



We Need Your Help!

The 66 children's advocacy centers (CACs) across Texas rely largely upon a grassroots approach to advocating for CACs within Texas legislature. In doing so, we need your help to get our message out. The following are the Children's Advocacy Center's of Texas, Inc. Legislative Initiatives for 2012-2013:

Senate Bill 12 (SB 12) will provide greater resources to prosecutors and child victims of sexual assault by allowing a defendant's similar offenses to be admissible during trial. These crimes are particularly difficult to prosecute because usually there is no eyewitness or medical evidence. The proposed legislation is similar to the Federal Rules of Evidence and was enacted in 11 other states. In 2011, this bill passed the Senate, only to die in the Texas House of Representatives. CACs are hopeful that in 2013, it will be passed into law.

The second proposed bill contains amendments to the Texas Family Code to better delineate the role of, and elevate the standards for, CACs within the child protection and justice systems. Over the past two years, CACTX has worked to update and improve the quality of services provided by local centers. Updating the CAC statute, which has not been done since its inception in the mid 1990's, will give CACs greater credibility, and better reflect current terminology and processes in the child abuse field.

Most importantly, CACTX will pursue an increase in the state appropriation which helps fund the 66 CACs across the state. The network of CACs in Texas now officially serves 162 counties and is operating beyond capacity. An increase in state funding by \$5 million (over the 2014-2015 biennium) would allow CACs to increase service numbers and reach new populations of victims, and deepen the services currently provided to child victims and their families. Additionally, the rate of growth and service figures for CACs has far outpaced the rate of growth of our state appropriation. During the period between 2001 and 2006, state funding for CACs remained flat. During this same time, Texas experienced the most intense period of growth for CACs in Texas opening 14 new centers. Individual funding for each CAC declined during this period and the network has yet to fully catch up. A \$5 million increase will address this deficit.

CAC services are unique and unduplicated. Texas CACs provide an essential service to the state of Texas which is critical to child welfare and public safety. As the sole non-profit to play a role in the criminal investigation of crimes against children, any loss in state funding to children's advocacy centers would not only impact our ability to provide critical recovery services to 40,000 child victims annually but would also compromise the integrity of the criminal investigation of these heinous crimes. Please let your state representative know how much CAC's mean to you! We need your help to ensure that CAC's are able to continue to serve children in the years to come. If you have any questions about this, please let Christy Williams know and she will be glad to help!

Recognizing and Reporting Abuse

In order to recognize and report abuse, it is helpful to know the signs of child abuse. **Below are indicators of child abuse that can include but are not limited to these signs.** Some signs that a child is experiencing violence of 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 show at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, 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 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 appear 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, carrying a weapon and self-harming behaviors.

10. Inappropriate sexual behaviors.

Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.

If you are interested in learning more about what to do when you suspect abuse or neglect of a child, contact our center to schedule a presentation by Michele Meehan or another staff member for your work, church, school, or other group!
Call us at 830-303-4760 or email Michele at mmeehan@gccac.net.

GCCAC Welcomes Michele Meehan

The Guadalupe County Children's Advocacy Center welcomed Michele Meehan as a full-time member of the staff in late August as our Community Outreach Specialist, a new position for the center. Michele has been with GCCAC since September 2011 in a part-time, internship capacity. The GCCAC recently reorganized the staffing structure allowing for the addition of this new position.

Michele worked for the Nueces County Children's Advocacy Center for 5 years before leaving to work on her Master of Social Work degree at Texas State University-San Marcos. Michele conducted forensic interviews and coordinated advocacy services for families in Corpus Christi and is now continuing to interview and work with families at GCCAC.

As a part of Michele's internship experience, she began building relationships with community agencies and school administrators of area school districts in order to provide education and awareness of child abuse related issues. Michele attended a train-the-trainer session on *Recognizing and Reporting Abuse* through the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center and is now a certified trainer for our area. Over the last year, Michele has presented to a number of groups, ranging from day care staff, school personnel, university students, and other community groups.

We are so excited to welcome Michele to our GCCAC staff! If you are interested in having Michele present to your group about *Recognizing and Reporting Abuse*, please contact her at mmeehan@gccac.net or call the office at 830-303-4760.

Yes, I/we will support **The Fund for Courage!**



Please check one:

- One with Courage \$5,000 or more
- Children's Table \$1,000
- Friend of Children \$500
- Advocate \$250
- Kid \$100

Name _____

Org/Company/Church _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Enclosed \$ _____ Monthly commitment \$ _____

Join us on Facebook! Search "Guadalupe County Children's Advocacy Center" and "friend" us!

Upcoming Events and Happenings:

Tickets will be on sale soon!!!

ZDT's Family Fun Night in February 2013

There will be a family fun night out at ZDT's Amusement Park in February benefiting the GCCAC. More information will be coming soon!

Auction in April 2013

District Attorney **Heather McMinn** and Sheriff **Arnold Zwicke** are once again gearing up for an Auction benefitting the GCCAC in April! There will be a wide array of items and trips, so watch for our announcement to come with all the details!

Designer Purse Bingo on May 9, 2013

Tickets will go on sale in April for the Schertz Designer Purse Bingo fundraising event at the Schertz Civic Center.

There's something for everyone!!! Come out, have fun, and support the GCCAC!!!



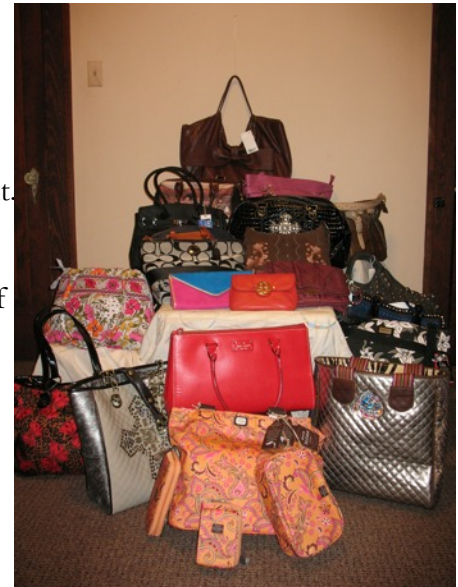
424 N. River Street
Seguin, TX 78155



Recess!

GCCAC Designer Purse Bingo a HUGE Success!!

The GCCAC had a very successful and fun fundraiser in November. *Designer Purse Bingo* was held for the first time in Guadalupe County with a little over 350 people in attendance; many of whom were asking when we would do it again? Twenty two purses ranging in value from \$50 to nearly \$400 were donated for this event as prizes, along with more than 20 door prizes given away throughout the night. Thanks to those donations along with 28 sponsorships ranging from \$100 to \$1,000, and the ticket sales of all those in attendance, the GCCAC was able to raise over \$19,000. After only a small amount of expenses related to the event, over \$18,000 of that will go straight towards the center's operating funds for our current fiscal year! Our annual operating budget is approaching \$300,000, so fundraisers like this are necessary to support our expenses.



Above: 22 purses given away as prizes at the first GCCAC Designer Purse Bingo!!

Unfortunately, the number of children we serve continues to grow, up 5 percent again for our fiscal year last year over the year before. With a staff of three full time and two part time employees, we continue to work hard to assist the families we serve. *Designer Purse Bingo* was a fun way to come together with the community to financially support the work the GCCAC does while also creating an awareness for our agency as well.

Mark your calendars because we have two more *Designer Purse Bingo* events on the horizon! We will be at the **Schertz Civic Center on Thursday, May 9, 2013** and back in **Seguin on Thursday, November 14, 2013!** Please plan to join us. Who knows, you may walk away with a fantastic purse, but no matter what, you will walk away knowing that by supporting GCCAC you advocated for children in our community and providing them with a voice!! We look forward to seeing you there!

GCCAC Staff



Right: Our staff is pictured in front our beautifully decorated Christmas tree and fireplace. Seated in the front are our on staff therapist, Jane Tomlinson (*left*) and our Administrative Assistant, Rose Mary Ermel (*right*), and standing in the back from left to right are Michele Meehan, Community Outreach Specialist, Christy Williams, Interim Executive Director, and Maria Haiyasoso, Client Services Coordinator. These hard-working, compassionate ladies work along side our community partners and volunteers to help children through the process of healing when allegations of abuse are made.