

The WE CAN COALITION



Working to End Child Abuse and Neglect

Achievements

In the year since its inception, the **WE CAN Coalition** and its partner organizations have worked to end child abuse and neglect in the following areas:

Clinical Services

- Added a *full time* medical team to the County's collaborative **Child Abuse Services Team (CAST)**.
- Launched a *full service* Physical Abuse and Neglect Diagnosis and Assessment (PANDA) clinic at the **Children's Hospital of Orange County**.

Coordination and Capacity Building

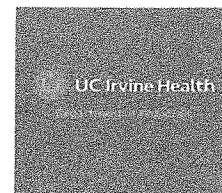
- Created a *multidisciplinary team* of **Law Enforcement, County of Orange, Social Services** and medical experts to provide and support professional training across the county.
- Partnered with researchers at the **University of California, Irvine** to investigate the experience of child welfare involved families with substance use issues.

Training and Education

- Trained all active duty **Santa Ana Police** officers on the response to a potential child abuse call.
- Trained all **Orange County Department of Education** school nurses on the recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect.
- Partnered with the **Orange County faith community** to create a simple tool on child abuse prevention and recognition for all personnel who volunteer or work with families.

Research

- Pooled data from the **Commission on Children and Families, the Social Services Agency, the Health Care Agency**, and census data to identify unusual *micro hotspots and coldspots* of abuse and neglect in **Orange County**.
- Designed a multidisciplinary study of the needs and barriers to placement for targeted youth at **Orangewood Children and Family Center**.



For more information, or to get involved, please contact **Veronica Carpenter: Veronica.Carpenter@ssa.ocgov.com**

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Working to End Child Abuse and Neglect

Mission: To prevent, diagnose, and treat child abuse and neglect and to strengthen the health and well-being of children, families and communities.

Vision: All Orange County children are raised in a safe and nurturing environment.

Child abuse in 2015 will cost Orange County **1.3 billion dollars** over the victims' lifetimes.

The Need

Each year in **Orange County**, there are approximately **5,400¹** cases of substantiated child abuse or neglect. These children require extensive child and family intervention, treatment and support and in some cases **children** must be temporarily removed from their home for their own protection. Child maltreatment is not merely a horrible thing to endure; it actually changes a child's brain and biology. If not treated, it will have a dramatic and detrimental effect on the life of a child, negatively predicting his or her risk of later educational success, medical and mental health, and lifespan.

Child abuse may seem like just one of many problems facing **our county**. But because of the strong and predictive link between early suffering and later life outcomes, we know that eliminating child abuse here in **Orange County** would dramatically decrease county rates of cancer, heart disease, HIV, and mental illness.² Furthermore, preventing abuse and intervening to help injured children is financially savvy. According to studies by the CDC just one year's worth of confirmed child maltreatment here in **Orange County** costs us **1.3 billion dollars** over these children's lifespans.³ Thus, creating systems to immediately support and assist struggling families is critical not only to their well-being, but to the physical, mental, and financial well-being of our county as a whole.

When a child suffers from maltreatment it impacts every facet of his or her life: basic needs such as food and shelter, medical and mental health care, education, finances, family, legal rights, and many additional challenges. Here in **Orange County** we are lucky to have a wide variety of groups that work to help these children and families; however, each program is developed by a different group with a different mission, vision, and purpose. In the worst situation, differing mandates and a lack of coordination across organizations means that these children may have an embarrassment of riches in some areas and lack critical resources in others.

Strategy

The **WE CAN Coalition** is a county-wide collaboration to collectively address the intersecting needs of children, families and communities touched by abuse. It consists of more than **100** different programs and departments, both public and private, that work together to serve these populations in a comprehensive manner. It recognizes that child maltreatment does not happen in a vacuum, and that prevention, diagnosis and treatment function along a continuum and must reach out to children, families and their communities alike.

¹ 22nd Annual Report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County. OCCP, 2016

² CDC aggregate report 5/13/2014 <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>

³ Adapted from CDC data delineating lifetime cost per abuse case in 2010 dollars: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/economiccost.html>