



AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT
Community Service Agency - Funding Request

This fillable form is available on our website: www.leecountyil.com

Section 1: Program Overview/Eligibility

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds enable local governments to provide a wide range of assistance to individuals and households, including support for unemployed workers and aid to households facing food, housing or other financial insecurity, to help alleviate the economic hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lee County is seeking partnerships with community service organizations to provide aid to individuals and households. Interested agencies should verify eligibility, complete the following application, and provide supporting documentation to apply.

A. Important Dates.

- Applications will be accepted via email between January 10-February 28, 2022.
Notification of the grant award will be on or about March 15, 2022. The first (of two) payments will be on or about April 1, 2022.
All grant money awarded must be expended by March 30, 2023.

B. Agency Eligibility. To be eligible for funding assistance:

- The Agency must be a not-for-profit agency registered with the Illinois Secretary of State.
The Agency must be located within or serving individuals that reside within the corporate boundaries of Lee County.
The Agency must agree to provide timely and accurate reporting of the funding uses for Lee County to comply with reporting requirements to the United States Treasury.
The Agency must comply with all federal sub-award compliance requirements as listed in Page 3 of this document.

C. Program Eligibility.

- The proposed use of funding must deliver aid to Lee County unemployed workers, households facing food, housing, or other financial insecurity, or to support survivor's benefits for family members of COVID-19 victims. See Page 2 for more details on eligible uses. Include a description of the proposed program and any supporting documentation with this application.

B. Available Funding.

- Funding up to a maximum of \$10,000 is available per Agency. Funding may be allocated in increments over a specified period at the discretion of Lee County.

C. Program Information.

- Email application to Sara Leisner, Lee County ARPA Grant Coordinator at arpa@countyoflee.org.

Section 2: Agency contact information (please print)

Agency Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center Agency Tax ID# 30-0135798
Agency Phone Number 815-284-1891 Agency Fax # (if available) 888-901-3617
Agency Address 215 E. 1st St. Suite 110 Dixon, IL 61021
Agency Representative Jessica Cash Title Executive Director
Representative Email jcash@shiningstarcac.org Phone 815-284-1891

Section 3: Required Documentation (attach to this application)

- 1. Description of the intended use of the funding, including the total dollar amount of funding requested.
2. Copy of the Illinois Secretary of State registration as a not-for-profit agency
3. Completed Form W-9, Request for Taxpayer Identification Number

Section 4: Signature

I hereby depose and say that I am an authorized representative of the Agency, that I have read this application, that I have personal knowledge of the contents thereof, that the same is true in substance and fact, and that I will comply with all grant and reporting requirements to Lee County on behalf of the Agency.

Jessica Cash Digitally signed by Jessica Cash Date: 2022.02.28 10:55:44 -0600 2/28/22
Signature of Agency Representative Date

Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center
215 E. 1st St. Suite 110 Dixon, IL 61021
815-284-1891

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds
Community Service Agency Funding

Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center is a 501c3 not for profit agency that serves children and families in Lee and Ogle Counties. The mission of Shining Star is to transform victims of child abuse into survivors. Each year Shining Star provides Forensic Interviews for over 150 children, and provides valuable advocacy, and counseling services to those children and their non offending caregivers. Shining Star has served the Lee County community since 2002, and continues to grow in services to help reduce child abuse in Lee County.

Negative Economic Impact - In 2020 when the pandemic started to affect our community, Shining Star continued to provide in person services to ensure the most vulnerable populations were not denied services due to the pandemic. Forensic Interviews continued to occur in person, trauma therapy continued to occur in person at Shining Star. Throughout the past two years our victim services have continued. One thing Shining Star was not able to continue was our vital fundraising events. As a 501c3 organization we rely on fundraising events to help pay for expenses not covered by various state and federal grants. During the pandemic fundraising events had to be held virtually which did not bring the level of revenue to the organization that past fundraising events had. Our fall fundraisers in 2020 and 2021 were not able to be held at all. Donations decreased as people were out of work for some time, and court fines and fees decreased for a time, while court had paused payment. The decrease in revenue has forced Shining Star to not purchase some needed supplies or utilize funding that has since dwindled.

Funding Guidelines - The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Community Service Agency Funding) allows for not-for-profit agencies to apply for funding to help recover from the negative impacts the coronavirus pandemic has caused. The drastic decrease in fundraising and donation funds has caused a negative financial impact on Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center over the past two years. Funds from the Community Service Agency Funding would help us pay for expenses related to our required annual fiscal audit, expenses related to our equipment to allow communication online (scanning, faxing, copying), and expenses for printing and materials given to families who visit Shining Star to help educate on their child's experiences and child abuse in general. Previously these expenses were covered by donations or fundraising efforts. The sustainability plan for these items will be to begin fundraising efforts again when federal restrictions are lifted on group events to fund these items.

Timeline - The funds received from the Community Service Agency Funding will begin to be utilized on April 1, 2022 and will end on March 30, 2023. Some funds will be spent out before the end of 2022 and some will remain to be spent in the beginning of 2023. Shining Star is requesting funding in the amount of \$9392, see attached budget for a break out of expense amounts.

Other Funding Sources – Shining Star receives state and federal grants to help with salary and agency expenses. The requested items are not paid for by any other federal, state, or local grants. At this time there are no matching funds for these specific items. If funding is not received some items will go unpurchased, and some items that are necessity will be paid for by future donations, that may come in.

Funding Budget

Item	Amount	Purchased From	Purpose
FY22 Fiscal Audit	\$6000	Wipfli	Required financial audit of years income and expenses required as a 501c3 receiving any state and federal grants
Copy/Fax/Scanner Machine Contractual Fee	\$1392	DeLage Landen	This funding will pay for 12 months of service of our lease for this machine. This machine is required as many communications are done through scanning, copying, and faxing
Printing Expense for Shining Star Educational Brochures for Families “About your Child’s Visit to Shining Star” *	\$500	Fischers Inc.	These brochures are given to each family that visits Shining Star to explain Shining Stars service and the needed information about their child’s experience.
Printing Expense for “Handbook for Caregivers of Abused Children” Shining Star Publication *	\$500	Fischers Inc	This handbook was created by Shining Star for families that explains the “system” their child is experiencing as part of an investigation.
Supplies for caregiver and child education about parenting and child abuse prevention *(sample of items, may not be exact)	\$1000	Positive Promotions	These materials will provide products made for children and parents to educate on positive parenting and child abuse prevention and treatment. These will be given to children and parents at the time of their visit to Shining Star
Total	\$9392		

*Examples of items attached

Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification

Give Form to the requester. Do not send to the IRS.

Go to www.irs.gov/FormW9 for instructions and the latest information.

Print or type. See Specific Instructions on page 3.

1 Name (as shown on your income tax return). Name is required on this line; do not leave this line blank.
Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center

2 Business name/disregarded entity name, if different from above

3 Check appropriate box for federal tax classification of the person whose name is entered on line 1. Check only one of the following seven boxes.

Individual/sole proprietor or single-member LLC

Limited liability company. Enter the tax classification (C=C corporation, S=S corporation, P=Partnership) _____

Other (see Instructions) ▶

C Corporation

S Corporation

Partnership

Trust/estate

4 Exemptions (codes apply only to certain entities, not individuals; see Instructions on page 3):

Exempt payee code (if any) **A**

Exemption from FATCA reporting code (if any) _____

5 Address (number, street, and apt. or suite no.) See instructions.
215 E. 1st St. Suite 110

6 City, state, and ZIP code
Dixon IL 61021

7 List account number(s) here (optional)

Part I Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)

Enter your TIN in the appropriate box. The TIN provided must match the name given on line 1 to avoid backup withholding. For individuals, this is generally your social security number (SSN). However, for a resident alien, sole proprietor, or disregarded entity, see the instructions for Part I, later. For other entities, it is your employer identification number (EIN). If you do not have a number, see *How to get a TIN*, later.

Social security number

			-			-			
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OR

Employer identification number

30	-	0135798
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Note: If the account is in more than one name, see the instructions for line 1. Also see *What Name and Number To Give the Requester* for guidelines on whose number to enter.

Part II Certification

Under penalties of perjury, I certify that:

- The number shown on this form is my correct taxpayer identification number (or I am waiting for a number to be issued to me); and
- I am not subject to backup withholding because: (a) I am exempt from backup withholding, or (b) I have not been notified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that I am subject to backup withholding as a result of a failure to report all interest or dividends, or (c) the IRS has notified me that I am no longer subject to backup withholding; and
- I am a U.S. citizen or other U.S. person (defined below); and
- The FATCA code(s) entered on this form (if any) indicating that I am exempt from FATCA reporting is correct.

Certification instructions. You must cross out item 2 above if you have been notified by the IRS that you are currently subject to backup withholding because you have failed to report all interest and dividends on your tax return. For real estate transactions, item 2 does not apply. For mortgage interest paid, acquisition or abandonment of secured property, cancellation of debt, contributions to an individual retirement arrangement (IRA), and generally, payments other than interest and dividends, you are not required to sign the certification, but you must provide your correct TIN. See the instructions for Part II, later.

Sign Here Signature of U.S. person ▶ **Janica Cash** Date ▶ **2/28/22**

General Instructions

Section references are to the Internal Revenue Code unless otherwise noted.

Future developments. For the latest information about developments related to Form W-9 and its instructions, such as legislation enacted after they were published, go to www.irs.gov/FormW9.

Purpose of Form

An individual or entity (Form W-9 requester) who is required to file an information return with the IRS must obtain your correct taxpayer identification number (TIN) which may be your social security number (SSN), individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN), adoption taxpayer identification number (ATIN), or employer identification number (EIN), to report on an information return the amount paid to you, or other amount reportable on an information return. Examples of information returns include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Form 1099-DIV (dividends, including those from stocks or mutual funds)
- Form 1099-MISC (various types of income, prizes, awards, or gross proceeds)
- Form 1099-B (stock or mutual fund sales and certain other transactions by brokers)
- Form 1099-S (proceeds from real estate transactions)
- Form 1099-K (merchant card and third party network transactions)
- Form 1098 (home mortgage interest), 1098-E (student loan interest), 1098-T (tuition)
- Form 1099-C (canceled debt)
- Form 1099-A (acquisition or abandonment of secured property)

Use Form W-9 only if you are a U.S. person (including a resident alien), to provide your correct TIN.

If you do not return Form W-9 to the requester with a TIN, you might be subject to backup withholding. See *What is backup withholding*, later.



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

February 2, 2022

SHINING STAR CHILDRENS
ADVOCACY CENTER
215 E. FIRST ST, STE 110
DIXON, IL 61021

Kwame Raoul
ATTORNEY GENERAL

RE: RE: Status of SHINING STAR CHILDRENS ADVOCACY CENTER under the Illinois
Charitable Laws
CO# 01047913

Dear Registrant:

This letter is pursuant to your request that the Attorney General confirm the status of SHINING STAR CHILDRENS ADVOCACY CENTER under the Charitable Organization Laws.

This organization is currently registered with the Attorney General's Charitable Trust and Solicitations Bureau as CO# 01047913. It is current in the filing of its financial reports, having filed its report for the period ended June 30, 2020, and has received an extension of time to file its June 30, 2021 report, until February 28, 2022. Please let us know if you require further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CF", written over a horizontal line.

Christopher Flint, Compliance Officer II
Charitable Trusts Bureau
100 West Randolph Street, 11th Floor
Chicago, IL 60601-3175
(312) 814-5840

★ On March 4th Celebrate Employee Appreciation Day! ★



POSITIVE PROMOTIONS®



Menu

Find ways to recognize, educate & inspire...



Home / Healthcare / Kids Wellness / Kids Health and Safety / 5 Rules To Teach Your Child About Body Safety Two-Sided English/Spanish Glancer - Personalization Available

5 Rules To Teach Your Child About Body Safety Two-Sided English/Spanish Glancer - Personalization Available

Item # CSD-90

☆☆☆☆ Write a review

5 Rules To Teach Your Child About Body Safety Two-Sided English/Spanish Glancer - Personalization Available



Request a Free Sample

1 Select Quantity

Pricing - Need more? Call 877-258-1225 for pricing beyond quantity shown

QTY QTY EACH

\$0.45

\$0.44

\$0.43

\$0.41

\$0.39

\$0.37

\$0.36

Minimum Order Quantity: 25

Minimum Personalization Quantity: 200

2 Select Print Option

Need help? Get a FREE design consultation

Customize:

Leave Blank

Order Sample

Let Us Do It For You

Select Personalization Color



Add Artwork

Stock Art Gallery

Browse Stock Art Gallery

OR

Upload artwork after order is complete

More Info on Uploading

Add Text

Enter Line 1 of Your Personal Message

Enter Line 2 of Your Personal Message

Enter Line 3 of Your Personal Message

Enter Line 4 of Your Personal Message

Enter Line 5 of Your Personal Message

0 @ \$0.45:	\$0.00
-Setup Fee:	\$30.00
Upcharge:	\$0.00

Total: Quantity is too low

Please add at least 200 items

ADD TO CART

Sign in to start/continue a quote

Description

- Gives parents tips for dealing with a sensitive yet important subject
- Tips include: *Explain that private parts are those that are covered by bathing suits and that they should stay covered. Say, "It's not OK for others to look at or touch your private parts, unless that person is your doctor or me."*
- Bilingual to reach a wider audience
- Pinhole at top for easy hanging
- Add your custom personalization to bottom of English side

Product Specifications

Minimum Personalization Quantity: 200

Minimum Order Quantity: 25

Product Size: 8 7/8" X 8 3/4"

Imprint Specifications

Imprint Size: 3" X 1 1/4", UP TO 5 LINES OR LOGO, 35 CHARACTERS PER LINE

Max Imprint Characters/Line: 25

Production Time: Ready to ship in 10 business days after artwork approval

Setup Fee: A Setup Fee of \$30.00 will apply to Personalized Items only.

Write A Review



BE THE FIRST TO WRITE A REVIEW

Related Products



Good Touch/Bad Touch Coloring Book - Personalization Available



Be Smart: Say "No" To Strangers Educational Activities Book (Spanish) - Personalization Available



My Safety Matters! English/Spanish Educational Activities Book - Personalization Available



My Safety Matters! Personalization Available



Menu

Find ways to recognize, educate & inspire...



Home / Healthcare / Child Abuse Prevention Month / Child Abuse Prevention Essentials / 10 Tips For Positive Parenting Two-Sided English/Spanish Glancer - Personalization Available

10 Tips For Positive Parenting Two-Sided English/Spanish Glancer - Personalization Available

Item # CSD-57

☆☆☆☆☆ Write a review

10 Tips For Positive Parenting Two-Sided English/Spanish Glancer - Personalization Available



Request a Free Sample

1 Select Quantity

Pricing - Need more? Call 877-258-1225 for pricing beyond quantity shown

QTY	QTY EACH	\$0.45	\$0.44	\$0.43	\$0.41	\$0.39	\$0.37	\$0.36
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Minimum Order Quantity: 25

Minimum Personalization Quantity: 200

2 Select Print Option

Need help? Get a FREE design consultation

Customize

Leave Blank

Order Sample

Let Us Do It For You

Select Personalization Color



Add Artwork

Stock Art Gallery

Browse Stock Art Gallery

OR

Upload artwork after order is complete

More Info on Uploading

Add Text

Enter Line 1 of Your Personal Message

Enter Line 2 of Your Personal Message

Enter Line 3 of Your Personal Message

Enter Line 4 of Your Personal Message

Enter Line 5 of Your Personal Message

0 @ \$0.45:	\$0.00
Setup Fee:	\$30.00
Upcharge:	\$0.00

Total: Quantity is too low
Please add at least 200 items

ADD TO CART

Sign in to start/continue a quote

Description

- Helps parents treat children with love, respect, and care, and to be a positive influence
- Tips include: Be A Good Role Model, Your Child Learns From The Example You Set, Give Your Child Praise, And Hugs, And Say 'I Love You' Often; plus 8 more
- Reach a wider audience with English on front, Spanish on back
- Pinhole on top for easy hanging
- Personalization appears on English side
- Ready to ship in 4 business days after art approval

Product Specifications

Minimum Personalization Quantity: 200

Minimum Order Quantity: 25

Product Size: 3 7/8" X 8 3/4"

Imprint Specifications

Imprint Size: 3" X 1 1/4", UP TO 5 LINES OR LOGO; 35 CHARACTERS PER LINE

Max Imprint Characters/Line: 35

Production Time: Ready to ship in 10 business days after artwork approval.

Setup Fee: A Setup Fee of \$30.00 will apply to Personalized items only.

Write A Review



BE THE FIRST TO WRITE A REVIEW

Related Products



10 Tips For Positive Discipline 2-Sided Bilingual Glancer - Personalization Available



Know The Warning Signs Of Child Abuse Two-Sided English/Spanish Glancer - Personalization Available



101 Ways To Praise Kids 2-Sided Bilingual Glancer - Personalization Available

★ On March 4th Celebrate Employee Appreciation Day! ★



Menu

Find ways to recognize, educate & inspire...

Home / Healthcare / Child Abuse Prevention Month / Child Abuse Prevention Educational Tools / It's OK To Tell! Value Pack

It's OK To Tell! Value Pack

Item # NT-5903

☆☆☆☆ Write a review

It's OK To Tell! Value Pack

NT-5903_1.jpg NT-5903_2.jpg NT-5903_3.jpg NT-5903_4.jpg



Request a Free Sample

1 Select Quantity

Pricing - Need more? Call 877-258-1225 for pricing beyond quantity shown

QTY	QTY EACH	SALE	\$2.74	\$2.50	\$2.22	\$2.01	\$1.88	\$1.76
			\$2.39	\$2.19	\$1.94	\$1.74	\$1.64	\$1.54

Minimum Order Quantity: 10

0 @ \$2.39:	\$0.00
Setup Fee:	\$0.00
Upcharge:	\$0.00

Total: Quantity is too low
Please add at least 10 items

ADD TO CART

Sign in to start/continue a quote

Description

- Value Pack is a great money-saving way to reach and help more kids!
- *It's OK To Tell!* Educational Activities Book: 16 pages
- Box of 4 non-toxic crayons for kids
- *It's OK To Tell!* Bookmark
- *Kids Are Special* Goody Bag
- 4 items in all
- For grades K to 3

Product Specifications

Minimum Order Quantity: 10

Product Size: Activity Book: 8 1/2" X 11", 16 Pages, Bookmark: 2 3/4" X 8"

Imprint Specifications

Production Timer Ready to ship in 4 business days

Write A Review



BE THE FIRST TO WRITE A REVIEW

Related Products



Preventing Child Abuse Slide Chart * Personalization Available



Children Are Our Tomorrow; Care For Them Today Posters - Pack of 5

Sign up for Exclusive Offers

Enter your email address

Sign Up

Contact Us

Customer Service

Your Order

Shop With Us

Our Company

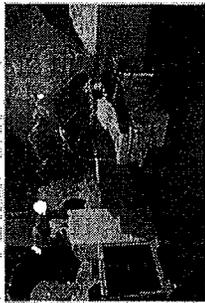
Connect with Us



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Will my child need a medical exam?

Based on the allegation or the interview, the members of the investigative team may decide a medical evaluation is needed. For many children, knowing their bodies are okay is a huge relief. If seeing our medical provider will make your child less worried or anxious, then be sure to let us know. We work with a physician with specialized training in child abuse who conducts the medical evaluations here at SSCAC. If a medical exam is needed, our Advocate will arrange a time with you and the doctor. The exams are provided at no cost to the families and are done in a child friendly exam room at SSCAC. It's important to realize that in most cases of child sexual abuse, there are no medical findings and the medical



provider can help explain this to you more fully. If your child wants you to be with them for the exam, you can be.

Will my child need counseling?

Some children do and some don't. Every child is unique in how they cope. Some may not need counseling now, but will need counseling in the future. Maybe you need counseling more than your child to help you cope with everything that has happened. Your Advocate will listen and provide referral information. What we do know is that children who are believed and protected from continued abuse are able to do quite well. If you do decide to seek counseling services, it is very important to your child's recovery that you work with a therapist specifically trained and experienced in trauma and abuse. This is a field with special expertise. In most instances, it is important to provide your child with an opportunity to talk with a professional.

Too often parents just want their child to "forget" about the abuse and "move on." That's easier said than done. Counseling can help your child and family through this very difficult time. It's best to address issues and concerns now, rather than years later. We have a therapist available at SSCAC or we can also provide you with referrals to therapists in the community. These services are also provided at no cost to the families.

Remember:

- ★ Your support is what your child needs most at this time.
- ★ Continue to let your child know you love, believe, and support her/him.
- ★ Parents need support, too. Make use of counseling and other support available to you through SSCAC.
- ★ You may call SSCAC at any time.
For a supportive listening ear.
For information about the status of your case.
For suggestions about how to help your child best.

How do I contact Shining Star?

PH# 815.284.1891
FAX# 888.901.3617

shiningstarcac@yahoo.com
www.shiningstarcac.org

YOUR APPOINTMENT

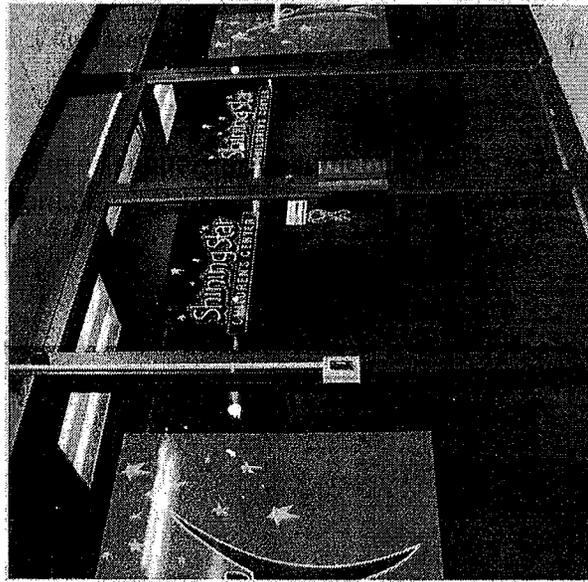
INTERVIEW DATE: _____

INTERVIEW TIME: _____

This project was supported by Grant #15-VA-GX-0049, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, through the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Points of view or opinions contained within this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice, or the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.



ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S VISIT TO SHINING STAR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER



ShiningStar

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

Helping kids when they need it most

215 E. 1st Street, Suite 110
Dixon, IL
815.284.1891
www.shiningstarcac.org
shiningstarcac@yahoo.com

We at Shining Star want to focus on what matters most.....

Your Child!

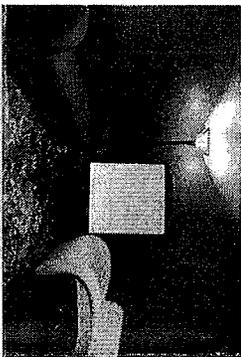
We know this is likely to be a difficult time for you and your child. We hope this information helps you understand what to expect before, during, and after your child's visit to Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center. If you have any questions or concerns, please call and talk to us. We will do our best to answer your questions and help ease your concerns.

What happens at Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center (SSCAC)?

Shining Star CAC is a safe, child-friendly interview center located in Dixon, IL. Children come to SSCAC to speak with a trained interviewer about allegations of child sexual and/or physical abuse. The process involves a team of professionals from multiple agencies such as law enforcement, the Department of Children and Family Services, the State's Attorney's Office and SSCAC Staff. When you and your child arrive at SSCAC, a staff member will greet you in the reception area. A separate interview room with recording capabilities is used for the children to talk to our interviewer.

You are not alone!

Each year, Shining Star CAC works with over 200 children and their families, through forensic interviews, counseling, and advocacy services, to provide them with a safe, child-friendly space where they can talk about their abuse.



Who will my child talk to?

Your child will talk to one of our Forensic Interviewers. These interviewers have special training and experience in talking with children about difficult subjects. The goal is to make your child as comfortable as possible while gathering the necessary information. Questions are asked in a non-threatening and non-leading manner. The interviewer will move at a pace that is comfortable for your child and will never force a child to talk to them.

What do I tell my child about the SSCAC Interview?

You might tell your child, "We are going to Shining Star. It is a place where kids go to talk. The person you will be talking to talks to lots of kids about what happens to them. They need to know everything that you remember so that we can make sure you are safe and okay. It is important that you tell the truth and only talk about what really happened. It is okay for you to talk to them. **YOU ARE NOT IN ANY TROUBLE.**"

What will I be doing while my child is talking to someone?

Parents meet with the SSCAC's Family Advocate while the child is being interviewed. The Advocate is your support person. Please feel free to ask her any questions you may have. If she doesn't know the answer, she will try to find the answer for you. She will listen to your worries and concerns and provide resources to help you and your child through this difficult time. Our advocates are not therapists, but they can listen and get you the help you need.

Can I talk to my child about what happened?

While you want to be open and available to your child if they need to talk, you should not question your child about what happened. Listen and reassure your child that he/she will be alright and that it's okay for them to talk about what happened when they come to SSCAC.



What happens after the interview?

You will be able to talk to members of the investigative team. They will tell you in general terms what they learned from the interview. You will have an opportunity to ask questions and voice your concerns. Remember, your child's interview is just the first step in the investigative process. There may be other witnesses that need to be interviewed. There may be physical evidence that needs to be photographed or collected. The alleged offender will be interviewed. At this point in the process, it's often difficult to predict what will happen. All of the information will be turned over to the State's Attorney's Office and they will decide whether or not to prosecute. Your Family Advocate will keep in regular contact to let you know what is happening on the case. If you have questions at any point during the investigation or prosecution of your child's case, please feel free to contact your Advocate. Parents and children are often worried about whether they will have to testify in court. It's really way too early to know. If this happens, your Advocate will be with you every step of the way.



Helping kids when they need it most

www.shiningstarcac.org

Resources

www.nctsn.org

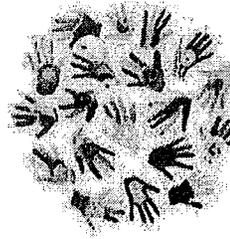
National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.mosac.net

Mothers of Sexually Abused Children

www.stopitnow.org

Stop It Now!



NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
ALLIANCE

ACCREDITED
MEMBER



United Way of Lee County
United Way of Ogle County
Community Partner

To guide you through
the system...



A handbook for caregivers
of abused children

Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center
215 E. First Street, Suite 110

Dixon, IL 61021

(815) 284-1891

www.shiningstarcac.org

Reading List for Caregivers

Continued from page 29

Davies, V., Andrew, H., & Pearce, C. (1995). *Betrayal of trust: Understanding and overcoming the legacy of childhood sexual abuse*. Bath: Ashgrove.

Hooper, C. (1992). *Mothers Surviving Child Sexual Abuse*. NY, NY: Routledge.

Mars, B. L. (1999). *Bobbie's story: A guide for foster parents*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

Schaefer, K. (1993). *What only a mother can tell you about child sexual abuse*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

Stone, R. D. (2004). *No secrets, no lies: How black families can heal from sexual abuse*. NY, NY: Harlem Moon, an imprint of Broadway Books.



Welcome to The Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center

Your child is at The Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), because of concerns about possible abuse. You may notice that in this handbook Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center is often referred to as the CAC. This is done to respect the privacy of you and your child such that others will not know of your affiliation with the CAC unless you choose to share that information.

Our goals are to:

- Do the best job possible in finding out what happened
- Work with the child protective legal systems to help the child
- Help you understand the child protective and legal systems
- Help make the process as comfortable as possible for you
- Help your children and family begin to heal

We hope this handbook will help you understand more about child abuse. We also hope it will help you understand the system we use to respond to a report of abuse. Please call us at the CAC (815-284-1891) if you have questions.



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Reading List for Caregivers

Adams, C., & Fay, J. (1998). *Helping your child recover from sexual abuse*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Alexander, D. W. (1999). *Children changed by trauma: A healing guide*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.

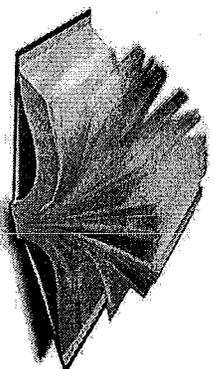
Bear, E., & Dimock, P. T. (1989). *Adults molested as children: A survivor's manual for women and men*. Orwell, VT: Safer Society Press.

Brohl, K., & Potter, J. C. (1988). *When your child has been molested: A parent's guide to healing and recovery*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Byerly, C. M. (1992). *The mother's book: How to survive the molestation of your child*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.

Coblentz, J. (1999). *Beauty for ashes: Biblical help for the sexually abused*. Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publications, Inc.

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Taking Care of Yourself

You are going through a very difficult time, and you probably feel pressured from many directions. Although you are trying to take care of a lot of other people, you also need to take care of yourself. Your well-being is very important, so you need to find time to do something just for you and plan to do it regularly. This may be difficult to do, but it is in the best interest of you and your child.

Some suggested activities include the following: Take a walk, have lunch with a friend, go to the movies, go out to dinner, join an exercise class, take a drive, and last, but equally important, join a support group or begin counseling for yourself.



What is Trauma?

Trauma can be any event that, when witnessed or experienced by a child or adolescent, is extremely distressing to them. These events are sometimes in situations where the children feared for their lives or the lives of others. There are many different kinds of trauma including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Exposure to violence
- Loss of a significant loved one
- Natural disaster
- House fire
- Car accident

What Are Some Reactions to Trauma?

Each person can react in different ways to a traumatic event based on many things, such as age when the trauma occurred, the severity of the trauma, and the amount of time that has passed since the trauma. Some possible symptoms/effects include:

- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares and/or not wanting to sleep alone
- Difficulty not thinking about the event
- Increased fear in both safe and risky situations
- Feelings of shame or guilt
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty staying still
- Thoughts about death or dying
- Low self-esteem
- Mood swings
- Drop in grades/performance at school
- Irritability and problems with anger control
- Efforts to avoid talking about the event or doing things that remind the child about the event

What is Physical Abuse?

Child physical abuse is any physical force or action that results in, or may result in, a non-accidental injury of a child. Physical abuse is usually connected to physical punishment or is confused with child discipline. Although an injury resulting from physical abuse is not accidental, the parent or caregiver may not have intended to hurt the child. Physical abuse may involve a single episode or repeated episodes of abuse resulting in bruises, cuts, welts, burns, fractures, internal injuries, or in the most extreme cases, death. The injury may have resulted from severe discipline, including injurious spanking or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age or condition. Generally, physical abuse results from the following:

- Punching
- Kicking
- Shaking
- Stabbing
- Hitting with hand or object
- Poisoning
- Being held under water
- Beating
- Biting
- Throwing
- Choking
- Burning
- Suffocating

Physical abuse involves external injuries and is more easily detected than other forms of abuse. Some signs of physical abuse may include unexplained injuries, repeated injuries, cigarette burns, burns with a "doughnut" shape on the buttocks, friction burns, unexplained fractures, and changes in child behavior, such as becoming hyperactive, disruptive, aggressive, complacent, compliant, shy, withdrawn, or uncommunicative. A child may also wear clothing, such as long-sleeves, to purposely hide the injury.

Comments You Can Expect from Others About the Abuse

- "What exactly happened to your child?"
- "Are you sure your child didn't make it up?"
- "Why didn't you know it was happening?"
- "If it were my child, I'd just move away."
- "Your poor child must be feeling really guilty."

Remember, you do not owe anyone an explanation. It may be easier to just nod as an acknowledgement of what someone says. However, some acceptable responses include:

- "I'd rather not talk about it."
- "It's been a very difficult time for all of us."
- "I appreciate your concern."
- "I would prefer to respect my child's privacy."

Keep in mind that most people have very little knowledge about sexual abuse. For example, in response to the comment about your child feeling guilty, you could say that children always feel unnecessary guilt in these cases until they are assured that they are not responsible in any way for what happened. As a caregiver, you might also be experiencing some guilt, and as a result, you may feel defensive. In that case, a good response is, "Parents do their best, but we're only human."

Adults are the people most likely to say something to your child. You may want to tell your child that if someone says, "I'm sorry about what happened to you," respond with a simple, "Thank you." Let your child know that she does not always have to respond to comments or questions. Your child could say, "My mom and/or dad told me not to talk about it now."

Reference: *When Your Child Has Been Molested*, by Kathryn B. Hagans & Joyce Case

What to Say to Others

One challenge your family will face will be what to say to others about the abuse. Your child may feel embarrassed and/or responsible. If there is no publicity or public awareness, you can decide whom you will tell. Let your child know with which relatives or friends you will be discussing the abuse, and let your child have some choice about who is told.

Sometimes an extended family member is the first person to learn of the abuse. You may feel hurt that someone knew before you. However, understand that your child may have been trying to protect your feelings by telling someone else. Your child may have felt that person could tell you in a less upsetting way than s/he could.

If you are especially close to your family, you will probably want to talk with them about your child's abuse and how it has affected the family. It is important to keep in mind how these relatives usually react to stressful situations. Their reactions may include hysteria, horror, obvious distress, sincere concern, embarrassment, disgust, disinterest, or unnecessary questioning for intimate details. If you know they will react in a negative way, you may not want to share the information with them unless it becomes necessary. It is important to maintain your child's sense of privacy, self-control, and dignity. On the other hand, be careful not to make it seem like a "dirty secret", as this could cause more shame in your child.

Reference: *When Your Child Has Been Molested*, by Kathryn B. Hagan & Joyce Case



What is Sexual Abuse?

Sexual abuse occurs when a person forces a child to have any form of sexual contact or makes a child perform sexual acts. Sexual abuse may involve touching private parts (clothed or unclothed), penetration using an object, forced sexual acts between children, or making the child view, read, or participate in pornography. These acts are abuse even when offenders say they were gentle and did not hurt the child.

Sexual abuse is also known as molestation and exploitation. Sexual molestation does not always mean sexual intercourse. Sometimes older children abuse younger or smaller children. Sexual acts between children become abuse or molestation when one child uses coercion, force, or violence to get the other child to do the acts. Children with sexual behavior problems should be reported to social service agencies so that they can receive help.



Sexual abuse is often overwhelming to children, especially when an adult is involved. Most children are taught to trust adults. They tend to believe what adults tell them is true rather than to rely on their own feelings. This works against them in two ways. If the abuser tells the child that what is being done is okay, the child may doubt his or her own feelings that the abuse is inappropriate. Likewise, if a caregiver's initial reaction to the child's abuse report is "This can't be true!" the child may wonder if his or her own feelings are wrong. Children almost never tell about abuse "to create problems." More often, they fear that telling will make people angry at them. It is extremely difficult for children to report abuse.

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Reference: *When Your Child Has Been Molested* by Kathryn B. Hagan

How Caregivers Sometimes Feel When Abuse Has Been Reported

When abuse is reported, parents or caregivers sometimes feel as if they are on a roller coaster of emotions. This is normal. The report can affect your life in many ways, and it takes time to adjust. The following are some of the common thoughts and feelings of caregivers. You may feel one or more of these, or you may move from one to another.

1. **Denial.** Your first reaction may be not to believe or accept the possibility that abuse really happened. Or you may believe it happened but that no real harm was done. Caregivers often experience denial because it is too overwhelming to accept that the abuse occurred and that there will be after-effects. For some people, it takes time to overcome denial and face the realities of abuse.
2. **Anger.** At times, you may feel angry at yourself for not protecting the child. You may feel angry at the perpetrator (the person responsible for hurting your child) for what s/he did. You may even feel angry at the child. Be honest about your feelings and share them with a trusted person or group.



3. **Helplessness.** You probably do not know what to expect and feel, or that things are out of your control. Some parents may fear that their children will be taken away. Your Victim Advocate can help you to stay informed of how your child's case proceeds through the system.
4. **Lack of assertiveness.** You may feel invisible and think there is nothing you can do to help the situation get better. We will help you to learn what you can do to be an advocate for your child and yourself.

What to Expect from Counseling Services

What is counseling/therapy?

Counseling/Therapy is a unique opportunity for a child to meet with a trained professional who is willing and able to work together to establish goals for treatment and a pathway toward achieving those goals. For children who are coming to counseling for a history of abuse, this process also uses research-based treatment proven effective in helping children with the trauma.

How will counseling help my child?

The counseling relationship is a safe place for your child to label and express feelings and thoughts related to the abuse, such as anger, fear, and sadness. Your child will also be assisted in re-establishing the personal boundaries and sense of self-worth taken away by the abuser. Your child will learn that the abuse was not his/her fault.

How long will my child need to come to counseling?

Length of time in counseling varies. Your child's counselor will help your child set goals to be reached in therapy. An individual treatment plan will be made and reviewed periodically. Your child may need to seek counseling in the future when leaving home, getting married, or having a child.

How do I request counseling for my child?

You can request for a referral to be made for your child through any of the professionals dealing with your child's case. If your child may be best served by counseling services offered by Shining Star CAC, arrangements will be made with you to schedule an intake session. If services may be best offered by another counseling center, arrangements will be made with you to receive contact information for that center. Shining Star CAC may be reached at 815-284-1891.

How to Tell Your Child About the Legal Outcome

It is best to be honest and direct with your child. However, how much you explain depends on your child's age and level of understanding about the case. The most important thing is let your child know that you are proud of him/her for being brave.

When the case is completed, you may feel let down or have a period of depression. This happens to many parents, even if the legal proceedings had a positive outcome. If your child hears you express disappointment in the outcome, your child may think you are disappointed in him/her. Instead, find a supportive friend or counselor with whom you can share your feelings and frustration.

Remember you have done your best in trying to prevent further abuse and hold the offender responsible for what s/he did. Even if the case was dropped, ensuring your child's safety is a major accomplishment.

Some things you can say to your child if the alleged offender is not held legally accountable:

- Just because they didn't find _____ guilty, that does not mean they didn't believe you. It's just that they have to follow the court's rules, and sometimes it's hard for other people to prove that it happened.
- You may be wondering how someone can do something wrong or against the law and not be punished. It doesn't make sense to me either.
- It doesn't matter what the court process did. What matters is that you did what you needed to do—you told.
- You are safe. You have been very brave.



How Caregivers Sometimes Feel...

Continued from page 8

5. **Shock, numbness, repulsion.** You may have memories of being abused as a child, which may lead to shock, numbness, and repulsion for the new situation you find yourself in. If so, you may need to seek therapy for yourself to recover from the abuse.
6. **Guilt, self-blame.** You may feel it is all your fault. The offender is responsible for the abuse, not you. The best thing you can do now is support your child and learn all you can about how to make things better. Reading this handbook is a good first step.
7. **Hurt and betrayal.** It is normal to feel hurt from the loss of your child's innocence. You also may have lost a spouse or partner if that person was the offender. You may even have lost friends. It is very important to take time to grieve for these losses.
8. **Concern about money.** You may be worried about finances because of lost income.
9. **Fear of violence.** In homes where violence is common, you may fear the offender will try to harm you or your children. If so, call the YWCA Domestic Violence Program, at 815-626-7277 or HOPE of Ogle County at 815-562-8890.
10. **Fear of drug or alcohol abuse.** You may be afraid that you or the offender will abuse drugs or alcohol because of the stress or that one of you may have a relapse to an old addiction. If you need help, call Lutheran Social Services 815-626-7333 or Mississippi Centers 800-242-7642.

The Grooming Process: Steps the Abuser Takes to Set up Children

Some caregivers wonder how it is possible for their children to be abused. Offenders use many tactics to gain access to children. These include:

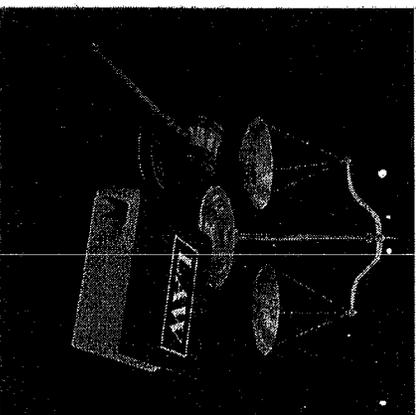
1. **Seeking out an approachable child:** Abusers usually pick children who are easy to get to (relatives, friends, and neighbors). They may also seek children who have emotional needs for friendship and attention.
2. **Establishing relationship with the child:** Abusers often seek ways to build trust and friendship with children. They may spend time playing with them, volunteering for child duty, becoming their "buddy," or buying them candy or presents.
3. **Breaking down the child's resistance to touch:** Abusers may find ways to touch children a lot. As a result, the children are often confused when the touch becomes sexual. The abusers may play games with a lot of physical contact, like wrestling, and they may tickle children and sneak sexual touches.
4. **Finding ways to isolate a child:** Abusers find excuses to be alone with children so they can molest them. For example, they may babysit, invite them to sleep over, or take them camping.
5. **Blaming the child and keeping the secret:** Abusers try to make the children feel responsible so they won't tell. They use statements like these:
 - "You know you like the way I touch you."
 - "If you tell, people will think you are bad."
 - "If you tell our 'special secret,' I will go to jail."
 - "If you tell your mother, she won't love you anymore."
 - "If you tell, you will be taken away from your family."

Limits of the Legal System

While the legal system is very important to your child's case and can be emotionally draining for you and your family, it is only one step in the process and is *not* essential to your child's recovery. Maintaining a focus on your child's wellbeing will help you to prioritize your emotional energy and hopefully lessen the frustrations of the legal process.

Another thing to remember: Day after day, therapists who talk with adult survivors of child sexual abuse hear them say, "My parents didn't do anything about it." However, your child will not say that if you are supportive and explain that you *will not* tolerate abuse.

Celebrate when the court case has ended. No matter what the outcome, conviction or not, tell the child it is over. Acknowledge that you both did your best and worked hard. Recognize your efforts and the end of this stage of the process.



Getting Ready for Court

If there is to be a trial, your Victim Witness Assistant at the State's Attorney's Office will take you and your child to the courtroom for a tour. Giving the child an early look at the courtroom and preparing him/her on what to expect can ease some of the child's fears, which may include the following:

- Seeing the abuser again
- Not wanting to go
- Wanting it to be over
- Wondering where you will be

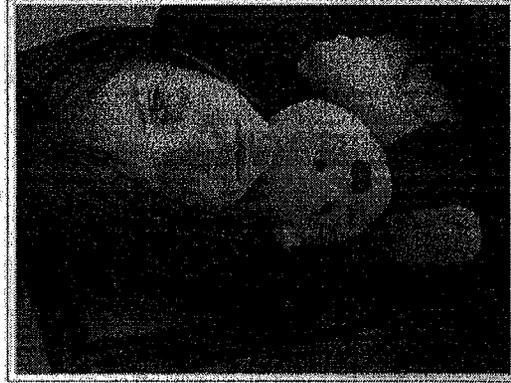
If you are a witness, you will not be allowed in the courtroom when your child is testifying. In some cases, it might be easier on your child not to have you there. However, your child should never be in the courtroom without a trusting, friendly face, so make sure your Family Advocate, a best friend, or a relative stays with your child at all times.



Signs Sometimes Shown by Abused Children

Children may have some of the following symptoms as a result of abuse:

- Nausea/upset stomach
- Change in appetite
- Crying
- Nightmares
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Anger and mood changes
- Withdrawal from others
- Avoidance of school/friends
- Clinging to parents
- Aggressiveness
- Change in school performance
- Rebelliousness
- Sexually inappropriate behavior
- Fears and phobias
- Lying
- Attention-seeking



Shining Star CAC and other community agencies offer services to help your child overcome the effects of trauma. Children react differently depending on age, extent of abuse, support from others, and their relationship with the offender. The single most important factor affecting the child's recovery is the level of support from the caregiver. It is this simple. If you do everything you can to support your child, the chances of recovery are much greater. If you feel torn between loyalty to your child and loyalty to the offender, Shining Star CAC has services available to help you sort it out.

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How to Act Toward Your Child

Provide safety, love, and support. Let them know it is okay to cry or to be mad. Make sure your child understands it is not his or her fault. Don't coach or pressure your child to talk about things.

Some things you can say that will really help your child:

- I believe you.
- I know it's not your fault.
- I'm glad I know about it.
- I'm sorry this happened to you.
- I will take care of you.
- I'm not sure what will happen next.
- Nothing about YOU made this happen. It has happened to other children too.
- You don't need to take care of me.
- I am upset, but not with you.
- I'm angry at the person who did this.
- I'm sad. You may see me cry. That's all right. I will be able to take care of you. I'm not mad at you.
- I don't know why the person did it. She has a problem.
- You can still love someone but hate what they did to you.



Working with the System

Continued from page 20

- Try not to overreact. It is a difficult time and emotions are probably running high. Losing control can hurt the case and overshadow the needs of the innocent victim, your child.
- Love, support, and protect your child at all costs. If the alleged offender is a significant person to you, balancing your feelings for the offender and your child can be very difficult. Remember that your child has only you to make healthy, protective decisions.
- Please cooperate with investigators. You will probably feel as if investigators are prying into your personal life, but this is necessary and vital to the case and to your child's welfare. The sooner the facts come out, the sooner the case can be resolved and you can return to a more normal life.
- Try to understand the investigator's perspective. You may feel that investigators do not care because they avoid showing emotions. In fact, investigators do care, and part of that caring involves remaining objective and calm in the face of extremely emotional situations.



Working with the System

The system is responsible for protecting children and holding offenders accountable. The more information and cooperation you give to the team of professionals working in the system, the better job they can do on the case.

Support people are available to help you. Shining Star CAC staff can be empathetic and are familiar with the legal system and child abuse and are available to help. The Victim Witness Assistant (at the State's Attorney's Office) is also available to keep you informed about the status of the case (court dates, etc.), help you work through the legal system, and assist you in obtaining financial assistance, if you are eligible.

Here are some basic tips for working with professionals in the system:

- Be calm and reassuring to your child. Please do not coach your child on what to say. It is important for the story to come out in your child's words and in your child's own time.
- Try to provide as many facts as you can when you are asked for information. Cases are built on the four W's: who, what, when, and where. Avoid guessing if you don't know the answer to a question—it is much better to say you do not know.
- Tell how you feel and why you feel that way. Your feelings are valuable in giving investigators insight. Although only facts are allowed in court, feelings can help give investigators ideas for how to proceed.
- Always be honest, even though the truth may not seem favorable to yourself or others.

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Some Things You Can Do:

- Return to a normal routine as soon as possible.
- See that your child receives counseling services as soon as possible. Trying to sweep the problem under the rug usually causes more problems because it will not go away.
- Find help for yourself. You don't have to do it all on your own.
- Contact Shining Star CAC for assistance.
- Teach your child the rules of personal safety. Tell them what to do if someone tries to touch them in an uncomfortable way.
- Be careful not to question your child about the abuse. If you do, you can jeopardize the case in court against your child's abuser. Specially trained professionals at Shining Star CAC will interview your child to obtain the necessary information without harming the case or causing further trauma. If your child wants to talk about it, listen supportively, but do not probe.
- Keep your child away from the person suspected of the abuse. This is to protect you, that person, and the child.
- Avoid discussing the case with other victims or their families.
- Never coach or advise your child on how to act or what to say to professionals or investigators. This could seriously damage the case.
- Avoid the suspect.
- Your child may need an extra sense of physical security. Stay close, and assure your child that you will keep him/her safe.
- Remember to give attention to your other children.

The Investigation

Following are the basic steps to an investigation of child sexual abuse.

1. Someone reports suspicion of abuse to authorities, either law enforcement or the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).
2. Interviews with the child are conducted, usually at Shining Star CAC. A specially trained Forensic Interviewer conducts the interview.
3. Medical exams may be conducted, if necessary.
4. Law Enforcement and/or DCFS will continue the investigation, which will include an interview with the alleged offender, if possible.
5. A team of professionals will meet to discuss the case and decide how to manage it. The team consists of medical professionals, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, child protection workers, and mental health professionals.
6. The case may be referred to Criminal or Family Court, or some other plan may be made for managing the case.



How the Legal System Responds to Abuse

The legal system's response to abuse can be confusing to children and families. Part of this confusion stems from the fact that two different "legal systems" can be working on the same case at the same time. These two systems are the "criminal" system and the "civil" system. In addition, there are two different court systems that can work on a child abuse case—Criminal Court and Family Court. Both courts may work on the same case at the same time, but they have different purposes.

The *Criminal Court* is concerned primarily with guilt or innocence of the accused and often uses a trial to decide on the suspect's guilt or innocence. The criminal trial focuses on issues such as:

- Is there evidence to prove the child was abused?
- What illegal acts occurred?
- Was there a confession?
- If proven guilty, what punishment should the offender receive?

Family Court is concerned primarily with the safety of the child and focuses on issues like custody, supervised visitation, and counseling. A number of different court hearings can be held to decide these issues. The decisions in the civil system do not depend on whether or not the criminal system finds guilt.



The Legal System

It is very difficult to predict what will happen for you and your child after the report has been made and the case is in the legal system. Sometimes the chance to speak up about what happened can be a good thing for the child—whether or not the abuser is convicted. Many children are relieved to think that someone more powerful will help protect them and tell the offender that s/he was wrong. For other children, however, the events following the report can be upsetting.

The legal process often moves at its own pace, different from your child's need to heal. Emotional wounds may be reopened by the various proceedings, which take can take place usually over a period of one to two years. The court date may be delayed repeatedly. It is best to try to remember that people are working to gain the best outcome for you and your child. The team approach to these cases keeps the process as simple as possible.

You can make the process easier for your child by working with the authorities. The legal system may be able to protect your child from future unsupervised contact with the offender. Working through the legal system is also a way to keep other children safe.

To help guide you through the legal process, you may also work with the Victim-Witness Assistant (VWA) from the State's Attorney's Office. This person will help you through this difficult period and will be available to answer questions, explain the types of victim assistance and services for which you may be eligible, and generally help you through this difficult period. Also, the VWA will serve as your direct liaison to the State's Attorney's Office and the particular attorney assigned to prosecute your case. Once the investigation in your case is completed and your case is received in the State's Attorney's Office for prosecution, you will be notified by letter of who your VWA is. Please contact your VWA as soon as possible for assistance throughout the entire process.

Your Team of Professionals

In Lee and Ogle Counties, we are fortunate to have a highly trained team of professionals that meets regularly to respond to child abuse reports. The roles of the team members are described below.

The State's Attorney (SA)/Prosecutor: The prosecutor leads the team, which decides whether charges will be filed. Consideration is given to many factors which will affect the likelihood of success in court. Some of the factors considered are age and maturity of the child, the child's ability to testify, whether or not the suspect has admitted to the allegations, presence of medical or other types of corroborating evidence, and whether or not there are other witnesses.

The Family Advocate (FA): The Victim Advocate from Shining Star CAC is a trained professional who helps the family when abuse is reported. The Family Advocate helps the caregiver(s) connect with services in the community and provides education and emotional support as the caregiver protects the child in the aftermath of the abuse report. The Family Advocate can also provide support and information in assisting victims and their families understand the criminal justice process.

The Law Enforcement Officer: The Police Department(s) and Sheriff's Office(s) have investigators on the team. They may interview children, non-offending caregivers, suspects, and other witnesses, and they may gather evidence from the scene of the alleged event.

The Child Protection Investigator: The role of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is to help protect your child. The DCFS investigator conduct interviews and develops safety plans. They may also interview others involved in the case. They may also refer you and/or your child to other services.

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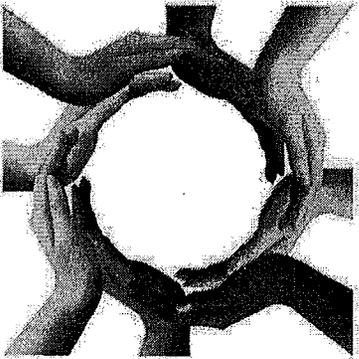
Your Team of Professionals

Continued from page 15

The Child Forensic Interviewer: The FI is a trained professional who is responsible for providing legally defensible forensic interviews of children and adolescents when there are suspicions of abuse or when the child has been a witness to violence against another person. The FI will meet with your child so that your child can provide a statement about what happened.

The Medical Doctor: Depending on what may have happened to your child, a medical exam may be requested by the investigative team. Our specially trained doctor may conduct a medical exam to evaluate and collect evidence from the child. This exam, performed in a child friendly room, is not invasive or painful. Medical exams are performed to assess for and treat STDs and injuries, evaluate for pregnancy, and to document trauma. More importantly, exams help to reassure the child that his or her body is okay. Regardless of when children are evaluated, most children will have normal examinations. This does not mean that no sexual abuse has occurred. It is possible that children and teens have been involved in sexual activity without injury or lasting signs.

The Counselor: Mental health professionals on the team help decide how the abuse has affected the child and family and what can be done to assist them in healing from the experience. The counselors provide research-based counseling services to aid in coping with the trauma.



The Interview Process

At Shining Star CAC, your child will be interviewed by one of our Forensic Interviewers. Being unable to be in the interview room with your child can make you feel as if you are not very important to the process or to your child. Please be assured that you are very important. In fact, you may be the key to understanding what has happened. However, caregivers are not present during the interview to make sure that the child's testimony is unbiased and will stand up in court.

The interviewer will take the time to make sure your child is comfortable without you. This means letting your child see you with the interviewer and making sure that your child knows where you will be during the interview. It should be made clear to the child that you are available if necessary.

During the interview, you will meet with the Family Advocate. The FA is your support person. Please feel free to ask her any questions you may have. She will listen to your worries and concerns and provide resources to help you and your child through this difficult time.

At the end of the interview, the DCFS investigator and law enforcement will inform you about what will happen next. This will also give you the opportunity to ask them any questions you may have. In some instances, a medical examination will be recommended. If so, the Family Advocate will work with you to find a time for you and your child to return for the exam. Unless told otherwise, you and your child are free to leave after talking with the investigators. The team will meet to develop a plan, and the Family Advocate or an investigator will contact you at a later date with more detailed information.

