



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield  
Program Title: Davis Child Advocacy Center Multidisciplinary Team  
Program Category: Customer Service; Health & Human Services

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Emily Russell  
Title: Senior Assistant County Attorney  
Department: County Attorney's Office  
Telephone: 804-748-1491 Website: www.chesterfield.gov  
Email: russellem@chesterfield.gov

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: 

*Brief Summary*

The Multidisciplinary Team at the Davis Child Advocacy Center in Chesterfield County offers new services to County residents, particularly children, enhances the level of citizen understanding of the offerings of the Child Advocacy Center, and promotes coordination to address the community problem of child abuse. The MDT is a service provided by the willingness and dedication of County departments and community partners like the Bon Secours forensic nursing program to work together in recognition that child abuse is best tackled through a multidisciplinary approach. In 2023, the CAC was fully accredited by the National Children's Alliance. As a result, the MDT's policies and procedures ensure compliance with State and National Accreditation standards for a best practice, collaborative response to child abuse cases.

The team's approach encompasses the expertise and dedication of its members – from law enforcement and social services to mental health services and therapy to nursing and attorneys. Every professional on the MDT has valuable insight and expertise that they bring to the team to achieve its goals of maximizing services to families affected by child abuse and exploitation. The process begins with coordinating criminal investigation of child abuse to determine the facts, identifying therapeutic and medical services that can assist the family, scheduling a forensic interview with the child, and working toward successful prosecution of abusers. Each member of the MDT recognizes the value of contributing and takes time away from his/her primary duties to participate in monthly meetings and frequent case-specific communications amongst MDT members. The MDT is not an added cost to the County, but the added benefits of the collaboration between its members for abused children and their families are immeasurable.

*Executive Summary*

The Davis Child Advocacy Center (“CAC”) in Chesterfield County opened its doors in 2018 (see news coverage, attached). The CAC provides a safe space to support children suspected to be victims of sexual or extreme physical abuse and their families. To promote the efforts of the CAC and further serve local families, the County created a multidisciplinary team (“MDT”) of County staff and community partners. The MDT exists because no single discipline can, or should be, responsible for meeting all of the needs of a child who is the victim of sexual or physical abuse. The MDT’s primary objective is to coordinate investigation and maximize services to reduce the trauma to children and families from child abuse.

The MDT enhances the protection of children in Chesterfield County through interdisciplinary cooperation and collaborating in investigations of reported child abuse. Investigations are conducted by law enforcement and Social Services. MDT members also provide medical and therapeutic interventions for child victims of sexual abuse and physical abuse to reduce the trauma associated with abuse.

The MDT is comprised of staff from the Chesterfield County-Colonial Heights Department of Social Services, Chesterfield County Police Department, the Chesterfield Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office, Bon Secours Forensic Nursing Program, Chesterfield County Department of Mental Health Support Services, Chesterfield County Victim/Witness Assistance Program, and the Domestic Violence Resource Center. Together, these agencies and community partners coordinate the evaluation and investigation of child abuse cases in Chesterfield County. Coordination avoids duplicative interviewing of children to prevent retraumatizing them and ensures forensic interviews are conducted in a legally sound manner by professionals specially trained in a nationally-recognized protocol adopted by the Commonwealth of Virginia. This approach promotes successful prosecution of child abuse cases and looks out for the best interests of child victims, while connecting them with therapeutic services and medical professionals.

*The problem, challenge or situation faced by the locality and how the program fulfilled the awards criteria (innovation, partnering or collaboration and a model for other localities).*

The MDT was created because Chesterfield County and its community partners recognize that child abuse is a community problem that requires a coordinated response. A strong, collaborative, non-duplicative, compassionate community response ensures that victims of child abuse have their needs met in the most efficient and trauma-informed manner. The MDT exists because no single discipline can, or should be, responsible for meeting all of the needs of a child who is the victim of sexual or physical abuse. The MDT's primary objective is to coordinate investigation and maximize services to reduce the trauma to children and families from child abuse.

Chesterfield County is Virginia's fifth most populous jurisdiction. Based on current census data, nearly one in four Chesterfield residents is a child. That percentage is higher than surrounding jurisdictions and the statewide average. Accordingly, Chesterfield has more children to serve than most other jurisdictions in the Commonwealth.

In FY22, the Department of Social Services received 2931 reports of child abuse. This was the 8<sup>th</sup> highest in Virginia. In FY22, 366 forensic interviews of alleged child victims were conducted at the CAC. The CAC's analysis of FY21 statewide data shows that, on average, a forensic interviewer manages 160 cases annually. The CAC's annual caseload for FY21 was 348 per interviewer, more than twice the state average.

*Tell how the program was carried out, including financing and staffing, and the program's results.*

To achieve this objective, the MDT takes a four-pronged approach. First, it implemented an Interagency Agreement and Working Protocol to reflect the ten best practice standards as mandated by the National Children's Alliance, an accreditation organization representing the largest network of child advocacy centers in the country. Second, the MDT facilitates effective interagency communication and information-sharing for ongoing involvement of its members.

Third, the MDT ensures continuity of practice across disciplines while preserving and respecting the rights, mandates, and obligations of each agency. Fourth, the MDT fosters strong, resilient interdepartmental relationships to build trust and cooperation between all members of the MDT.

In 2023, the CAC was fully accredited by the National Children's Alliance. As a result, the MDT's policies and procedures were created to ensure compliance with State and National Accreditation standards for a best practice, collaborative response to child abuse cases. The MDT functions to provide a coordinated and joint response to allegations of child abuse, to promote information-sharing among its member agencies, to ensure a consistent child-focused process, to provide supportive interventions, and to conduct monthly case reviews.

#### Program Cost

MDT members participate voluntarily in the MDT and its monthly case reviews. Leadership for each department and community organization has deemed the MDT and its purpose to be a worthy use of their staff's time and a means of furthering their individual departmental roles in addressing child abuse. Staff takes time away from their primary duties to participate. The MDT is a no-cost, value-add to the County and to County residents affected by child abuse.

#### Program Results/Successes:

As noted above, the CAC served over 700 children in FY18 (latest data available) and in FY22 conducted more than double the state average in forensic interviews for children suspected of being victims of child abuse. In addition, the MDT has created several resources for team members and the public to promote its objective of coordinating investigations and maximizing services for families and victim children affected by child abuse.

#### 1) Onboarding & Cross-training Presentations

Each member of the MDT must create a presentation about its department or organization and the role it plays on the MDT, with the goal of cross-training other members of the MDT. For example, Chesterfield County Police and the Commonwealth's Attorney's office prepared a joint presentation to discuss legal aspects of criminal investigation and

prosecution of child abuse cases. Members of the MDT are required to watch each presentation to gain a better understanding of their partner organizations, their expertise, and the contributions they make to the MDT. These presentations are recorded and are automatically assigned to any new member of the MDT as onboarding training through the County's ULearn repository of employment resources. The MDT has benefitted from these trainings. They promote consistency of training, information sharing, and facilitates better relationships between member organizations.

2) Educational Series for the Public

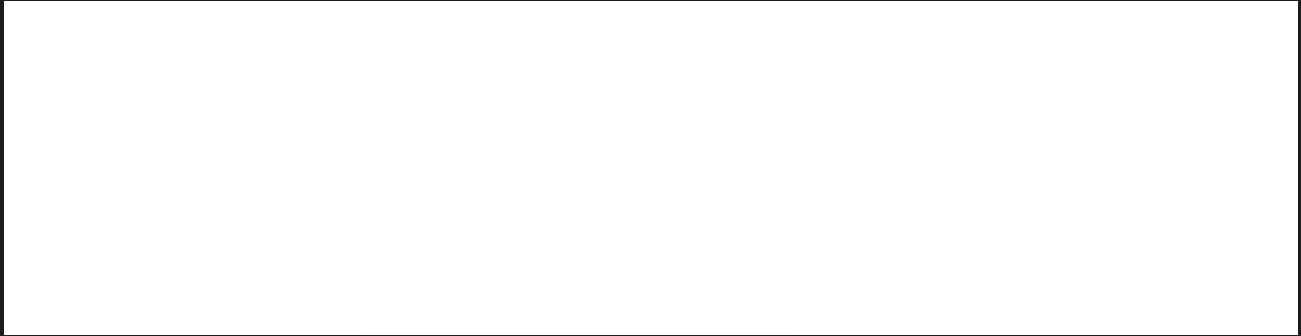
In January, the MDT kicked off the first in its series of educational videos to inform the public about the CAC, the role of each MDT member in the investigation of child abuse cases, and how families can seek help. The first video featured MDT members from the Department of Social Services and the Police Department, who discussed each department's role in investigating child sexual abuse allegations. The videos will be made available via the County's Youtube Channel. The first video in the series is available here: [Navigation Sexual Assault Investigations - YouTube-  
\(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSWQfQq7tzk&feature=youtu.be\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSWQfQq7tzk&feature=youtu.be)

3) Case review discussion guide (attached)

The MDT is very aware of the busy work obligations of its members and that each agency is taking time away from its normal duties to participate in the MDT's monthly case reviews. These meetings have covered anywhere from 5 to 40 active cases, depending on the active case load at the time. To improve the case review process and use time wisely, the MDT organized a work group to develop suggestions to improve the case review structure. The work group identified that MDT members desire that case reviews to be a good use of their time, a good source of information, and a safe place to discuss their role in current child abuse cases. To better facilitate these meetings and meet the goals of the MDT members who participate in monthly case review meetings, the work group created a case review guide. The MDT also agreed on ground rules to guide each case review, a reminder of the MDT's values and emphasis on teamwork. At each case review meeting, the MDT members proceed through each case by applying the guide. This promotes consistency of discussions, efficiency of the meeting, and allows each member to meaningfully participate and provide input on cases they have contributed to. The case guide is included in the supplementary materials.

4) Therapy Dog

One of the unique services the MDT is able to offer is the support and comfort of a police K9 called Hobbes (see news coverage, attached), who joined the team in March 2023. Hobbes is a service dog who works with children and families at the CAC to comfort them during forensic interviews. His human handler is a police detective with Chesterfield's Special Victims Unit who is a member of the MDT.



COMMUNITY

## Chesterfield opens Child Advocacy Center

Posted: Jun 5, 2018 / 02:06 AM EDT  
Updated: Jun 5, 2018 / 02:06 AM EDT

After a grand opening celebration on May 31, (seen above), Chesterfield County's new Child Advocacy Center is up and running.

A Children's Advocacy Center, or CAC, is a child-focused, facility-based program where representatives from many disciplines meet to discuss and make decisions about investigation, treatment, intervention and prosecution of child-abuse cases. They also work together to prevent further victimization of children.

The multidisciplinary team approach brings together under one umbrella all the professionals and agencies needed to offer comprehensive services, including law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, mental health, medical and victim advocacy.



The types of services provided include child forensic interviews, medical referrals, victim and family advocacy, and case management and tracking. This comprehensive approach, with follow-up services provided by the CAC, ensures that children receive child-focused services in a child-friendly environment — one in which the child’s needs comes first.

case, according to National Children’s Advocacy Center researchers in Huntsville, Alabama. That study also found that traditional investigations cost 45 percent more than CAC investigations.

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Traditional approaches to investigating cases of child abuse often prolong children’s trauma, provide little mental health support for victimized children, and lack reliable evidence to prosecute abusers. Historically, child victims of sexual or severe physical abuse often go through multiple interviews and examinations by multiple service providers. Subsequently, children may alter their stories with each interview, which hinders the investigation and prosecution of cases. This is also detrimental to the mental health of the victim. Children continuously relive the trauma of the abuse with each interview and the process leaves the child angry and confused. This can compound the problems associated with abuse such as nightmares, insomnia, aggression and poor academic achievement.

Because the traditional system of managing cases of abuse does not focus on victims, they rarely receive the ongoing mental health support they need to cope and recover. Maltreated children often have social, cognitive and economic difficulties in adulthood and suffer from a variety of physical and mental health problems. To decrease the negative impact of abuse, children need appropriate mental health services.

Pictured above from left: The Rev. Johnnie Fleming Jr., Colonial Heights Mayor T. Gregory Kochuba, Virginia Child Advocacy Center Executive Director Wanda Ostrander, Retired Chesterfield County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judge Bonnie Davis, Child Advocacy Center Administrator Jenelle Beverly, Dale District Supervisor Jim Holland, Clover Hill District Supervisor Chris Winslow and Deputy County Administrator for Human Services Sarah Snead.





# Case Review Guide

## CASE REVIEW PRESENTATION OUTLINE

Please use this as a guide for discussing cases during monthly case review meetings. In the circumstance where you are not able to be present at case review, please designate one of your team members to provide this information for you.

Ground Rules: Be present; Respect one another; Embrace innovation; We have shared accountability; We make decisions that are in the best interest of the child



**Investigator Presenting Case**  
Who, What

**DSVRC**  
Protective Order  
Next hearing date

**Medical**  
FNE conducted- why or why not

**Victim Witness**  
Referrals made  
Status of services  
Family strengths/needs

(further recommendations)

**Department of Social Services**  
CPS open case/screened out/not reported  
Safety Plan/Protective Order/Removal  
Child's placement  
History with Department

**Commonwealth Attorney**  
Assigned/Not assigned/Under Review  
Upcoming court dates  
Bond stipulations

**Law Enforcement**  
Charges  
Location of the suspected offender  
History

**Forensic Interview**  
Disclosure/No disclosure  
Team members present

**Mental Health**  
Attending/Not attending

**Family Advocacy**  
Referrals made  
Family strengths/needs

(treatment needs or recommendations)

(cultural factors, caregiver's response)

Next steps:

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# Chesterfield Police welcome Facility K9 Hobbes to help victims dealing with trauma



By NBC12 Newsroom

Published: Mar. 2, 2023 at 3:49 PM EST



CHESTERFIELD Co., Va. (WWBT) - Chesterfield Police have officially welcomed a new four-legged member to their Special Victims Section.

Facility K9 Hobbes was donated and trained to the agency by Canine Companions. This non-profit organization provides service dogs to individuals with disabilities and facility dogs to professionals in healthcare, criminal justice and educational settings.

Hobbes' partner, Detective Kay, attended an intensive two-week training in New York to become his certified handler.

Hobbes will work primarily at the Davis Child Advocacy Center to provide comfort during interviews with children who have experienced trauma. He will also help during interviews with adult trauma victims and will be able to accompany victims in court, including on the witness stand.

He is trained in over 40 commands and passed the same practical exam as a service dog.

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Posted on: February 16, 2023

# TRUST, COLLABORATION WITH PARTNER AGENCIES KEY TO DAVIS CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER'S ACCREDITATION



Five years after it opened as a safe, secure place where physically or sexually abused children can meet privately with a specially trained forensic interviewer while a family advocate meets with caregivers, Chesterfield's Davis Child Advocacy Center (CAC) has been accredited by the National Children's Alliance.

Staff were notified of the facility's accreditation late last month, concluding an exhaustive multiyear process that required partnership with the other agencies that comprise its multidisciplinary teams: the police department, the commonwealth's attorney's office, Social Services, Mental Health Support Services, the Domestic and Sexual Violence Resource Center, the Victim-Witness Assistance Programs and the Violence Response Team at Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital.

“It wasn’t just the CAC, it was the whole team that got accredited,” said Jenelle Beverly, the center’s director. “Every agency had to do something outside of its regular duties to meet the standards. That level of commitment really helped solidify that everybody is bought in to our shared mission.

“That’s the beauty of our team – no one agency can do everything. We need each other. Nobody can do it by themselves,” she added. “That’s the piece we’ve focused on as we recognize we all bring different strengths.”

The Davis CAC has conducted more than 1,400 forensic interviews of children since it opened in January 2018. That number was 384 during fiscal year 2022.

To meet rising demand for its services, the facility’s staff has expanded to four full-time and two part-time employees. They’re part of multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) in Chesterfield and Powhatan counties and the city of Colonial Heights.

Chesterfield’s MDT is by far the largest of the three, with 65 members, most of whom are employed by the county government.



While the center has interagency agreements with each of the localities that define best practices, protocols and operating procedures for the respective MDTs, forensic interviewer Lisa Johnston noted collaboration is critical to successfully investigating and prosecuting incidents of child sexual or physical abuse.

“We have to have open, effective communication between team members in different disciplines,” she said. “Sometimes people have very strong opinions about the way things should go and we’re not always going to agree. There’s a lot of trust involved.”

Beverly submitted the CAC's 1,000-page application for accreditation to the National Children's Alliance last June. The organization sent two representatives to Chesterfield in October to conduct a day-long site review, during which they met with employees from each of the MDT agencies, then observed both a leadership meeting and a review of every new case that had come into the center over the past month.

Following an exit interview, one of the site reviewers notified Beverly by email that the CAC had met all standards and was being recommended for accreditation. Among their findings, they cited "mutual respect," "strong relationships" and "collaboration between partner agencies."

"I am so proud of our Child Advocacy Center staff and all of our partners on the multidisciplinary team for a truly collaborative effort in achieving national accreditation," said Marilyn Brown, Chesterfield's director of Juvenile Justice Services, who oversees the CAC. "A tremendous amount of work was done in conjunction with the hard work our CAC staff and MDT partners do every day in protecting our most vulnerable citizens. The county is so lucky to have Jenelle and her team doing this work, and I am grateful to be part of a community that truly values the CAC as a best practice model for serving victims of sexual and extreme physical abuse."

The National Children's Alliance's board of directors approved the Davis CAC's accreditation at its meeting last month. Beverly and Johnston agreed it's validation of all the "sweat and tears" that have been spent at the facility over the past five years.

"Without the CAC model, all of the agencies can be operating in their own silo," Beverly said. "We realize we're all cogs on the same wheel. We all are impacted by what the other does. Having that level of accountability to one another moved us away from a 'stay in your lane' mentality because there is no one lane. We're all in this car together, going to the same destination."

