

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CATAWBA COUNTY OFFICIALS SIGN AGREEMENT TO PROTECT LOCAL CHILDREN**

HICKORY -- Representatives of Catawba County law enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, Catawba County Social Services, and the Children's Advocacy and Protection Center of Catawba County have signed an inter-agency agreement pledging to work together to protect the child victims of sexual and serious physical abuse.

The CAPC collaborates with these other agencies to respond to cases of suspected severe child physical abuse and child sexual abuse in a manner that reduces trauma to the child victim and non-offending family members.

The agreement notes that the criminal justice system is "designed for and oriented to adults." The CAPC and partner agencies agreed to minimize the trauma to child victims while working to aggressively prosecute offenders.

Specifically, those signing the document agreed to minimize the number of interviews to which the child is subjected, work together to improve coordination, and attend training and educational events sponsored by the CAPC.

"Catawba County's CAPC is recognized throughout North Carolina as a model for its collaboration between law enforcement, prosecutors, and Child Protective Services," said John Eller, director of Catawba County Social Services. "We are pleased to have the continuing support of these agencies as we work together to ensure the safety of our county's children."



*Those attending the signing of the CAPC inter-agency agreement included (left to right): John Eller, Catawba County Social Services director; Don Brown, Newton police chief; Steve Brewer, Conover police chief; Julia Allen, CAPC vice chair; Tom Adkins, Hickory police chief; Coy Reid, Catawba County sheriff; Michael Van Buren, assistant district attorney, 25th District.*

There are 78 counties in North Carolina being served by a Children's Advocacy Center. Thirty of these, including Catawba County's CAPC, are accredited by the National Children's Alliance.

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