



**First Witness**  
CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

# Restoring Hope 2022 Appropriations Request

## First Witness Child Advocacy Center

First Witness Child Advocacy Center (CAC) is a child-focused non-profit agency offering hope, healing, and justice for alleged victims of child abuse and their families. We were founded by and for the community and have been serving northern Minnesota communities since 1990.

First Witness CAC is built upon a national model where the investigative process for child abuse is streamlined and provided in a child-friendly setting. We bring together a collaborative multidisciplinary team of professionals made up of law enforcement, social workers, doctors, therapists, advocates, prosecutors, and public defender's office. Our dedicated team members work together to investigate child abuse and coordinate needed services.

We provide forensically sound interviews for children, adolescents, and vulnerable adults who have reported sexual abuse, physical abuse, witnessed violence, or who may have been otherwise victimized. Our interviews provide a safe and comfortable space for victims to talk about the abuse in one video recorded interview by a trained professional.

The report of abuse is not the end but rather the beginning. Our family advocates help parents understand the system and professionals involved and connect children and families with resources in their community. First Witness CAC offers in-depth initial and ongoing advocacy for children and families.

### Mission

Our mission is to strengthen our communities' response to child abuse.

### Vision

Our vision is of a society that supports children and ends child abuse.

## Impact 2021

Since 2011, our impact has consistently climbed each year. Our dedication to the children and families of our community is highlighted throughout our ongoing work.

### Served **232** children

reporting sexual and physical abuse or having witnessed a violent crime through a child-friendly forensic interview monitored by multidisciplinary team members.

### Trained **278** professionals

on protocol and practice of forensic interviewing at beginning and advanced levels.

### Trained **495** advocates

nationwide with our advocacy trainings for advocates working with a CAC.

### Served **547** new children and parents

in our advocacy services including ongoing support for non-offending caregivers, medical advocacy, court advocacy, crisis calls, and safety planning.

### Provided **155** prevention education presentations

to 3109 students and community members.

### Provided **26** presentations

to **530 individuals** in local civic groups, churches, and college classrooms.

# A Journey Towards Our Vision

First Witness CAC began as a child abuse resource center from community members recognizing a gap where the needs of child abuse victims and their families were unmet. Systems workers, attorneys, law enforcement, and local foundations came together in 1990 to form this organization. They generated community support for this new model of forensic interviewing. Our agency has continued the journey by deepening and expanding our services and collaborations.

- Specialized Medical Team and Medical Exams
- Accreditation by the National Children's Alliance (NCA)
- St. Louis County Multidisciplinary Team and Coordinated Response
- Intensive Family Advocacy Program
- Full-time Professional Forensic Interviewers
- ChildFirst® Forensic Interview Protocol
- NCA Approved Training for Advocates Working With a CAC
- Zero Abuse Project Approved ChildFirst® Forensic Interview Training
- Safe and Strong© Prevention Education Program
- Member of MN Council on Non-Profits
- Member of MN Children's Alliance
- Child Abuse Prevention Coalition
- Witness to Domestic Violence Project
- Carlton County Multidisciplinary Team and Coordinated Response

Learn More About Us at:  
[firstwitness.org](http://firstwitness.org)



## Funding Request

\$2,000,000 is requested for the purchase of new space to house First Witness CAC in Duluth, renovations of the premises, supplies and equipment, and demolition of a portion of the property to establish a parking lot.

Additional funding will be secured from local foundations, businesses, municipalities and individual donors.

Since our beginnings as a child abuse resource center, First Witness CAC has expanded our efforts to include family advocacy services, full-time forensic interviewers, a national training center, the development of a child abuse prevention coalition, and the expansion to serve Carlton County families and have outgrown the capacity of our current building. This funding would allow us to bring together services and professionals onto one site to provide the best experience possible for the child.



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