

## **First Responders- Thank You for Protecting Our Kids**

Now that 2021 is in the rear-view mirror, it's a good time to take stock. For Adams County Children's Advocacy Center, our efforts continue to focus on helping child victims of abuse. Our partners in this work are Adams County first responders- Children & Youth Services caseworkers, police officers and healthcare workers.

Under the best of circumstances, being on the front lines requires these professionals to possess a wide variety of skills, including sound decision-making, clear and honest communication, and most importantly, the ability to manage complex, often dangerous situations. Regardless of the challenges brought on by the pandemic, Adams County first responders continue their work protecting and supporting children and families with empathy and respect.

I think it's fair to say that most of us are physically and emotionally drained; worn down by trying to manage the day-to-day stressors brought on by COVID 19. But while many of us have found ways to juggle our schedules or work-from-home; making this "new normal" a little more manageable, Children & Youth Services caseworkers, police officers and healthcare workers do not have this luxury. Instead, they go out into our neighborhoods every day, regardless of the risks to themselves and their families. They respond to our 911 calls, verify our children are safe, and care for us when we are sick. And they do this even though they have the same day-to-day stressors as we do. Even when their child's daycare or school is closed, and they scramble to find alternate childcare. Even when their co-workers or friends are sick. Even when they lose loved ones to COVID. Even when they are overwhelmed, overworked, and exhausted.

And let's not forget about our community's teachers and school personnel. Our schools have worked very hard to keep education on track for our kids. Every day brings a different challenge; creating an environment where our children can both learn and be safe.

First Responders- the Children's Advocacy Center could not do our work without you as our partners.

In 2021, the Center:

- Received 513 Referrals from first responders
- Supported 201 child victims, 198 caregivers and 237 siblings/family members
- Provided 1,143 units of advocacy support to children and caregivers
- Conducted 703 trauma therapy sessions (for 78 children)
- Performed 199 Forensic Interviews

Police officers, caseworkers, healthcare workers and teachers- thank you for everything you do to keep kids safe and families strong in Adams County.

*Elida Murray, M.A. is the Executive Director of Adams County Children's Advocacy Center. The Center is dedicated to a community where children are safe, families are strong and kids can be kids.*