

The Need

Child abuse incidences -- both physical and sexual -- are on the rise, not only in Citrus County, but across the United States. Since children are our most valuable resource, it is our job to help these innocent victims heal so they can become productive, healthy adults.

In 2004, 442 children in Citrus County were reported as abused. That number has steadily risen in the last five years to **627(need new number)** children for the year 2009. These cases included the most serious and severe allegations of physical and sexual abuse to children residing in Citrus County. Those children were found to be in need of expert services to include forensic interviews and medical exams due to their disclosures of abuse and/or neglect. Consider the following:

- 106, 725 children in the state of Florida were reported victims of maltreatment including those children physically and sexually abused (DCF, 2009).
- **70% of sexual assaults** investigated by law enforcement are crimes perpetrated against **children** (Snyder, 2000).
- Over 20% of children will be sexually abused **before their eighth birthday** (Snyder, 2000).
- Studies have shown that "**counties without CACs have a 30-40 percent conviction rate, while those counties with CACs show a conviction rate of 75-90+ percent!**"

Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) began in 1984 when Congressman Bud Kramer developed the concept to improve the prosecution of these heinous crimes and to provide child friendly investigations. Over the last 25 years this movement has grown to over 700 accredited children's advocacy centers nationally whose model aims to reduce the trauma incurred by children through the investigative process .

"There is nothing more frustrating and enraging than to see an abuser walk away because a child has been too traumatized to tell his or her story."

Portia Guinn, Child Protective Investigator