

# CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER OF HIDALGO AND STARR COUNTIES

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December 16, 2020

Honorable Richard Cortez  
Hidalgo County Judge  
2818 S. Bus. Hwy. 281  
Edinburg, TX 78539

## RE: 381.004 (f) of the Local Government Code

Dear Judge Cortez,

I would like to first thank you for the continued support of the Children's Advocacy Center of Hidalgo and Starr Counties (Children's Advocacy Center). Over the last 20 years, Children's Advocacy Center has worked tirelessly to reduce the emotional trauma and impact to children and families affected by abuse by providing forensic interviews, victim support, immediate crisis intervention, counseling services and forensic medical evaluations.

During the pandemic, Children's Advocacy Center continued to provide "an essential service that supports the social needs of the community" and served 1,053 abused children from March 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020. During this period, we provided counseling to children and families that were dealing with trauma related to child abuse, the pandemic and financial instability. In total, **1,469** counseling sessions were conducted virtually or in person at no cost to them. All this work was possible in part with the support of the Commissioners Court.

Section 381.004 (f) of the Local Government Code states; "*The commissioners' court of a county may support a Children's Advocacy Center that provides services to abused children.*" Since 2017, Children's Advocacy Center has experienced an increase of **40.5%** in the number of children and the demand for counseling services has increased exponentially. Last year, Commissioners Court supported Children's Advocacy Center with \$50,000 and this year, we are respectfully requesting support in the amount of **\$70,000**.

The additional funding will be used to expand trauma focused counseling services by approximately 325 counseling sessions for FY2021. This is a 15% increase from FY2020. With early mental health intervention, we can give abused children the coping skills necessary to help restore their lives to a sense of normalcy and, more importantly, significantly increase their chances of becoming a healthy adult, a good parent, and a citizen that is able to positively contribute back to the community.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we thank you for your time, your consideration, and your support. Do not hesitate to contact me at (956) 287-9754 if you have any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Jesus A. Sanchez  
Executive Director

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