

Hope Child Advocacy Center (Hope of South Texas, Inc.)

Due to the complex nature of child abuse cases, our systems require the involvement of many different professionals to investigate, prosecute, and intervene.

Children's Advocacy Centers provide a safe, child-friendly environment where law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medical and mental health professionals may share information and develop effective, coordinated strategies sensitive to the needs of each unique case and child.

Signs of child abuse can be subtle, and in many cases, nonexistent. Changes in your child's routine or new unexplained behaviors are worth a second look. Signs you might observe are:

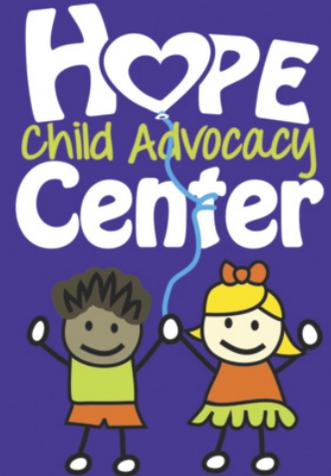
- Unexplained injuries
- Changes to emotional behavior
- Returning to less mature/younger behaviors
- Fear of going home
- Changes in eating
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in school performance or attendance
- Lack of personal care in hygiene
- Risk-taking behaviors
- Inappropriate sexual behaviors

Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc., a statewide association that promotes the efforts of the local CACs by coordinating and providing training, technical assistance, resources and funding.

Founded in 1994 as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership association with a charter membership of 13 local CACs, CACTX is the largest organization of CACs in the nation.

The mission of CACTX is to restore the lives of abused children by supporting CACs in partnership with communities and agencies investigating and prosecuting child abuse.

member of:



www.hopecenterstx.org

If you are interested in learning more, or becoming a volunteer at Hope Child Advocacy Center, please contact us at 361.573.HOPE (4673).



Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 3651 • Victoria, TX 77903

We believe that every child is
entitled to a life free of
violence and full of possibilities.

Hope Child Advocacy Center

Our mission is to lessen the emotional trauma of child victims in sexual, physical and mental abuse cases. As an organization it is our vision to embrace the belief every child is entitled to a life free of violence and full of possibilities.

Hope Child Advocacy Center is one of a growing number of children's advocacy centers in Texas. We serve children between the ages of 0-18 that have exclusively been referred by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or local law enforcement agencies.

In January 2002, Hope Child Advocacy Center was established as part of Hope of South Texas, Inc. The agency was established to assist in combating child abuse by partnering with: Law Enforcement Agencies, Texas Department of Family & Protective Services – Children's Protective Services, District Attorneys, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, and Mental Health Professionals.

Representing members of these agencies meet monthly and through the multidisciplinary team approach attempt to make the experience of the abused child less traumatic as they move in the course of the legal process.

What We Do:

- Provide a neutral, child friendly facility
- Conduct videotaped forensic interviews
- Work in conjunction with Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners to provide medical consultations
- Participate in a multidisciplinary team approach, aiding in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases
- Provide case coordination/management from initial referral through case disposition
- Conduct case reviews/tracking
- Provide child and family advocacy
- Provision of trauma focused mental health services.
- Court accompaniment
- Initiate referrals for counseling, therapy, medical exams, and other community resources for children and families as needed
- Provide court testimony
- Conducts awareness education and prevention programs to schools, civic organizations and other professional groups
- Provide training for professionals from such fields as education, religion, criminal justice, healthcare and social services
- Recruit and train volunteers to assist in the operation of the agency and fundraising events

How to Respond to an Outcry of Abuse:

- Remain calm.
- Always believe the child...children rarely lie about such an intense and painful topic. In fact, statistics indicate that children only lie about abuse 2-8% of the time! Your response to the disclosure of abuse is critical to the child's ability to resolve and heal.
- Assure the child that they did the right thing in telling...a child who is close to the abuser may feel guilty about revealing the secret. The child may feel frightened if the abuser has threatened to harm the child or other family members as punishment for disclosing the abuse.
- Tell the child that they are not to blame for the abuse...in attempting to make sense of the abuse most children will believe that somehow they caused it or may even view it as a form of punishment for imagined or real wrongdoings.
- Do not make promises.
- Let the child tell their story, but leave the questioning to the professionals. In child abuse cases, the child's statement will often be the key evidence utilized by investigators to determine the facts of what has occurred. Preservation of the statement is critical to ensuring the integrity of the investigation. Therefore, when responding to an outcry, let the child use her/his own words to tell you what has happened, but leave the detailed questioning to the professionals. This is critical to ensuring the integrity of the investigation.
- File a report with Texas Department of Family and Protective Services within 48 hours. Statewide intake to report abuse is open 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week...call 1.800.252.5400. If the child is in immediate danger, call 911.

