



# SAFESpot

Children's Advocacy Center of Fairfax County

## 2021 Impact Report



# FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

There is no denying that 2021 presented us all with challenges. Yet I have always believed that it is during our most trying times that we learn our true strength, and last year I am proud to share we did just that. With the support of our community and the dedication of our partners, SafeSpot served a record number of children and families in 2021, creating safer, healthier futures for those impacted by the tragedy of physical and sexual abuse in Fairfax.



I am often asked how COVID-19 has affected child safety. While it will take researchers years, even decades to evaluate the long-term effects of the pandemic, there was never a question what the immediate results would be: vulnerable children at even greater risk of abuse. Yet in the first year of the pandemic, referrals for our services decreased. It wasn't until 2021, when children returned to the classroom (and everywhere else) that we began seeing the true effects of the isolation they experienced. From January - December 2021, SafeSpot received a record number of referrals from our partners in law enforcement and child protective services, resulting in a 26% increase in the number of forensic interviews provided by our team of specialists. In total, 564 children received a forensic interview through SafeSpot in 2021, and 513 caregivers were provided with crisis support, psychosocial education, and community referrals (a 15% increase over 2020). And for those at most risk of severe, long-term trauma, our therapy team provided 1,171 sessions of trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy.

It can be hard to find the silver lining in these numbers, as no caring individual would want to see a single child abused, let alone 564 children. And yet SafeSpot exists for the sole purpose of intervening on behalf of child victims following an allegation of abuse. When children are not seen, when they are forced to suffer alone and in silence, we lose the ability to intervene, and our partners lose the ability to hold perpetrators accountable. Can we do more as a community to prevent child abuse? Undoubtedly. But until the day we can eradicate violence and exploitation directed at children, the doors at SafeSpot's must remain wide enough to serve every child in need. By hearing and believing, supporting and advocating, we minimize trauma, facilitate healing, and invest in the long-term well-being of children and families. We stop intergenerational cycles of abuse before they have a chance to take hold. And last year we did this for more children than ever. This is the silver lining that we celebrate at SafeSpot.

While 2021 presented SafeSpot with the opportunity to serve more children and families, we expect even more growth in 2022. In the coming months, we will release the results of a year-long strategic planning process that will put SafeSpot on a path to forming new partnerships, enhancing programs, and serving even more children and families in need. I look forward to sharing this plan with each of you. In the meantime, I am excited to draw your attention to our refined mission statement on the following page. This change reflects our desire to make the work of SafeSpot, and all Children's Advocacy Centers, more understandable and engaging to the wider community. For, at the end of the day, our results are simple: healthier children, stronger families, and a safer community for all.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "H. O'Malley".

Heather Lyn O'Malley  
CEO

SafeSpot Children's Advocacy Center of Fairfax





## Our Mission

The mission of SafeSpot Children's Advocacy Center is to provide a safe environment and support services for child abuse victims and their families as they navigate the investigation and aftermath of abuse.

## Our Vision

To reduce the trauma and improve the lives of child sexual abuse victims as they navigate the investigative, legal, and post-trauma treatment systems following an allegation of abuse.

## Our Philosophy

We believe that every child in Fairfax County has the right to receive prompt, thorough, and complete child-focused attention when abuse has been reported.

We believe the process that the community requires for the investigation of abuse should be a best practices model, be culturally sensitive, and focus first and foremost on the needs of the child.

We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all staff, clients, volunteers, partners, and vendors.

We believe we need to be good stewards of the time and treasure that volunteers, donors, and the community give to us in order to forward our mission.

We believe that our Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) members are valuable, important, and essential to our vision and mission.

We believe that after an investigation is concluded, our work does not stop; and that Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) can help minimize the trauma experienced by victims of sexual and severe physical abuse.

We believe that providing non-offending caregivers the tools to assist their child(ren) is critical to helping victims post-trauma.

# Changing the Child Welfare System

## WHAT USED TO HAPPEN WHEN KIDS NEEDED HELP FOR ABUSE



### START

**6 YEAR OLD JULIA  
TELLS HER TEACHER  
SHE IS BEING HURT AT  
HOME**

- While at school, Julia is questioned by her teacher, her principal, and a school nurse who examines her.
- The school calls Child Protective Services and Law Enforcement

**JULIA MEETS WITH  
POLICE, THEN GOES  
TO THE DOCTOR'S  
FOR AN EXAM**

- Police Officer talks to Julia
- At the Doctor's, Julia talks to a nurse, social worker, and the Doctor who examines her
- Once a detective is assigned to her case, Julia is sent to a specialized hospital where another team of Doctor's ask questions and examine her



**JULIA TALKS TO A CPS  
WORKER, LAWYER,  
PROSECUTOR, AND  
COUNSELOR**

- Julia needs to meet with the CPS worker on her case, a lawyer, and a counselor
- They all have different questions and objectives for Julia



### END

**JULIA HAD TO TALK  
TO 15+ PEOPLE**

Children were forced to share the most traumatic experience of their life, over and over again.

The needs of the system were more important than the needs of the child.



# Changing the Child Welfare System

## WHAT HAPPENS TODAY WHEN KIDS NEED HELP FOR ABUSE

### START

**6 YEAR OLD JULIA TELLS HER TEACHER THAT SHE IS BEING HURT BY HER MOM'S NEW BOYFRIEND AT HOME**

- Julia's teacher calls Law Enforcement, who schedule a Forensic Interview at SafeSpot Children's Advocacy Center for Julia



Julia will be interviewed by a professional forensic interviewer while a detective and CPS worker listen as a team



### FORENSIC INTERVIEW



While listening to Julia's story, the MDT will determine what the best course of action will be for Julia and her family; Julia's needs come first and foremost.

Law Enforcement  
Victim Services  
Child Protective Services  
Medical  
Public Schools  
The Commonwealth's Attorney Office



### THERAPY

Julia is referred to a therapist who will teach her coping-skills, including relaxation and cognitive coping



### FAMILY ADVOCATE

Julia's mom talks to an advocate, who will help assess her family's basic needs and provide connections to community resources



### END

This place is great!





# The Forensic Interview

## Reducing Trauma & Paving the Way for Justice

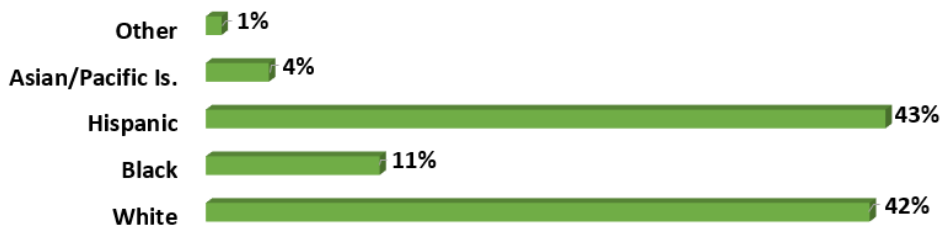


The core service of a Children's Advocacy Center - the **forensic interview** - requires a safe, welcoming environment, highly trained interviewers, and close coordination with a multidisciplinary team that includes law enforcement, Child Protective Services, medical professionals, and prosecutors. All of these components come together at SafeSpot, where we conduct a single forensic interview that is used by the entire multidisciplinary team, ensuring children are not traumatized by having to re-live their experience(s) in multiple interviews.

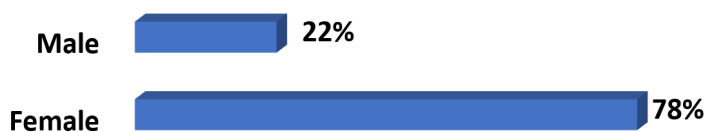
SafeSpot's highly trained Forensic Interview Specialists know how to ask questions that are structured to avoid re-traumatizing the child or compromising the investigation. Forensic interviews are used throughout the child abuse investigation and they become evidence in criminal trials, helping to support justice for the child, family, and community.

IN 2021, SAFESPOT CONDUCTED  
**564 FORENSIC INTERVIEWS.**  
THIS REPRESENTS A 26% INCREASE OVER 2020

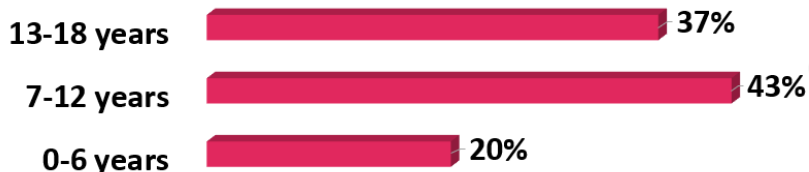
### RACE/ETHNICITY



### GENDER



### AGE



WHAT CHILDREN ARE SAYING ABOUT SAFESPOT

"I feel safe here."

"I like the atmosphere, very calm and welcoming, I like it a lot :)"

"I liked that it was quiet and that I was listened to."

"I like how patient they were with me. And the hot chocolate."

# Family Advocacy

## Safety, Stability, and Support

SafeSpot Family Advocates provide parents and caregivers with crisis counseling, resources, service referrals, and guidance on navigating the child welfare and criminal justice systems. Addressing the needs of the non-offending parent or caregiver is critical, as feelings of guilt, anger, and disbelief can often follow a report of child abuse, especially when the alleged abuser is a family member or friend. Helping caregivers understand the impacts of abuse and trauma ensures the best support is given to their child, and that the remaining family unit grows stronger.



**IN 2021, SAFESPOT PROVIDED  
FAMILY ADVOCACY TO 513 CAREGIVERS.  
THIS REPRESENTS A 15% INCREASE OVER 2020**

**97% of participating caregivers felt they knew what to expect with the situation facing their child and family after visiting SafeSpot.**

**91% of participating caregivers felt SafeSpot did everything it could to help their child and themselves.**

**99% of participating caregivers reported that SafeSpot staff provided them with resources to support their child and respond to their needs in the days and weeks ahead.**

**WHAT PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS ARE SAYING ABOUT SAFESPOT**

**"The staff and support are phenomenal! "**

**"Bless you all for what you do and the difference you are making in my child's life."**

**"The team was extremely professional, knowledgeable, and warm. Truly exceptional professionals who clearly have a calling."**



## Trauma Focused Therapy

### Promoting Long-Term Health & Resiliency

Helping children process and recover from the pain and trauma of sexual or severe physical abuse requires specialized care. SafeSpot's Mental Health Therapists utilize Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), an evidenced-based therapy tailored to the unique challenges of youth with post-traumatic stress and mood disorders resulting from abuse, violence, or grief. Over the course of 16-30 sessions, our therapists work with survivors to build coping strategies, reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, address negative behaviors such as distorted thinking and low self-esteem, and regain the ability to form trusting, healthy relationships. Caregivers are also active participants in their child's therapy. Through individual and joint sessions our therapists help family members cope effectively with their own emotional distress and develop skills that support their children.

**IN 2021, SAFESPOT PROVIDED  
1,171 THERAPY SESSION TO  
123 CHILDREN & CAREGIVERS.**

**WHAT FAMILIES ARE SAYING ABOUT SAFESPOT**

*"SafeSpot provided us with complete information and alternatives in how to handle the traumatic incident, and helped us to move on. My child now has the confidence he needed."*

*"We felt at home...we loved and trusted the therapist so much. We are so grateful."*

**90%**

**OF CHILDREN WHO COMPLETED  
TF-CBT SERVICES IN 2021  
DEMONSTRATED A DECREASE IN  
TRAUMA-RELATED SYMPTOMS.**





# The Multidisciplinary Team: A Coordinated Response

The Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) model is the foundation on which a Children's Advocacy Center operates. This innovative approach recognizes that in order for communities to effectively respond to child abuse, a true public-private partnership is essential. As facilitators of Fairfax County's MDT, SafeSpot brings together the many agencies and departments responsible for the protection of children, ensuring a united effort to respond. Fairfax County's MDT includes the Fairfax County and City Police, Herndon Police, Victim Services, Child Protective Services, the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney, Fairfax County Public Schools, and the medical professionals at the Inova Ewing Forensic Assessment and Consultation Team. Our thanks go out to each team member who joins with SafeSpot in making our community safer for all children.



FAIRFAX COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**FAMILY  
SERVICES**



**Office of the Fairfax  
Commonwealth's  
Attorney**

**WHAT OUR PARTNERS ARE SAYING ABOUT SAFESPOT**

*"This center and its staff are truly a gift to everyone who comes in. I appreciate the care they give to our families."*

*"SafeSpot uses strategies to continually improve the engagement of all parties in the MDT."*





# Meet **Ayana** and her **Family**

Ayana means "beautiful flower" in Swahili.

Ayana's parents, Christine and Shawn, met in 2012 while they were stationed in South Sudan through the Peace Corp. Eager to start a family, and wanting to provide a loving, safe home to children orphaned by the violence of war, Christine and Shawn adopted Ayana, Namir, Leila, and Tabby, all children who had lost their parents in the civil conflict. The blended family took some time to adjust and bond, but after a few years Ayana and her brother and sisters became as close as any biological siblings. And when their parents returned to the states to settle the family in Northern Virginia, the children embraced everything their new home had to offer.

When Leila and Tabby, the oldest siblings, went away to attend college two years ago, 9-year-old Ayana and her 14-year-old brother Namir became closer than ever, preferring to spend their time almost exclusively with one another. While Christine and Shawn were happy that the two younger children were so close, they started noticing some disturbing behavior. One day, Christine entered Ayana's room and found her and Namir engaged in oral sex.

Christine and Shawn struggled with what to do next, but they knew they had to protect both of their children and decided the best thing to do was to call Child Protective Services (CPS). It was a painful decision, but one they knew they had to make for their family.



CPS engaged law enforcement and referred Ayana to SafeSpot for a forensic interview. During the interview, Ayana revealed that what had started with inappropriate touching and pornography had escalated over the past several months to sexual acts.

Working together to support the distraught family, SafeSpot's Family Advocate, law enforcement, CPS, and the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney helped Christine and Shawn make the difficult decision to send Namir to a residential program where he could get the best possible treatment for his problematic sexual behavior. At the same time Ayana would remain safe at home and begin trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) with a SafeSpot mental health therapist. Christine and Shawn told both of their children that they were loved, and that neither would be abandoned - a fear they retained since losing their biological parents. They asked Namir and Ayana to commit to their treatment, and promised that when it was safe for them both, they would once again be together as a family.

While in treatment, Namir revealed that he had been sexually assaulted multiple times by older children at the Sudanese orphanage where he grew up. Without the intervention of caring adults, Namir had internalized his experience and came to believe that it was appropriate to show love and affection through sexual intimacy.

At SafeSpot, Ayana struggled at first to understand why her brother's behavior was wrong. Because she loved her brother and the abuse "felt good", she couldn't rationalize the reaction of her parents and other adults around her. She blamed herself for Namir's separation from the family and her old siblings' anger towards him. She was confused, and she missed her best friend.

Over the course of 11 months, both Namir and Ayana came to understand why their sexual relationship was harmful and how their past experiences had shaped their distorted view of love and affection. They each addressed their individual trauma and learned what healthy relationships between siblings and family members look like.

In December of last year, Ayana's SafeSpot therapist, Namir's treatment coordinator, and Christine and Shawn began a series of reunification sessions. A safety plan was developed that included no physical contact or unsupervised time together. After four sessions, Ayana and Namir's older siblings were invited to share their feelings and to show their support for their brother and sister. In their last session, Namir presented Ayana with several drawings he had created for her and when Ayana went to hug him, he told her that because he loved her, he couldn't hug her - but that he could give her a high-five! He went on to thank her for telling the truth and getting him the help he needed to be the brother she and her siblings deserved.





# SafeSpot in the Community

SafeSpot board, staff, and supporters were out and about in 2021! From our inaugural Superheroes for SafeSpot 5K & Fun Run to our annual Champion's for Children Golf Tournament, we are grateful to everyone who brought attention, resources, and awareness to our community's most vulnerable children and families.



## Superhero's Spring Into Action for SafeSpot

Superheroes come in every shape and size, and we could not be more grateful that so many showed up for our inaugural 5K & Fun Run this past September! The 5K course at Lake Fairfax provided a lovely wooded background as nearly 200 individuals of all ages ran in support of children and families impacted by abuse.

Our generous sponsors and runners raised more than \$60,000 for our community's most vulnerable children.

***Special thanks to Co-Chair's Jacqui McVey and Lauren Kushin for going the extra mile to ensure a fun morning for everyone involved!***

## Generosity On and Off the Course

The October weather was perfect for the **12th Annual ICC/SafeSpot Charity Golf Tournament!** Hosted by the Lady Niner's of the International Country Club, and led by Co-Chair's Gita Marin Joyce and Sue Martin, this year's tournament and Hit the Green competition raised over \$20,000 to support SafeSpot's programs and services. We are truly grateful to the incredible women (and men) who came out to support children in Fairfax!



## Making a Difference with Eagles n' Aces

The **2021 Champions For Children Eagles n' Aces Tournament** was one for the history books! From golf and tennis in the afternoon to cocktails and dinner in the evening, it was an event to remember. Thanks to our sponsors, golfers, tennis players, and volunteers, we raised more than \$200,000 for children and families impacted by abuse. ***Special thanks to Co-Chair's Andy & Christin Klaff, and our entire volunteer committee for their tireless energy and creativity!***



Be sure to mark your calendar for this year's tournament, scheduled for October 24, 2022!

## Snacks, Supplies, and Seasonal Gifts

With record numbers of children and families served in 2021, we could hardly keep up with the demand for healthy snacks, art supplies, and therapeutic toys and books. Thankfully, our caring community met the need for us. Through our **Amazon Wishlist**, and the new **Winter Wishes** program, our supporters donated hundreds of items to make our Center successful and to help our families celebrate the holidays.

If you would like to purchase a much-needed item from our Amazon Wish list, please visit our website at **[www.SafeSpotFairfax.org](http://www.SafeSpotFairfax.org)** to learn how.





# Welcome SafeSpot's Junior Board!



## SafeSpot Junior Board Class of 2021



**Nick DiChiara,**  
**President**  
Newmark



**Paige Barger,**  
**Vice President**  
Cushman and Wakefield



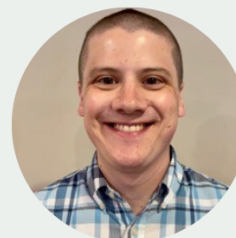
**Rick Gibson,**  
**Secretary**  
West Financial Services, Inc.



**Monica Cogo**  
Amazon



**Nolan Dee**  
Bonaventure Realty Group



**Austin Diamond-Jones**  
IRS Office of Chief Counsel



**Austin High**  
ALXC



**Robert Kang**  
Booz Allen Hamilton



**Ryan Klaff**  
Bonaventure Realty Group



**Cole McCarthy**  
Transwestern



**Christina Quint**  
Inova Health Systems



**Emily Robinson**  
SCAN of Northern Virginia



# Making the Most Of Your Investment

It is only through the generous support of our community that we are able to provide comprehensive services to children and families touched by the trauma of abuse, all at no cost to the family. We are grateful to have earned the confidence of our donors, and we strive to be good stewards of the financial contributions with which we have been entrusted.

SafeSpot is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Our federal tax identification number is 46-1358388. If you would like to make a donation, visit our website at [www.SafeSpotFairfax.org](http://www.SafeSpotFairfax.org), or mail your donation to P.O. Box 148, Fairfax, Virginia 22038.

## 2021 FINANCIALS

<u>REVENUE</u>		<u>EXPENSE</u>	
Government	\$745,292	Salaries & Benefits	\$915,604
Contributions	\$305,634	Programs	\$ 55,020
Events & Other Income	\$359,130	Fundraising & Management	\$290,551
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,410,056</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,261,175</b>

SafeSpot is proud to have earned the recognition of national and regional charity reviewers, including:



As well as the endorsement of the National Children's Alliance and our state chapter:

NATIONAL  
CHILDREN'S  
ALLIANCE®



# Join Us

There are many ways to join the movement to support children and families impacted by abuse in Fairfax. SafeSpot is always looking for volunteers, donors, and community advocates of all types! If you are interested in getting involved, please visit our website at: [www.SafeSpotFairfax.org](http://www.SafeSpotFairfax.org), or contact our office at 703-385-KIDS (5437).

## SafeSpot Board of Directors

Denise Balzano, *President*  
Jim Burns  
Brook Carlon  
Debby Cochran  
Bryan Gibson  
Jessica Greis Edwardson  
Pat Harrison, *Vice President*  
Bootsie Humenansky

Annette Kerlin  
Michelle Kingsley  
Andrew Klaff  
Lauren Kushin, *Secretary*  
Armen Manoogian  
Claudia Manoogian  
Ralph Masino

Tina Mather  
Jacqui McVey  
Marge Odeen  
Phil Odeen, *Treasurer*  
Clishia Taylor  
Randy Turk  
Jamie Weber  
TJ Weber

## SafeSpot Junior Board

Nick DiChiara, *President*  
Paige Barger, *Vice President*  
Monica Cogo  
Nolan Dee  
Austin Diamond-Jones  
Rick Gibson, *Secretary*

Austin High  
Robert Kang  
Ryan Klaff  
Cole McCarthy  
Christina Quint  
Emily Robinson

## SafeSpot Staff

Heather O'Malley, Chief Executive Officer  
Michele Thames, Executive Director  
Lindsey Kerber, Clinical Director  
Angela Haslett, Manager of Forensic Services  
Leannah Farbotko, Therapist  
Angela Niblet, Therapist

Alexsandra Mendez, Program Assistant  
Shanice Madera, Forensic Interviewer  
Carla Claudio-Silva, Forensic Interviewer  
Veneisy Andrade, Family Advocate  
Jasmine Gutierrez, Receptionist



Virgil, Facility Dog





## April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

If you would like to display pinwheels to help raise awareness, please call us at 703-385-5437.





PASSION FOR  
**Fashion**  
...and the children we serve

THE EVENING OF

MAY



2022





**OCT  
24TH  
2022**



[safespotfairfax.org/champions-for-children](https://safespotfairfax.org/champions-for-children)

# **CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN TOURNAMENT, COCKTAILS & DINNER**

**WESTWOOD  
COUNTRY CLUB**

Vienna, VA





***I am grateful that we were referred to the Center. They reassured me that I am on the right path to help my child heal. The Center is a blessing.***

***~ SafeSpot Client***

**SafeSpot Children's Advocacy Center of Fairfax County**

**PO Box 148**

**Fairfax, VA 22038**

**(703) 385-5437**

**[www.SafeSpotFairfax.org](http://www.SafeSpotFairfax.org)**