

# Safe Harbor Children's Advocacy Center

## Program Details

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Safe Harbor Children's Advocacy Center (SHCAC) serves victims of child abuse throughout the Brunswick Judicial Circuit (Jeff Davis, Appling, Wayne, Glynn, and Camden Counties). Safe Harbor provides rehabilitative care to more than 450 child victims of abuse every year at our offices in Wayne, Glynn, and Camden. Through the advocacy center, Safe Harbor offers forensic interviews, forensic medical exams, follow-up medical services, 24-hour crisis line and response, counseling by licensed counselors, advocacy and multidisciplinary review in collaboration with our partner agencies. Currently all three centers are staffed to capacity and able to provide services in all three locations.



### SCOPE OF SERVICES

**Population served:** The child advocacy staff serve children ages 0-18 and adults with special needs who have allegedly experienced any form of abuse or witnessed a crime.

**Settings:** In 2013, Safe Harbor partnered with the District Attorney's office and the Golden Isles Children's Center became Safe Harbor Children's Advocacy Center in Glynn County with a satellite office in Camden County. In 2017, SHCAC expanded to Wayne County in order to serve the three northern counties in the judicial circuit. All three offices have a forensic interview room, an observation room for partner agencies to observe the forensic interview in real-time, a medical examination room for the sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs) to provide the medical exam, meeting spaces for counseling and MDT, as well as waiting areas that are set up with toys, comfortable seating, and informational materials in order to provide a neutral, welcoming environment to the families. Directions to all three locations can be found on our website, <https://safeharborcenterinc.org>.

**Hours and days of service:** SHCAC is available to provide services 24/7, 365 days a year in all three offices on an on-call basis. Service professionals are available Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-5:00 pm and on an on-call basis after typical business hours and on weekends.

**Frequency of services:** Typically, clients receive one forensic interview and one medical exam. Based on each client's needs (mental health diagnosis, developmental delays, age, etc), there are instances where forensic interviews are split up into multiple sessions. After the initial forensic medical exam, follow up appointments can be scheduled to perform testing for sexually transmitted infections and/or to document the healing progress of injuries on an as needed basis. Counseling is also offered to clients, both in-house and partner agency resources and is typically completed weekly or twice a month. Victim advocates provide follow up communications with clients as often as needed as well.

**Payers and funding sources:** SHCAC receives funding through grants provided by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (Victims of Crime Assistance), United Way, Child Advocacy Centers of Georgia, National Children's Alliance, St. Mary's United Methodist Foundation, and individual community donors.

**Fees:** SHCAC does not collect any fees from clients for the services provided.

**Referral sources:** All referrals are received from law enforcement agencies within each county served, The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), and The Brunswick Judicial Circuit District Attorney's office

**The following services are provided:** Clients referred to SHCAC and partner agencies are eligible to receive the following services as needed: forensic interviews, forensic medical exam, STI testing,

advocate accompaniment to medical exams, follow-up advocacy communications, counseling, counseling referrals, Multi-disciplinary team meetings with partner agencies on a monthly basis, community awareness and education.

**Partner Agencies:** SHCAC partner agencies include: Local law enforcement agencies within each county served, Brunswick Judicial Circuit District Attorney's office, Southeast Georgia Health Systems, the school system in each of the five counties served, The Division of Family and Children Services, and local health departments.

**Relevant information about our Scope of Services can be found in the following resources:**

- SHCAC Client Handbook
- Brunswick Judicial Circuit Child Abuse Protocol
- National Children's Alliance Website: <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/>
- Safe Harbor's Website: <https://safeharborcenterinc.org>

**Entry Criteria:** Clients are eligible for services at SHCAC if they are between the ages of 0-18 or if they are an adult that has special needs and have been referred by law enforcement, DFCS, or the district attorney's office due to being a victim of any form of abuse or witnessing abuse or a crime. SHCAC does not accept referrals from individuals or agencies that are not law enforcement, DFCS, or the district attorney's office. If a child is actively suicidal, homicidal, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or an alleged offender, they will not be eligible for services at that time.

**Transition Criteria:** For the duration of the client's involvement with SHCAC, they are provided opportunities for referral to other services such as counseling, referral through DFCS to the Family Preservation Program at Safe Harbor, placement in a group shelter such as Safe Harbor Children's Center, and assistance in finding stable housing.

**Exit Criteria:** Clients are eligible for exiting our program once the investigation is closed, whether through the judicial process or if there is not enough evidence to move forward with the investigation. Clients and caregivers are given the option to continue follow up services with victim advocates but are able to terminate communication upon request.

**What happens when a client is determined to be ineligible for services:** If clients are determined to be ineligible for services, the staff member taking the referral information will inform the person requesting services of the reasoning for ineligibility. SHCAC does not accept referrals from individuals or agencies that are not law enforcement, DFCS, or the district attorney's office. If a child is actively suicidal, homicidal, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or an alleged offender, they will not be eligible for services at that time. The staff member who receives the ineligible referral will then give resources on how to report to the correct agencies or refer for more applicable services.

**Service Delivery Model:** SHCAC provides services through a trauma-informed, person-centered lens. The forensic interviewers are trained in Child First Protocol for conducting evidence-based, non-leading, unbiased interviews in order to assist in the investigative process. Our victim advocates are trained through the Victim Assistance Academy in order to ensure the most impactful and efficient advocacy interactions throughout the duration of services. Our in-house counselors are licensed professionals (Licensed Clinical Social workers and Licensed Professional Counselors) trained in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.