

LAWRENCE BUSINESS

MAGAZINE

2025 Q3



THE FUTURE OF
AGRICULTURE



Breaking the

The Children's Advocacy Center strives to improve the lives and outcomes of abused children in the Douglas County area.

by Paula Martin, Founding Board Member and Chair of the Board of Directors
and Bev Turner, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Center of Douglas County

photo by Steven Hertzog

The Children's Advocacy Center of Douglas County (CAC) provides a safe, child-friendly environment to receive services when there has been a report of child abuse. Our mission is to ensure that children and families affected by child abuse receive a compassionate, community-based intervention through a multidisciplinary team approach to prevent, identify, investigate, prosecute and treat child abuse.

Without a CAC, a child must report his or her experience of abuse multiple times to multiple agencies. The CAC coordinates a multidisciplinary team that works collectively during the investigation. This improves outcomes and reduces stress and further trauma for the child. The multidisciplinary team is comprised of professionals from various fields in Douglas County, including Baldwin City, Douglas County, Eudora, KU and Lawrence law enforcement; the Douglas County District Attorney's Office; Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF); Children's Mercy Hospital and LMH Health; Bert Nash Community Mental Health Center; and The Sexual Trauma and Abuse Care Center. This team meets monthly to review all pending cases, ensuring that nothing falls through the cracks in the investigation and prosecution of child maltreatment cases.

Each case begins with a forensic interview conducted by a professional trained in trauma and child development. This one-time, age-appropriate interview is designed to minimize stress while gathering the information needed for an investigation. Meanwhile, a family advocate meets with caregivers to connect them with vital services. We provide trauma-focused therapy to help children and families begin healing from abuse. Medical exams are facilitated to assess injuries and provide treatment. The CAC connects the family with community resources and provides emotional support. Appointments are made, and if necessary, transportation is provided. All services are free for the child and his or her family members. At the end of the initial visit, after the completion

of the forensic interview, each child is invited to choose a comfort item, a small but meaningful part of the healing process. Popular items include Squishmallows, stuffies, games and journals. For family members, there are educational books about sexual abuse and how to talk to your child.

Additionally, a family advocate provides guidance throughout the legal process to ensure families are not navigating the system alone. This advocate meets with the district attorney's Victim-Witness Coordinator, helps prepare the child to testify against the alleged perpetrator and attends hearings to provide a known and friendly face in the courtroom, since often family members are witnesses and are excluded from the courtroom except when testifying. District Attorney Dakota Loomis says, "The Children's Advocacy Center of Douglas County is an invaluable partner who serves families affected by child abuse while also helping hold accountable those who target children. Our community is a better, safer place thanks to the tireless work done by the CAC."

Cycle

One in 10 children will be sexually abused before the age of 18. To put this in perspective, in a classroom of 30 children, three will be sexually abused during their childhood. Ninety percent of victims are abused by someone they or their family know and trust. Because of factors such as shame, confusion or fear, only about 40 percent of victims report their abuse. Since its establishment in 2021, The CAC has delivered services to 743 children and families.

In addition to the above core services, CAC is expanding its services. It will soon provide Problematic Sexual Behavior Therapy, an evidenced-based program for children who are exhibiting inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviors toward other children. This early intervention helps children understand healthy boundaries, reduces risk and promotes safe behavior moving forward. The Children's Advocacy Center of Douglas County will be the only provider of this therapy in our community.

Funding for all services is through a mix of federal, state and county grants, as well as donations from private foundations, generous individual donors and community fundraisers.

Our vision is to break the cycle of trauma by restoring lives and futures of children and families impacted by child abuse. If you would like to support the work of the Children's Advocacy Center of Douglas County or learn more about our work, visit cacdouglas.org.

If you are concerned about a child's safety or suspect abuse, contact the Kansas Department for Children and Families at 800-922-5330, or reach out to local law enforcement. ▲

STEVENS & BRAND LLP

100 Years
1925-2025

ATTORNEYS

Christopher F. Burger	Leslie M. Miller
Whitney L. Casement	C. David Newbery
Amy L. Durkin	James (Jay) Newbery
Bradley R. Finkeldei	Ann J. Premer
Webster L. Golden	Kana R. Roller
Patricia E. Hamilton	Richard S. Schoenfeld
Thomas D. Haney	Kate M. Simpson
Stanton A. Hazlet	Wesley F. Smith
Jeffrey L. Heiman	Scott E. Taddiken
B.J. Hickert	Peyton N. Weatherbie
Matthew H. Hoy	Rebecca J. Wempe
Sherri E. Loveland	J. Eric Weslander
Denise L. McNabb	Winton A. Winter, Jr.
Jean B. Ménager	Molly M. Wood

PRACTICE AREAS

Business, Corporate, & Real Estate Law
Elder Law, Tax, & Estate Planning
Family Law
Litigation & Criminal Law

CONTACT INFORMATION

Lawrence 785-843-0811
Topeka 785-408-8000
stevensbrand.com
stevens@stevensbrand.com



NATIONALLY ACCREDITED. WITHOUT THE ROAD TRIP.

Cancer care that's closer to you.

Our new Cancer Center is here, bringing you national accreditation from the Commission on Cancer – the standard setter for quality cancer care. Plus a team of oncologists and the latest treatment options. All in one place.



LMHHealth
Cancer Center