

## Children's Advocacy Center of Hamilton County

### Case Study

The Children's Advocacy Center of Hamilton County, Inc. was established as a private, non-profit agency in 1991. The Center's mission is to serve children who are alleged victims of abuse through prevention, education and intervention. The agency helps victims become children again and lead normal, healthy, productive lives, thereby breaking the cycle of abuse.

Among the many support services offered, the Center provides facilities for forensic interviews, individual and family counseling, and medical examinations. During the 2010 – 2011 fiscal year, 430 children were served at the Children's Advocacy Center of Hamilton County, Inc. 388 forensic interviews were conducted, 297 counseling sessions were offered 46 children, 198 medical examinations were provided, 391 non-offending families were assisted through the family advocate program, and prevention education programs were presented to over 9,000 children and adults in the Chattanooga area.

Approximately 60% of the Center's budget comes from local, state, federal and private grants. The other 40% of the operating budget is provided by private donations from generous individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations, who provide funding not only for child victims but for prevention education programs as well. All programs and services are offered completely free of charge for as long as the client needs the service.

Two interviewers conducted 528 interviews during the fiscal year 2011-2012. Two interview rooms are equipped with V2 *Advocate*, the Digital Interview Recording Management System manufactured by Commercial Electronics Corp., of San Antonio. "We have used other systems in the past that had so many issues. This is the first system I am truly impressed with," says Stacy Cook, Forensic Interview Coordinator for the Children's Advocacy Center of Hamilton County.

The system is used to improve interview objectives. Obviously, it is preferred to have everyone involved present when the interview is occurring, but that is not always the case. Up to 60-70 people are part of the team that use the system through observation and use the information gleaned from the interviews. It is very beneficial to be able to get the DVD to them as quickly as possible. If there is something that needs to be looked at, a "bookmark" marks that place. "That is huge!" Stacy says. "Since V2 was installed, interviews have increased 20%, if not more. The sound quality is great and the picture is great, because the field camera that captures the whole room is great to have along with the camera that can be moved around depending on where the child is." There are many factors that could be attributed to the 20% increase. The team members have the security knowing that this system is working, giving them the sound they need and it's user friendly. "V2 *Advocate* does what it says it's going to do," Ms. Cook adds.

The most helpful features are that it's easy to start, and after the interview, the DVD can be burned within a few minutes. Based on the search needs, the search criteria is a plus. Commercial Electronics was able to setup the information needed to put in the Evidence Locker to follow the system that the center used. The center was quickly able to acclimate because the new setup was very similar to what was previously being used.

"There are many positive things about the system. A huge positive is when we hit the record button we know the interview will be recorded. That is a good feeling when going in for the interview. You only have one chance to interview a child and if the interview is not there when you come out, you can't go back in and have them repeat it", says Cook.

Cook continues, "All technology has its flaws, but with the V2 system there is security knowing there is a back up of the interview."

Customer support is provided 24/7 by Commercial Electronics Corp. Remote support is available when necessary.