## Pasadena Citizen



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## LPPD Works Hand-in-Hand with Child Protection Organizations

There exists a sad reality that our most precious resource, children, are frequently victims of both physical and sexual abuse.

Those who have suffered at the hands of irresponsible or vicious adults have been robbed of more than many of us can even begin to imagine. However, while law enforcement representatives may play many roles and perform many tasks, few undertakings stand before La Porte Police Department's mission to eradicate incidents of child abuse.

Whether it be the patrol officer, making the initial response to an outcry of victimization, the shift supervisor, ensuring that both the child and remaining household members are protected during the interim period, the victim service liaison, providing access to recovery resources, or the case investigator, tracking all leads to bring perpetrators to justice, LPPD representatives have both the resources in place and the desire to fight the battle. Nevertheless, it remains essential that the entire community become involved and stay active in the lives of our children if we are to see them grow to their full potential.

La Porte Police Department's most frequent contact and incident coordination link concerning child abuse is the Houston-based Children's Assessment Center (CAC). As a member of the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc. the Assessment center has instituted what they label their "Capital Campaign" in order to restore hope and rebuild lives.

Through their efforts the CAC has already trained over 2000 first-responders through their annual Protecting Texas Children's Conference. At an estimated cost of merely \$10.53 per trainee, improved child-protective behaviors are being proliferated, as they spread from Emergency Service Personnel to parents, teachers, and those who mentor everywhere. Research suggests

that after an adult is trained, an average of 10 children will have been protected from abuse in the years following the training.

Unfortunately, spotting an abused child is not always easy, but if each of us takes a moment to look we may notice some of the most recognizable signs. Children with unexplained injuries, poor hygiene, and a fear of going home are the most evident. However, if you have additional exposure to a child, investigators suggest looking for noticeable changes in eating habits, sleeping patterns, academic performance, and school attendance.

La Porte Police Child Abuse Investigator David and CAC Liaison Officer, Detective David Huckabee, recommends that we also be on the look out for "increases in a child's risk-taking behavior. Weapon possession and Drug use are the most obvious of course, but more frequent acts of vandalism, sexually acting out, and increased use of poor language are also signs parents and guardians should not ignore." Huckabee states that these signs typically become worse as time progresses.

Data from the CAC supports Huckabee's comment and the agency further advises that children who are abused are 40 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime as an adult. "Protecting our kids is never a back-burner issue", exclaimed La Porte Police Criminal Investigations Lieutenant Tammy McBeath. "We will do everything we can to catch these criminals and see to it that they experience the maximum penalties for their crimes."

The CAC established its Harris County-based center in 1991 and has expanded their partnering agencies from 10 to the current number of 45. Of these 45 partners, there exist 5 law enforcement co-agencies, including La Porte PD, who have investigators housed directly inside of the CAC facility. Additionally, there are representatives from various state and local criminal justice agencies, including but not limited to the Texas Department and Family Services, Harris County District Attorney's Office, Texas Children's Hospital, a designated child advocate, as well as many local Police and Sheriff's Departments who assist the CAC.

The La Porte Police Department is pleased to be involved with the CAC's efforts and both agencies identify that we all need the help of one another to do away with child abuse. For more information on how you can get involved in the protection of our children, La Porte Police suggest logging onto the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas website at <a href="www.onewithcourage.org">www.onewithcourage.org</a>. Moreover, if you observe any situation where you feel a child is in danger, LPPD officials plead that you don't hesitate and immediately call the Texas abuse and neglect hotline at 1-800-252-5400, or the La Porte Police Department at 281-471-2141 for assistance.