

Share Our Journey:

Keeping Kids Safe from Abuse and Neglect



*Every Child
Deserves a Childhood*

Whose job is it to prevent child abuse?

The answer to that question is at the heart of everything we do at the Center for Child Protection and Family Support. We think it's our job. And yours. Each one of us has a role in keeping children safe—through our individual actions, public discourse, community service, and support for public policies that acknowledge the challenges facing families.

By joining together—neighbors, schools, communities, and child welfare agencies—we can make children's lives safer and happier.

Every child deserves a childhood . . .
let's make it important to everyone.



Every child deserves a healthy, happy childhood

that is free from abuse, neglect, and violence. For so many children, though, the reality is quite different. They are beaten, starved, sexually abused, and neglected. Their need for food, clothing, shelter, and love is completely disregarded.

In 1987, the Center for Child Protection and Family Support began a journey to address the issues of child abuse and neglect. Through community-based services, we have made an impact on the lives of more than 5,000 children and their families.

Right from the beginning, we were aware of the complexities of child maltreatment, so we developed integrated program models. After 10 years of providing broad prevention projects, the need for more intensive therapy for abused and neglected children and adolescents led us to open the Child Abuse and Neglect: Victim Services Center, where emotionally traumatized children receive services. Parent education also drew our attention, and in 2001, we created and rigorously evaluated a curriculum on parent education that took place at various sites in the District. To this, we added a safety-and-self-esteem component for preschoolers.

As our programs developed, so did our knowledge—from an increased focus on research projects to identifying best practices models. Our research findings led to the development of position papers and monographs known collectively as the *State of Children in the District of Columbia*. More than 35 local, regional, and national research projects have been funded since 1987.

Looking back, we are profoundly proud of these successes and of the differences we have made. We cannot help but also reflect on all that still needs to be accomplished as we set a direction for the Center's future.

Our vision is to do more of everything—more public awareness activities, more advocacy, and more training for both professionals and non-traditional audiences. We see our next step as pushing harder to engage the general public and mandated

reporters to better understand, recognize, and act responsibly when they become aware of children being abused or a family at risk.

We want to expand early-intervention and prevention programming for families. At the root of our programs is a strong belief that building families' inherent strengths and parents' abilities will improve their skills to raise their children well. We will continue to support and educate parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins caring for children in at-risk families. More funds are desperately needed for community- and school-based programs that intervene before abuse begins.

As you read *Share Our Journey: Keeping Kids Safe from Abuse and Neglect*, you'll learn more about the programs and services of the Center for Child Protection and Family Support, each of which is based on these guiding principles:

- Child abuse is harmful to children.
- Family violence and substance abuse increases the risk of child maltreatment.
- Systems and interagency collaboration improves service delivery.
- Understanding ethnic and cultural factors is essential for quality services.
- Child abuse and neglect are often inter-generational.
- Prevention is the key to keeping children safe.
- The family is essential in the life of a child; therefore, the primary goal of intervention should be to 1) assure the child's safety and 2) preserve and strengthen the child's family.



In 1987, President Reagan stood at Brandenburg Gate in West Germany and demanded, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.” *The Cosby Show* was TV’s number 1 show, and Aretha Franklin became the first female to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. A German teenager, Mathias Rust, caught the world off guard by landing a single-engine Cessna right into the middle of Moscow’s Red Square.

Here in Washington, D.C., two pioneering child advocates, Joyce N. Thomas and Carl M. Rogers, decided that an innovative, flexible, and culturally sensitive system was needed to better protect children, address child maltreatment, and support and preserve families.

The Center for Child Protection and Family Support would take a fresh approach by developing integrated programs to address the complex problems facing children, youth, and families. The world has changed a lot since 1987, and so has the Center. From its first program, which trained workers at a single day care center, this small organization has grown to provide community and national leadership in all areas of prevention, intervention, and treatment for abused and neglected children and their families, as well as to train thousands of child-care providers and other professionals to recognize abuse and neglect of children.

Referrals come to the Center from schools, parents, public agencies, private organizations, citizens like you, and other sources. Services, provided at no cost, address the diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds of families.

The Center is a 501(c)(3) organization. Ms. Thomas, a pediatric nurse, continues to serve as president and CEO.

Highlights of Center Research Projects

- *Drug Trafficking: An Element of Child Neglect*
- *Analysis of Baltimore City Department of Social Services: Supervision and Practice*
- *Prevention of Child Maltreatment in Out-of-Home Settings*
- *Children in Domestic Violence Shelter: Implication for Public Health Practice*
- *Integrated Nutrition and Food Services: A Coordinated Community Response*
- *The People of Color Leadership Institute: Overrepresentation of Minority Children in the Child Welfare System*
- *Effective Screening of Children and Youth Workers*
- *Issues in Resolving Cases of International Child Abduction*
- *Community Actions for the Prevention of Missing and Exploited Children*
- *An Analysis of Neighborhood-Based Child Welfare Services*
- *State of the Children of the District of Columbia: Findings and Recommendation After Ten Years of Service Delivery of the Center for Child Protection and Family Support*
- *City-Wide Protocol for Addressing the Issues of Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment.*

At a Glance: How We Help

150 cases treated each year

About 150 cases of sexual abuse and neglect are treated each year at the Child Abuse and Neglect: Victim Service Center. The children involved are from 4 to 17 years old and have been physically abused, sexually abused, or neglected. Since the Victim Service Center opened, more than 1,600 children have received healing help and hope.

1,200 families supported

We have intervened directly in the lives of about 1,200 families through the therapy and support the Victim Service Center provides. More than one child in a household is often involved in clinical treatment.

3,200 parents educated





More than 3,200 parents have attended our parenting education sessions, which vary to address the specific needs of different parent populations.

11,000 people trained

Through training workshops for professionals, we have reached almost 11,000 people who work with children daily—including child care providers, teachers, nurses, doctors, therapists, and social workers.

4 Program Areas

The work of the Center for Child Protection and Family Support is divided into four program areas, as listed below. These areas are described over the next four pages.

-  Children's Programs
-  Parenting Programs
-  Professional Training Programs
-  Research and Advocacy Programs



Healing Children One-by-One

Children and their families receive specialized therapeutic services for as long as needed

“Abused children who experience trauma beyond their ability to cope often struggle with their perception of reality, and have a limited range of appropriate emotional responses. These children are in pain and need healing.”

—Gloria Johnson-Powell, MD,
professor of psychiatry and pediatrics,
School of Medicine, University of Wisconsin

At the Center for Child Protection and Family Support, we know that victimized children react in unpredictable ways as they struggle to cope with overwhelming circumstances. Depending on each child's case, we provide individual counseling sessions, home visits, crisis intervention, parent support, emergency food, housing assistance, or family therapy as well as accompaniment to courts and hospitals. Because services are free, therapists are able to work as extensively and as long as necessary to help children over their trauma and the family to manage. These services are provided through the Child Abuse and Neglect: Victim Service Center, in Washington, D.C., which we opened in 1997 with funds from Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice.

Every child deserves
a chance at a
satisfying and
fulfilling life.

Fulfilling a vision to expand services to more children and families

The therapeutic counseling provided by the Victim Service Center is high quality, evidence based, and trauma focused. This specialized therapy helps children who have been victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect or who have witnessed domestic violence to develop into emotionally healthy individuals who are able to identify and cope with a range of emotions.

The Victim Service Center serves more than 150 children and their families each year. We want to do so much more—our vision is to expand services at the Victim Service Center so that it will become a resource for many more abused children and their families.



Strengthening Families to Prevent Child Abuse

We support parents and other caretakers in developing the skills to be a positive role model for their children

Everyone recognizes how hard it is to be a good parent. When poverty, substance abuse, prison, homelessness, and other challenges are present, children's needs may take a back seat to more immediate problems. During such times of difficulty, a family's strengths may go unrecognized. All the parenting programs at the Center for Child Protection and Family Support stress solution-oriented intervention that uncovers and builds on family strengths so that families become more effective caretakers of their children's growth, safety, emotional development, and happiness.

We recognize that troubled families often have troubled youth, and this reality influences our commitment to provide programs that prevent child abuse before it occurs. Each of our parenting programs is customized for a specific group of parents—teenagers, welfare recipients, parents of pre-school children, parents of school-aged children, or fathers. Since 1987, we have developed, implemented, and evaluated the outcome of nine different parent education programs.

- Improving Methods for Prevention of Addiction in Teens (IMPACT)
- Families Organized for Coping Under Stress (FOCUS)
- Male Adolescent Positive Parenting (MAPP)
- Bridging Early Childhood and Family Support (BECAFS)
- Families and Schools Together (FAST)
- Discovering Every Parent's Positive Image (DEPPI)
- Family Intervention to Support School Readiness (FITSSR)

- Children and Parents Learning About Prevention (CAPLAP)
- Balancing Employment and Parenting (BEAP)

In evaluations of our programs, parents report an increase in contact with teachers about academic performance and behavior, reading to their children more, feeling less stress, and having more of a connection to other families. Participating youth report better relationships with peers and family members.

A 2006 analysis of the BEAP parenting program, for example, found that 88 percent of those who had completed the program were safely caring for their children. BEAP focused on preventing abuse and neglect among predominantly African American TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) parents with children ages 3 to 6. The community-based program taught parents how to reduce stress, improve parenting skills, and access community support in times of need. The children's component of BEAP promoted positive self-esteem through prevention activities at day-care centers.

Children rely on adults to keep them safe from harm, and the Center's parenting programs strive to make that a reality.

Increased family services are needed in the future

Strengthening families is labor intensive and time consuming, yet there is a tremendous need to broaden services both in scope and in the number of families participating. As increasing numbers of parents become involved in domestic violence, are addicted to drugs or alcohol, or return from prison, we face a dramatic need to provide more parent education services. With increased financial support, the Center would like to expand our parenting programs to reach additional families.

Training Professionals about Child Abuse and Neglect

Lack of knowledge about signs of maltreatment and how to intervene often leaves people working with children at a loss

Children come in contact with many different people who are well positioned to notice when they are being maltreated: day-care workers, teachers, employees of various agencies, even school crossing guards. These adults often have a sparse understanding of how abuse and neglect affect children's development and behavior so they can easily overlook the signs. Even when adults do recognize that a child is suffering, they are often unfamiliar about what to do next.

With these facts in mind, the Center for Child Protection and Family Support designed a comprehensive program to train professionals how to protect children from harm. Since 2001, more than 3,000 day-care providers have attended our Child Abuse and Neglect Training Institute (CANTI) to learn to recognize and address the needs of vulnerable children.

The training is culturally sensitive, which reflects the Center's leadership in addressing ethnic and racial diversity issues in child welfare. As a certified training agency for the Washington, D.C., Office of Early Care and Education since 2003, the Center also delivers training to professionals who are required by law to report suspected child abuse and maltreatment such as social workers and psychologists, day-care providers, health care professionals, school officials, and others.

We approach families as a whole to eliminate the conditions that lead to abuse or neglect.

Outpouring of need for services highlights urgency for more training

More professionals must be trained if we are to protect children from harm. We are seeking partners among universities, corporations, and other community-based agencies that can assist us in improving our outreach to our target audience. Our vision is to expand our efforts by using technology, innovative models, and replication of curriculum materials.

Once trained, every professional stretches the Center's reach into the community and becomes one more person who can make a difference in a child's life. As our agency continues to mature, we envision that training will be a larger focus of our work as we seek additional ways to share the knowledge we've accumulated.





Changing Lives through Research and Advocacy

The Center's research, technical assistance and advocacy keep the issues of child abuse in front of policy makers

No less important than the direct services we give families and children is the work the Center does through research and advocacy.

Research supports decisions about which programs to expand or continue and helps us find constructive approaches to problems. For example, one group of victims that we have had trouble reaching is traumatized children in families in which the parents themselves are victims of domestic violence. Focus groups with parents have helped us to uncover two issues that need to be addressed in order to help these children—first, parents feel too overwhelmed to address their children's emotional distress, and second, parents often think a child who hasn't been physically harmed isn't hurt by what he or she has witnessed. Based on these findings, the Center is partnering with the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence to develop a public awareness campaign to inform parents that witnessing violence in the home is very scary to children. Help is available through many programs, including our own.

Research also influences our public policy advocacy. Our recent study, the Child Victim Model Project Financial Reimbursement Analysis, examined the issue of mental health reimbursement to child victims of abuse. Components of the project involved conducting a comprehensive review of the literature, gathering information from key informants, surveying 100 providers, analyzing the survey findings, implementing a roundtable discussion, and developing a position paper on this topic of reimbursement. Among the study's findings was that mental health providers are unable to provide therapy to children in need because of the uncertainty of benefits and

reimbursement. We will use this research to develop policy recommendations to improve the system so that children needing mental health services aren't turned away.

Continuing research and advocacy—a wish list for the future

In 2004, we conducted a local and national study to find out what professionals and the general public know about child abuse. We talked to neighbors who said they “suspected something was wrong but didn't know what to do or who to call.” Others said things like they heard a baby crying but hadn't realized a child was in danger until they read about it in the newspaper. The study's results underscored the tremendous need for public education about child abuse. In response, we increased efforts to provide parent education programs.

For the future, the Center's wish list includes expanding our parenting programs to better reach individuals in the general public. “We hear so much about heart disease or smoking,” points out Joyce N. Thomas, the Center's president and CEO. “The same way we say that smoking is bad for your health, we have to say that protecting children is better for society. The general public has a role in protecting children, and we need a way to reach them.”

Public awareness campaigns and mental health advocacy are examples of programs that affect treatment of abused and neglected children although they do not provide direct services. The Center will continue to publish and disseminate research findings in order to increase public support for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Ending child abuse and neglect requires vigilance in informing our local, regional, and national communities about the problems children and their families face.



“We evaluate each program to measure the results of our involvement with children and to document the outcomes for children and families. We want to make sure what we are doing really works. We just don’t count heads. We seek to be accountable to both our clients and the people and organizations that have invested in us.”

— **Joyce Thomas, RN, MPH, PNP, FAAN**
President, CEO and Founder

Joyce Thomas’s pioneering work in child abuse and neglect has helped to change the way in which this chronic societal problem is approached. More than 21 years ago. Ms. Thomas, a pediatric nurse, co-founded the Center for Child Protection and Family Support, and her focus and determination have guided the Center to becoming a regional and national leader in developing programs to help children and their families—and to train social workers in new ways to assess, counsel and treat.

Ms. Thomas is active in policy, research, and clinical practice. She has advised the White House, Congress and other policy makers at all levels of government. In addition to serving as president of the Center for Child Protection and Family Support, she is project manager for several programs that focus on issues of family violence such as the Child Maltreatment Victim Service Center and the Child Abuse and Neglect Training Institute, a community-based domestic violence intervention project.

She is a member of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community and



serves on the Board of the Delta Research Education Foundation. She is past president of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children. Ms. Thomas has received many national recognitions and award, has authored numerous professional articles, and has served on the faculty of many colleges, including the University of Maryland School of Social Work, Johns Hopkins University, and the Howard University School of Social Work. Ms. Thomas is a pediatric nurse practitioner and fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.



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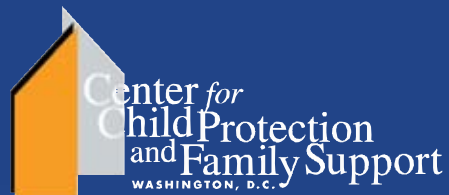


Please call
202-544-3144.

The Center for Child Protection and Family Support is commemorating more than two decades of service for the prevention of child abuse and neglect and promotion of healthy families.

Our services are comprehensive and our support is open-ended. We provide intervention programs for children and parents in crisis, education programs to enhance parenting skills, and prevention programs for children and adolescents. We also provide training programs for professionals and public advocacy to prevent child abuse and neglect. Our services are free.

We need your support to continue our journey to prevent child abuse.
Every child deserves a childhood.



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