



**ESTRELLA'S HOUSE ... A LEGACY OF HOPE, HEALING AND JUSTICE**

**Children's Advocacy Center, Estrella's House, Protecting and Providing for Children in Hidalgo & Starr Counties**  
**Over 1000 children served every year!**

**What is CHILD ABUSE?**

**Sexual Abuse**

**Neglect**

**Physical Abuse**

**Emotional Abuse**

We can't change what happened  
 but we **CAN** change what happens next.



Estrella's House was named as a tribute to Estrella Rojas, whose life ended tragically in 2000 in Edinburg, Texas at the hands of her mother's boyfriend.

[www.cachidalgo.org](http://www.cachidalgo.org); 956.287.9754



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**DID YOU KNOW**



Sexually abused  
 before the age of 18:  
 1 in 4 girls  
 1 in 6 boys



Solicited sexually  
 on the internet:  
 1 in 5 children



Die in U.S. every day  
 as a result of child abuse:  
 4 children

## *A Message from the Executive Director, Victoria Medina*



- 13 year old female, pregnant for the second time after one abortion, comes in and reveals that this is her father's baby
- 8 year old little girl forced by her father to stay in the room to witness the beating of her mother by him and then is forced to clean up the blood that was splattered in the room
- 17 year old who tells of the abuse she suffered at age 5 by a family friend that her parents had taken into their home
- 7 year old boy and 9 year old girl, siblings who were sexually abused by their grandfather who had each witnessed the abuse of the other

These are only four among the 75 to 100 stories told by children seen at the Children's Advocacy Center, Estrella's House on a monthly basis. And just when you think you've heard it all, you realize you have not. Each child comes with their own trauma and the trauma of their family members who are also affected by the tragedy. And these four victims are the lucky ones that got to tell their story since only 1 in 10 victims reveal their abuse.

Child abuse is a crime of secrecy which breeds itself. "Abuse" is a difficult topic to hear and to talk about however, we must make our community aware by sharing the signs of abuse. Children who suffer sexual abuse or other acts of violence and go untreated, face critical mental health issues into their adult years. You only have to hear the local, state or national news to realize the enormity of the problem. While a very few victims are able to live "normal" lives, too many are haunted into adulthood, too many are not treated and the list of consequences is long. It impacts their lives as it also impacts on the economic well being of the communities in which they reside. The Children's Advocacy Center model was developed to promote and deliver excellence in child abuse response and prevention through services at no cost to families.

Our Children's Advocacy Center that serves

Hidalgo and Starr Counties is 1 of 65 centers in Texas but the only one in our area that addresses this type of trauma. Children's advocacy centers (CACs) 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. These professionals see them through the investigation, prosecution, and healing stages of their unique case.

Thanks to federal, state, and local funding, the Children's Advocacy Center, Estrella's House is able to carry out its mission to reduce the emotional trauma of child abuse victims by facilitating a multidisciplinary team approach, which supports the prevention of child abuse through community education and promotes the effective prosecution of those who perpetrate crimes against children.. However, these funds come and go and suffer from the economic ups and downs that we are all so familiar with these past few years. So it has become increasingly important that we reach out to our community to assist us. We have been blessed that donors "such as you who are probably reading this item" have been generous in your consideration and financial contributions that translate 100% to direct services. THANK YOU to each and every one of you who cares with action.



## Children's Advocacy Center, Estrella's House Selected to Host Sexual Assault Examination Nurses Training

The Children's Advocacy Center-Estrella's House is proud to announce that it was selected to host a Sexual Assault Examination Nurses (SANE) Training for Registered Nurses who wish to obtain certification to conduct sexual assault examinations. This certification is highly specialized. After the nurses attend the necessary hours of training, they must obtain experience under a licensed medical doctor. It is anticipated that thirty-two (32) nurses from across the state will attend the training at the Echo Hotel in September and October. Ms. Elvia Munguia, our SANE nurse at Estrella's House, is the state's local representative for this training. We are happy to host this upcoming program that will help fill the critical need for SANE Program nurses in all hospitals and Children's Advocacy Centers across Texas.

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### Keeping our facility beautiful!





## IF YOU SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE

It is up to us to protect our children from abuse and neglect. [Anyone can report suspicions of child abuse and neglect.](#) Some professionals are even required by law to report possible abuse cases. If you believe a child you know has been abused, molested, neglected or otherwise maltreated, please report it today. For more information on reporting child abuse: Call the Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline 24/7 at (800) 252-5400 or visit [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org).

## VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNSHIPS

The Children's Advocacy Center of Hidalgo County offers numerous volunteer opportunities as well as internships for both graduate and undergraduate students. All persons working at the center must be at least 18 years of age complete an application, agree to a background check and a pledge of confidentiality.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

If you are interested in joining our team, we are always looking for caring, dynamic individuals who are committed to helping further our cause. We offer competitive salaries and a generous benefits package including health, dental and vision benefits, paid vacation, sick time and retirement plan.

Would you like to join our growing team? Visit our website, [www.cachidalgo.org](http://www.cachidalgo.org) to view our current job opportunities.



OVER 5 CHILDREN WILL DIE TODAY FROM CHILD ABUSE



*Open House*



**Below are Indicators of child abuse that can include but are not limited to these signs.**

Some signs that a child is experiencing violence or abuse are more obvious than others. Trust your instincts. Suspected abuse is enough of a reason to contact the authorities. You do not need proof.



- 1 Unexplained injuries.** Visible signs of physical abuse may include unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.
- 2 Changes in behavior.** Abuse can lead to many changes in a child's behavior. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.
- 3 Returning to earlier behaviors.** Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bedwetting, fear of the dark or strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.
- 4 Fear of going home.** Abused children may express apprehension or anxiety about leaving school or about going to places with the person who is abusing them.
- 5 Changes in eating.** The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child's eating behaviors, which may result in weight gain or weight loss.
- 6 Changes in sleeping.** Abused children may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep, and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.
- 7 Changes in school performance and attendance.** Abused children may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to adults trying to hide the children's injuries from authorities.
- 8 Lack of personal care or hygiene.** Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may present as consistently dirty and have severe body odor, or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.
- 9 Risk-taking behaviors.** Young people who are being abused may engage in high-risk activities such as using drugs or alcohol or carrying a weapon.
- 10 Inappropriate sexual behaviors.** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.



[www.onewithcourage.org](http://www.onewithcourage.org)

## IF A CHILD OUTCRIES:

### DO:

- Remain calm
- Believe the child.
- Allow the child to talk.
- Show interest and concern.
- Reassure and support the child.
- Take action. It could save a child's life.

### DON'T:

- Panic or overreact.
- Press the child to talk.
- Promise anything you can't control.
- Confront the offender.
- Blame or minimize the child's feelings.
- Overwhelm the child with questions.

**Remember, you are obligated by law to report suspected child abuse.**

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, call 911.  
In Texas, call the abuse and neglect hotline at 800.252.5400.  
Outside of Texas, visit [www.onewithcourage.org](http://www.onewithcourage.org) for a list of resources.

There are more than 60 children's advocacy centers (CACs) located throughout Texas. The centers offer a child-friendly environment where children and their families can begin the healing process. Children receive a forensic interview, mental health services, medical services, and family advocacy services and resources.

It is the goal of all local children's advocacy centers to reduce the trauma to child abuse victims once they come forward to speak about their victimization.

The Children's Advocacy Center, Estrella's House provides services in Hidalgo and Starr counties for child victims of crime, and also offers volunteer opportunities and trainings for educators, local community members, and others interested in learning how they can make a difference for child victims of abuse.

Visit [www.onewithcourage.org](http://www.onewithcourage.org) to learn more about children's advocacy centers in Texas.

**This is an initiative of Children's Advocacy Centers™ of Texas.**

[www.cactx.org](http://www.cactx.org)



## ***SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS***

**by Delise Cavazos, Licensed Counselor**

Jennifer, who is currently eighteen (18) years of age, came in for a forensic interview last October, 2012 for allegations of sexual abuse. The alleged perpetrator was a family friend whom the family had taken into their home to do work around the house. Jennifer was 5 yrs old at the time. The family friend who had been their trusted handyman started to sexually abuse her in her own home and did so on multiple occasions. Jennifer eventually made an outcry to her mother. Her parents did not pursue filing with law enforcement but did dismiss the alleged perpetrator (AP) and had him leave their residence. They thought that they were doing the right thing. Twelve years later, she saw the AP working at her high school doing some electrical work. She experienced a panic attack. All the memories of the previous abuse came rushing back to her. She went directly to inform her school principal about the AP. Although she “told”, she basically started experiencing trauma reactive symptoms: flashbacks; nightmares; crying spells; increased fear/anxiety; depression. Overall she had difficulty coping with daily routine activities in her life. She had been harboring all of her emotional and mental distress about the abuse for 12 years. Thanks to the school and a referral to law enforcement, she came to the CAC where she was interviewed and later debriefed for a crisis assessment. Consequently, she was referred for trauma based counseling here at the CAC. Unfortunately, the AP fled and was not caught and brought to justice.

Jennifer has been in therapy at the CAC since November, 2012. Now eight (8) months later she has done magnificently well in her sessions and it has expressed itself in her coping skills and overall self-esteem. She has been able to recognize her self-defeating thinking patterns and how these had been contributing to maladaptive coping in the past. She is now preparing to attend Texas A & M University in Kingsville to pursue a Psychology degree. She wants to be a therapist for children who have been sexually abused. There is so much more I could say about her progress. The change in her is expressed in so many ways. I am so extremely proud of her. She has grown to be an independent and responsible young lady. As noted, the AP was never caught having fled to Mexico. However, she has said that if the AP were ever to be caught and put through court system, she would want to confront him and to let him know that although he impacted her life in a negative way by abusing her, that she is stronger than ever and that in the end, he did not break her spirit.

Delise Cavazos  
Licensed Counselor



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**Executive Director, Victoria Y. Medina**