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NETWORK OF VICTIM ASSISTANCE RECEIVES FUNDING TO RENOVATE ITS CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CAC)

(BUCKS COUNTY, Pa.) Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA) is pleased to announce the renovation of its CAC (Child Advocacy Center) in Jamison, PA. The CAC is a nationally accredited service of NOVA that is an interagency collaborative between NOVA, Bucks County Children and Youth Social Services Agency, the Bucks County Office of the District Attorney, and all 48 police departments in Bucks County. Established in 2008, the CAC provides a coordinated and multidisciplinary response to reports of suspected child sexual and physical abuse in Bucks County. The renovations were made possible by a grant through the County of Bucks from the Federal Government's Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

There are more than 2000 reports of child abuse in Bucks County each year and the CAC provides a setting where children can receive collaborative services from agencies mandated by law to investigate reports of sexual and physical abuse. The CAC's mission is to provide a child-friendly setting where skilled professionals investigate abuse allegations, conduct forensic interviews to aid in the prosecution of offenders, and connect victims and families with victim assistance services.

The CARES Act funding enables NOVA to continue providing a coordinated community response to child sexual and physical abuse at the central Bucks location in Jamison. NOVA's

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multidisciplinary approach integrates law enforcement, prosecution, child welfare, medical and mental health and a family advocate. The purpose of the renovations was to reconfigure the existing multi-disciplinary team room and the forensic interview room to ensure social distancing. Additionally, the forensic interview room now has the space to conduct virtual interviews for children who are unable to attend the CAC in person due to distance.

“When the pandemic hit, we knew that we had to continue providing services to the many children and families referred to the CAC, but we did not have physical space to do so while bringing the entire team onsite,” said Penny Ettinger, Executive Director. “The CARES Act provided us with the financial resources to renovate the existing footprint to allow us to continue providing exemplary service to these most vulnerable children and their family members.”

“There are a few things that do not stop for a pandemic; one is child physical and sexual abuse,” said Diane M. Ellis-Marseglia, chair of the Bucks County Board of Commissioners. “In fact, these victimizations may increase during a pandemic. Bucks County is happy to work with NOVA in creating a safe venue for interviews in such cases. We must be able to protect and confront child victimization, and the Children’s Advocacy Center needed a COVID-safe environment to do this.”

Additional funds for the renovations were contributed by United Way of Bucks County and Foundations Community Partnership to improve technology.

ABOUT NOVA

Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA) supports, counsels and empowers victims of sexual assault and other serious crimes in Bucks County and works to prevent and eliminate violence in society

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through advocacy, training, community education and prevention programs. Founded in 1974, NOVA is a non-profit 501(c)(3), community-based organization operating out of three offices in Fairless Hills, Jamison and Perkasie. Services are made possible through the financial support of federal, state and local government grants and contracts, corporations, foundations and private donations. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. For more information, visit www.NOVABucks.org.

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Editor's Note: Photos courtesy of Oscar Mikols, OM Media

NOVA-CAC Family Support Room:

Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA) has announced the renovation of its CAC (Child Advocacy Center) in Jamison, Pa. The CAC is a nationally accredited service of NOVA that is an interagency collaborative between NOVA, Bucks County Children and Youth Agency, the Bucks County Office of the District Attorney, and all 48 police departments in Bucks County. The renovations were made possible by a grant through the County of Bucks from the Federal Government's Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Pictured is the CAC's family support room, where family members and caregivers are given support and comfort during a child's interview.



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NOVA-CAC Team Room:

In conjunction with the CAC's (Child Advocacy Center) recent renovations in Jamison, Pa., was an update to the team meeting room where experts from various participating agencies can view and assess victim interviews in order to be able to provide a coordinated, interagency response to a child who has been abused or victimized.



NOVA-CAC Interview Room:

During CAC renovations, the Interview Room was made larger to allow for social distancing during interviews. The emphasis in the redesign of the room is the comfort of the child and video accessibility for the coordinated response team to view and assess the interview as it is happening.

