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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **BIVONA CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER CELEBRATES 5 YEARS OF CHILD ABUSE INTERVENTION**

**Agency has become a valuable community resource and has evaluated nearly 4,000 children.**

**ROCHESTER, NEW YORK- August 1, 2009** – Before the Bivona Child Advocacy Center (BCAC) opened its doors on August 1, 2004, children and families with concerns of sexual abuse had to navigate through a maze of services—from police to hospital to social services and back again, with each incidence often requiring a painful retelling of the abuse—the result was more emotional distress for children and a devastating delay in the start of their recovery.

Today, as Bivona Child Advocacy Center celebrates its 5-year anniversary, children and families journey through a much more streamlined process which reduces the chances that the children are re-traumatized and preserves the best evidence for investigators.

The Bivona Child Advocacy Center, a non-profit organization, is a safe, welcoming place where children who have been sexually or physically abused can begin their journey to recovery. Bivona staff facilitate an under-one-roof collaboration of social and legal agencies to protect, treat and counsel child victims and their families, and to investigate and prosecute the abusers. Bivona provides a compassionate, efficient, cost-effective infrastructure for child abuse intervention. With now more than 700 Child Advocacy Centers across the United States, BCAC is the only agency in the Greater Rochester area to provide these services.

Since its opening 5 years ago, Bivona has evaluated and provided services to nearly 4,000 children. The past few years, more than 1,000 children have been seen annually. 41% of the children that receive services at Bivona are under 7 years of age.

When Bivona first opened its doors, its co-located partners in the fight against child abuse included a team from Child Protective Services and one victim advocate. In the past five years, Bivona has seen a tremendous increase in formal partnerships, increased staffing within each partnership, as well as an increase in the types of services offered. A list of current partners includes:

- Monroe County Child Protective Services
- Law Enforcement (including Rochester Police Department, Monroe County Sheriff's Office and New York State Police)
- Monroe County District Attorney's Office
- REACH Program of Golisano Children's Hospital at the University of Rochester
- Rape Crisis Service
- Linden Oaks Sexual Abuse Treatment Services
- Catholic Family Center

To help make room for the increase and co-location of these partnerships, Bivona has undergone three facility modifications since its opening. In addition, Bivona staff has doubled from 3 to 6 employees and its operating budget has increased by 176%.

Bivona has quickly become a community resource for issues surrounding child sexual and physical abuse. In an effort to help educate professionals who work with children, Bivona hosted its first Bivona Summit on Child in April, 2009, attracting 350 professionals from across New York State. The Summit is a one day conference that will continue to be held in April, in conjunction with Child Abuse Prevention Month.

“We are very pleased about our growth because we can now better serve our community’s most vulnerable children. Because of the coordinated efforts with our partner agencies, children are getting intervention and services much sooner which ultimately help them begin the healing process,” says **Mary E. Whittier, Executive Director of Bivona Child Advocacy Center.**

## **ADDITIONAL STATISTICS**

The incidence of abuse of children—both sexual and physical—is overwhelming and tragic. In the United States, a child is sexually abused every six minutes.

In Monroe County alone:

- More than 7,000 cases of abuse and neglect are reported every year, up 51% since 1990.
- 90% of sexual abuse crimes are committed by someone the child knows and trusts: parents, neighbors, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, and peers.
- Most sexual abuse cases still go unreported.

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### **About Bivona Child Advocacy Center**

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Bivona Child Advocacy Center is the only agency in the Greater Rochester community to provide these services. More than 1,000 children are helped at the Center each year. Although Bivona receives some government funding, the majority of its support comes from donors. Bivona Child Advocacy Center is an accredited member of the National Children’s Alliance ([nca-online.org](http://nca-online.org)). The Bivona Child Advocacy Center has quickly become a resource to the community for all issues related to child sexual abuse. For more information, please visit [www.BivonaCAC.org](http://www.BivonaCAC.org).