

# Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso



El Paso's **Only Children's Advocacy Center**

[advocacycenterrep.org](http://advocacycenterrep.org)

Spring 2020 Edition

"Helping child victims when they need it most!"

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## Our Mission:

To advocate for child victims of abuse and neglect in the El Paso area by providing education and a collaborative, comprehensive and efficient intervention process to seek justice and to maximize each child's chance for healing. With community support, this mission can be accomplished in a child and family sensitive environment through partnership of legal, law enforcement, child protective and health care resources.

If you believe a child is being abused or neglected, it is your legal duty to report it.

Call the Texas Abuse Hotline:

1-800-252-5400

Or 911

**FAILURE TO REPORT ABUSE IS A CRIME!**



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To understand what the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso does, you must understand what sexually assaulted children would face without us. The child would tell the worst event(s) of his or her life over and over again (to doctors, police officers, lawyers, therapists, investigators, judges and others). Victimized children in El Paso County would share their traumatic experience in a police station where they think they might be in trouble or may be asked the wrong questions by a well-meaning teacher or other adult that could hurt the child's chance to receive justice.

When law enforcement or Child Protective Services believe a child has been abused, the child is brought to the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso, a safe, child-focused environment, by a caregiver or other "safe adult." At our Center, the child talks about their abuse to a trained interviewer who knows the right questions to ask in a way that does not retraumatize or influence the child. Based on the interview, a team that includes medical professionals, law enforcement, mental health professionals, prosecutors, Child Protective Investigators, victim service advocates and other professionals make decisions together about how to help the victim. Our Center offers therapy and medical exams, victim assistance, case management and other services. This is called the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) response and is a core part of the work of our Center.

The Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso helps El Paso County's child victims of severe physical and sexual abuse at no cost to the family. We are the only service provider in El Paso County who facilitates the investigation process for Child Protective Services and all law enforcement agencies working with victimized children. On Thursday, April 16, 2020, the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso will celebrate our 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Anniversary Dinner and Silent Auction with District Attorney Jaime Esparza being our keynote speaker. Mr. Esparza is now serving his sixth term as District Attorney for the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District which includes El Paso, Culberson, and Hudspeth Counties. Mr. Esparza has been recognized by the State Bar of Texas as Prosecutor of the Year and received national accolades for his Domestic Violence 24-Hour Contact Program and is a Board Member for the Texas Council on Family Violence. Mr. Esparza was a founding board member for the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso. He has served as Master of Ceremonies for the Advocacy Center's Annual Dinner Celebration for 22 years. Thank you, Mr. Esparza, for helping our Center to give child abuse victims an opportunity to be heard, an opportunity to seek justice, and an opportunity to heal. The Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso sincerely thanks you for your service to protect "our kids."





# A Message from the Executive Director



Dear ACCEP Supporter:

Child sexual abuse is an unforgettable and horrific event. Can we ever really prevent sexual abuse from happening? I have worked with El Paso County’s victimized children for more than 23 years. It may take years for a child who was sexually abused to disclose abuse, or a victimized child may make an outcry immediately after the first assault. Statistics show: Sexual abuse of a child is usually committed by a family member or very close friend of the family. This trusted individual is not only taking advantage of his or her relationship with the child but is also taking advantage of the entire family.

Good touch, bad touch, secret touch or talking to your children about their private parts is a discussion that should take place as soon as possible. The Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso has presented our “P.S. Happy Bear, It’s Your Body” for local schools for almost ten years (presenting to more than 30,000 children in small groups of 30). This program teaches children ages 4-6 on how to protect their bodies, not to keep secrets, and to tell if anyone touches them inappropriately. It never ceases to amaze me that a child as young as three knows about secrets and knows how to keep one. It is important to talk to your children about confiding to you about anything. Children need assurance that they can tell you anything, especially if someone you trust is sexually abusing them. Talk to your children about secret or unwelcome touches, and more importantly make the time and effort to listen to what they have to say. It needs to be clear to children when it comes to protecting their bodies: They need to say “No”; they need to get away from their abuser, and they need to tell a trusted adult. Sexual abuse is NO time to keep secrets. This year the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso, a nationally accredited, not-for-profit, Children’s Advocacy Center celebrates 24 years of helping children victimized by severe physical and/or sexual abuse to receive healing services. To continue our much-needed mission, we continue to need our community’s support. Our Center exists to help El Paso County’s sexually abused children to be heard, have an opportunity to seek justice, and have an opportunity to heal.

You can make a difference in the life of a child victim by supporting our Center. If you know a child is being victimized, do not hesitate to make the call. Report child abuse at (800)252-5400 or by calling 911. Whether you are an adult who survived child sexual abuse, or know a child who has been victimized, it is never too late to receive counseling services to help the healing process. Last year, the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso assisted sexually abused children ages 2 to 17. The majority of “our kids” who received services were between the ages of 6 and 12. Yes, sexual abuse can happen at any age.

Please step up, listen, and help protect our children. For information about child abuse resources or to help local children victimized by severe physical or sexual abuse visit [advocacycenterep.org](http://advocacycenterep.org). As a community, we can work together to prevent child sexual abuse.

Susan H. Oliva  
Executive Director



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# Meet Our Children



Names have been changed to protect our victims. We hope sharing their experiences helps you understand the importance of talking and listening to your children about anything.



Mary (age 10) met her stepfather when she was 5 years old. He would ask her to sit on his lap and he would touch her private parts. Her stepfather would make her sit on his lap in front of his wife or parents by covering her with blankets or touch her when other people were not looking. Mary said he did this often to prove that no one would believe her if she told anyone about the touching. Mary's stepfather also told her that if she told anyone, her mother would go to jail. The abuse happened until Mary turned 10 years old. Her stepfather was in a car accident and was recovering in a rehabilitation center. After five years of abuse, Mary finally told her mother. Mary's stepfather was arrested and is still in jail - his trial date is pending. The Center assisted with a forensic interview, the Crime Victims' Compensation application process and helped with relocation assistance which allowed Mary and her mother to move into a new apartment. Mary and her mother are attending ACCEP counseling but are still apprehensive with the trial date approaching.

Kendra (age 16) was sexually assaulted at age 13. She was victimized by a very close friend of the family. Mom trusted her abuser (he had been friends with the family for over 20 years). The offender volunteered to take Kendra to riding lessons after school while Kendra's mom was still at work. He began the grooming process and abuse by holding her hand, he moved up to kissing her, and eventually sexually abused her. Kendra was confused and at age 13, she felt she loved him. These feelings, and him telling her "not to tell" made it difficult for her to confide in her mom about the abuse. Mom made the report and her offender was arrested. Kendra received a forensic interview and a medical wellness exam to ensure she was healthy. Both Mom and Kendra also received ACCEP crime victims' assistance and are receiving ACCEP counseling services.

Teresa (age 10) was sexually abused by her best friend's grandfather. Teresa would regularly spend the weekends with her best friend (because her single mother usually worked on the weekends). Teresa kept the secret of abuse for 5 years, because she did not want to lose her best friend or have the 77-year-old grandfather get in trouble. She just wanted the abuse to stop. After Teresa made her outcry, it was discovered that her best friend was also sexually abused by her grandfather. Both girls received forensic interviews, ACCEP crime victim services and have attended counseling.

Richie (age 11) spent his entire life looking forward to meeting his father, at age 10 he met him for the first time. Richie's mother allowed Richie's father to meet him and take him out for pizza. Richie was excited to meet his father, and his father took advantage of those feelings. He took his son to his apartment, took Richie into his bedroom, locked the door, and sexually assaulted him. Richie told his mother as soon as possible and she made the report to 911. Richie's father is currently in prison. Richie is having difficulty feeling safe. He is currently in ACCEP provided counseling and is starting to improve in school. Richie's mother is also in counseling. She is dealing with tremendous guilt and regret for having allowed her ex-husband to ever meet Richie.



## What can I do as a parent?

**KNOW**...Know your children's friends & their families, caregivers, teachers, coaches, or any person spending time alone with your children.

**TEACH**...Teach your child names for their private parts & that they have the right to say NO. Never make your children submit to physical contact if they don't want to.

**LISTEN**...Listen when your child tells you that he or she does not want to be with or go with someone else and ask why.

**UNDERSTAND**...Understand that no one should want to be with your child more than you. When someone is showing your child too much attention, ask yourself why. Trust your intuition.

**EXPLAIN**...Explain to your child who a "someone" is, when you instruct them to tell you if "someone" looks at or touches their private places. "Someone" is anyone, including family or close loved ones.

**AVOID**...putting your child's first name on clothing or schoolbooks. This puts your child on a first name basis with anyone they meet.

**BELIEVE**...Believe your children if they say they have been abused. Encourage them to ask questions if they are confused or not sure if another's behavior is acceptable or not.





ADVOCACY CENTER FOR THE CHILDREN OF EL PASO

# Designer Purse Bingo

*Do you like to play bingo? Do you love designer purses? Do you want to help raise money to provide healing services for El Paso County's child abuse victims?*

Then this is the event for you! The Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso is proud to present its annual Designer Purse Bingo Sponsorship and individual tickets are available. Your entry fee includes dinner, drinks and 20 bingo game cards, for an opportunity to win 30 designer purses. There will also be several door prizes given away, and chance tickets sold to win a Louis Vuitton Handbag. Gather your friends and be a part of this one of a kind event! For more information visit our website [advocacycenterep.org](http://advocacycenterep.org)



## Essential Services Provided

The Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso provides victims assistance services to include counseling, transportation, medical exams, and other services (food, clothing and bedding). The Center assists children who come in due to reports they have been fondled, raped, exposed to pornography or otherwise physically injured, or have witnessed violent events, such as murder, stabbings, or other violent events. The Center coordinates professional agency investigations, providing a child friendly environment, forensic interviews, and victims assistance. We provide an opportunity for a child to be heard, seek justice, and receive healing.

The Advocacy Center also provides a prevention program P.S. It's My Body! Happy Bear! Happy Bear is a friendly, lovable bear that teaches safety to children in their classroom preschool through 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Children can identify the difference between welcome and unwelcome touches by practicing saying "No", moving away, and identifying trusted adults they can report to. If you would like more information or are interested in scheduling this program, please contact the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso at (915) 545-5400.



## What you can do

- Volunteering time & talents
- Donating needed supplies and items
- Contributing money to fund programs
- Becoming a monthly donor
- Honor or memorialize loved ones via the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso

## Wish list

- Packaged diapers-sizes 1,2,3,4,5
- Comforting new toys, teddy bears, basketballs, Barbie Dolls
- New children's underwear, shoes and socks-all sizes
- Toiletries, toilet paper, paper towels, coloring books, crayons, office supplies.
- Canned goods, Capri Sun packaged drinks, animal crackers, and individual ravioli cups.
- Auction items for annual fundraiser- small working appliances, household items, clocks, jewelry items, artwork, gift certificates for merchandise or services.



*The continuation of our mission and services depends upon the generosity of our supporters. Donors contributions will be an investment in the lives of abused children. Thank you for helping our child victims become safe and happy survivors!*

- Alta Vista Optimist Club
- Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas
- Casa Ford Family Dealerships
- Hoy Fox Family Auto
- KLAQ Radio
- Lee & Beulah Moor Children's Home
- Mt. Franklin Kiwanis Club
- RM Personnel
- The Nolan Richardson Charity Golf Tournament
- United Way of El Paso County

Department of Homeland Security



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Special Thanks to our agency partners:



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