



# Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso

Spring 2012



## El Paso's Children's Advocacy Center

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### Senator Jose Rodriguez: Keynote Speaker at Advocacy Center 16<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event

On April 19, 2012 the Advocacy Center for Children of El Paso will celebrate 16 years of helping El Paso's victimized children. Our event will feature keynote speaker, Senator Jose Rodriguez. Senator Rodriguez and his family have made their home in El Paso for 27 years. Jose has made a lifelong commitment to public service. He has practiced law for 35 years, 33 of them in the public interest sector.



As the County Attorney of El Paso, he was elected for 5 terms beginning in 1993. Jose represented El Paso, its elected officials, the county hospital district, as well as the State of Texas, in matters involving juvenile crime, child and elder abuse, mental health, deceptive business practices, and environmental enforcement. Senator Rodriguez is also a founding board member of the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso, established in 1996.



Senator Rodriguez, thank you for your continued support to help "our kids" receive much needed assistance and healing.



## A letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friend of the Advocacy Center,

If you have been listening to the news, you have to agree that it is horrible to think of a coach abusing children in his care. Similar to instances that have been disclosed in the national news, our Center recently helped a child who was abused by her tennis coach. She was twelve when she was brave enough to tell someone that the sexual abuse had happened on many occasions. She kept her secret until she recognized the signs of abuse in a new victim (she suspected abused by the same coach). She was provided a Forensic Interview at our Center.



Working as a team, the investigators discovered eight more sexually abused children. When she made her outcry of abuse many other victims were identified, and they also disclosed sexual abuse. Through our Center, counseling and medical services were made available for each and every child. In this case, all of the victims were spared testifying in court due to the coach pleading guilty. Most child victims must testify against their perpetrator. Fortunately these youngsters were spared this process. During the time frame of July 2010 through August 2011 our Center provided restorative healing services for 1,186 child physical and sexual assault abuse victims as well as 174 child

witnesses to family violence and/or homicide or other abuse, and 30 children for neglect or mental trauma. 254 victims were under the age of five, 689 victims were between 6-12, and 243 children were between 13-17. Our kids are assisted due to reports that they have been fondled, raped, exposed to pornography or otherwise physically or sexually assaulted. We are able to help "our kids" because of people like you. All victims receive services at no cost to the family. Thank you for believing in them and helping us to have healing opportunities available today, and making sure we have healing opportunities available tomorrow. Please help us to continue to make a difference in the lives of child abuse survivors. We appreciate your consideration and future support.

Executive Director



## Board of Directors

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## ACCEP STAFF

### **Executive Director:**

Susan H. Oliva

### **Victims' Services Liaison**

Sylvia C. Morales-Padilla

### **Forensic Interviewer**

Joe Zimmerly

### **Scheduling Secretary**

Ana Apodaca

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### **Volunteers**

**To report abuse or neglect call the  
Texas Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400 Or 911**

**FAILURE TO REPORT ABUSE IS A CRIME!**

**Not sure if it is abuse?  
Call them and they will guide you  
through making a report.**

# Meet Our Children



**\*Lisa was 9 years old** when she came to the Advocacy Center. During her forensic interview she disclosed that her stepfather had been sexually assaulting her (over a long period of time). She had kept it a secret because her stepfather threatened to kill her family if she told. Lisa's mother caught the stepfather in bed with the child and made the report of abuse. Lisa received a medical exam, counseling referrals and assistance with crime victim's compensation. Both Child Protective Services and the Detective from the El Paso Sheriffs' Office worked together to keep Lisa safe and arrested her perpetrator. Lisa's stepfather confessed to the sexual assault and pled guilty. Through counseling and support, Lisa was able to overcome her fear of her stepfather and provided a victim impact statement at his sentencing. The stepfather will be released from prison in 2017.

**\* Ten-year-old Luis**, along with his eight-year-old sister Susie, and six-year-old brother Martin, were brought to the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso (ACCEP) in a police patrol car, after being picked up at school. Each one of them had been physically beaten by both their mother and their father. Luis' beating was so severe he was black and blue from his lower neck to the back of his knees. Luis had been caught "stealing" food from the kitchen for himself, his brother, and his sister. Mom and Dad had a rule "children do not eat dinner." Anyone who ate would be punished. All three children received Spaghetti O's, Goldfish Crackers, and pudding at the ACCEP. It was heartbreaking to see not one crumb left on their plates. Child Protective Services worked closely with EPPD and the Center. Luis and his siblings were placed with their aunt. They have gained weight, and are doing well in their new school. The Center provided clothing and counseling for each of the children. The parents pled guilty, and their children did not have to testify in court.



**\*Alex was a 5-year-old molested by his teacher.** The abuse happened while in class and in front of his classmates. During his forensic interview (provided at the Center) Child Protective Services and the El Paso Police Department heard Alex disclose that it happened many times and he was able to draw how the teacher was touching him. Each of Alex's classmates were also interviewed, he turned out to be the only victim. The teacher confessed to the crime and was arrested. The teacher pled guilty to his offense and was sentenced to 6 years in prison. The Center provided counseling assistance for both Alex and his mother (a single parent). Today, Alex is a healthy, happy, A-B student, and his mother still stays in touch with the District Attorney's Office and The Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso.

**\*Names have been changed to protect the innocent.**

# Forensic Interviews

## What are forensic interviews?



They are interviews that are conducted by our specially trained forensic interviewer at the request of law enforcement and/or Child Protective Services. The Forensic Interviews reduce the number of times a child has to describe his/her abuse to multiple persons involved in the investigative process. The investigative agencies are present for the interview and will watch the interview from an adjoining room. During the interview, the child will speak with the interviewer who has been trained to talk with kids about abuse. It is a better alternative to taking a child to a police station or multiple offices for repeated interviews.

## Who conducts the forensic interviews?

Joe M. Zimmerly has been the Forensic Interviewer at the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso since 2008. Joe conducts interviews with children who may make outcries of serious physical or sexual abuse. He has conducted close to 900 interviews of this type. He has received a great deal of training in interviewing child abuse victims at the local and state level. Joe has conducted trainings at the El Paso



Police Academy, El Paso Sheriffs' Academy and for various local law enforcement agencies, Child Protective Services, as well as with school districts and parents. Joe also conducts presentations in the area of Child Abuse Reporting and Recognition to local physicians, school nurses and day care professionals. He has conducted presentations in the area of sexual assault prevention in a program titled No Means NO, to thousands of local High School students and has also presented the "P.S. It's My Body! Happy Bear!" program to thousands of local Elementary school children.

In 2008, he was recognized by the Advocacy Centers of Texas for his work as a Forensic Interviewer.

## Essential Services Provided

**Our center assists children victimized by physical and sexual abuse. We provide a friendly environment; forensic interviews; immediate crisis counseling; medical/long-term counseling referral services; and victims' transportation, free of charge.**

Last year, our Victims' Assistance program provided the following services:

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 119 crisis counseling  | 65 justice/advocacy             |
| 284 follow up services   | 138 assistance in filing claims |
| 148 therapy  | 197 personal advocacy           |
| 557 information referrals (in person)  | 331 telephone contacts          |
| 716 transportation, care packages, letters, translations, meals, court preparation |                                 |

Our Victims' Assistance Program includes all services listed above including: coordinating professional agency investigations, providing a child friendly environment, and forensic interviews.

Last year we assisted 1,189 victims of severe physical or sexual abuse. We also provided assistance for 174 young children who had witnessed violent events, such as murder, stabbings, or other violent attacks.

# Thank You!

We would like to give a heartfelt thank you to our supporters.  
"You make healing happen!"



To Our Anniversary Event Sponsors:



*Thank you,*  
Rotary Club International  
for your recent gift of \$21,000!



## Community Awareness & Prevention Programs

The Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso is currently working with area schools to raise awareness and provide information

### No Means NO

In coordination with the Center Against Family Violence, ACEP works together for older children's personal safety in the "No, Means No" program. A frank discussion on dating violence and useful information on how to avoid becoming a victim is provided.



### "P.S. It's My Body! Happy Bear!"

This program is geared for children in Kindergarten thru 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. We teach and

reinforce the three R's of safety: RECOGNIZE, RESIST, and REPORT. It's an interactive play performed by a facilitator and costumed volunteer, "Happy Bear".

If you would like more information or are interested in scheduling any of these programs please contact the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso at (915) 545-5400.

## A Very Merry Christmas at the Center!



Each year, the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso assists hundreds of "our kids" during the holidays by providing food, clothing, shoes and toys. For the past five years the Department of Homeland Security/El Paso Sector has been sponsoring our families for Christmas. They help us provide toys and clothing for families that we have assisted throughout the year. They deliver the donations to the Advocacy Center in early December so they can be distributed to the children in time for Christmas. This Christmas they collected 160 toys and gifts. Each year they've made the holidays extra special. We appreciate their dedication and support to help families whose lives have changed forever due to severe physical and sexual abuse. We thank them for helping the victimized children assisted by the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso.



Keep in touch with the  
Advocacy Center for the  
Children of El Paso!

Visit our Website

[advocacycenterep.org](http://advocacycenterep.org)



CHECK US OUT!

We are El Paso's Children's  
Advocacy Center

## Open Your Heart



Give a gift that will make a difference in the life of a child. Your tax deductible gift, no matter what size, will help ensure that critical services are available for abused and neglected children in El Paso County.

### Wish List

- Packaged diapers-sizes Newborn 1,2,3,4,5,
- Comforting new toys: teddy bears, basketballs, Barbie Dolls
- New children's underwear and socks-all sizes
- Toiletries, canned goods, Capri Sun packaged drinks, toilet paper, paper towels, copy paper, coloring books, crayons, office supplies
- Auction items for annual fundraiser- small working appliances, household items, clocks, jewelry items, art work, gift certificates for merchandise or services

### More ways you can make a difference:

- Volunteering time & talents
- Donating needed supplies and items
- Contributing money to fund programs
- Becoming a monthly donor
- Honor or memorialize loved ones via the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso

## We Need Your Support!

We are participating in the Albertsons Community Partners Program. There is no cost to get involved and we will benefit greatly from your help. Please pick up a key tag at the Advocacy Center and scan it at the check-out each time you shop at Albertsons. We will earn 1% of your shopping each time you scan this key tag. If possible, please make copies of the key tag and distribute to friends, family, neighbors and co-workers who may also be willing to help. Thank you in advance for your support in this campaign. We sincerely appreciate it.



## Mission Statement:

The Mission of the Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso is to advocate for child victims of abuse and neglect in the El Paso area by providing education and a collaborative, comprehensive and efficient intervention process to seek justice and to maximize each child's chance for healing. With community support, this mission can be accomplished in a child and family sensitive environment through partnership of legal, law enforcement, child protective and health care resources.



Editor: *Ana Apodaca*, ACCEP

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## Advocacy Center for the Children of El Paso

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"Helping Child Victims  
when they need it most!"