



# ATTORNEY GENERAL WORKS WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO HELP YOUNG CRIME VICTIMS

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

EACH CHILD IN OUR GREAT STATE is a precious gift whose innocence must be protected. If one of our children is abused, neglected or assaulted, we must be prepared to handle their unique circumstances and tailor a response to their needs.

For more than 25 years, the Office of the Attorney General has partnered with local, community-based organizations that walk through the recovery process with young crime victims.

One of those partners is **Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas**, a network of 61 facilities throughout the state that are committed to helping our youngest survivors of crime. Each one of these Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) provides a safe, nonthreatening environment that is designed to address each child victim's specific needs. At CACs, children encounter caring professionals who provide specialized medical and mental health services, grief counseling and other assistance victims need to put their lives back together.

Bringing everybody under one roof allows children to tell their painful story just one time. The people who need to know – law enforcement, child protection officers, medical professionals, prosecutors, and others – get

critical information during a single session, thus saving children from reliving the agony and trauma of the crimes committed against them.

CAC professionals, who work closely with investigators and prosecutors, usher a child's case through the criminal and civil justice systems. Throughout the process their goal is the same: minimizing the trauma to the young victim.

A CAC's loving arms are extended every day to children, just like the 10-year-old who was sexually assaulted by her uncle last year. The traumatic experience left this girl shell-shocked, but the CAC staff comforted and assisted her as soon as she walked through the door. They helped the young victim and her mother apply for assistance through the Office of the Attorney General's Crime Victim Compensation Fund to offset expenses related to the crime. These caring experts also helped her complete a Victim Impact Statement, in which she told how her uncle's betrayal affected her little life.

Many crime victims are understandably terrified by the thought of facing their attacker in court. This little girl was no different. She and

her parents were uncertain she would be able to look at her uncle, let alone testify against him. But the CAC and its staff were there for them. They conducted weekly therapy sessions and took the family to the courthouse, where they visited other trials and grew comfortable with the courtroom.

As it turned out, she didn't have to go through the trial. Her uncle agreed to a plea bargain and received 60 years in prison. Had it been necessary, though, this 10-year-old victim would have been ready. In fact, she told her victim assistant that the reassurance she received from the CAC staff gave her the courage to face her attacker.

In 2006, Texas CACs helped more than 35,600 children. The Office of the Attorney General is proud to partner with Children's Advocacy Centers; last year, we provided more than \$5 million in grant funding to support them.

Rebuilding lives damaged by the emotional and physical aftermath of violence takes a unified approach. Together with crime victim advocates, law enforcement officers and communities across Texas, we can help victims of crime become hope-filled survivors.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER



### CRIME VICTIM SERVICES

The Office of the Attorney General partners with organizations around the state to help crime victims find help and healing. Services made possible by these partnerships include:

- Crisis intervention
- Counseling
- Victim hotlines
- Emergency shelters
- Accompaniment during court proceedings

For more information about **Crime Victim Services:**  
**Toll Free: (800) 983-9933**  
**crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us**

To help young crime victims in your area, visit the **Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas** online: **www.cactx.org**

**www.oag.state.tx.us**



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