



ECCAC

**Emerald Coast
Children's Advocacy Center**

**August
2026
Newsletter**

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ECCAC goes to Crimes Against Kids

Some of our team recently wrapped up an incredible week at the Crimes Against Kids Conference in Orlando, joining child advocates and professionals from across the country to learn, connect, and strengthen our work on behalf of children and families.

We are deeply grateful to the Florida Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (FNCAC) for helping make this valuable training opportunity possible.

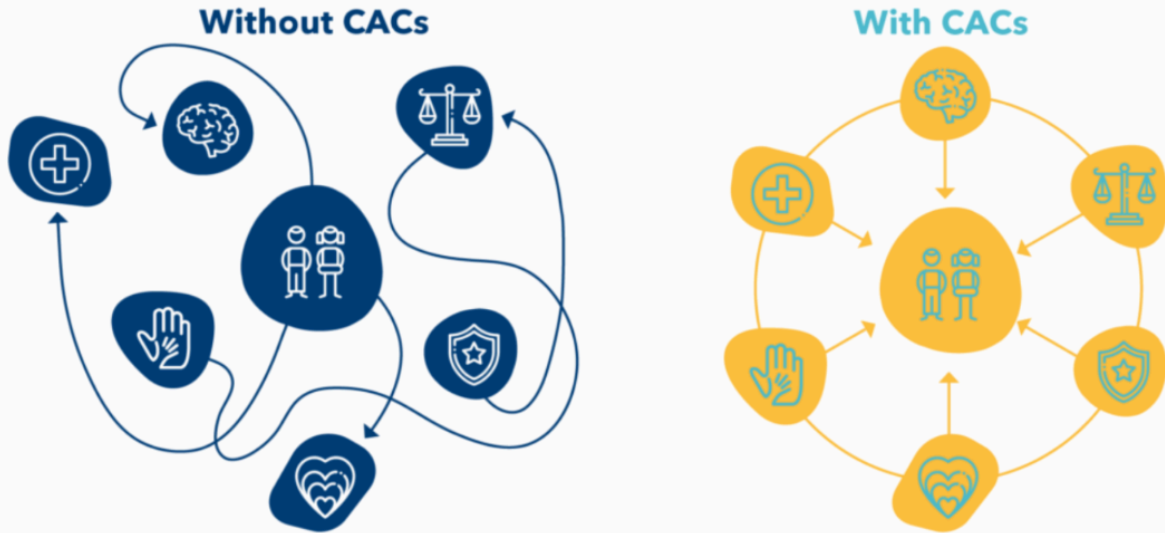
Every session, conversation, and new resource gives our team additional tools to provide trauma-informed care, strengthen multidisciplinary partnerships, and support children on their

journey toward healing.

We're returning home inspired, empowered, and ready to put what we've learned into action. Because when we invest in our team, we invest in the children we serve. 🦋



The Need for CACs



Before There Was a Better Way

The Critical Need for Child Advocacy Centers

When a child experiences abuse, what happens next matters.

A Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) brings the professionals involved in a child abuse investigation together to create a coordinated, child-centered response.

Instead of navigating multiple agencies and retelling their experience again and again, children and families receive support in one safe, welcoming environment.

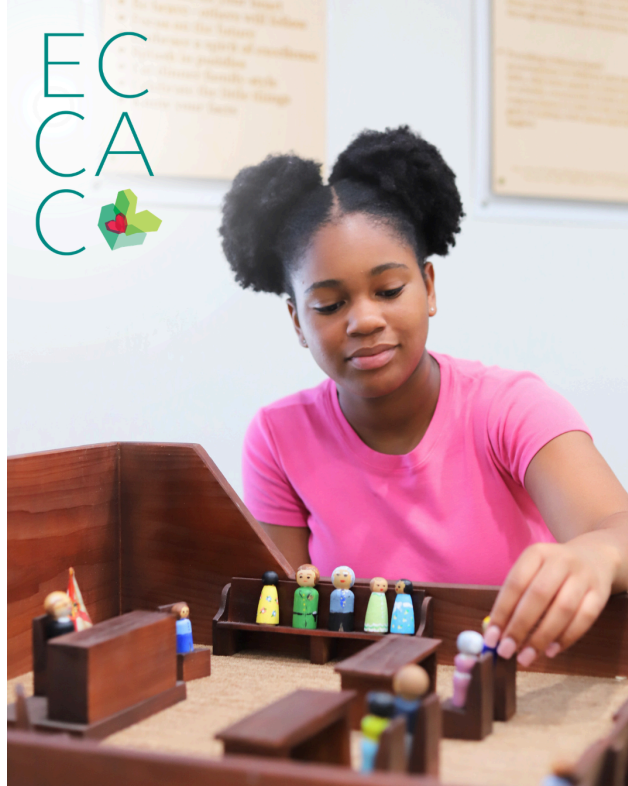
The impact of this model is significant.

Children Are More Likely to See Justice

- When children are interviewed in a child-friendly setting by specially trained forensic interviewers, investigations are strengthened while reducing additional trauma. At Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, every reported case of child abuse and neglect in Okaloosa and Walton Counties receives this coordinated response.

 **One Interview. Less Trauma.**

- A child shouldn't have to repeatedly relive their experience. At a CAC, specially trained forensic interviewers conduct child-focused interviews while law enforcement, child protection, prosecutors, medical professionals, advocates, and therapists work together as a multidisciplinary team.



Healing Starts Sooner

- The response doesn't end when the investigation does. CACs connect children and families with advocacy, trauma-informed therapy, and other supportive services to help children process what happened and begin to heal.

Children Feel Safe

- According to the National Children's Alliance, 97% of caregivers reported that their child felt safe during their CAC visit.

Caregivers Feel Informed

- Child abuse investigations can be overwhelming for families. The National Children's Alliance reports that 94% of caregivers said they understood what to expect after their first CAC visit.

These numbers tell an important story: when communities come together around children, children are better supported.

At Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, we believe every child deserves to be heard, protected, supported, and given the opportunity to heal.

That's the CAC difference.



ECCAC Back-to-School Safety Safari 🦁📚

Our Back-to-School Safety Safari was a wild success!

We're incredibly grateful to our amazing ECCAC staff, volunteers, community partners, and everyone who donated school supplies to help set our kids up for a school year filled with kindness, safety, confidence, and academic success. 💛🖍️

A huge thank you to the Emerald Coast Science Center for bringing some WILD friends along and teaching our kiddos more about animals! 🦎🌿 You helped make the day SO special!



We also want to give a special shoutout to the Mobile Show Stoppers (MSS) Florida Chapter for coming out to teach our kiddos some line dancing! 🦊 Thank you for bringing the fun and helping make this a day to remember!

And to everyone who donated supplies, volunteered their time, or helped make this event possible: THANK YOU! Your generosity and support help local children head into the school year feeling prepared, encouraged, and cared for. 📚📱✨

Here's to a safe, happy, and successful school year! 🚚💛

Every child deserves a childhood—and the chance to thrive. 🦋





Advocating for Children on Capitol Hill 💙

We're incredibly proud of our Lead Clinical Supervisor, Sarah-Kate, and Lead Mental Health Advocate, Kerri, for representing Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center in Washington, D.C., during Hill Day 2026.

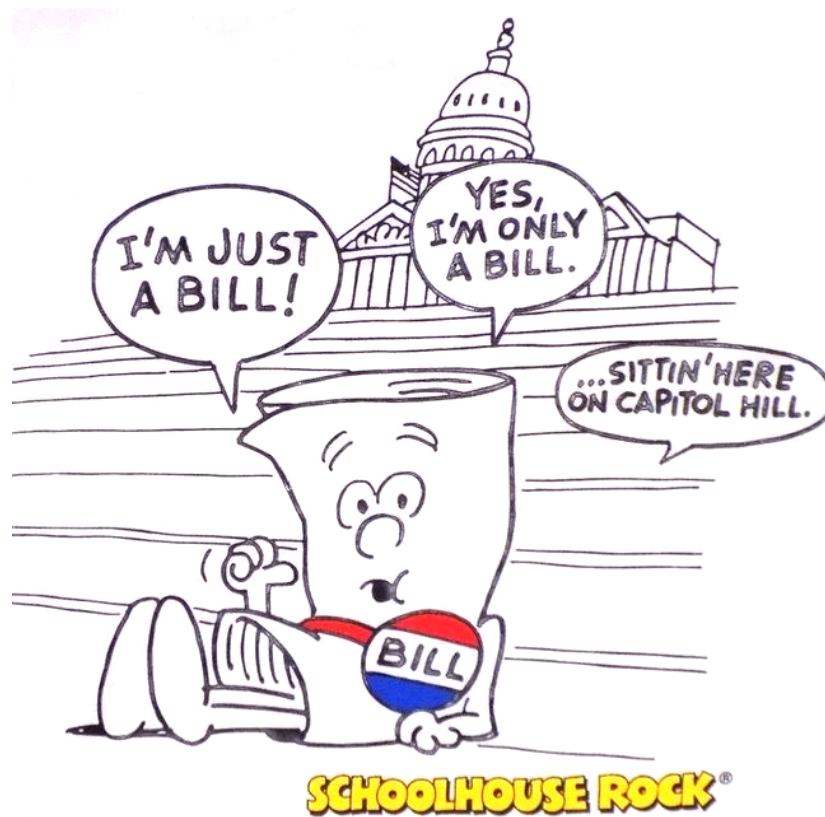
Alongside Children's Advocacy Center professionals from across Florida, Sarah-Kate and Kerri met with congressional leaders and their staff to advocate for the children and families we serve—and for the resources that make healing possible.

A key focus of their advocacy was protecting victim services and supporting the Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act (CVFSA), which would help create a more stable funding source for Children's Advocacy Centers nationwide.

VOCA funding isn't just a line item in a budget. It helps provide the forensic interviews, trauma-focused therapy, medical evaluations, and victim advocacy that children and families rely on after abuse.

We are so grateful to Sarah-Kate and Kerri for bringing the voices and needs of children in Okaloosa and Walton counties to our nation's capital. Their leadership reminds us that advocacy doesn't stop at our center doors—it extends wherever decisions are being made that impact the children we serve.

Thank you for being powerful voices for our community and for helping ensure every child has access to the care, healing, and justice they deserve. 🦋





CHELCO: Swinging for a Safer Tomorrow 🏌️💚

A huge thank you to CHELCO for making this year's Charity Golf Tournament a record-breaking success!

Thanks to the generosity of players, sponsors, and the hospitality of Eagle Springs Golf & Recreation Center, the tournament raised an incredible \$17,946.27—with \$5,982.09 donated to Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center!

We are so grateful to CHELCO for choosing to invest in the safety, healing, and well-being of local children.

Their generosity helps ECCAC provide advocacy, therapy, prevention education, and support to children and families throughout our community.

We're proud to partner with organizations like CHELCO that continue to show up for kids when it matters most. 💚

Thank you, CHELCO, for helping us create a safer, stronger community for every child!





Community Partnership Spotlight: Kendra Scott

A heartfelt thank you to Kendra Scott and everyone who joined us for our recent Give Back Event! 💚

We are so grateful to everyone who stopped by, shopped, shared the event, and helped turn a little sparkle into a whole lot of good. Your support helps Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center provide advocacy, healing, and prevention services to children and families in our community.

Thank you for showing up for local kids and helping us build a safer, brighter future—one beautiful piece at a time. ✨



Heroes Behind the Mask 🐢 🦸

This week, we're celebrating our incredible Forensic Interview Team! 💙

You may notice they're sporting Ninja Turtle masks and capes in this photo—and there's actually a meaningful reason behind the masks. Our forensic interviewers intentionally maintain a low public profile to help protect the integrity of their work and the children they serve.

By remaining anonymous, they help ensure children enter the interview room without preconceived familiarity, keeping the focus where it belongs: on the child and their story.

Behind the masks are highly trained professionals who create a safe, child-friendly environment where children can share their experiences one time, using trauma-informed, evidence-based interviewing practices that help reduce further trauma.

We're grateful for these quiet heroes who listen, advocate, and help children take an important first step toward healing. 🦋



DONATE to ECCAC



ECCAC Volunteer Spotlight: George

This month, we're shining a spotlight on George Tenezaca, a new ECCAC volunteer who continues to show up for local children and families!

Originally from New Jersey, George is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree in Cybersecurity Analytics and Operations while serving on active duty in the U.S. Air Force.

When he's not studying or serving, he enjoys movie nights with his wife, playing soccer, and exploring new scenery on a run. 🏈🎬🏃

As the youngest of eight with a big family of nieces and nephews, George says his family is a major reason he chose to volunteer with ECCAC. He believes that by helping children today, we're helping shape a better future. 🦋

Recently, George donated generously to our Back-to-School Supply Drive and helped make our Back-to-School Safety Safari a success! 📚🦁📖

George, thank you for your service, generosity, and commitment to our community's children. We're so grateful to have you on the ECCAC team! 🧡

Make a Direct Impact - Volunteer with the ECCAC!

Support the ECCAC Mission – Volunteer Today

If you have any questions about events and volunteering contact our Community Engagement Manager, Christopher: (251) 809-4067 or email at (Christopher@eccac.org)

Join us in making a difference for children in our community. By volunteering with ECCAC, you help support the hope, care, and safety for children who need it most. Every hand makes an impact.

Volunteer with ECCAC



ECCAC Healing Fact:

For a child experiencing something difficult, having even one trusted adult who listens, believes them, and consistently shows up can make a powerful difference.

A safe adult can provide reassurance, stability, and a sense of security when the world around a child feels uncertain.

You don't have to have all the answers.

Sometimes, simply being present, listening without judgment, and reminding a child that they are safe and supported is an important part of healing.

One safe adult can help a child feel less alone—and that can be the beginning of healing. 🦋



Summer Water Safety Starts with You 🏊

Life on the Emerald Coast means plenty of time at the beach, pool, and waterways. A few simple precautions can help keep those summer memories safe. ❤️

Remember to:

- 👁️ Designate a distraction-free Water Watcher to supervise children.
- 🏊 Keep young children within arm's reach and never let them swim alone.
- 🚶 Use properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets when needed.
- 🏠 Secure home pools with four-sided fencing, self-latching gates, and alarms.
- ❤️ Learn CPR and consider swim lessons for children.
- 🏊 At the beach, check warning flags and choose lifeguarded areas when possible. Teach children caught in a rip current to stay calm, float, and swim parallel to shore.



And don't forget: drowning is often silent and can happen in seconds.

🏊 Free Pool Guard Alarms Available at ECCAC!

ECCAC has free Pool Guard alarms available for local families to add an extra layer of protection around home pools. Stop by the center to learn more and pick one up while supplies last!

Together, we can help make sure every child enjoys a fun, safe summer on the Emerald Coast.



Thank you for being part of the ECCAC community.

Your support helps us provide safety, hope, and healing for children every day.

Together, we're making a lasting difference—one child at a time.

-The ECCAC Team

OUR MISSION

We seek to heal and prevent the trauma of childhood abuse and neglect by providing advocacy, child-friendly therapies, and a safe environment for kids to feel seen, heard, and understood. We restore lost innocence, provide hope, and make a difference in all the lives we touch.



Rise to the challenge.

Help us restore childhood joy and hope for the future.

[DONATE NOW](#)



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