

Anonymous Advocate



Stock Photo Used

Children's Advocacy Centers of Arkansas

I wanted to share a personal story with everyone, as it was a good reminder to me. I hope it will bring you encouragement and be a good reminder to you as well that the families we work with deserve to have someone who meets them where they are & helps them overcome challenges.

A few weeks ago, our center had a late night. We did two (2) sets of acute interviews, seeing a total of seven (7) kids after hours. The second set of interviews started at 9:00 pm, and here is the interaction I want to share with you.

When the interviews were scheduled, I was told by the investigator that the mom was angry, confrontational, defensive, and had already indicated this would be a waste of time for her family - even balking that she would have to leave work early to get to the appointment. When the family arrived, this was very much the pervasive attitude of the mom. There was no obvious desire to be there or take part in what was going on with her kids, asking how long everything would take, and ducking completing paperwork. I was starting to believe the outcome would not be great for this family.

I did my usual thing; being nice no matter what, giving mom time to step outside and complete the paperwork on her timeframe, and showing understanding, but all this did little to soften her. When we finally sat down together with the paperwork, she still seemed angry and defensive, declining the need for any services. When I began inquiring about the incident and briefly what happened, mom's whole demeanor shifted. She went from angry and defensive to shaking her legs and holding back tears. When she finally said the alleged offender's name, she began to cry. Immediately, I told myself what I have told myself time and time again, "This isn't about me, and it isn't about the appointment." The behavior I witnessed earlier was a mask for something underneath. Mom was angry and defensive and did not want to be there, simply because she was afraid, had already been through a lot, and spoken to so many people who didn't do anything to meet her needs nor had they provided her the space to voice them.

From this point on, I was able to process with mom the family's continued fear that the alleged offender would cause further significant damage to their life. He had destroyed their house, the garage door, the front door, smashed holes all over the house, and they did not have the resources to fix any of it. For weeks, they'd been living in constant fear as they were surrounded by trauma reminders of what happened, and they were physically unsafe in their house.

Since our first meeting, our team pulled together and got their front door fixed, the garage door fixed, and supplies to patch the drywall in their house; proving to her that I meant what I said when I told her an advocate is there for and cares about her family and wanted them to get their concerns and needs addressed. We were showing mom that our word was good, and we cared about all their needs. As a result, the mom agreed to give consent for her children to get mental health assessments, and all three children were assessed at our center. Mom even got her mental health referral and asked for the advocate to go with her to her order of protection hearing.

Anonymous Advocate

Mom deserved a person who saw where she was and looked past all the barriers to find what her family needed. We know that the impact of healing even just one family is immeasurable, and we know every family who is confronted with a child abuse investigation deserves this chance.