. **The CAC to host National Children’s Advocacy Center Forensic Interviewing of Children Training**
CAC continues its commitment to best practices for interviewing children in cases of alleged abuse, and it is widely accepted that professionals should have formal initial and ongoing forensic interview training. In March 2016, The CAC hosted the internationally-recognized NCAC Child Forensic Interview Structure in a five-day, interactive training. (10) CAC Forensics Staff benefited from the training along with interviewers from CAC of Central Texas and Wharton and Matagorda County. NCAC instructors provided training on the most current, evidence-based and practical, research-based experience. The training included discussion, child interview practicum, review of recorded forensic interviews, experiential skill-building exercises, and participation in a mock court simulation. The same training will be offered to new Forensic Interviewers and Evaluators in November 2017.