

Federal grant received to establish Family Advocacy Center in Cobb

In fall 2020, the Cobb District Attorney's Office and its partners were awarded a four-year grant worth up to \$400,000 to create a Family Advocacy Center, where victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse can receive services in a single location.

"It is exciting that Cobb County has such great collaboration and support among victim-service providers, law enforcement and county government that we were successful in seeking out this opportunity," DA Joyette M. Holmes said. "The partnering agencies are committed to the establishment of a Family Justice Center for our community so that we can serve the victim where they are rather than the victim having to seek services where the agencies are located. This streamlining of services will provide a safe place for victims and survivors to go to receive wrap-around and holistic services. I am devoted to leading in the planning, implementation, and ongoing partnership to build a Family Advocacy Center for Cobb County."

Partners include LiveSAFE Resources, SafePath Children's Advocacy Center, Inc., along with Cobb County Government, the Cobb Sheriff's Office and Police Department, the Solicitor General's Office, and Legal Aid of Cobb County. Partnering agencies and offices will have the opportunity to house representatives in the new center to serve victims.

Tracey B. Atwater is the Executive Director of LiveSAFE Resources.

"Too often, those seeking help after victimization must visit various service providers and agencies in order to get the assistance they need. This incredible new project will allow us and our community partners to better serve those in need by creating a collocated space, reducing barriers for victims seeking help," she said.

Jinger Robins, Chief Executive Officer of SafePath Children's Advocacy Center, Inc., also welcomed the project.

"What a great day for Cobb County citizens! The successful award from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council of funding for a Family Advocacy Center will serve all citizens in Cobb County and further ensure victims of crime are able to have the best access to all the services they deserve. SafePath is honored to be one of the partnering agencies as we work collaboratively to connect victims to services as they heal," Robins said.

The grant is administered through Georgia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council with federal dollars from the Victims of Crime Act. Only two other Georgia communities, Waycross and Macon, were awarded grants to create family justice centers. Savannah has the only existing center in Georgia.

The center's model has been identified as a best practice in the intervention and prevention of domestic violence by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women. Documented and published outcomes include reduced homicides, increased victim safety and empowerment, reduced fear and anxiety for victims and their children, and reduced recantation by victims receiving this level of support.

Agencies that provided support for Cobb's center in the application process include Center for Family Resources; Cobb Collaborative; the Division of Family and Children's Services; Kennesaw State University's WellStar College of Health and Human Services; police departments of Acworth, Kennesaw and Smyrna; the Georgia Commission on Family Violence; and the Prosecuting Attorney's Council of Georgia.

Planning and establishing the center will require significant community buy-in. Cobb's leaders are planning a virtual community meeting in early December to begin discussions.