

Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center

..... SPRING/SUMMER NEWSLETTER



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During the first half of our fiscal year 2024-2025, the center staff have provided over 4952 services to include forensic interviews, specialized interviews, medical exams, victim advocacy, and counseling.



Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center

300 S. Canal St. Leesburg, FL 34748

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www.cac4kids.org





*Dear Valued Members of our Community,
As Director, I want to express my appreciation for your continued dedication to our mission and philosophy. Our mission is "to seek truth, heal wounds and instill hope that children may thrive in their trauma recovery and excel in life." Our Center philosophy states, "children possess the inherent resiliency to surmount all challenges in their*

trauma recovery with guidance, support and compassion of our qualified professionals." From your participation in local events, to your generous contributions, your involvement has made a real difference. Thanks to the strength and spirit of our community, we have achieved so much together. Our vision "to sustain, enhance and expand established child abuse prevention and treatment services in a facility that accommodates the diverse trauma recovery needs of a growing Lake and Sumter County community" has been exemplified through our collaboration with local Law Enforcement agencies and other outreach endeavors. Thank you again for your unwavering support.

~ Brenda Crellen, Executive Director

Counseling Corner

Forms of Play: Bibliotherapy

Before a child learns to speak, they innately know how to play. According to the National Institute for Play, play is a deeply rooted biological process, meaning it is as fundamental as our primary emotions (fear, joy, sadness). Play is considered the primary language of a child, so it only makes sense that it is incorporated in our trauma counseling at the CAC. Play Therapy provides an outlet for children to explore and process their traumatic experiences in a safe, nonjudgmental way. It also fosters the use of creativity, a trait often lost amidst traumas. This type of therapy can be either nondirective or directive. While there are specialized "play therapists" who work within certain theories of play therapy, any therapist can incorporate play with both children and adults using a variety of methods. One of our most used forms of play therapy here at the CAC is bibliotherapy.

What is Bibliotherapy?

Bibliotherapy is the use of books in the therapeutic process to explore complex topics and feelings the child may not be developmentally ready or able to directly discuss. Bibliotherapy can be used to help children find solutions to their problems and provide psychoeducation. Parents and caregivers can also utilize books to navigate difficult topics and build open communication with their children.



Some of our favorite books:

Brave Bart by Caroline H.

Sheppard - Psychoeducation on trauma, symptoms and counseling

Hands Are Not for Hitting by Martine Agassi - Positive emotional expression

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst - Grief

Listening to My Body by Gabi Garcia - Relaxation and body/feeling awareness

The Color Monster by Anna Lleanas - Mixed emotions

Sometimes I Feel Like A Storm Cloud by Lezlie Evans - Understanding emotions

Child Protection Team News

The Child Protection Team “springs” into action, launching the finalization on our third satellite office, located at Tavares Police Department. This new satellite location will allow families to be served “where they live” in a familiar community environment and be relieved of inordinate transportation costs. We will perform all the same services at this location to include a medical evaluation and forensic interview of the child as well as an interview with their caregivers.



The Child Protection Team

Dr. Oludapo Soremi, *Medical Director*
Regina Berry, *Team Coordinator*
Heather Palasky, *Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Supervisor*
Holly Bonyng, *Advanced Practice Registered Nurse*
Cori Sholl, *Senior Case Coordinator*
Logan Kovacic, *Case Coordinator*
Megan Sweat, *Case Coordinator*
Awilda Echevarria, *Case Coordinator*
Jessica Priebe, *Data Entry Specialist*
Angela Wood, *Receptionist/CPT Victim Advocate*

Upcoming Community Awareness Trainings

Child abuse prevention is essential to our community. Our CPT Team provides training to our community partners and agencies to increase awareness and understanding of the types of abuse and neglect, the signs of child abuse, and how to report child abuse. We currently have scheduled trainings at Leesburg High School and the Mount Dora HeadStart. Please contact us if your agency wants this valuable training. We are gearing up to start our Virtual Training. We will be emailing our community partners with more details about the trainings and how to register.

Center Happenings



3rd Annual Caring for Kids Ride

Sponsored by the "Punishers" to benefit Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center

The Punishers Motorcycle Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. Stop by our informational table. We will be accepting monetary donations as well as new clothing and gift cards. All proceeds from the event will go to Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center.



April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Everyone has a role in promoting happy, healthy childhoods and empowering families. It is an honor to come together with our community partners to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month and the important role we all play. Throughout Child Abuse Prevention Month, we will recognize key members of our community and their efforts to fight against child abuse.

Did you know every adult is a mandated reporter in Florida?

The **General Reporter** is defined in Florida State Statute as any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to

suspect, that a child is the victim of abuse, abandonment or neglect by parent, legal guardian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare.

The **Professional Reporter** is defined as anyone who is legally obligated to report known abuse and **MUST** identify themselves when reporting. This includes but is not limited to: Physician, medical examiner, chiropractic physician, nurse, paramedic, emergency medical technician, hospital personnel, mental health professional, Social worker, day care center worker, or other professional childcare, foster care, residential or institutional worker (child), Employees of Department of Business and Professional Regulation conducting inspections of public lodging establishments, Law enforcement officer, Judge, and Mediators.

For more detailed information regarding mandatory reporting, please see Florida State Statute 39.201.

Be a hero. Spot the signs of abuse.

Learn these 10 signs of child abuse and make the report. You may be the only one who will.

1. Unexplained injuries
2. Changes in behavior
3. Returning to earlier behaviors
4. Fear of going home
5. Changes in eating
6. Changes in sleeping
7. Changes in school performance and attendance
8. Lack of personal care or hygiene
9. Risk-taking behaviors
10. Inappropriate sexual behaviors

National Children's Alliance
The Force Behind Children's Advocacy Centers

Do something about it.
#ItsYourBusiness
nationalchildrensalliance.org/iyb

**To Learn More About Child Abuse visit the National Children's Alliance Website
www.nationalchildrensalliance.org**

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Children's Advocacy Center

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<https://www.facebook.com/cac4kidsfl>