

CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

In March 2006, a task force was created to study the development of a Child Advocacy Center here in our area.

The task force was comprised of members of the Wichita Police Department, Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office, SRS, Office of the District Attorney, COMCARE, Wichita Children's Home and the medical community.

All members of the task force have a wealth of experience in child welfare, and in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect. This task force clearly represents the experts in this area.

As the task force met over the past several months, on-site visits were conducted at Child Advocacy Centers throughout the country in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Ohio.

Throughout this process, members of the task force recognize and acknowledge that we currently have in place an excellent system in the form of a multi-disciplinary team, EMCU- the Exploited and Missing Children's Unit. Our community is very fortunate to have assembled in this team a dedicated, passionate, and hard working group of professionals.

As the Chair of this task force, I want to publicly thank Chief Norman Williams, Sheriff Gary Steed, District Attorney Nola Foulston and Jean Hogan, Regional Director of SRS, for their leadership in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases.

The task force learned through its numerous meetings and site visits that many jurisdictions did not have a multi-disciplinary team (like EMCU) prior to the creation of a Child Advocacy Center in their area.

Our community has had the benefit of EMCU for 22 years. This community has led the state in many ways when caring for children. The CAC of Sedgwick County is an opportunity for us to continue the advanced services we provide while reviewing ways to potentially integrate agencies under one roof allowing for enhanced accessibility to the criminal justice system and victim services.

Our task force learned that by creating a Child Advocacy Center in our community, we could take an excellent system and make it even better.

Today I am pleased to announce the Wichita Police Department, Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office, District Attorney, SRS, COMCARE, the Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center, SANE/SART program through director Diana Schunn and noted pediatrician Dr. Katherine Melhorn have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a Child Advocacy Center in our community.

Steps are underway to form a non-profit corporation to pursue funding through grants, in particular through money set aside by Governor Kathleen Sebelius in her budget earmarked for the development and maintenance of Child Advocacy Centers, and to pursue funding from the private sector.

I want to emphasize this is an important and ambitious undertaking, the success of which will be based on a partnership with members of our community.

We truly want to make this the best possible system for our families and our children.

I would like to make several introductions. We are pleased to have several honored guests here today.

Serving on the Executive Board with me is

Deputy Chief Tom Stolz –VP, WPD

Major Jackie Stuart – Treasurer, S/O

Jean Hogan – Secretary, SRS

Dr. Katherine Melhorn Pediatrician, SANE/SART Pediatric Medical Director, University of Kansas School of Medicine

Diana Schunn RN, SANE/SART Director Via Christi Regional Medical Center

Kathy Williams WASAC

Marilyn Cook COMCARE

And the following who really need no introduction but must be recognized for their passion in protecting this community - Chief Norman Williams, Sheriff Gary Steed and District Attorney Nola Foulston.

With those announcements, I'll turn this over to my boss, District Attorney Nola Foulston, who will introduce our honored guest. At the conclusion of her remarks, I'll stand for questions.