



**Testimony of
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**Hearing on the Office of Victim Services
Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary
Council of the District of Columbia**

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Children's National Medical Center, a 283 bed not-for-profit academic medical center located at 111 Michigan Avenue, NW, has provided hope to sick children and their families for more than 140 years. With Children's Hospital, seven primary care facilities, one outpatient center, two facilities providing specialty care services, and two pediatric practices located in the District of Columbia, Children's National is proud to provide convenient, high quality pediatric primary and specialty care to the District's children and families.

The Freddie Mac Foundation Child and Adolescent Protection Center

The Freddie Mac Foundation Child and Adolescent Protection Center at Children's National is the only medical center in the District of Columbia with a team of health professionals dedicated to victims of child abuse and their families, and one of the few hospitals in the country using a team approach to assessing and treating these victims. The staff treats more than 1,300 children annually from the District of Columbia and surrounding jurisdictions, and serves more than 1,800 children annually through its participation in the District of Columbia's Multidisciplinary Team on Child Physical and Sexual Abuse (MDT).

The Child and Adolescent Protection Center believes that all children have the right to develop and mature in a supportive, nurturing environment and that they have the need and the right to be protected from every form of violence, victimization and neglect. When children are victimized, they must be given appropriate medical and mental health assessment and treatment with dignity, respect, and an appreciation for their emotional and intellectual maturity.

Since 1997, the Child and Adolescent Protection Center has operated a Victims of Crime Assistance Program (VOCAP). VOCAP provides specialized services to a target population of children and adolescents, from birth to 18 years of age, who have been sexually victimized in the District. Sexual abuse of children and adolescents is a large national and local problem. Specialized services are provided by Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, and child abuse pediatricians who conduct Forensic Medical Examinations,

and psychologists and clinical social workers who provide specialized mental health services.

Oral Remarks

The District of Columbia continues to have twice the national rate of child abuse, making the Child and Adolescent Protection Center's work more important than ever. Over the past two years, the Child and Adolescent Protection Center had over 5,000 patient encounters, of which about 62 percent were victimized in the District. In addition, 91 percent of the patient encounters were for children who are eligible for Medicaid and Medicaid Managed Care, making them ineligible for Crime Victim's Compensation for the services we provide to them.

The budget for the District's Office of Victim Services (OVS) provides critical funding for the Child and Adolescent Protection Center. In total, over half of the Freddie Mac Center's annual budget is funded by the Office of Victims Services through the Victim of Crime Act Formula Grant, as well as the Crime Victim Assistance Fund. Thus, any reduction in the OVS budget will impact the Child and Adolescent Protection Center's ability to provide comprehensive services for victims of child abuse in the District. The budget of OVS should, therefore, be maximized so that child victims of abuse can receive the much needed services they deserve from the experts at Children's National.

OVS funding cuts over the past few years have already had an impact on the Child and Adolescent Protection Center. In the past, Crime Victim's Compensation has provided 100 percent reimbursement to the Child and Adolescent Protection Center for services provided to child victims. Currently, Crime Victim's Compensation provides minimal reimbursement for these services, since Medicaid pays the charges with an albeit minute reimbursement rate. The Child and Adolescent Protection Center cannot afford to absorb these cuts without reducing access to services for children in the District.

Child and Adolescent Protection Center Accomplishments in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009

The Child and Adolescent Protection Center treated 108 therapy patients during Children's FY 2009. A part-time child abuse pediatrician was hired to augment medical services at the Child and Adolescent Protection Center and Recovery Act grant funding allowed the Center to maintain one part-time clinical and one full-time clinical social worker.

The Child and Adolescent Protection Center has also produced training curriculum for health care providers on the recognition and response to teen victimization and held 3 training events; participated in the training and education of medical students, pediatric residents, and pediatric emergency medicine fellows, child psychiatry fellows, and obstetric/gynecology residents on rotation with our team; and collaborated with the District's OVS to develop and implement a Victim Training Academy for the District (provided Trauma training June 2009).

Future Plans

Moving forward, the Child and Adolescent Protection Center has several important goals, including development and implementation of an Inflicted Head Trauma Prevention Program. Recognizing that the District continues to have nearly twice the national average of child abuse, ranking in the top 5 states in the US, the Child and Adolescent Protection Center continues to seek secure sustainable funding so that child and adolescent victims can receive evidence-based trauma focused mental health services, and so that more forensic medical evaluations can be provided by child abuse pediatricians and pediatric sexual assault nurse examiners.. Sustainable funding would also allow for Children's National's medical providers to make use of the now vacant satellite medical space at Safe Shores, the DC Children's Advocacy Center's new site (formerly the Bundy School) for forensic medical examinations. With sustainable funding, the Child and Adolescent Protection Center also hopes to resume active and consistent participation with all the MDT activities and increase our collaboration with other service agencies to effect policy and interventions that will improve outcomes for child victims of abuse and violence.

The District's Multidisciplinary Team on Child Physical and Sexual Abuse

One essential component of services for the well being of children is Children's participation in a multi-agency Multidisciplinary Team (MDT). The MDT includes members from the DC Metropolitan Police Department, the DC Office of the Attorney General, the DC Child and Family Services Agency, the US Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, and Children's National. The MDT focuses on: 1) the needs of the child victims of physical and sexual abuse, 2) law enforcement, prosecution and related civil proceedings, and 3) the needs of the family members who support the best interests of the child. The MDT works in conjunction with the Safe Shores, the DC Children's Advocacy Center, a child-friendly place where children can be interviewed, assessed, treated and prepared for court in a coordinated way, in order minimize the trauma experienced by victims of sexual or physical abuse during the interview process.

Children's National not only recognizes the value of the MDT's impact on prosecuting perpetrators of child abuse, but also has committed significant, un-reimbursed staff time to providing expert advice and coordination for suspected child abuse cases. As the only medical representative on the MDT, Children's input into the investigative and legal process is critical for the clarification of sometimes complex medical findings and for effective prosecution of child abusers. The amount of time involved in MDT work is significant, however, requiring over 830 hours combined from four staff members annually. This addresses time spent in case review meetings, preparing for case review meetings, preparing for court cases that settle out of court, providing training at MDT orientations, training other District government staff about the MDT and how they can help victimized children, etc.

The magnitude of comprehensive services to assist child victims of abuse, including provision of medical treatment, mental health therapy, legal proceedings and follow-up

care, can be overwhelming for a metropolitan area as a whole, let alone for any one institution involved with such care. Children's National is one of the two members of the MDT that is a private non-governmental agency.. Children's National has donated staff time since 1995 to better care for abused children in investigation surrounding their abuse. Our team members devote hundreds of hours for court preparation and expert testimony for which only approximately a quarter of our time is reimbursed. Unfortunately, Children's National is unable to continue providing services at this level due to lack of funding. The shifting health care environment is forcing changes in staffing, which is affecting our ability to meet the manifold needs of physically and sexually abused children. Children's first commitment must be to meet the medical and mental health needs of children. Lending our expertise to the investigative and legal process, while important in serving abused children's long-term needs, is a service we will need help to continue to provide.