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Shapiro Administration Visits York Children’s Advocacy Center, Highlights Work Preventing Child Abuse and Supporting Youth Wellbeing

Since 2006, the York CAC has served over 9,000 children and their families across York County

York, PA — In light of Child Abuse Prevention Month, the **Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) Executive Director Mike Pennington** visited the [York Children’s Advocacy Center](#) (CAC) today to highlight their work in supporting youth and families impacted by child abuse and providing resources in the aftermath of trauma.

“Keeping Pennsylvania youth safe and healthy is a top priority of the Shapiro-Davis Administration,” **Pennington** said. “Children’s Advocacy Centers give children the opportunity to be seen and heard, and most importantly, feel safe on their healing journey. For the past ten years, PCCD has been proud to support the growth of CACs throughout the Commonwealth so that their services and care can be offered to every child victim of abuse. The York CAC is just one of many exemplary providers that we are fortunate to be able to highlight today.”

Across Pennsylvania, CACs provide state-of-the-art treatment for the victims of child sexual abuse and child abuse. These centers— which are nationally accredited to provide a trauma-informed, collaborative response— coordinate the initial investigation, medical care, treatment, and other social services for victims while gathering evidence, through age-appropriate forensic interviewing and information sharing among multidisciplinary investigative teams (MDITs), as required by state law. By bringing medical professionals, social workers, prosecutors and police who specialize in child sexual abuse together under one roof, CACs are the most effective way to bring healing and justice to victims of child abuse.

“The services that the York CAC provides in partnership with our multidisciplinary team highlights, every day, why child abuse prevention is so important,” said **Deborah**

Harrison, York CAC Executive Director. “Child Abuse Prevention Month provides an opportunity to our community to show that we place a high value on our children and are committed to protecting them.”

The York CAC serves children ages 3-17 who are victims of physical and sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation of children, drug endangerment, and witnesses to violent crime. Since opening its doors in 2006, the center has served over 9,000 children and their families with forensic interviewers, forensic medical exams, and family advocacy support. In 2023 alone, the center provided more than 620 forensic interviews and more than 110 forensic medical exams.

In partnership with PCCD and Penn State's Child Maltreatment Solutions Network, the York CAC also provides prevention education programming for students, parents, and caregivers throughout York County. The center uses an evidence-based curriculum called Safe Touches which utilizes an interactive puppet show to teach children that they can trust their feelings, try to say no, try to walk away, and tell a trusted adult about touches that make them feel scared and/or uncomfortable. More than 2,000 second-grade students have benefited from Safe Touches workshops in the 2023-24 school year, and over 7,000 York County students have participated since the CAC began to offer the workshops in 2018.

Additionally, the York CAC offers Smarter Parents workshops, an interactive course which provides guidance to guardians for addressing challenging subjects, including sexual abuse. Within the Smarter Parents workshop, caregivers learn information about healthy sexual development for children ages 2-13, vital skills to promote open and honest parent-child communication, particularly about sexual topics, and strategies to help to create safe environments for their children.

In 2023, CACs served a total of 14,922 children across the Commonwealth. This includes conducting 11,020 forensic interviews, completing 5,487 medical evaluations to ensure health and safety, and ensuring that 4,100 children received trauma therapy on-site or by referral. Additionally, for each child and caregiver served at a CAC, victim advocates provided individualized support including referrals, court preparation and accompaniment, and ongoing assistance as needed.

The Children’s Advocacy Center Advisory Committee (CACAC), under PCCD, was established by [Act 28 of 2014](#) as one part in a series of reforms to the Child Protective Services Law in the wake of the Sandusky scandal. The CACAC advises the Commission on the development and promotion of programs and projects related to CACs, the distribution of grants to support both existing and developing CACs and MDITs and is responsible for the administration of the Endowment Act, to aid victims of child sexual abuse in Pennsylvania.

Chaired by former legislator, judge, and Bucks County District Attorney David Heckler, the CACAC has used the funding at its disposal to support current MDIT and CAC

operations, supply medical and mental health training to providers, develop child sexual abuse prevention programming, and grow the network of CACs throughout the state.

To learn more about the work of the CACAC, visit the [PCCD website](#).