

# How Can the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse Help You?

NDAA/APRI's National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse (NCPCA) is an organization staffed with talented professionals. NCPCA has a myriad of resources that can benefit professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse, maltreatment, exploitation and computer facilitated crimes against children.

**History** The National District Attorneys Association established the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse in 1985. This was done in response to the expanding child abuse caseload of America's prosecutors and the need to establish a support network, to pool and develop resources and provide multidisciplinary training to child abuse professionals nationwide.

**Staff** Depending on the inquiry, professionals calling NCPCA may speak with a program assistant, a staff attorney, or a senior attorney. Program assistant duties include conference registrations and other technical support for the organization. Staff attorneys handle a variety of research and writing projects and provide technical assistance to child abuse professionals. Senior attorneys are experienced former prosecutors who train at NCPCA training courses as well as at other national, local and custom training. They also provide technical assistance, and research and write on a variety of topics.

**Technical Assistance** The heart of the NCPCA has always been providing hands on assistance to prosecutors and allied professionals working on child abuse, maltreatment, exploitation and computer facilitated crimes against children. Each year, NCPCA receives approximately 4,000 calls from prosecutors and others seeking assistance on handling child abuse cases. Assistance may include substantive legal, medical, psychological research, deciphering complex medical or forensic evidence, brainstorming trial strategies, legislative review as well as victim referrals to the appropriate agencies and resources.

**Transcript Data Base** NCPCA maintains a comprehensive data bank of trial transcripts of child abuse "experts" who testify in cases nationwide. These transcripts are made available to prosecutors preparing to cross-examine one of these witnesses. NCPCA also has other substantive material that may be of use for prosecutors preparing for trials with expert witnesses. Our data base will remain effective as long as prosecutors continue to send us transcripts of trials in which one of these witnesses testifies. Accordingly, please remember to help your colleagues as they have helped you and send the pertinent portions of your trial transcripts to NCPCA.

**Publications** NCPCA publishes the two volume manual *Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. This book was originally published in 1987 and quickly became the authoritative text for handling criminal cases of child abuse. Developed by veteran child abuse prosecutors with help from medical, forensic, child development and treatment specialists, the manual provides step-by-step guidance to evaluating, investigating, charging and trying child abuse cases. The book is published by Sage and is currently available on their website at [www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com) or by calling 1-800-818-7243. NCPCA, through our Director Victor Vieth, also serves as an editor for

*Medical & Legal Aspects of Child Sexual Exploitation – A Comprehensive Review of Child Pornography, Child Prostitution and Internet Crimes Against Children.* The book is published by GW Medical Publishing and is currently available on their website at <http://www.gwmedical.com/> or by calling 1-800-600-0330.

NCPCA also publishes the monthly newsletter *Update*, and a child sexual exploitation *Update* which are both available on line and also by signing up for the mailing list. Also available on line is the electronic *Update Express*.

**National Conferences** Each year, the Center sponsors several national conferences. Annually, NCPCA hosts a five day conference on the investigation and prosecution of child abuse entitled *Equal Justice: Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse*. This conference has given hundreds of child abuse professionals the requisite skills to effectively address cases of child abuse. We annually sponsor a five day course entitled the *Investigation and Prosecution of Child Fatalities and Physical Abuse*. *Childproof: Advanced Trial Advocacy for Child Abuse Prosecutors*, is a six day advanced trial advocacy course in which prosecutors conduct a mock child abuse trial from jury selection to closing argument and are critiqued on their performance by accomplished child abuse prosecutors. We offer an intermediate course on computer facilitated crimes against children entitled *Safety Net: Multidisciplinary Investigation and Prosecution of Computer-Facilitated Child Sexual Exploitation*, where multi-disciplinary teams work together on computers to learn the about the investigation and forensic examination of computer facilitated crimes against children as well how to work as a multidisciplinary team to successfully prosecute these crimes. *Unsafe Havens I: Prosecuting Online Crimes Against Children*, focuses on the pre-trial aspects of prosecuting computer facilitated crimes against children. *Unsafe Havens II: Prosecuting Online Crimes Against Children* is a five day advanced trial advocacy course for prosecutors dealing with computer facilitated cases against children. Prosecutors will conduct a mock trial from opening statement through closing argument and are critiqued on their performance as they examine experts, officers and lay witnesses.

**Half a Nation by 2010** *Finding Words: Interviewing Children and Preparing for Court*, is our five day course in which multidisciplinary teams made up of an investigator, prosecutor and interviewer are taught the art and science of speaking to children about abuse and then defending those interviews in court. *Finding Words* was launched in 1998 and over 400 applications from child abuse professionals hoping to be counted among the first group of forty students admitted to the course. In an effort to meet the demand, we increased the course offerings from one to three per year but the demand for admission continued to exceed the supply of courses.

The goal of *Half a Nation* is to establish a high quality, five day forensic interviewing course modeled after *Finding Words* in at least half of the states in the nation. Two-three states each year are chosen from a number of applicants. NCPCA and Corner House Child Advocacy Center (our partner in developing *Finding Words*) will then present *Finding Words* in each state. The states then coordinate and present *Finding Words* in their state, using local faculty while NCPCA and Corner House observe and critique the course. The state presents the course a second time to obtain final NCPCA endorsement to continue the *Finding Words* training for professionals in their state. NCPCA also offers an advanced course entitled *Beyond Finding Words: Emerging Issues in Forensic Interviewing*, each year in a conference setting to keep the Half a Nation states and others up to date on issues related to forensic interviewing.

**Other Trainings** Senior attorneys from NCPCA are regularly solicited to teach at national, regional, state and local child abuse conferences around the country. In addition, many of our senior attorneys have trained internationally in various locations throughout the world. NCPCA also can be contracted with to provide a training program for your jurisdiction customized to meet your training needs. This is a comprehensive and cost efficient method for providing updated training for your communities' child abuse professionals.

These are some of the many services and products available to the front line professionals who deal with child abuse, maltreatment, exploitation and computer facilitated crimes against children. If there is a product or service which you feel needs to be developed, please call, write or e-mail your suggestions. We are constantly striving to better serve the professionals we serve and the children who are counting on us.

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