

“Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę”

Empowering the Children

Audiovisual Equipment for interview room for Child Advocacy Center

Children are the most vulnerable victims of violence, yet when criminals are brought to courts, a child who has disclosed sexual or physical abuse is often faced with an additional trauma of confronting not only perpetrators but also lawyers and judges, and procedures too difficult to comprehend. In such intimidating situations a victim can become mute or give a contradictory deposition, a word of a child against a word of a suspect, who may be in a position of authority or even a member of family : this may result in a dismissal of a case. Helping abused children and their families requires an approach addressing physical, emotional and legal dimensions of abuse, in order to reduce stress during the investigation and intervention process. It also requires a coordinated response from expert professionals.

In 2018 the Empowering the Children Foundation, relying on its over 28 years' experience in helping children created a Child Advocacy Center in Warsaw for children who are victims of violence and sexual abuse, in accordance with the Council of Europe's guidelines on child friendly justice and evidence based methodology of interviewing children was based on the Scandinavian and American Barnhaus model. The approach was of course adapted to the country's judicial system.

The Child Advocacy Center helps children and their non-abusive parents to prepare for their participation in criminal procedures. They learn what is going to happen, where, whom the child is going to meet and for what purpose.



The Foundation DDS received funds covering salaries from the state, but no funds were provided to purchase equipment for the interview room, a necessary facility for the professionals from the Police, educational and welfare institutions, foster care and others, to be used free of charge. A difficult situation in which “Empowering the Children” was supposed to assure services without having means to do it correctly.

After a preliminary visit of the premises and an overview of what was necessary to assure the best possible quality of the equipment we in Femmes d'Europe were able to agree to

provide the Foundation DDS with a modern audiovisual system, including rotating cameras with 360° view and zooming option (images being visible in the auxiliary room), high-sensitivity microphones, images and soundtracks which can be recorded and backed-up. All the equipment, except cameras and microphones are located in the auxiliary room, so they remain concealed from the interviewed children, who can explain what has happened to them in a friendly environment, using dolls to show when verbal expression becomes too difficult. The system enables discreet communication between individuals present in the auxiliary room (legal counsel, prosecutor, etc.) and those conducting the interview (judge and psychologist or social worker).



The session is video-recorded to prevent repeated interviews of the child. During visits to the Center, the child never meets the offender face to face. If there is a suspicion that the child's legal guardian or caregiver will not act in his or her interest, a guardian is provided to represent the victim.

Visiting the Child Advocacy Center after the installation of the equipment bought thanks to our Association was a very emotional moment for me. I've seen the peaceful interview room with pleasant furniture and lovely toys and the efficient auxiliary room. During the first three months of activity 52 children were interviewed benefitting from our equipment, and almost 200 by the end of the year 2018.

The name "Association Femmes d'Europe" is displayed on the Empowering the Children Foundation's walls as a donor. The Center has become a benchmark for other NGOs. It is a great satisfaction to see children protected from unnecessary additional trauma, to help this way to build up their resilience and restore their trust in the world of adults.

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