

## **Testimony in Support of Bill # HB5812: March 20, 2006**

As staff of the Yale Child Sexual Abuse Clinic and members of the Steering Committee of the Children's Advocacy Center (Associate Member) at Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital, we are writing in support of bill #HB5812.

The Yale Child Sexual Abuse Clinic (YCSAC) is responsible for conducting child sensitive, expert medical forensic examinations and forensic interviews of children. Brief assessments of the family are conducted, crisis counseling is offered to families in need, and referrals for treatment are made. Additionally, expert medical support is offered to outlying communities as needed. Case information is presented to the MDT's as cases are reviewed.

The Clinic serves families within three judicial districts: New Haven, Milford/Ansonia, and Bridgeport. The Clinic provides services to 290 children and their families each year. The Clinic participates as team members in the MultiDisciplinary Teams (MDTs) that serve these three Judicial districts.

Cooperation between the MDT members ensures a comprehensive response to allegations of serious child physical or sexual abuse. The MDT team model encourages the coordination of investigatory, evaluative, and supportive services. Involving members of many agencies with overlapping interests and coordinating services are formidable tasks. Helping the MDTs to achieve this high standard of performance is the goal of the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC).

At the heart of the CAC model is a child-focused approach with a dual mission: to minimize the trauma to the child and his/her family and to increase prosecution rates for perpetrators. CAC partnerships create an environment that allows evaluation, treatment, and supportive interventions to be offered as quickly as possible, while maintaining and supporting the integrity of the investigative process so as to ensure effective and timely prosecution.

As the site for the newly formed Children's Advocacy Center at Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital, we are actively engaged in defining an environment that best supports our MDT teams. We anticipate the creation of a site that provides the facilities, resources, and support needed by our community.

The provisions in HB5812 that support funding to Connecticut's MDTs and CACs will allow our communities to pursue the highest standard of support for the young and vulnerable victims we serve. We appreciate your consideration of this timely proposal.

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