

# FROM TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH

## GROWING STRONG FUTURES



A CAMPAIGN FOR KIDS-TALK DETROIT



THE GUIDANCE CENTER  
**KIDS-TALK**  
CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

# WHAT WE DO

Every year in Wayne County, **approximately 6,000 child abuse and/or neglect cases** are verified. When these allegations involve sexual abuse or severe physical abuse, Kids-TALK is there to serve as a vital component of the investigative process, and more importantly, as an advocate for the child and family.

The Kids-TALK Children's Advocacy Center was established 25 years ago through the vision and determination of Lynda Baker and Nancy J. Diehl, who co-authored a Skillman Foundation grant with the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office serving as fiduciary. United by a **deep conviction that children who had endured the unspeakable deserved better care**, Lynda and Nancy set out to create a more compassionate and coordinated response.

Today, Kids-TALK is a program of The Guidance Center, one of Michigan's largest human service agencies providing comprehensive behavioral health and community outreach services. By combining The Guidance Center's wide-ranging services, high quality care and dedicated staff with Kids-TALK's child-centered programming, the children who walk through the Kids-TALK doors are **surrounded by the support they need to heal from their trauma**.

When a child makes an allegation of abuse, instead of taking them to the police station for an interview—a process that can be incredibly scary for a young person—the child is taken to Kids-TALK. In this **child-friendly, safe, and supportive atmosphere**, they are interviewed by specially trained staff to learn more about the allegations. These interviews are monitored by law enforcement and other professionals who are in another room watching and the interviews are recorded. This unique process ensures that **the child only needs to tell their story once**. Gone are the days of re-living their trauma by repeating their story over and over. Kids-TALK also conducts medical evaluations, offers comprehensive mental health services and advocacy, and provides resources to support the child's (nonoffending) family.

**As the only accredited Children's Advocacy Center in Wayne County, each year we help 2,000 children ranging from birth to 17 years old in one of our two Kids-TALK locations in Midtown Detroit and Southgate.**



# OUR MODEL

Kids-TALK is built on the nationally recognized Children's Advocacy Center model. This unique and collaborative model (joining law enforcement, Children's Protective Services, Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, Attorney General's Office and our Kids-TALK team) makes sure that no child falls through the cracks.



This model was created in 1985 out of a recognized need for a coordinated, evidence-based response to children experiencing abuse and is considered best practice across the country.

In 2022, Children's Advocacy Centers of Michigan surveyed more than 500 prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and child protection workers who collaborate with CACs. Ninety-seven percent reported that the CAC model fosters positive cooperation between agencies involved in the investigation of child abuse, ensuring that children and families receive the best possible care.



“The forensic interview services provided by the Kids-TALK Children's Advocacy Center have been instrumental to the Detroit Police Department's efforts to achieve criminal justice. The services are critical to law enforcement agencies throughout the City of Detroit. Without Kids-TALK, Wayne County will incur additional and unnecessary costs across the partner agencies such as Children's Protective Services, Juvenile Justice, Foster Care, and inpatient facilities. Tragically the children of Michigan will pay the ultimate price.”

Todd A. Bettison, Chief of Police  
City of Detroit

# HOW WE HELP

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Every child who walks through the doors of Kids-TALK carries a story—one of resilience, hope, and the need for safety. These stories belong to someone's child, sibling, grandchild, neighbor, or classmate, and each one is powerful in its own right. By sharing these experiences, we honor the courage of the children we serve and highlight the profound impact of Kids-TALK in restoring their sense of security, dignity, and well-being. Their journeys remind us that healing is possible, and that Kids-TALK plays a vital role in helping children move forward with hope.

## Katherine's Story

Katherine remembers when she was very young that her mother would tell her how smart and independent she was going to be when she grew up. She learned how to ride a bike, how to rollerblade, how to read every single book, article and cereal box in the house. She learned how to sew doll clothing out of socks. With her mother's help and encouragement, Katherine WAS smart, curious and happy, developing confidence and independence.

But then when she was nine, her mother married a man who turned out to be **cruel and abusive**. It wasn't long after her mom was married that her husband began to sexually abuse Katherine. For whatever reason, his sexual abuse stopped about a year later. Katherine thinks it was because he was afraid she would tell. But **the soul sucking emotional abuse and cruelty didn't stop**. He would demean her, tell her that nobody would believe somebody like her. He said she would destroy their family and her mother. She said nothing to anybody until she was 13. During her silent years, she became depressed, her relationship with her mother deteriorated, she developed an eating disorder, was terrified of men and **tried to commit suicide** more than once.

Today, after several years of therapy at Kids-TALK, Katherine has reconnected with her sense of self-worth, her relationships with her mom and brother are strong, and **she is healing from her trauma**. She says, "I want to thank everyone that has had the patience to help me at Kids-TALK but especially my therapist. **Thank you to all for your role in helping to change so many children's lives.**"



# HOW WE HELP

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## Genavieve's Story

Genavieve can't remember a time in her first 17 years on this planet when she wasn't abused by her father. The **abuse took many forms**—physical battering; terror; constant pressure to achieve academically, socially and athletically; constant demands to improve her appearance; even worse things that Genevieve avoids talking about—and it was relentless.

Outwardly, Genavieve appeared to be together and successful. Inside, she was **racked with self-doubt, depression, an eating disorder and fighting impulses to end her life**.

After one catastrophic night filled with terror and violence, Genevieve's mom Shelly left with Genavieve and her brother. Genavieve believed it was somehow her fault that it all happened. When it came time to tell her story to the authorities investigating the criminal charges pending against her father, she was so overwhelmed with guilt and self-recrimination that she **overdosed and ended up in the hospital**.

Shortly thereafter, she was introduced to a therapist named Julia at Kids-TALK. Julia **taught her how to find herself**, her sense of self-worth and to understand that what she experienced was a cycle of extreme abuse that she had courageously ended.

Genavieve says, "Kids-TALK has helped me more than I can ever put into words. Julia knew when I was sinking and when to get me more help. I would not be here today if it was not for the help I received at Kids-TALK."

"Julia has helped me learn to turn my bruises and my suffering into a key to help others unlock the doors to their own recovery. I now have enough confidence in myself to use my story to help others understand that they are enough. In our lives, pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional."

**Today, Genavieve is thriving in law school and plans to work as an attorney dedicated to helping others who have suffered abuse and neglect.**



# THE PROBLEM

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Since our inception in 2001, Kids-TALK has experienced a 2,306% increase in the number of children served. Because of that dramatic growth **we no longer have adequate space to meet the needs of the community**. Sadly because of our capacity constraints and increases in demand each year, **families sometimes must wait up to 18 long days** before their child can be seen. These delays can compromise child safety by prolonging a child's exposure to potential harm and can hinder the timely collection of critical evidence, which is essential for accurate assessments and successful prosecutions. As a result, **investigative outcomes may be weakened**, and opportunities for early intervention and protection may be missed.

We know that child abuse crosses all genders, races, and socio-economic statuses. It's not someone else's problem or a neighborhood's problem. **It is our problem**. All of us need to work together to stand up for children.

What we do is important. But right now, too many kids are not getting the timely help they need. **That simply isn't acceptable**.



“Childhood abuse has mental and emotional consequences and is a deeply traumatic experience that can have profound and lasting impacts on a child's mental and physical well-being. Children who experience abuse are more likely to develop anxiety, depression, and memory issues. Seeking help is important as it addresses immediate trauma and fosters good mental health in the short and long term.”

Kevin Fischer, Executive Director  
NAMI Michigan

# THE PROBLEM

National estimates published by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) suggest that as many as **one in four girls have experienced some sort of sexual abuse by the age of 18**. For boys, it is **more like one in 13**. About 90% of abuse is perpetrated by someone known and trusted by the child or child's family. Many families and children either wait years to report the abuse or *never report it at all*.



**The scale and devastating impact of abuse are both shocking and daunting.** This is why it is so important that places like Kids-TALK exist. Children who are traumatized by sexual abuse are affected forever by their experiences. With the right interventions, we can mitigate the effects of trauma.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that the total lifetime economic impact of child sexual abuse in the United States in 2015 was estimated to be at least **\$9.3 billion**.

Compared to adults who have not been sexually abused, survivors of child sexual abuse **earn \$8,000 less per year**; are less likely to have a bank account, car or house; are three times more likely to be out of work due to sickness or disability and are **less likely to go to college** or have a skilled job.

Since 2013, Kids-TALK has seen a **43% increase** in the number of forensic interviews conducted at our Detroit location.

# WHAT WE NEED

Kids-TALK was founded with a focused mission to serve children from birth through age 12 who were victims of alleged sexual abuse. As our community's needs evolved, so did our responsibility to respond. To better meet those needs, we expanded our scope to include youth through age 17, children impacted by severe physical abuse and neglect, and children who witnessed violent crimes such as homicide.

The steady and significant growth in the number of children we serve is also a reflection of **the trust our professional partners and broader community have in Kids-TALK and the CAC model**. As the coordination and collaboration among law enforcement, children's protective services, prosecution, medical, mental health, and advocacy professionals has strengthened, so too has the recognition that **this unified, child-focused approach works**. The effectiveness of the CAC's comprehensive, compassionate, and trauma-informed care has led to a dramatic increase in the number of children served is a direct result of systems throughout Wayne County working together to prioritize the needs of children.

Sadly, because of this dramatic growth, services at our Midtown Detroit location have been unavoidably negatively impacted. **We simply cannot keep up with the demand** due to our limited number of exam rooms, therapy spaces, and staff.

Consequently, we undertook a study of our facility needs and learned that the space required to meet the growing demand at our Detroit location is approximately 25,000–30,000 square feet; **nearly three times the size of our current building**. By expanding to this size, we will be able to provide children with the critical services they need within 3 days of their disclosure, which is the standard best practice for children's advocacy centers.

## MORE SPACE FOR MORE KIDS

**The proposed new and expanded location will provide:**

- **10 interview and advocacy rooms**

*Expanding interview and advocacy rooms is critical to meeting best practice standards—ensuring children are seen within three days—reducing trauma, strengthening investigations, and improving safety and long-term outcomes for children.*

- private and comfortable therapy spaces, medical evaluation rooms

- flex office space for our community partners

- **healing spaces for children and families**

*Healing spaces, including specifically designed interview, therapy and medical rooms, child-friendly waiting rooms, and an outdoor garden, offer children and families a calm, welcoming environment where they feel safe and supported—an essential foundation for trauma recovery. Creating these spaces within the CAC fosters trust, reduces anxiety, and reinforces the center's role as a haven for healing and hope.*

- the ability to serve twice as many children

# OUR VISION

To ensure that Detroit's children have access to the same high-quality care and coordinated response that all children deserve, The Guidance Center is undertaking a **critical initiative to find a new, larger home for Kids-TALK in Detroit**. This larger space will ensure we can increase the size of our specially trained staff, expand essential mental health and medical services, and provide more preventative programming.

To bring our impactful vision to life, **we are embarking on a \$10 million capital campaign** to raise the funds necessary for this critical undertaking. Achieving this bold goal will require support from several key areas. Therefore, the campaign will include a blend of private philanthropic support, public funding, and the proceeds from the sale of our current location.



*Proposed renderings from THOMAS ROBERTS Architect (not final versions).*



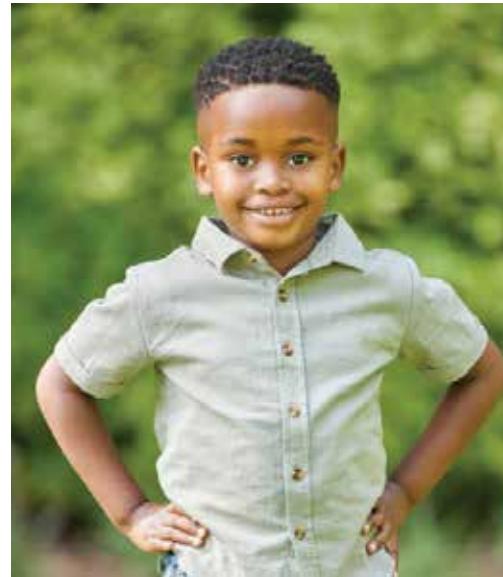
“For 25 years, Kids-TALK has made a huge difference in the lives of children and families in Wayne County. The program empowers kids to tell their story in a safe place where they are believed, supported, and can begin healing. By supporting this work, we are not only helping thousands of children each year, we are investing in the future of our community.”

Laura Huot  
President & CEO, The Guidance Center

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

Today, **we are calling on our friends, neighbors and all those invested in the health and safety of our children**. Time is of the essence. We must do everything we can to help them overcome the devastating impact of abuse.

To help us realize our vision and ensure that more children are able to move from trauma to triumph, we are looking to the community for financial support. By joining with us and supporting Kids-TALK, you will have a long-lasting impact on the lives of children in our community. **The children of Wayne County—including Detroit, Downriver, Western Wayne and the east side—deserve more.** They deserve better. And with your help, we can and will ensure that they are given a path toward a bright and happy future.



If you share our commitment, please contact us to learn more. There are a variety of ways to support this important project, and we would love to discuss how you can help.

For more details about our bold vision and how you can help, please contact us.

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“The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office strives to be acutely victim centered. One of the best partnerships that we have to achieve that goal is the Kids-TALK Children's Advocacy Center. Their building must be expanded in order for the staff to effectively do their work and support our abused and traumatized children. We support this effort in the strongest of terms and recognize that this is a mandate that we can all get behind.”

Kym L. Worthy, Prosecuting Attorney  
Wayne County Prosecutor's Office

# OUR NEW HOME



Proposed renderings from THOMAS ROBERTS Architect (not final versions).



THE GUIDANCE CENTER  
**KIDS-TALK**  
CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

Midtown Detroit  
40 East Ferry Street  
Detroit, MI 48202

Southgate  
19275 Northline  
Southgate, MI 48195

Canton (coming in 2026)  
44649 Michigan Ave.  
Canton, MI 48188

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