



Putting wheels on child advocacy centers to reach children and families in rural areas



Region: New York State

Sector: Community Outreach

CHALLENGE

Nearly 200,000 children in New York State were named as alleged victims and 69,000 were confirmed victims of abuse/maltreatment according to one, Child Protective Services (CPS) report. Many of these children are in rural and underserved areas, making transportation a major barrier to seeking help.

SOLUTION

Using funding from the Victims of Crime Act, the Office of Children and Family Services partnered with the Office of Victim Services to develop seven mobile child advocacy units to improve services for children who are victims of physical or sexual abuse.

The units are child advocacy centers on wheels, meeting children where they are and eliminating the need for families to travel long distances to obtain help.

These vehicles will be deployed in Allegany, Cattaraugus, Clinton, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, Montgomery, Steuben, and St. Lawrence counties.

APPROACH

The mobile child advocacy centers provide children and families access to resources such as protective services, law enforcement, medical providers, advocacy, and therapeutic services. The units are individually owned and operated by nonprofit organizations and agencies. Staff members from the Child Advocacy Centers are supported by staff from Child Protective Services, the District Attorney's office, and family advocacy, law enforcement and mental health providers.

Each unit is equipped to provide forensic interviews and victim advocacy and support. Some units provide mental health services, while medical evaluations and services are provided by referral.

IMPACT

Thus far, there has been considerable success in reaching underserved children and families, with – for example – Delaware County's unit serving 32 families in its first month. More data will be collected as the program grows.

For more information on Winnebago Specialty Vehicles, contact Jennifer Butters at 630-362-9992 or jabutters@wgo.net