

A Publication of

Dr. Bill Lewis
CENTER for CHILDREN

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The Advocate

August 2013

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Q & A with Karen Richards

President, Dr. Bill Lewis Center Board of Directors and Allen County Prosecuting Attorney

Q: The Lewis Center provides forensic interviews. What is a forensic interview?

A: A forensic interview of a child is a neutral, child-friendly interview, conducted by a trained interviewer, using established and accepted techniques. The purpose is to obtain factual information which potentially involves the legal system or a legal matter.

Q: How does the interview process at the Lewis Center decrease trauma to the child compared to how information was obtained prior to the Lewis Center's founding in 2000?

A: In the past, each entity involved in gathering information from a child conducted separate interviews. This often meant the alleged victim or witness was interviewed many times over a period of time, which is especially traumatic to a child. Now there is just one interview, which is recorded using closed circuit TV. Everyone involved can watch from another room and feed questions to the interviewer, who wears a small earpiece. Trauma to the child is greatly reduced.

Q: Why is it important to have a multidisciplinary team involved in the interview process?

A: It is important that law enforcement, Child Protective Services, prosecutors, victim advocates and forensic medical personnel are involved simultaneously to ensure the spectrum of information needed is obtained at the single interview with the child.

Q: Does the process at the Lewis Center aid in getting alleged perpetrators off the streets?

A: The process used at the Lewis Center doesn't really speed things up, but it does give us more accurate and complete information upon which to make a decision about filing charges. This is important both from a community safety perspective and from the perspective that we need to ensure no one is falsely accused.

Q: The Lewis center is accredited by the National Children's Alliance. Why is this important?

A: Being accredited ensures we are using interviewing techniques that are accepted within the scientific and legal community. In turn, that produces a better interview with improved chances for admittance into court and accepted as valid.

Q: The Lewis Center has seen a marked increase in referrals of children for interviews. In your opinion is that because more children are being sexually abused or because of greater awareness of the issue and willingness to report it?

A: While it is difficult to be certain, but sexual abuse has always been present in society. Yet it does seem to have become more prevalent and more reported.

LEWIS CENTER STATS:

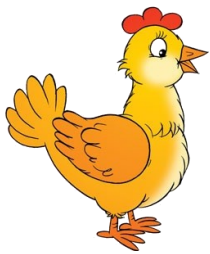
Between January and June, the center completed 357 interviews, slightly up from the same period in 2012.

THANK YOU for helping us achieve our mission!

The mission of the Dr. Bill Lewis Center for Children is to provide neutral, child-friendly forensic interviews, interagency comprehensive assessments and case management services for victims of reported child sexual abuse and their families.

The Dr. Bill Lewis Center has been awarded grant funding from the following organizations and foundations from January to July 31. Thank you to these donors for their generous support:

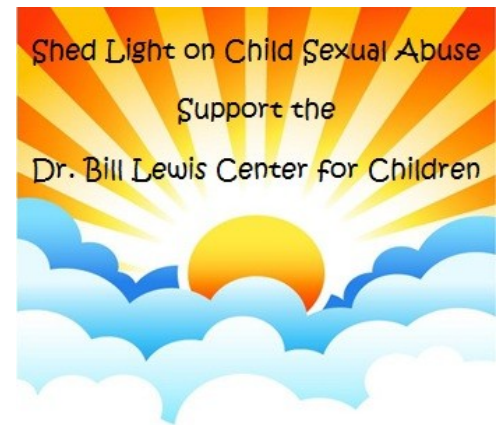
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Chicken
for
Children

SAVE THE DATE:
Thursday, October 31st
3rd Annual Chicken for Children
Orders accepted starting October 1
Call 260-421-5000 x 2318

The Chicken for Children Fundraiser is held in conjunction with the Lewis Center's Shed Light on Child Sexual Abuse Campaign held annually in October. Get involved, call 260-407-5437!



The services of the Dr. Bill Lewis Center for Children are available to all individuals regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, national origin, veteran status, age and/or mental or physical disability. The Lewis Center is nonsectarian and is partially supported by federal Victims of Crimes Act funding through the Indiana Department of Child Services. The Lewis Center is an equal-opportunity, affirmative action employer and a 501(c)3 organization, administrated by SCAN, Inc., a separate 501(c)3 organization.

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