

# THE MEMPHIS CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER



**ONE CAC'S TRANSITION FROM**  
**CHILD-FOCUSED EDUCATION**  
**TO ADULT-FOCUSED EDUCATION**

2020 CHILD PROTECTION CASE STUDY



## THE ISSUE

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) across the United States have worked to revolutionize the nation's response to child abuse through service, education, and leadership. Historically, CACs across the nation have worked closely with schools to prevent child sexual abuse (CSA) through the use of child-focused training. While they recognized the importance of talking to children to help prevent CSA, a national paradigm shift in child protection occurred in 2005, and CACs began to recognize the adult's responsibility in keeping children safe. This shift involved educating adults on what they could do to protect children from abuse.

In Shelby County, Tennessee where the Memphis CAC operates, 1 in 5 adults reported being sexually abused as a child.<sup>1</sup> This is 10% higher than the remainder of counties in Tennessee and further demonstrated the importance of educating the adult community on how to best prevent CSA. To address their concerns, the Memphis CAC began the search for adult-focused CSA curriculums.

## THE MOVEMENT

The Memphis CAC is committed to ensuring that children are not further victimized by the system designed to protect them. They provide resources and therapy for families and children for whom there is suspected child sexual abuse and physical abuse, house a multi-disciplinary team approach to intervention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of abuse, provide training for adults and youth serving agencies, conduct policy workshops, and provide resources and guidance on policy development. In 2011, the Memphis CAC began offering Darkness to Light's *Stewards of Children*<sup>®</sup> child sexual abuse prevention training in tandem with their child-focused curriculum, and in 2012 they made *Stewards of Children*<sup>®</sup> their primary prevention tool. They set out to train four key

target populations within Shelby County: youth serving organizations, schools, healthcare organizations, and the faith community.

**“There aren’t many tools that Darkness to Light hasn’t already thought of or have in the works, and that’s really what makes our job as prevention outreach professionals easier.”**

**– Kris Crim, Prevention Director at the Memphis CAC**

By February 2015, the Memphis CAC had trained about 11,000 duplicated adults (some adults may have been trained multiple times in different organizations).<sup>2</sup> The team at the Memphis CAC is committed to reaching tipping point in Shelby County (training 5% of the population), which requires training 35,000 of the 750,000 adults in the county. Since the beginning of their county-wide initiative, the Memphis CAC has trained approximately 3,000 to 4,500 adults per year, primarily led by two Prevention Specialists employed by the CAC. As of March 2020, the number of unduplicated adults trained using *Stewards of Children*<sup>®</sup> reached 26,000, bringing the Memphis CAC and Shelby County close to reaching their tipping point.

## THE RESULT

The Memphis CAC has found that there is improved knowledge, a 70% increase in awareness of CSA, and an increase in reports of CSA among participants after completing *Stewards of Children*<sup>®</sup>. Even those who indicated they knew about CSA prevention before taking the training have demonstrated a significant increase in knowledge post-training.

CSA prevention has turned into a true community initiative in Shelby County. There has been an observable cultural shift in how the

community addresses child abuse. Funders are requesting grantees complete *Stewards of Children*<sup>®</sup> and ask about the grantee's child protection policies. Churches and youth serving organizations are putting child sexual abuse prevention at the forefront of their minds and mission. Local officials and government bodies have changed their perspectives on CSA and better understand its impact on a child's physical and mental growth and development, in addition to the associated physical and mental costs to the community.

In 2012, the Memphis CAC began an ongoing post-program evaluation led by Dr. Christina Underhill, a program evaluation manager from Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in Memphis. The evaluation focuses on individual change, program implementation, and community impact. These are respectively measured by improved knowledge and attitudes regarding child sexual abuse, county coverage/reach and training feedback, and changes in reporting. At the end of each *Stewards of Children*<sup>®</sup> session, the team asks participants to practice four prevention behaviors. Through a 6-month follow-up survey, the Memphis CAC has discovered a notable increase in adults taking those protective behaviors.

**“Darkness to Light has been a tremendous partner. We’re working towards the same goal of protecting children and Darkness to Light is able to address the various needs of all their partners and provide us with effective tools and resources we need to be successful in our community. Darkness to Light is consistently looking at ways to enhance child protection and drive this conversation on both the national and international stage.”**

**– Kris Crim, Prevention Director at the Memphis CAC**

