

On March 19, 2015, the Central County Family Justice Center in Concord opened its doors in Todos Santos Square. This wraparound service for victims of family violence is an innovative approach to delivering assistance to a variety of clients. It took nearly two years and commitment from numerous public and private agencies, private donors, grants, and the energy of Executive Director Susun Kim to make this a reality.

In the first eight months of operation, the center saw 516 clients. The most common reason for seeking services involved domestic violence. 79% of the clients were victims of domestic violence. This was followed by elder abuse (6%) and sexual assault (5%). And the vast majority of the clients claim Concord as home. The most alarming number involves children. 91% of the victims seeking services in those first eight months of operation have been children.

Study after study finds that children exposed to violence in the home suffer from a variety of severe effects. Their exposure to this violence manifests itself for long periods of time. It impacts them socially and especially in school.

Children in domestic violence cases were generally treated as witnesses for the past 25 years. Recently, these children are finally being recognized as victims themselves. The number of children exposed to domestic violence that are being interviewed by specially trained counselors at the Children Interview Center has been increasing in the past few years. And if you believe the experts that the most critical time in the development of a child's brain is between birth and two years, which I fully support, family violence exposure to these infants is criminal. Absolutely criminal!

The Central County Family Justice Center will be celebrating their first year anniversary on April 7, 2016. It will be held at the Pleasant Hill Community Center. There is more information on this celebration and how you can assist at [cocofamilyjustice.org](http://cocofamilyjustice.org). The theme for this year is, "Hope for the Future: Healing our Children."