

## Child Safety Organizations in Alachua County

These organizations have either a mandated responsibility, or a mission related to child safety (responding to victims, investigating child abuse, placing child victims safely, and/or providing services to child victims of child maltreatment specifically). This is not an exhaustive list, but a starting point for the Children's Trust of Alachua County to discuss child safety regarding violence and abuse.

- Child Advocacy Center, Inc. (CAC) - Provides a safe, children friendly space for children to receive services during child abuse investigations; assistance with child protection and law enforcement investigations through the provision of child friendly, developmentally appropriate forensic interviews to be used for criminal and dependency cases; coordinating a multidisciplinary team response and case staffing reviews to ensure that children don't fall through the cracks of the system when abuse has been alleged and/or verified; trauma responsive recovery therapy services for child victims and their non-offending caregivers; and ongoing advocacy and case management services as long as is needed. Emergency response program provides on call staff 24/7/365 for child abuse that presents at any of the local emergency rooms - multidisciplinary team response, crisis intervention, victim advocacy are provided. Training on a variety of child safety and welfare topics is also available, including, but not limited to child abuse reporting, preventing child abuse in child care settings, no hit zone implementation, sexual abuse investigations, adverse childhood experiences, trauma recovery and response, etc.
- UF Child Protection Team (UF CPT) - Medically directed, multidisciplinary program based on the idea that child abuse and neglect involve complex issues and require the expertise of many professionals to protect children. Provide forensic interviews, medical exams, psychological assessments, social assessments, case staffing and expert testimony regarding the diagnosis of child maltreatment.
- Guardian Ad Litem Program (GAL) - Partnership of community advocates and professionals with volunteers appointed by the court to protect the rights and advocate for the best interests of children involved in dependency court proceedings. The volunteer Guardian Ad Litem makes independent recommendations to the court by focusing on the needs of each child. The Guardian Ad Litem advocates for the best interests of the children they represent.
- Children's Legal Services (CLS) of Department of Children and Families - CLS plays an integral role at each stage of the Chapter 39 proceeding. Often, CLS becomes involved in a family's life when a Department of Children and Families child protective investigator seeks to remove a child from an unsafe home. When it has been determined that a child has been abused, abandoned, or neglected, CLS will advocate for a trial court to adjudicate the child dependent. CLS partners with case management organizations to ensure that the child and family receive the services necessary to eliminate the conditions in the home that resulted in the child being in present or impending danger.
- Department of Children and Families (DCF) - Responsible for assessing and investigating reports of child maltreatment. The Florida DCF hotline 1-800-96-ABUSE reviews and accepts reports of child maltreatment, and if accepted for investigations, will route the child maltreatment report to the local DCF investigative unit to investigate the allegations of abuse, neglect or abandonment of children. Child Protective Investigators assess the validity of the allegations, contributing factors to

the allegations, and offer services that would mitigate further risk of child maltreatment. In cases where the children's safety cannot be secured, the child protection investigator will recommend removal (called sheltering) from the home through the court.

- Partnership for Strong Families (PFSF) - Provides child welfare services designed to protect local children from abuse, neglect and abandonment and assists in establishing safe and permanent homes with their own families, partner families, or adoptive parents. PFSF also has community resources centers in zip codes with the highest abuse reports in an effort to prevent child abuse and neglect by providing centrally located, safe, welcoming facilities filled with programs and resources to help build resiliency in children and families.
- Alachua County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) Special Victims Unit (SVU) - Responsible for responding on scene, taking reports, and investigating reports of criminal child maltreatment for reports occurring in Alachua County. Specialized unit for working with victims has been established including victim advocacy support.
- Gainesville Police Department (GPD) Special Victims Unit (SVU) - Responsible for responding on scene, taking reports, and investigating reports of criminal child maltreatment for reports occurring in Alachua County. Specialized unit for working with victims has been established including victim advocacy support. Utilizes Child Advocacy Center Advocate/Case Managers.
- Alachua Police Department (APD) - Responsible for investigating reports of child abuse in the city of Alachua.
- Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) - Investigates cases of human trafficking, including child sex trafficking, throughout the state of Florida. FDLE works closely with local law enforcement and local state and not for profit agencies that work with child victims of trafficking, exploitation, and pornography.
- Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) - Investigates federal crimes of human trafficking, including child sex trafficking, throughout the US. Locally placed FBI agents work closely with FDLE and local law enforcement on cases involving child victims of trafficking, exploitation, and pornography.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office (SAO) - Responsible for making charging decisions and prosecuting offenders of child crimes for state cases.
- US Attorney's Office, Department of Justice (DOJ) - Responsible for making charging decisions and prosecuting offenders of child crimes for federal cases.
- Peaceful Paths - A certified domestic violence center that serves survivors of domestic violence in Alachua, Bradford, and Union counties. Provides a wide range of services including emergency shelter, 24-hour helpline, victim advocacy, children's programming, economic empowerment education and support, crisis counseling and support groups, community awareness and intervention, and violence prevention programs.

- Children's Home Society, Family Visitation Center - A place for safe, supervised visits and exchanges with the goal that children are emotionally, physically, and mentally safe. This is typically ordered by the court when safety is an issue affecting visitation.
- Alachua County - Victim Services and Rape Crisis Center - Offers a program to help anyone who is a victim or survivor of violence. All services are free and private. Services can include immediate outreach to victims of sexual battery, face to face or telephone counseling, support groups, accompany and support victims through criminal justice proceedings, transportation, assistance with protective injunctions, emergency assistance with special needs, personal advocacy, information and referral, community education, outreach provided inside GPD, HIV test site, and network with other victim service providers and state organizations. (For child victims, consultation occurs with the CAC to provide on-site/scene advocacy for emergent cases.)
- Healthy Families Program - This program offers voluntary home visiting by family support workers to promote positive parent-child interaction and child health and development. Services begin prenatally or at the birth of a baby and continue up to 3-5 years depending on the need. Services are available to families living in targeted geographic areas that are experiencing stressful live situations. This is a child abuse prevention program with 98% of families free of abuse 1 year after completing services.
- Child Abuse Prevention Task Force - This task force brings together community organizations to focus on and develop initiatives to prevent child abuse and neglect in Alachua County. Celebrate the Child and Planting Pinwheels for Prevention are two community awareness events that the task force produces annually.
- Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC) - Internet Crimes Against Children is a task force started by the United States Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in 1998. Its primary goals are to provide state and local law enforcement agencies the tools to prevent Internet crimes against children by encouraging multi-jurisdictional cooperation, as well as educating law enforcement agents, parents, and teachers. The aims of ICAC task forces are to catch distributors of child pornography on the Internet, whether delivered on-line or solicited on-line and distributed through other channels and to catch sexual predators who solicit victims on the Internet through chat rooms, forums, and other methods. The Gainesville Police Department is the host agency for the North Florida Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force for 38 counties in Florida.
- North Central Florida Human Trafficking Task Force - A network of governmental and non-governmental organizations interested in preventing human trafficking, intervening skillfully and professionally with human trafficking cases through training, and providing restoration and support services for adult and child victims.
- Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. - Provides mental health services for children, and adults, many of whom have experienced trauma through violence and abuse. Psychiatric, psychological, mental health, substance abuse and prevention services are provided. Meridian provides a variety of services for child victims and their caregivers based on their needs. Meridian's crisis stabilization program is engaged for many children that are Baker Acted for suicidal and/or homicidal ideation including plans, means and intention.

- Village Counseling Center - Private practice regarded for assessing and treating children, adolescents and young adults for issues related to sexual abuse, trauma, and adoption with specialized services for both victims and family members. Accept private referrals as well as clients through various contracts with many agencies including the Department of Children and Families, Partnership for Strong Families and Alachua County Public Schools.
- Chrysalis, Community Action Team - The CAT team is a contracted provider for DCF to assist in preventing children that are at risk of going into long term behavioral mental health in-patient programs. The CAT provides mental health counseling, psychiatric services, case management and mentors to assist with wrap around services for families. Criteria for services includes at risk for out of home placement due to mental illness or lack of stability due to mental health issues, involvement with Juvenile Justice, poor school performance, and/or multiple hospitalizations.

There are a variety of other programs and organizations who prevent child abuse and/or work with child victims, but these listed are the primary agencies that are dealing with child safety and recovery services. There are also programs that address issues of safety such as fire, automobile, car safety seats, bike, and drug safety. Some also provide health safety such as the health department, pool, helmet and car seat safety. There are many agencies that interact with child victims such as juvenile justice that partner with other organizations to assist with safety related issues. And finally, it is certainly worth noting that many organizations and agencies help with child safety by providing child care and/or after school programming for children that would otherwise not have appropriate adult supervision.



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