Child Advocacy Services is implementing a new service through our Children’s Advocacy Center Program entitled “Powerful Paws for Children™”. Powerful Paws for Children is facility companion named “Hayward” to provide additional advocacy and support to children in our mission to give voice, healing and security to children.

**What type of dog will be used in the Powerful Paws for Children Program?**
Our Facility Dog or companion is a professionally trained adult animal that was trained by Canine Companions for Independence (CCI), a national organization that specializes in training service dogs. CCI is an accredited member of Assistance Dog International and has placed over 3800 dogs since it was founded in 1975. Child Advocacy Services will serve as the host for our companion “Hayward”. He will work full time at the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) and live with a staff handler. Although the working life of a dog is on average 8 years, CCI will maintain ownership during that time. Hayward a lab golden retriever, trained in over forty commands.

**What will the dog do during the work day?**
During the work day, Hayward will enhance the services provided at the CAC to victims and non-offending caregivers. The handler will inform families about the Powerful Paws for Children Program upon their arrival to determine if they would like to utilize him during their forensic interview process. If the family chooses to utilize Hayward, the handler will introduce him to the family while our staff handler is providing advocacy to them prior to the interview. The victims and family members will be able to pet the dog and give it easy commands such as lie down or sit which will help the victim and family members feel comfortable and safe at the CAC. During a forensic interview Hayward is trained to lie beside the child so that the child can pet or touch the dog.

After the forensic interview, Hayward will remain with the victim and family until they are finished with the post interview follow up with the investigators. While Hayward is not being utilized for services with families, he will be “off duty” in a designated area of the CAC. This area will be out of site of anyone that is in the CAC. Families who choose not to utilize the Powerful Paws for Children Program will not see Hayward or be introduced to this service.

**What is the benefit to children, our community, and CAS?**
In 2011, the National District Attorneys Association adopted a resolution which supports the use of “Courthouse” or “Comfort” Dogs to aid in the investigation of crimes involving young or vulnerable victims and in situations where these animals would aid in the preparation for, or during trial or hearing testimony. Research shows that animals provide calming, provide positive physiological benefits, and reduce anxiety in people. A dog may help a child be calmer, more comfortable and secure, therefore improving the child’s ability to recall traumatic information during the forensic interview. Facility Dogs are currently being utilized in 17 states, Canada, and Chile. Currently, Child Advocacy Services is the only program in Louisiana piloting this program. Our overall goal is to enhance our “child friendly” atmosphere, increase advocacy, and provide additional safety for children while reducing trauma for child victims of sexual or severe physical assault. For more information on facility dogs, visit [www.courthousedogs.org](http://www.courthousedogs.org) and [www.cci.org](http://www.cci.org).
**Commonly Used Terms**

*Canine Companions for Independence (CCI)* – A non-profit that enhances the lives of people by providing highly trained assistance dogs and ongoing support to ensure quality partnerships.

*Courthouse Dogs* – Promotes the use of highly trained assistance dogs to provide comfort to children and adults who are victims or witnesses of crimes and support juveniles and adults in mental health and drug courts through advocacy, training and consultation.

*Facility Dog* – A professionally trained adult animal that is acquired from an organization that specializes in training service dogs.

*Handler* – The person who accepts responsibility for the dog’s welfare. The handler will be the person who will use the dog in their work. Our Advocate Coordinator will serve as the handler to enhance our safety and advocacy for children served through the CAC Program.

*Host* – Child Advocacy Services is the host agency where the dog will work. CAS is a private, non-profit umbrella agency providing services through the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) program and other initiatives supporting it’s mission to give *voice, healing*, and *security* to children.

*Owner* – Ownership is maintained through Canine Companions for Independence. CCI has four training facilities located regionally throughout the country.

*Trainer* – CCI trains the dogs at one of their regional training facilities. Each dog is bred for service companionship. These dogs receive rigorous training that may range from 1400 to 2000 hours annually. [http://youtu.be/IPVdie1-Jdc](http://youtu.be/IPVdie1-Jdc)

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**Hayward, CAS Facility Dog**

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**Powerful Paws Partners:**

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**Powerful Paws Patrons:**

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