



Harford County Child Advocacy Center



MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER EARNS NATIONAL RE-ACCREDITATION

National Children's Alliance recognizes the Harford County CAC for its ongoing delivery of high quality and effective services to child abuse victims through accreditation

Bel Air, Maryland (June 8, 2016) – The Harford County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) has been awarded re-accreditation by the National Children's Alliance following an extensive application and site review process. As the accrediting agency for Children's Advocacy Centers across the country, the National Children's Alliance awards various levels of accreditation and membership to centers responding to allegations of child abuse in ways that are effective and efficient, and put the needs of child victims of abuse first. Accreditation is the highest level of membership with National Children's Alliance and denotes excellence in service provision.

Accredited CACs must undergo a re-accreditation process every five years to ensure that best practices are continually being applied. With accreditation standards being updated in 2010, re-accreditation this year reflects the Harford County CAC's commitment to providing evidence-based methods practice.

The Harford County CAC first opened its doors over 20 years ago in August of 1993. The CAC is committed to the best practices in the investigation and intervention of child maltreatment, first attaining full membership (accreditation eligible) with the National Children's Alliance in 1998 and maintaining Accredited status since. In 2015 the CAC handled 473 cases ranging from allegations of sexual child abuse, sexual assault, physical child abuse, to child neglect, as well as technology facilitated crimes against children in its capacity as a Maryland Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Affiliate. As an Accredited Member of National Children's Alliance, the Harford County CAC is dedicated to providing comprehensive, coordinated and compassionate services to victims of child abuse and their caregivers.

National Children's Alliance awards Accredited Membership based on a CAC's compliance with 10 national standards of accreditation to ensure effective, efficient and consistent delivery of services to child abuse victims. Accredited Members must utilize a functioning and effective Multidisciplinary Team approach to work collaboratively in child abuse investigation, prosecution, and treatment. National Children's Alliance also considers standards regarding a center's cultural competency and



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diversity, forensic interviews, victim support and advocacy, medical evaluation, therapeutic intervention, and child focused setting.

“In furtherance of our dedicated response to allegations of child maltreatment, we highly value the continuation of our Accredited status with the National Children’s Alliance. Not only does re-accreditation validate all of our hard work, but the proven effectiveness the standards provide increases our capacity for the positive intervention and prevention of child abuse and adds consistency across the entire child advocacy center movement, leading to better results for children and families,” said Lieutenant Veto Mentzell, Program Director of the Harford County Child Advocacy Center.

“The Harford County Child Advocacy Center is to be commended for its continued commitment to effectively serve victims of child abuse. As the national association and accrediting body for Children’s Advocacy Centers across the country, our goal is to ensure that every victim of child abuse has access to high quality services that result from professional collaboration. By requiring Accredited Centers to undergo re-Accreditation every five years, we ensure that evidence-based practices are being implemented and the highest quality of service is being provided,” remarked Teresa Huizar, Executive Director of National Children’s Alliance.

For more information about the Harford County Child Advocacy Center, visit their website at www.harfordcac.org.

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The **Harford County Child Advocacy Center** is the recognized community expert for Harford County, Maryland in the areas of child abuse, exploitation, and maltreatment. Through commitment, advocacy and collaboration they investigate, educate and serve to heal victims of child maltreatment and their families. Through outreach with their community they stop abuse when it happens and prevent abuse before it begins. The CAC’s proactive response includes: providing quality investigations, therapeutic interventions for all family members, medical support, prevention, awareness and education, as well as linkage to other community resources. They are committed to always making the child their first priority. The CAC’s multidisciplinary team consists of a Program Director, Social Workers, State’s Attorneys, County, State and Local Law Enforcement, Family Advocates, an Administrative Assistant, Therapists and a Pediatrician who are managed by an Executive Board made up of the allied agency heads of the Harford County State’s Attorney’s Office, Harford County Department of Social Services, Harford County Sheriff’s Office, Maryland State Police, and the Aberdeen, Bel Air and Havre de Grace Police Departments. The CAC provides specialized medical evaluations and treatment through partnership with Dr. Paul Lomonico, M.D. of Pediatric Partners Bel Air – Hoagie Drive and trauma-focused mental health services through partnership with Family and Children’s Services of Central Maryland. The CAC also provides two therapy dogs, Kilo and Dizzy, through the volunteer organization PAWS for People and was recently



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named as one of two pilots sites for Senate Bill 1106 which seeks whether to establish a Statewide approach for providing courthouse dogs to child witnesses. The CAC is co-located with the Domestic Violence Units for the Harford County Sheriff's Office and the Harford County State's Attorney's Office, as well as SARC, in the Family Justice Center at 23 North Main Street next to the Bel Air Armory.

The **National Children's Alliance** is the national association and accrediting body for the over 750 children's advocacy centers serving each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Dedicated to helping local communities respond to allegations of child abuse in ways that are effective and efficient, and put the needs of child victims of abuse first, National Children's Alliance provides support and advocacy to its accredited membership, as well as numerous developing centers, multidisciplinary teams and child abuse professionals around the country, and the world. As the national authority on multidisciplinary approaches to supporting child victims of abuse, the purpose of National Children's Alliance is to empower local communities to provide comprehensive, coordinated and compassionate services to victims of child abuse. Founded in 1998, National Children's Alliance provides accreditation opportunities, financial assistance, training, technical assistance, research and education to communities, child abuse professionals and children's advocacy centers throughout the United States in support of child abuse intervention, advocacy and prevention.

www.nationalchildrensalliance.org