

December 2020

2020 - A YEAR IN REVIEW



Guadalupe County Children's Advocacy Center

Friends of Courage!

2020 has been a unique year, full of hardships and changes. We'd like to take a moment to share with you all the things that have happened at the GCCAC this year.

JANUARY

We began another round of radKIDS in 11 different schools back in October. At the end of January and beginning of February, we celebrated with 813 kids as they completed the radKIDS program. Although COVID-19 has caused us to pause radKIDS for the time being, we are thankful that these kids were able to graduate!

FEBRUARY

On February 19th, team leaders from our partner agencies in law enforcement, Child Protective Services, and prosecution came together to sign updated versions of our Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Protocols and Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Our MDT partners include the Guadalupe County Attorney's Office, Guadalupe County Sheriff's Office, Cibola, Marion, New Braunfels, Seguin, Selma, and Schertz Police Departments, the Department of Family and Protective Services, Guadalupe Regional Medical Center, and CASA of Central Texas. These agencies have been working together for over 15 years to reduce trauma on children and families as they move through the investigation process, as well as build stronger cases. We are extremely thankful for these partnerships and all of our team members past and present who have helped the GCCAC continue to work toward our mission and serve children and families in Guadalupe County.



MDT leaders and GCCAC staff present for protocol signing

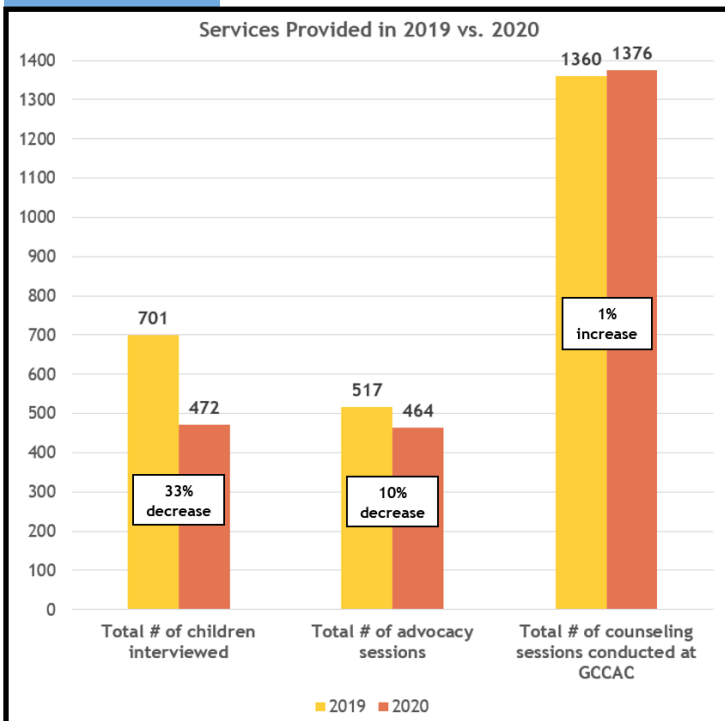
MARCH

With the onset of COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders, child abuse reports to the DFPS hotline decreased dramatically. This does not mean there was a decrease in child abuse, only that it was not being reported. Teachers and school personnel are typically the most frequent reporters of child abuse, so with children not going to school, there were very few reports. At the end of March, the majority of the child abuse reports we received resulted from situations involving 9-1-1 calls, such as domestic violence. Despite these shifts, we split into teams and took precautions in order to continue serving children and families. Our therapy department began their shift to providing distance-therapy.

APRIL

Typically April is a busy month at the GCCAC as we recognize Child Abuse Prevention & Awareness Month, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and Crime Victims' Rights Week. This year, we were not able to place our pinwheel displays around Guadalupe County, but we did our best to spread awareness via social media. In 2019, the GCCAC provided services to 875 children. In these times, it is more important than ever to be watchful and make a report if you suspect abuse or neglect!

MAY



In the spring, we continued to see low numbers of child abuse reports. In April, May, and June we interviewed 22-29 children each month as opposed to 40-60 children in other months throughout 2020. Due to this decline, our monthly average of children interviewed was only 39 in 2020 compared to 59 in 2019. See the chart to the left for a comparison of services provided in 2019 and 2020. Regardless of the decreases in other services, we expected a significant increase in counseling sessions provided in 2020 due to the addition of two new therapist positions in 2019. We believe that counseling sessions provided would have increased significantly if not for COVID-19. During this time, we were still seeing reduced numbers of intakes of child abuse reports. We shared resources with teachers to help them recognize and report abuse even as schools were teaching remotely.

JUNE

Due to COVID-19, we had to cancel all of our typical fundraisers for the spring, including Designer Purse Bingo, Knock-out Child Abuse Bowl-a-thon, and 5K Superhero Dash. Instead, we got creative with a new social distancing savvy event! On June 25th and 30th, we held our very first Designer Purse Drawing—Grab & Go Dinner event, a new hybrid event to mirror Designer Purse Bingo. This two-part event allowed participants to purchase meal plates to pick up during the drive-thru event on the 25th as well as buy drawing tickets for purses and bid on auction items, all through our website! On the 30th, we went Live on Facebook to announce winners of purses, door prizes, and auction items! We were pleasantly surprised with the turnout for the event and raised over \$21,000 net income!

JULY

After several months with low numbers of cases and clients served, July and August brought increases back to typical numbers. In July we interviewed 65 children and in August we interviewed 51. Part of the increase in July was a result of assisting a neighboring county with cases for a little over a week. Due to these increases, we began serving clients at our Schertz location again. Our therapists began seeing some clients in person.

Did you know that
875 children
were served at the Guadalupe County
Children's Advocacy Center
in 2019 for child abuse and neglect?

Call 1-800-252-5400 or
local law enforcement and
MAKE A REPORT!

 **Be a voice
for children!**



AUGUST



Although we were unable to complete the radKIDS classes we began in the spring, we were able to send 15 of our radKIDS Instructors through the virtual refresher training. This will allow us to teach and review radKIDS with children who have already completed the program. We also met with schools in our area and decided not to teach radKIDS in the fall due to COVID-19. We will be meeting with the schools again soon to discuss the spring. In lieu of teaching radKIDS in person, radKIDS Storytime was created and shared with radKIDS everywhere!

SEPTEMBER

The Big Give, a day of giving in the San Antonio area, was originally planned for March, but was rescheduled for September 10th. The GCCAC has participated in the Big Give in the past, but this year was extra special! In 2019, we received a grant from the Najim Charitable Foundation to help us grow our therapy department staff. For this year's Big Give, the founder, Harvey E. Najim, personally pledged to match the first \$5,000 donated to the GCCAC during the Big Give. We are extremely grateful for Mr. Najim and his continued support of the GCCAC and our mission! The GCCAC was also featured in the Big Give Live kickoff event and had the opportunity to share who we are and what we do!



OCTOBER

In 2019, the GCCAC received a \$25,000 grant from the Najim Charitable Foundation to assist with minimizing our mental health wait-list. With this grant, we were able to hire an additional therapist and provide counseling services to a number of additional families. This October, the Najim Charitable Foundation awarded the GCCAC with this same grant again, this time for \$30,000! We are extremely grateful to continue decreasing the number of children and families on the mental health wait-list.

NOVEMBER

On November 5th and 12th, we held our second Designer Purse Drawing—Grab & Go Dinner event, this time in Seguin! We had lots of participation and some beautiful purses and awesome door prizes! Thanks to our sponsors, donors, and everyone who supported the event, we raised over \$20,000 net income! We are extremely grateful for the organizations and individuals who continue to support the GCCAC during these times.



DECEMBER

With all of the uncertainty and hardships this year, the GCCAC wanted to make sure that the children and families we serve are cared for. During the holiday season, our staff has been working together to help provide meals and clothing to families who are going through hard times. Through our retirement fund provider, Thrivent, we have applied for and received small grants to help us purchase items for these families. If you would like to help, please see our Amazon wish list, which is full of items to be purchased for our wonderful families!

A Message from Christy Williams, Executive Director

I hope this newsletter finds you well and safe as we collectively continue to respond to pandemic concerns as a community. This year has been difficult, isolating, and overwhelming in many ways, but great things are still happening at the GCCAC, in addition to new and exciting ways of accomplishing the mission of the center!

The GCCAC is celebrating 16 years of support for children and families in Guadalupe County alongside our amazing partners in law enforcement, the Department of Family and Protective Services, prosecutors, CASA, medical and mental health providers. Starting on March 23, 2020, we changed the way we conduct business day in and day out to better ensure the safety of all and to be in compliance with recommendations and guidelines put in place. However, we have remained mission-focused and committed to service delivery. When the state was facing stay at home orders, direct service staff at the 71 Children's Advocacy Centers in Texas were deemed essential personnel by Governor Abbott. This allowed our center to continue to keep the doors open seamlessly and persist in support of our team, children, and families without question.

We have implemented small teams and remote work solutions to limit the number of staff in the building at one time. We meet virtually, which means some of us have never even sat in the same room as an employee who started in April. It also means we had to say goodbye-for-now to our wonderful volunteers, until it is safe for them to return to us. (We miss you all!!!) Additionally, we have transitioned most of our therapy to telehealth, while still seeing a significantly smaller number of clients in person at the office. Unfortunately, radKIDS implementation was disrupted last year when children didn't return to in person school. We know the importance of prevention efforts and are still working out the plans for the future of radKIDS within the schools.

I am thankful and proud to be a member of this amazing team and the leader of this compassionate, hard-working, and competent staff of professionals. This is a very rewarding, but hard job. **Would you consider helping me support my staff today by writing them a note of encouragement or making a monetary donation to the GCCAC in their honor to show them you support the work they are doing?** If so, please send your note or donation to **GCCAC Attn: Staff thanks** at the address below, to gccacinfo@gccac.net, or make a donation at gccac.net. I will read the notes and share the news of your gifts with the staff at our weekly staff meetings when we are collectively celebrating our WINS (moments of success and thanks). As we persevere to stay positive every day, we focus on the good. We thank you for caring about our mission and for being a GCCAC supporter! Take care and happy holidays!



If you would like to receive news and updates from the GCCAC electronically, please send an email to gccacinfo@gccac.net with the following information:
First and Last Name, Physical Address, and Email Address

Help bring joy this season

Buy your gifts at smile.amazon.com
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The mission of the Guadalupe County Children's Advocacy Center is to advocate for and provide services to abused children and their families in the investigation, prosecution, treatment, and prevention of child abuse, and to reduce the trauma to children by coordinating a multi-disciplinary approach.

