



## **CCTV and Recording Technology Site Visit Report National Children's Advocacy Center Huntsville, Alabama March 23, 2010**

The CCTV and Recording Technology Grant Program conducted a site visit at The National Children's Advocacy Center in Huntsville, Alabama on March 23, 2010. The following is a summary of the visit:

### **Equipment and Use**

The National Children's Advocacy (NCAC) is housed on a large campus. It has both a working Children's Advocacy Center that interviews and investigates child abuse, and a large national training center.

The training center has three interview rooms and three corresponding observation rooms used exclusively for forensic interview training. The cameras feature pan/tilt/zoom capabilities. There is a microphone, embedded in the wall, which captures all of the audio in the interview room. The interview video and audio are broadcast in the corresponding observation room. There is no two-way communication between the observation and interview rooms. There is a separate control room, in which the recording of the interviews is captured. The person in the control room cannot hear any audio from the interviews, but can see the video of all three interviews simultaneously. NCAC also has a mock courtroom, to acquaint professionals with courtroom procedures and techniques for testifying. NCAC used Education Management Solutions, Inc., located in Pennsylvania for their equipment.

At each training session, trainees conduct a 10-15 minute mock interview with a child from the community. Interviewers are challenged to get information about a certain topic from the child; these are never child-abuse related. While the interview is taking place, the other trainees and trainers are observing the interview from the corresponding observation room. During the mock interview, the trainers complete a feedback form using a computer-based program. This feedback form evaluates each aspect of the mock forensic interview – introduction, rapport building, follow-up questions, use of tools (drawings, etc.), and closure. After the interview, the trainers burn a CD of the trainee's mock interview. The CD and a hard copy print-out of their feedback form are given to the trainee to take home and watch at a later time.



Forensic Interview Training Room

NCAC has developed its own interview protocol, which is taught during the training sessions.

The Training Program Coordinator said that most trainees have recording technology that they use in their local jurisdictions. However, many of the Executive Directors are looking for ideas and recommendations for their recording programs. It is rare for someone to attend who is not familiar with the recording equipment or for a jurisdiction to still be using VHS tapes.

## **Training**

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In addition to Forensic Interviewing of Children Training, NCAC conducts regular trainings on: extended forensic evaluation, family and victim advocacy, advanced forensic interviewing, and Spanish-speaking forensic interviewing. They also host an annual Symposium on Child Abuse, which is attended by several thousand professionals from across the United States, and a National Conference on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention. These trainings are offered to groups that work on every aspect of child abuse: prevention, investigation, treatment, intervention, prosecution, etc.

From September 2008 to September 2009, the forensic interview training was offered a total of 8 times to 224 professionals. There were several other trainings offered during that time period. The type and frequency of the trainings changes every year.

The trainings are evaluated by participants 3 months after the training takes place. The survey rates the attendants' comfort in conducting a forensic interview, improvements they have incorporated into their interviews, any challenges they encountered, the overall helpfulness of the training, and whether or not they reviewed the materials they received from the training. There is also a survey sent to facilitators which asks questions about the usefulness of the recording equipment and the electronic feedback form.

## **Contact**

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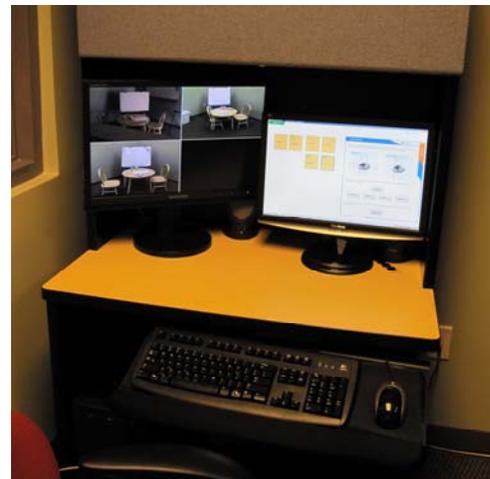
To learn more about the National Children's Advocacy Center, go to their website: [www.nationalcac.org](http://www.nationalcac.org).



Observation Room for Training Interviews



Mock Courtroom Used for Trainings



Equipment in Control Room