



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Dawn E. Long, Executive Director, announced today that the Barren River Area Child Advocacy Center (BRACAC) has been accepted as an Accredited Member of the National Children's Alliance (NCA), joining over 450 other member programs across the United States. Children's Advocacy Centers achieve this highest level of recognition following an extensive application and site review process to determine compliance with standards set by NCA.

Also a Full Member of the Kentucky Association of Children's Advocacy Centers, the BRACAC is one of fifteen Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) in the Commonwealth that provides one child-friendly and safe place for members of each county's Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) to work together to provide critical services to victims of child sexual abuse and their non-offending family members/caregivers. The Center serves the ten counties of the Barren River Area Development District, which include Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Logan, Metcalfe, Monroe, Simpson and Warren Counties. It provides services to 400-500 child victims each year and has served nearly 4,000 children since it opened its doors in 2001. While the BRACAC is a regional Center and accepts referrals from its ten counties on a first come first serve basis, the Warren County Multidisciplinary Team was included in the Center's application and site review process. One third of all children and families served by the Center live in Warren County.

Recent research has validated the long-held belief that when interactions with children are age appropriate and provided in a supportive manner, children are more likely to provide accurate and truthful information to investigators, clinicians, prosecutors and other professionals., which is clearly in the best interest of everyone involved in and affected by the crime of child sexual

abuse. As a result, each county in the Commonwealth of Kentucky is required to develop a protocol that outlines how its multidisciplinary team, which consists at a minimum of County and Commonwealth's Attorneys, law enforcement, and Cabinet for Health & Family Services, will complete joint investigations and provide specialized services to children when there are allegations or concerns of sexual abuse and/or assault. In addition to the facility, the Center adds to the team two Crisis Intervention Counselors, one forensic interviewer, five volunteer physicians who are experienced and trained in the medical diagnosis and treatment of child sexual abuse, and two mental health treatment providers with experience working with child sexual abuse.

The concept is simple: The child comes to one location to receive services by the team at one time, lessening the need for a child to tell his or her story repeatedly and to receive services that are appropriate for their age, development and individual needs. Services provided at the Center are crisis intervention and support, forensic interviews, specialized medical examinations, mental health counseling, treatment and referral, court preparation and advocacy and case management to help track each child's case through their county's MDT until closure. The Center is available for consultation and support of the region's multidisciplinary teams 24 hours a day and all services are provided at no cost to children and families.

Dawn Long, the Center's Executive Director and founder, had this to say about the announcement: "This is truly a tremendous accomplishment for our Center and for our regional community as a whole, and I am very proud and grateful to each and every one of our Multidisciplinary Team members, our staff, physicians and Board of Directors for working hard to make sure the children in our community have access to the attention and services they need.

A Child Advocacy Center by design is the one place where children can receive specialized attention and services from multiple professionals at one time. These are very sensitive and difficult cases, and our Center's national recognition of accreditation means we have shown on paper and in practice that Warren County has a "best practices" protocol in place and that we are working very hard to meet those standards for the children in our regional community. This standard simply cannot be met without a close working relationship between the Center and the Warren County Commonwealth's Attorney, the Warren County Attorney, the Kentucky State Police, Bowling Green Police Department and the Warren County Sheriff's Office, and the Warren County Department for Community Based Services, so this is a reflection on the entire multidisciplinary team and not just the Center."

Andrew Head, the current President of the Center's volunteer Board of Directors was also excited about the news. "I simply cannot stress enough just how proud the Board is of the Center. Our region and community made a great step forward in the commitment to keeping our children safe from sexual abuse 10 years ago when the Center was founded. Today, with promotion to full-accreditation our community has made another great stride in the effort and makes official what I and the Board already knew to be true; that the Barren River District is exceptionally fortunate to have a Child Advocacy Center of this caliber. There are still many, many things to be accomplished in the ongoing fight against child sexual abuse and we must never lose sight of this. But with that said, we should all take a moment today to congratulate ourselves as a community, our multidisciplinary team and the Child Advocacy Center on this major milestone.."

The BRACAC is a private, non-profit 501c3 organization. One third of its operating budget is supported by community support and fundraising efforts such as the annual *Great Teddy Bear Run* and the *Summer Lights Gala* events. Other fiscal year 2010 funding sources include a federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant, the Cabinet for Health & Family Services, a Child Victim's Trust Fund grant, and County Fiscal Courts in Edmonson, Logan , Metcalfe and Warren Counties . The Center also receives support from Medicaid and private health insurance carriers for the provision of specialized medical examinations whenever possible.

For more information about the Center and the services available to children and families, please see www.bracac.org or call (270) 783-4357.