



Press Release
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Child Safe of Central Missouri, Inc, announces details for new Child Safe Center

Tuesday, August 5th, Child Safe of Central Missouri celebrated our long-awaited Groundbreaking Ceremony of our future new center at 3307 W. Main Street. The new center has an estimated completion date of February 2021. This new center will be twice the size at 4,000 square feet, compared to our current location which is 1800 square feet at 102 East 10th. This is a monumental milestone in the progression of Child Safe. Child Safe has come so far and it is truly because of the support of the community and partnerships like the one we have developed with KPIII Properties.

Child Safe is very excited to see construction begin on the center. The planning for this building started about a year and half ago when we started working with Josh Kroeger, Kevin Kroeger, and Ken Weymouth with KPIII Properties on getting Child Safe a new building. There were a few times when we thought the building wasn't going to happen. The one thing we kept hearing over and over from Josh was, *"we have made a commitment to Child Safe and we told you we were going to get you into a new building and that's what we are going to do"*. Thanks to that commitment in the very near future Child Safe will have a child-friendly, state-of-the-art children's advocacy center to better serve sexually and physically abused children.

Before the thought of a new building crossed our minds, we were getting estimates for an expansion of our current location. The age of the house combined with the high cost of building materials quickly turned this idea into a project that wasn't a viable solution for our needs.

The need for a new building has been evident for many years just as the need for Child Safe Advocacy Centers has grown drastically since the 1990's. Child Safe provides a safe, child-friendly environment for victims of child abuse (sexual, physical, neglect, witness to domestic violence, witness to homicide, drug endangered) and their non-offending caregiver, where the child is protected, while the ability of investigators to meet their statutory mandates is enhanced. Child Safe serves 11 counties which include: Benton, Carroll, Chariton, Henry, Johnson, Lafayette, Linn, Moniteau, Morgan, Pettis, and Saline. Last year we served 411 children who were victims of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, exploitation, or witnessed domestic violence, homicide, or other crimes.



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Child Safe is located in a renovated two-story home in a residential section of Sedalia. Over the past twenty years Child Safe has grown from a small staff of five to currently employing thirteen full time and one part time staff member, making it very tight quarters with little to no privacy for individual cases. In-house mental health services were added with the hiring of two Child and Family Therapist in the fall of 2016. With no space in the current location for offices, Child Safe began leasing office space to house therapy services in a separate building. There are many days when Child Safe has four or five appointments back to back which can lead to the over-lapping of families. Often there are times when one family is still working through the interview process when the next family arrives and staff are creatively working on ways to maintain privacy for both families.

Once the new center is completed, Child Safe will be able to provide additional services. The new child advocacy center will contain a welcoming reception area, two age-appropriate interview rooms, two forensic family waiting rooms, one therapy waiting room, two therapy rooms, a second entrance for Children's Division and Law Enforcement, and private areas where children and their families can gather while they access the necessary services.

The additional space will help with the overlapping of families and aid in confidentiality and privacy. Child Safe therapy office will now be housed at the new center, instead of their separate location. The new center will also provide a reception area, a conference room for agency meetings, plus parking and front entrance is off to the side for additional privacy. The new center will provide additional security and privacy for families and staff as well.

The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) was passed by Congress in 1984 to assist states in providing services that are directly related to the emotional healing and recovery of crime victims. The Victims of Crime Act is funded through fines, penalties, and forfeitures collected from persons convicted of offenses against the United States (DSS Website) not tax paper dollars. Child Safe has received grant money from VOCA for more than a decade. A little over 60% of our funding is generated from VOCA with the remaining 40% coming from state appropriations, fundraising, and community donations. Any donations Child Safe receives goes directly to help children we serve.

Child Advocacy centers provide a team approach to child abuse investigations by bringing together those agencies involved in the child abuse investigation in a place specially designed for children, supporting, and enhancing investigation, prosecution, and therapy process. The trauma for the child is reduced and the probability of successful prosecution is increased. The services provided by Child Safe are available to cover over 60,000 children under the age of 18 in our 11-county service area. The average cost per child receiving services is \$2,003.57. All of Child Safe services are provided free of charge.

Child Safe has progressed over the past 20 years because of community support and partnerships. Everyone that attended the groundbreaking ceremony speaks volumes to our community's commitment to the fight against child abuse. Over the past 20 years, Child Safe has been able to provide a voice for children who have had the courage to speak the unspeakable and somehow have the strength and ability to come forward during some of the more horrific acts of abuse. Child Safe has been and will remain committed to providing a safe environment where a child's voice is heard and respected. It's a great feeling knowing that you have impacted a child's life. *"All of us together are a stronger foundation as protectors of the most vulnerable children. Unity is strength, when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved. It is not about the individual pieces, but how they work together."*



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