



**Adult Advocacy
Centers**

Funding an RV Mobile Unit

Help us help crime victims with disabilities, no matter where they live

The Adult Advocacy Centers (AACs) are seeking funding for a fully accessible recreational vehicle (RV) that will allow us to take our groundbreaking services to adult crime victims with disabilities anywhere they need us in the state of Ohio. The AACs defines “disability” the same way the Americans with Disabilities Act does: a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The AACs serve adults with disabilities ages 18 and older, although individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 may choose to receive services through their local Child Advocacy Center (CAC). This allows each person to have freedom of choice in providers, which may be therapeutic and aid their journey to healing.

Why Our Services are Needed

The United States Department of Justice reports that individuals with disabilities are at disproportionately high risk for violent victimization, abuse and neglect, experiencing triple the rate of serious violent victimization among persons without disabilities (Harrell, 2017). According to a national survey conducted by the Disability & Abuse Project, 57% of victims with disabilities reported they had experienced 20 or more incidents of abuse (Baladerian, Coleman & Stream, 2013). Eighty-eight to 98% of sexual abusers are known by their victims with disabilities (Sobsey & Mansell, 1994). Additional data suggests the high incidence of crime victimization is compounded by the fact that, compared to people without disabilities, those with disabilities are more likely to experience severe victimization, for longer durations of time and with multiple episodes of abuse, including multiple perpetrators (Schaller & Fieberg, 1998).

But the injustice does not end there. Statistics also indicate that crimes against people with disabilities are prosecuted at lower rates compared to those committed against people without disabilities. Nineteen percent of people with disabilities stated that they did not report their victimization because they did not believe the police would help. These statistics



demonstrate abuse against people with disabilities remains a serious problem in need of groundbreaking solutions. The Adult Advocacy Centers model is one such response.

Too often, a case may be considered a bigger risk if the victim or witness has a disability. People with disabilities may be unfairly labeled as unreliable sources, unable to provide information during an investigation, or incapable of testifying in court. A significant component of the AACs model is Project FIND, which trains investigators on best practices in gathering reliable information from victims of crime with disabilities.

The Adult Advocacy Centers' model, which is the first of its kind in the world, will include one-point brick and mortar facilities throughout Ohio, equipped to provide holistic, accessible, trauma-informed services in a universal and multisensory environment to adult crime victims with disabilities. To provide these services, the AACs will facilitate multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs), working in the centers within local communities. However, we know that there is a segment of the population we serve who will find it difficult to actually travel to a brick-and-mortar location. These challenges may include instances where a victim is physically or medically unable to leave their residence to receive services or a victim who might not have reliable transportation to travel to an AACs. The COVID-19 pandemic creates additional challenges because some people with disabilities might be at a higher risk of infection or severe illness due to their underlying medical conditions. A mobile RV will allow the AACs to meet those victims where they are, and therefore eliminate unnecessary travel and contact with people, a recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for vulnerable populations during the pandemic.

The RV Unit

The fully equipped RV will contain state-of-the-art technology and accessible, trauma-informed features, including:

- An interview room wherein individualized forensic interviews will be conducted by disability-specific trained forensic interviewers.
- An observation room will allow MDT members to view the forensic interview in person. State-of-the-art technology also will be installed to enable audio and video recordings that may be used as documentation in a legal case, as well as a live feed so off-site MDT members can view the forensic interview and participate in real time.
- An accessible medical examination room will provide disability-trained forensic nurse examiners (FNEs) the ability to offer forensic medical services and evidence collection services. The medical examination room will include many accessible features, such as a lift and adjustable examination tables for safe transferring of non-ambulatory victims. A small medical team will use advanced forensic technology to document and record evidence with medical equipment.
- A specially designed interior that includes tools, features and materials to accommodate a broad array of sensory, communication, mobility and therapeutic needs. The RV will also have a fully accessible bathroom, a wheelchair lift for entering and exiting, and Braille signage.

The Staff

The mobile RV will be staffed by expertly trained MDT members including Forensic Interviewers, forensic nurse examiners, mental health specialists, a clinical director, members of the AACs' executive team. Additional MDT members involved with a case may include law enforcement, prosecutors, victim advocates, and representatives from each of Ohio's disability-specific agencies. All services performed on the RV will be HIPAA compliant in the same manner as practiced within the centers.

What We Need

The AACs understand the geography of the state and selected locations for our upcoming centers based on accessibility to the rural areas of Ohio. The combination of brick-and-mortar sites and a mobile RV unit – both the first of their kind – will all allow the AACs to promote the safety and well-being of all crime victims with disabilities and improve their access to justice. The Adult Advocacy Centers are seeking funding for the purchase of an RV unit to accelerate our ability to provide services to crime victims with disabilities.

The cost to purchase an RV and completely modify it to suit our clients' needs is just over \$1 million. Your tax-deductable gift will help the AACs and its partners improve access to justice, build better cases against those who perpetrate crimes against adult crime victims with disabilities, and increase the number of successful prosecutions. Your investment today can help adult victims of crime with disabilities receive the same quality services and supports no matter where they are and no matter their circumstances.