



## Increased time at home raises the odds!

**Sexual and physical abuse**

**Witnessing domestic violence**

**Online predatory contact**

**SafeSpot is here to help, but we need YOUR support**

### Director's Message

Dear SafeSpot Advocates,

Health concerns which prevent in-class education and in-person fundraisers create a simple equation, but many complex societal consequences. The inverse relationship between these two recently altered aspects of life result in more horrific instances of child abuse, but with a reduction of funding to heal the abused. In fact, without school, summer camps and physical attendance at other extracurricular gatherings, our referral numbers continued to rise. We are projecting an increase of 10% more children than last year. According to NBC News, calls to the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline increased by 31% in March, 17% in April and 43% in May.

While the number of calls for help rose, so did the intensity of the abuse. Healthcare systems across America noted that physical abuse became more violent while entire families were without work or school outside of the home. This increase in life threatening injuries became the new immediate impact upon victims and hospital staff. The long-term effects on victims and society: however, are endless. Unresolved childhood trauma is shown to result in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, substance use, physical health problems, poverty, crime, promiscuity, and early death. This partial list of child abuse consequences typically generates \$1,000,000,000 dollars in expenses for the US Government and taxpayers to cover every single year.

Pandemic or no pandemic, SafeSpot makes their best effort to provide victims with healing and advocacy services to replace lifelong consequences with health and resiliency. SafeSpot continued seeing clients throughout COVID-19, while many agencies closed their doors. Our staff remained dedicated to the task, and where necessary, we altered our approach to accommodate safety precautions. Along the way, our business practices also evolved to better serve each client. For example, to further enhance the online therapy program, SafeSpot therapists created packages of integral materials for clients to use at home during online therapy sessions.

SafeSpot met the COVID 19 challenges with resolve and determination. The amount of passion for our mission and pride each of us have in our work is equal to the pride we have in our supportive community. The efforts you have made to maintain funding throughout a very distant, solitary time are remarkable! Thank you for the contributions to our organization, which keep children safe, provide healing and give

these victims the resiliency they each deserve.

Michele Thames  
Executive Director

## News of Note

### **The Show IS ON! 2020 Champions for Children Tournament & Dinner** *Monday, October 26th*



You may not be able to head to the office, but you can certainly find a safe oasis on the golf course or tennis court! Fresh air, protocols and fun are in place for our upcoming Champions for Children event! And due to abbreviated or cancelled fundraising efforts, this tournament is more important than ever. Help us heal the kids who have received the worst side of the "stay at home" coin - isolation with abusive perpetrators.

**Become a sponsor today and join us on Monday, the 26th!**

#### **Schedule of Events**

10:30am Golf Check-in / Practice Facility Opens  
11:00am Lunch  
11:45am Golf Tournament Shotgun Start  
2:00pm – 4:00pm Tennis Round Robin  
5:00pm Cocktail Reception

[More Detail & Registration](#)

If you would like to volunteer for the Champions for Children event, please contact Meghan Molinini by using the below link.

[Event Volunteer](#)

### **Back to School, Back to Safety Campaign** *Fundraising Success Amid COVID 19*



Unfortunately, we were unable to hold our Annual Passion for Fashion show this year due to Covid-19. While we missed seeing everyone, we completed a highly successful online campaign, called "Back to School, Back to Safety!" When we set out to raise \$35,000, we had high hopes, but could not have imagined the outpouring of support we received. Thanks to the generosity and caring of our community, we have raised nearly \$70,000; double what we thought was possible!!

These much-needed funds will go a long way to helping us overcome the challenges that COVID-19 has presented. Most importantly, your donations will ensure that SafeSpot remains a vital resource for children and families impacted by abuse.

We could not be more grateful for you, our generous and compassionate community!

"Generosity is the most natural outward expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving-kindness"

~Dalai Lama XIV

## **We Are Growing!**

*New Staff, New Space to Meet the Need*



## We Are Growing!

As our center expands to serve more children and families impacted by abuse, our team and space are growing to match. Over the past few months, we have welcomed three new employees to our team:

**Veneisy Andrade** is our newest *Family Advocate*. In this role, she provides crisis counseling, resources, and referrals to non-offending care givers, enabling them to best support their children while navigating the criminal justice and child welfare systems.

**Shanice Madera** and **Carla Claudio-Silva** have both joined our team as *Bilingual Forensic Interviewers*. Adding the capacity to conduct forensic interviews in Spanish as well as English allows us to better serve the children who come to our center, up to 40% of whom are Hispanic.

At the same time, our office has expanded to include a second interview room and a brand-new therapy suite. By adding a second forensic interview room, we can now conduct concurrent interviews while accommodating observation by the members of our multi-disciplinary team, including law enforcement and child protective services. And while our therapy has transitioned to a tele-health model during the pandemic, our newly designed therapy suite is ready to welcome children and caregivers as soon as we return to in person sessions.

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**Keeping Kids Safe**  
*Tips and Resources for Families*



### **Keeping Kids Safe Online**

Now more than ever before, youth & families are spending more time online - for school, for fun, and to connect with loved ones. We are existing in a time with much less structure and our typical things to do. Many of us may be turning to our devices - phones, tablets, gaming systems - for entertainment and connection. While technology and the internet can certainly provide such enjoyment and connection, it can make youth vulnerable to unsafe situations online. Keeping our children and families safe begins with staying informed. Please look at the information below to help keep kids as safe as possible while on the internet.

#### **Warning Signs:**

- Is your child acting isolated & withdrawn?
- Is their phone out of view when they receive texts/notifications?
- Do they run to the bathroom more often?
- Are they becoming stressed when they receive messages/notifications?
- Do you hear names/voices (on phone, video chats, game chats) that are unfamiliar?
- Are they spending time behind closed doors?

#### **What Parents Can Do:**

- Internet safety starts with adults! Be a good role model with your own technology use
- Be present & observant
- Have meals together as a family (if possible)
- Encourage a balanced life that includes outdoor activities and other games together
- Recognize the difference between heavy technology use vs. obsessive/excessive use
- Pay attention to their online activities and how it impacts their mood
- Be nearby when children are doing homework online
- Set limits & consider using parental controls built into game consoles & PC systems

### **Assistance With COVID 19**

- **Virginia Department of Health** has a [public helpline](#) for questions about COVID-19: 1-877-275-8343. Community resource specialists are available to answer questions to the public in English and Spanish.
- **Fairfax County Public Schools:**

- [FCPS Meal Sites for Children & Families \(Map\)](#)
- [FCPS Wellness Check Ins for Youth and Parents](#)
- **Financial Assistance:**
  - Fairfax County [Human Services Resource Guide](#)
  - NVFS Emergency Assistance Program: [English & Spanish](#)
- **Utilities:**
  - [Dominion Energy](#) has suspended all service disconnections for nonpayment. They are reconnecting customers whose services were shut off.
  - [Washington Gas](#) has suspended all service disconnections and are waiving late fees on customer bills. These actions are already in place and do not need to be requested.
  - [Click here](#) for a list of internet access resources (NVFS).
- **Food Assistance:**
  - [Capital Area Food Bank](#) searchable map
  - [Food for Others](#) food bank.
  - [Click here](#) for a list of Stores with Dedicated Shopping Hours for the Most Vulnerable (NVFS).
  - Please contact your family advocate for additional food referrals.
- **Emotional Support & Safety:**
  - Talk to someone
    - [Parenting Help](#) (1-800-CHILDREN) - Trained parenting specialists give guidance on issues ranging from how to understand each stage of a child's development to how to reduce parental stress, strengthen the parent-child bond, access helpful community resources
    - [Crisis Text Line](#) - Feeling overwhelmed? Text **HOME** to 741741 to speak with a trained crisis counselor.
    - [SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline](#) - 24/7 free, confidential support to those experiencing emotional distress due to the outbreak. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text **TalkWithUs** or **Hablanos** to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.
    - [The Trevor Project](#) - 24/7 free, confidential crisis intervention and support for LGBTQ+ youth. Call 1-866-488-7386 or text 678678.
    - [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) - 24/7 free, confidential support for anyone affected by domestic violence, available in all language. Call 800-799-7233, text **LOVEIS** to 22522, or chat online with a trained advocate.
    - Domestic & Sexual Violence Services of Fairfax County - If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, call the 24/7 hotline at **703-360-7273** for crisis support, information & referrals, and safety planning.
  - [Mental Health & Coping during COVID-19](#) (CDC)
- **Talking with Youth about COVID-19:**
  - Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019: [English & Spanish](#)
  - [Talking to Teens & Tweens about Coronavirus](#) - New York Times
  - [Supporting Children during Coronavirus](#) - NCTSN
  - [Simple Activities for Children & Adolescents](#) - NCTSN
- **How to Protect Yourself from Scams:** [Legal Services of Northern Virginia](#)
- **Resources for Immigrant Families:** [English & Spanish](#)
- **Slow the Spread:** wash your hands, especially after touching any frequently used items or surfaces. Avoid touching your face. Sneeze or cough into a tissue or the inside your elbow. Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible. ([CDC](#))

If you or someone in your family is in crisis, call the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board: 703-573-5679

## Ways to Donate

A Simple Way to Provide a Smile



Amazon Smile is an easy and automatic way for you to support SafeSpot as you shop on Amazon.

After you designate SafeSpot as your charity choice, via [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), every eligible purchase you make will result in a donation to SafeSpot!!

**Can I use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?**

Yes, you use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

**How do I select a charitable organization to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?**

On your first visit to AmazonSmile [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), you need to select a charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Amazon will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) will result in a donation.

**Can I change my charity?**

Yes, you can change your charity any time. To change your charity, sign in to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) on your desktop or mobile phone browser and simply select "Change your Charity" in "Your Account."

[Smile Amazon](#)

[Visit our website](#)

**OUR MISSION:**

The mission of SafeSpot Children's Advocacy Center of Fairfax County is to provide a child-friendly, culturally sensitive environment that promotes the safety and well-being of child victims of abuse while facilitating a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary team approach to the intervention, investigation, prosecution and treatment of sexual abuse and severe physical abuse.

STAY CONNECTED

