

# Chester County District Attorney's Office

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Chester County Children's Advocacy Center Receives National Recognition**

The National Children's Alliance (NCA) recently reaccredited the Chester County Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), recognizing the work and commitment of the CAC to the children and families in Chester County. Accreditation means the CAC has met national standards for dealing with child victims of physical and sexual abuse and neglect.

Chester County District Attorney Deb Ryan said, "The Children's Advocacy Center is a cornerstone of this office, and NCA accreditation means the work we do is of gold quality standard. In turn, that demonstrates to children and families that the countless professionals who work together in the CAC will be thorough and compassionate advocates for them during a highly traumatic time. As a former prosecutor in the Child Abuse Unit, I am incredibly proud of everyone's tireless efforts in protecting our children in Chester County."

"This accreditation affirms that we are abiding by best practices nationally in conducting child forensic interviews and providing services to these victims and their families," said Chester County Chief of Detectives David M. Sassa. He continued, "The reaccreditation also brings with it grant monies, training, and other opportunities to improve our CAC."

The CAC is a multi-disciplinary team comprised of the District Attorney's Office, Chester County Detectives, law enforcement agencies, the Department of

Children, Youth and Families, the Crime Victims' Center of Chester County, medical and mental health professionals, and other agencies.

Chester County Detective Sergeant Joe Walton said, "I appreciate the efforts of our investigators, forensic interviewers, advocates, caseworkers, and all of the members of our multi-disciplinary team for their hard work and commitment to the children and families in our community. This accreditation by the National Children's Alliance is an accomplishment that we hold in high regard." Walton is the executive director of the CAC.

Deputy District Attorney of the Child Abuse Unit Erin O'Brien said, "I prosecute child abuse cases every day, and knowing the CAC is a nationally recognized resource of experts makes my job easier. Child abuse is heartbreaking for everyone. The CAC helps child victims feel safer during the judicial process."

Reports of child abuse and child pornography are on the rise in Chester County. Between 2015 and 2019, there was a 45% increase in child abuse calls to the Childline, while child pornography and Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) saw a 300% increase between 2015 and 2020.

There have been fewer reports of child abuse across the county during the COVID 19 pandemic and school restrictions because most mandatory reporters work in schools. With fewer human interactions happening outside the home, it is imperative that anyone who suspects a child is being abused call the Childline at 1-800-932-0313.

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Approved for release by Deborah Ryan, District Attorney