

Davis County Children's Justice Center October 2004 Issue



Specialized Mental Health Assessments

Several years ago it came to the attention of professionals involved with child sexual abuse cases that there are some victims who do not or cannot disclose abuse in the initial investigative interview at the CJC. In many of these cases other evidence exists to suggest that something has happened to the child such as medical evidence or extreme behaviors that the child is exhibiting. Because the child does not disclose, the case generally has to be closed out as having insufficient evidence and will not be prosecuted. This was the reason behind creating the Specialized Mental Health Assessment resource. Doug Miller, Davis CJC director first heard about this resource back in 2001 and decided to send a therapist in the community to be trained to do these assessments. Doug met with Dr. Rick

Hawks and he agreed to go back to Huntsville to be trained.

Mental Health assessments require one meeting with the non-offending care giver(s). After this initial session Dr. Hawks meets with the child for up to 5 sessions while following a very strict protocol that was set forth in the training in Huntsville. If the child then makes a disclosure in one of these sessions it can be used in court and Dr. Hawks will put together a report with his recommendations and findings. Dr. Hawks can testify to his report in court if necessary. When he is finished with the report he will meet with the prosecutor involved and with the case worker, detective, CJC director and CJC coordinator to discuss the results. It is required that an initial staffing be done with Dr. Hawks and the prosecutor to determine if a case meets the criteria for a

mental health assessment. If you feel like you have a case that meets this criteria please discuss the case with Tanya Perkins and she will set up the initial staffing for you. The sessions with the child are not video or audio taped. Assessments cost \$650.00 and these are paid for either by billing insurances, CVR or with grant money Doug Miller obtained specifically for these assessments. Please note that these assessments are not considered therapy, and under no circumstances can Dr. Hawks meet with the child more than 5 times. If the child is in therapy at the time of the assessment their parent will be asked to suspend that therapy until the assessment is finished.

If you have any questions regarding this process please call Tanya Perkins at the CJC @ 451-3556.