



SPRING 2026



## Embracing Resilience & Rising in Courage

# April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

At Safe Passage, we are committed to providing hope and healing to El Paso and Teller county children who have experienced sexual abuse.

We are also committed to prevention.

Child Abuse Prevention Month is a time for communities to come together and take action to support strong families, thriving children, and healthier communities.

Recognizing that El Paso County receives the highest volume of calls to the statewide Abuse and Neglect Hotline, the Safe Passage team delivers year-round education. This education includes identifying signs of abuse, preparing for the back-to-school season, promoting safety during school breaks, managing family stress, addressing holiday-related anxiety, and understanding how to report concerns—among many other critical topics.

We often wonder if the call volumes are so high because we are not afraid to talk about childhood sexual assault. In fact, we believe the more we raise awareness of the issue, the safer the child.

This Child Abuse Prevention Month, consider attending Safe Passage's annual fundraising luncheon "Embracing Resilience & Rising in Courage" on Thurs., April 23. From survivor stories to partner agency gratitude, this event fuels the work we do on behalf of children and families.

**Email [ebowker@safepassagecac.org](mailto:ebowker@safepassagecac.org) for more information on attending the luncheon.**

# Colorado Attorney General Tours Safe Passage

In January, Safe Passage hosted Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser for a talk and tour to learn about the co-located space and speak to agency partners about our collaborative model.

The Colorado Attorney General serves as the chief legal officer of the state, responsible for representing Colorado in legal matters, enforcing laws, and protecting the public interest. During the annual legislative session, he reviews proposed legislation, including bills pertaining to child safety, and their constitutionality.

The Attorney General was most impressed with our ability to have law enforcement on site, including the Colorado Springs Police Department Crimes Against Children Unit, which is headquartered at Safe Passage, and the El Paso County Sheriff's Office. He saw the partnership, and proximity, invaluable in our community's efforts to thoroughly investigate and seek justice for kids.

Know someone interested in a tour of Safe Passage? It's our mission to showcase and share the work we do with our community. Contact us by emailing [info@safepassagecac.org](mailto:info@safepassagecac.org) if you or your organization is interested in touring the children's advocacy center.



*Pictured here: Ashley Jellison, CCA Executive Director. Mo Basenberg, Safe Passage Executive Director, Phil Weiser, Colorado Attorney General*

## Accountable to our Community

Safe Passage has released its 2025 Annual Report. Among other milestones, the highlight of the year was launching in-house mental health services.

By shifting from an outsourced model to an integrated clinical team, we increased the number of children receiving on-site therapy from just two in 2024 to forty-four in 2025. Similarly, crisis intervention services surged from twelve children in 2024 to seventy-nine in 2025.

Providing this trauma-informed care, free of charge to children and families, ensures we are delivering deep, lasting healing every child deserves.

**Below is a snapshot of our annual impact by the numbers:**

 **791**  
Primary victims

 **731**  
Caregivers served

 **858**  
Children cared for (non-victims)

 **36**  
Children who received a forensic medical exam

 **547**  
Children who had contact with a nurse for a general medical exam or medical resources/support

 **44**  
Children/teens who received therapy

 **560**  
(Includes 20 telehealth sessions)  
Number of therapy sessions

 **79**  
Onsite mental health crisis sessions

**For more information on our team, community support, leadership updates and financial insights, Download the Annual Report from our website, [www.safepassagecac.org](http://www.safepassagecac.org).**

# CACs at the Capitol

In partnership with the Colorado Children's Alliance, Safe Passage is closely tracking bills that have been introduced during the 2026 legislative session. While legislation is currently moving through both the State House and Senate, we are hopeful these bills make it to the Governor's desk for signature.

## Here is a summary of children's advocacy center (CAC)-focused legislation:

- Current Colorado law does not define what a CAC is, nor does it set standards for services, multidisciplinary collaboration, or accountability. It also lacks protections for MDTs and CACs. HB26-1142: Strengthening Colorado's Definition of Child Advocacy Centers updates the definition of CACs, adding language on the importance of these programs, expectations for operations, clarifies how information can be shared and adds civil immunity for CAC staff operating within their duties.
- HB26-1103: Report Child Sexual Abuse and Remote Testimony ensures children who are victims of child sexual abuse have access to critical intervention services by clarifying when law enforcement should refer cases to CACs. The bill also expands remote testimony to all minors to reduce the traumatic impact of testifying in front of their abusers.



**We will keep you posted in the event we need to enlist your help in lobbying Representatives, Senators and/or the Governor for passage.**

## 40 UNDER 40



Safe Passage Clinical Director, Nicole Eckles, continues to receive recognition in our community for her work on our new mental health program. Thanks to Southern Colorado Business Forum & Digest's 40 Under 40 for honoring Nicole as a young leader who is driving innovation and shaping the future of our community.

## Empty Stocking Fund



The 2025 Empty Stocking Fund campaign raised \$67,780 for Safe Passage. This is our fourth year participating and we are honored and proud to join 19 other superstar social services nonprofits who care for the most vulnerable in our community.



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*Pictured here: Three of our four interns for the semester*

## UCCS Interns Care for Kids

Every semester, Safe Passage hosts four UCCS interns from the University's Criminal Justice Department. Interns assist staff in providing a child-friendly, private, and supportive environment for victims, including playroom supervision. The opportunity provides real time career readiness in the criminal justice field.



*Pictured here: The specially trained dogs and handlers that visit Safe Passage*

## HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response

HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response offers comfort and encouragement to those impacted by crises through animal-assisted emotional support. In partnership with Safe Passage, a specially trained dog and handler visit each Wednesday to support children and families.