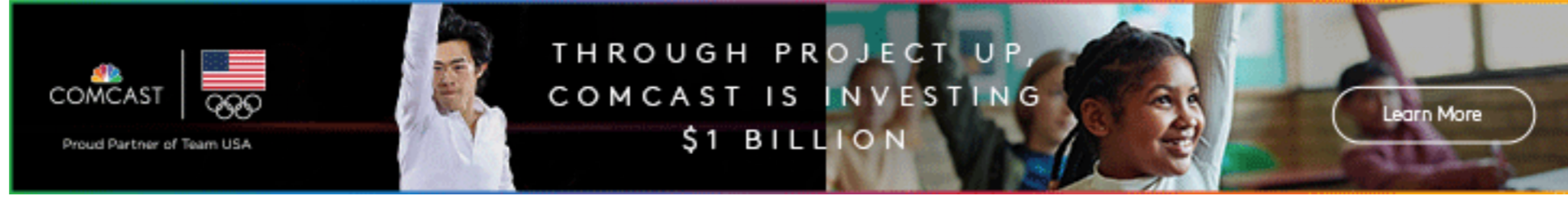


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Special Victims Unit Center officially opens

Larry Miller Aug 26, 2013 0



Philadelphia Safety Collaborative, the newly co-located site for members of the Philadelphia Department's Special Victims Unit, the Department of Human Services Sexual Abuse Investigation Unit, the Philadelphia Children's Alliance and staff from the District Attorney's Office.--Photo by Abdul Sulayman, Tribune Chief Photographer



Mayor Michael Nutter and other city officials were on hand Monday morning for the official opening of the Philadelphia Safety Collaborative, the newly co-located site for members of the Philadelphia Police Department's Special Victims Unit, the Department of Human Services Sexual Abuse Investigation Unit, the Philadelphia Children's Alliance and staff from the District Attorney's Office.

The new facility is located at 300 East Hunting Park Ave. The Collaborative integrates and brings under one roof the services of the partner agencies, thereby streamlining the investigative process for incidents of sexual abuse. Prior to the opening of this facility, children and their families were required to visit multiple locations throughout the city. The Collaborative team approach now reduces the number of staff-victim interactions by coordinating the efforts of the tenant activities. This results in a reduced level of trauma for those serviced by the new facility.

"The Philadelphia Safety Collaborative has been a decades-long hope for our city. We have worked in conjunction with a number of critical partners to create this facility that will reduce the adverse impact on victims and their families," said Mayor Nutter. "I am incredibly proud of the commitment that the Philadelphia Safety Collaborative represents with respect to providing for the well-being and safety of children who have suffered sexual abuse and promoting the interest of justice. It is another example of how the City is working to coordinate crime-response strategies more effectively for our citizens."

The 42,000-square-foot facility will feature two entrances for use by Special Victims Unit personnel and a shared entrance for DHS workers and the Philadelphia Children's Alliance workers. In addition, it includes an internal meditation garden, a parking lot for about 250 vehicles, interview rooms, on-site medical exams and psychological services. Offices are also provided for the Philadelphia Sexual Assault Response.



"Our Special Victims Unit encounters very sensitive issues, and so children need to be treated with compassion and humanity," said Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey. "The new site allows our investigators, DHS and our advocate partners to be available at one location, providing the best services for these victims, especially during such traumatic experiences. This is collaboration for justice, for service and most importantly for these children."

The Philadelphia Safety Collaborative will accommodate a staff of approximately 120 full and part-time personnel from social services, the health/medical community, the Police Department and child advocates. These partner activities have the capability to respond in an expedited manner to provide the needed services.

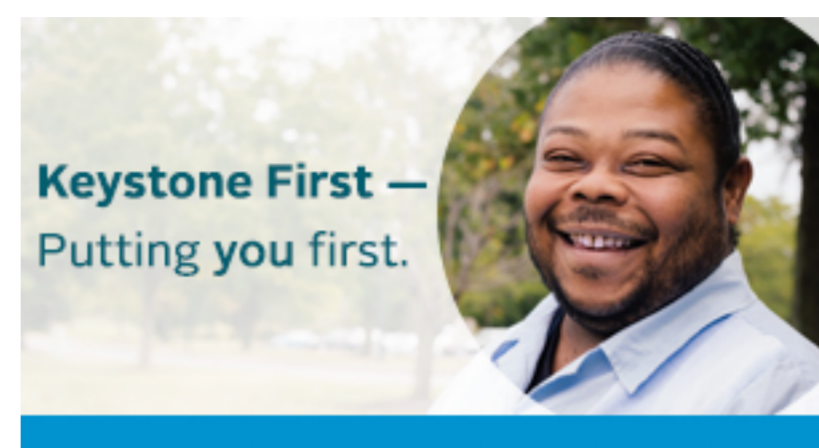
"This new facility and co-located program demonstrates that the City of Philadelphia is prioritizing its children by promising the best response to allegations of abuse," said Christine Kirchner, executive director of the Philadelphia Children's Alliance. "Since 1989, we have been collaborating on child sexual abuse investigations with our partner agencies, the Special Victims Unit, DHS and the DA's office, but now that we are all under one roof, we can enhance and expand our team approach. We have the ability to serve the full scope of children who need us with a timely response in a child-friendly facility with on-site medical and mental health services."



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