

**CCTV and Recording Technology Site Visit Report
CornerHouse Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation and Training Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota
June 24, 2009**

The CCTV and Recording Technology Grant Program conducted a site visit at the CornerHouse Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation and Training Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota on June 24, 2009. The following is a summary of the visit.

Grant Information

The CornerHouse Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation and Training Center was awarded a grant in July 2008 for \$11,400.50 to upgrade their recording equipment.

Jurisdictional Information

Minneapolis, MN is part of Hennepin County, a large urban and suburban community, with a population of roughly 1.12 million people. The majority of the county is Caucasian (80.5%), African Americans are the largest minority (10.6%), and the rest of the population is comprised of Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans.

Child Advocacy Center

Since 1989, CornerHouse is the only child advocacy center in Minneapolis. CornerHouse has broad public and private sector support from law enforcement agencies, the County Attorney's Office, the state departments of Public Safety and Human Services, local foundations, and fundraising from corporations and private individuals. CornerHouse is open from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. In cases of emergency, interviews maybe conducted after hours and during the weekend.

There are 15 staff members at the CAC, including forensic interviewers/trainers, a video technician, a family liaison/volunteer coordinator, and program assistants for training, intake and client services. A representative from the County Attorney's Office is co-located at the CAC, as are medical professionals for conducting medical exams. A representative of the Hennepin County Attorney's Office sits on the Board of Directors. There are no on-site law enforcement officers, child protection investigators, or mental health professionals.

CornerHouse receives significant funding from the Hennepin County Attorney's Office (approximately 15% of revenue in 2009). Thirteen percent of CornerHouse's funding includes contributions from donors, 12% from fundraising events, and 74% from contracts, fees, and government grants.

CornerHouse has agreements with 27 law enforcement agencies in Hennepin County and one law enforcement agency outside Hennepin County (Chisago County Sheriff) to provide forensic interviews and medical examinations. There are contracts with the Minneapolis Police Department and the Hennepin County Sheriff's Department as well as Service Statements with other law enforcement agencies. There is a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the multidisciplinary team members, including the Minneapolis Police Chief and the President of the Hennepin County Chiefs of Police Association.

When a child victim does not speak English, the CAC will provide an interpreter. They have used Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Creole and sign-language interpreters, along with other language

experts. Staff members report they have always been able to find an interpreter. If the interpreter has never been to the CAC before, one of the CornerHouse staff members will give him/her a tour of the facility, discuss what will happen during the interview, and stress the importance of direct translation, rather than just summarizing the child's words. They prefer to have a translator who is already familiar with the CAC, rather than having a newcomer. CornerHouse provides interpreter-specific training.

The building is divided into two sections, one for support staff and the trainings; and the other half for clients. This minimizes the possibility of children running into people before or after their interviews. The families use the front door, and there is a side door for law enforcement and any other visitors to the CAC. There are three interview rooms, two team rooms (for observing the interviews), and one monitoring room. Soundproofing in the rooms is considered "adequate" by the staff. CornerHouse has researched the cost of soundproofing the interview rooms; however this would mean major construction in the building. At the moment, there is carpet on the walls to help with the insulation.

Non-acute medical exams are conducted at the Center by expert physicians with the help of a CornerHouse medical assistant. Acute sexual assault cases are referred to local hospital emergency rooms. A children's hospital is located on the same block as the CAC. Exams can be arranged before or after the interview depending on the needs of the child. CornerHouse facilitates the delivery of exam reports to child protection and law enforcement. Acute exam reports are sent to these team members directly by the hospital involved.

Child Abuse Case Processing

CornerHouse sees approximately 500 children a year. From 1989-2008, CornerHouse worked with over 10,000 children, 74% were interviewed about alleged sexual abuse. Two-thirds (64%) of those interviewed were female, and 36% were male.

When a child makes a disclosure, a report is created either by law enforcement or Child Protective Services. Under Minnesota's Mandated Reporting Law, law enforcement and CPS are required to notify each other. Interviews at CornerHouse must be scheduled by CPS or a law enforcement agency. When they call to schedule an interview, the CornerHouse staff member taking the call determines whether the case fits their intake criteria, gathers information, and schedules an interview. All interviews are video recorded with law enforcement receiving a DVD of the interview immediately following.

Since 1991, the County Attorney has mandated that all interviews of children 10 and under must take place at CornerHouse in order for their cases to be considered for prosecution.

Cases usually go to District Court as felony level crimes. They may also be charged as misdemeanors. Juvenile perpetrators may be charged as a juvenile delinquent or child in need of protection or services (CHIPS). Less frequently, private attorneys may subpoena tapes for Family Court.

CornerHouse is currently in the process of implementing the NCA tracking system with the County Attorney's Office. Due to working with so many referents in such a large service area, problems arise in attempts to track what happens to cases once the CAC has conducted the interviews and medical exams. Previously, CornerHouse would mail case-tracking forms to CPS case workers and detectives involved in the cases. This provided the CAC a way to track what has happened to the case since the child's visit if the forms were returned. In recent years, CornerHouse has been working directly with county attorney, law enforcement, and child protection management to facilitate more accurate, efficient ways to gather this data. During the

site visit, it was mentioned that information sharing among agencies can often be challenging. Adding to the problem is the fact that there are 27 law enforcement jurisdictions within Hennepin County and one outside Hennepin County.

Protocols

While there are no statutes specifically directed at Minnesota's CACs, statutes require audio-video recordings of children in child abuse investigation, direct that question-and-answer format be used when interviewing child victims as part of child abuse investigation; and require a written report be made for every interview with a child abuse victim.

CornerHouse uses its RATAAC® (Rapport, Anatomy Identification, Touch Inquiry, Abuse Scenario, and Closure) protocol, which was developed by their staff in the 1990s. The RATAAC® model ensures that the interviewer establishes the child's comfort, communication, and competence; arrives at a common language for body part names, while determining the child's ability to differentiate between genders; assesses the child's ability to talk about "touch"; allows the child to talk about the abuse; and provides the child closure, a safety plan, and education about safety.

The CAC also has developed protocols on videotape production, record storage and maintenance, and video-recording interviews.

Trainings

CornerHouse has a number of training opportunities for a variety of different professionals investigating child abuse. They teach the RATAAC® approach to CPS, law enforcement, and prosecuting attorneys.

CornerHouse provides training to approximately 2000 professionals per year. There are 8-9 Basic forensic interviewing trainings (RATAAC®) at CornerHouse and an additional 15 conducted at other sites. There are 2-3 Advanced forensic interview trainings per year and several more done at other sites. When they are working at another site, they shorten both of these trainings to 3 days each. They are invited to conduct the training at the site and are paid by the host. Staff also has experience doing workshops at conferences. There are also orientation trainings, which introduce different professionals to CornerHouse, emphasizing the CAC's purpose. CornerHouse has conducted trainings in 48 of the 50 US States and in several countries overseas.

Equipment Set-Up and Demonstration

There are 7 rooms dedicated to interviewing young clients. Three of the rooms are for conducting interviews (The Green Room, The Blue Room, and The Red Room/Judy's Room), 2 rooms for the teams monitoring the interviews, and one for the Video Technician who oversees the recording of approximately 60% of the interviews. Other members of staff run the equipment the rest of the time. There is also a medical examination room. Each monitoring room has a 25" flat screen monitor with picture-in-picture capability. There is a phone in each interview room, which the observers may use to call in questions during the interview. The Video Technician or designated monitor can tape what is happening in all three interview rooms simultaneously.

Three copies of the interview are created—2 DVD's are burned and 1 is sent to the DVCAM. The DVDs have date stamps. The DVD's are given to law enforcement and the forensic interviewer. The interviewer writes up a synopsis, which is distributed to each of the agencies involved. CornerHouse's copy of the interview is put into long-term storage. The DVCAM holds the interview for two months, at which time it is erased and reused.