



center for child protection
HELP. HOPE. HEALING.

Child Profile

The Center for Child Protection is the first stop for children entering the criminal justice system in Travis County because of suspected sexual abuse, serious physical injury, and for children who have witnessed a violent crime. Most of the children who walk in our doors are under the age of 13.

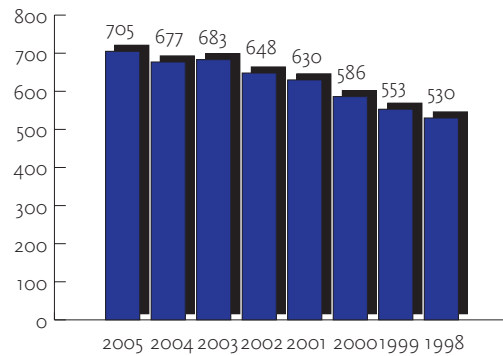
Consider the story of three sisters*....

Late in the afternoon Alejandra, Maria and Selena* were brought to the Center for an emergency appointment by an English-speaking CPS caseworker. When the girls arrived, they were very uncertain about what was going on and what would happen next, since they did not speak English. The Center's program coordinator, a Spanish speaker, stayed with the girls, eased their fears, and helped them understand that the Center was a safe place. After speaking with an on-site prosecutor, Center forensic interviewers interviewed each child in her native language. Maria corroborated her ten-year-old sister's outcry of repeated rape by their father, the sole caretaker. This occurred routinely while all three girls slept in the bed with him. After the interviews, detectives and interviewers talked with the girls about the next steps: Selena's medical exam, placement in a safe home, and other critical events that would take place in the next few days. The Center's ability to offer immediate services in a child's primary language increases the child's access to safety and healing after abuse.

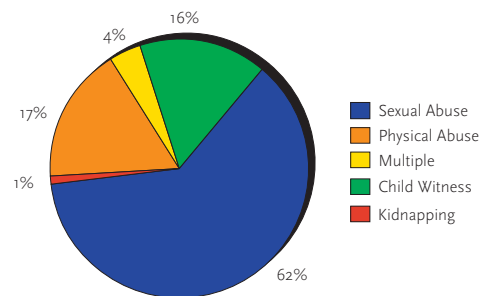
The collaboration of all the agency partners at the Center reduces the number of times children tell what happened, plans are made for their safety, and the family or other caretaker receives guidance and care to reduce the trauma of the investigative process. Children and caregivers receive crisis intervention, follow-up appointments are made with clinical staff, and other services are identified to initiate the healing process. In 2005, the Center served 1,303 children and 917 adults.

**Names and other identifying circumstances have been changed to protect the privacy of children and families.*

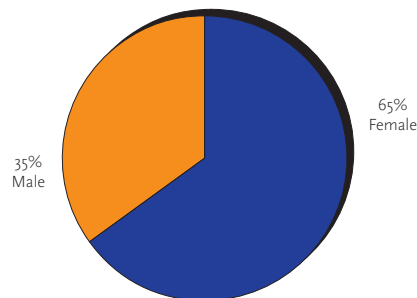
Number of Children Interviewed: 2005



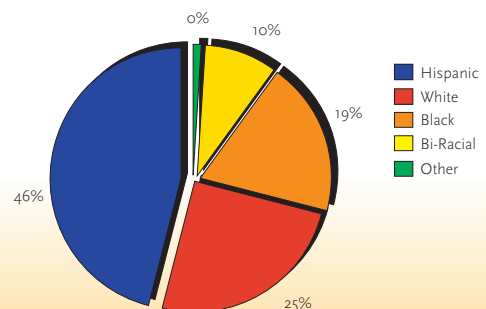
Reason Children Were Interviewed: 2005



Gender of Interviewed Children: 2005



Background of Children Interviewed: 2005





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COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW DO CHILDREN COME TO THE CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION?

All reports of abuse originate through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Service or law enforcement agencies in Travis County. They then send children with suspected abuse to the Center for Child Protection to begin the investigative process. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., and staff is on-call 24 hours a day.

HOW DOES THE CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION HELP?

The mission of the Center for Child Protection is to reduce trauma to children during the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases. We provide the facility and support that brings the Child Protection Team (CPT) professionals to the child at the Center for Child Protection. This model promotes better communication between CPT professionals and parents/caregivers. Better communication allows for more accurate, immediate assessment of a child's safety and better information to parents/caregivers about the criminal justice process. All of this means that children are less traumatized and can begin the recovery process.

WHAT DOES THE CENTER DO TO HELP CHILDREN?

The Center provides a specially-equipped, child-friendly atmosphere to place children at ease when they visit the Center. Volunteers keep children occupied with toys, books, and coloring projects while their families confer with police officers and social workers. Children then are interviewed by trained forensic interviewers who record what each child has to say, so their account can be used by investigators. After children are interviewed, each child receives a small, nutritious snack and a small stuffed animal to take with them. Subsequent appointments with clinical staff may involve a medical examination and/or therapy sessions to give children a safe place to express and process the trauma they have experienced, so they can continue the healing process. A host of services and support is also available for families.

DO CHILDREN SLEEP AT THE CENTER?

No. Children are scheduled for appointments that last from one to three hours.

WHY DO CHILDREN "FALL THROUGH THE CRACKS" IN THE SYSTEM?

The child abuse investigation and intervention systems are overwhelmed with cases, a lack of resources, and an enormous need for communication. Although the current system is not perfect, we are changing the way these children's cases are managed. Continued community participation and increased public awareness are key to ongoing improvement.

HOW CAN I REPORT CHILD ABUSE?

By law, citizens are required to make a report if they suspect or witness child abuse. Child abuse may be reported to a toll-free, 24-hour hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or by calling 911.

CAN I VOLUNTEER?

Yes! Our 125 volunteers make our program possible. Some work directly with children and families. Others prefer to help with special events, plant flowers, help maintain our facilities, or plan teddy bear drives at their offices. In-depth training, an interview, and records check is required of all volunteers. If you would like to find out more or would like to request an application, contact Melissa Faz Soliz, Volunteer Coordinator, at 512.472.1164.

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A Public/Private Partnership with the Travis County District Attorney's Office, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Children's Hospital of Austin, Austin Police Department, Travis County Sheriff's Office, Austin Independent School District Police Department, Pflugerville Police Department, Jonestown Police Department, Lakeway Police Department, Cedar Park Police Department, Leander Police Department, Sunset Valley Police Department, Lago Vista Police Department, Manor Police Department, Rollingwood Police Department, Bee Cave Police Department, West Lake Hills Police Department, and Mustang Ridge Police Department

Founding Member, National Children's Alliance, Inc. | Founding Member, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc.

A United Way Capital Area Partner Agency | A Project of the Junior League of Austin