

**Title:** Project Protecting Our Native Young (PONY); Site Visit Report  
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**Cluster:** Grants to Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Migrant Programs for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Programs  
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## SUMMARY

The Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center (CCAC) has developed a new program to prevent recurrences of child abuse by building protective behaviors in nonoffending parents and caregivers. Project Protecting Our Native Young (PONY) uses a combination of education, support, and outreach to help nonoffending parents of physically or sexually abused children strengthen their parent-child bonds and enhance parents' protectiveness of their children. A further aim of the program is to empower participants to the point that they can return as mentors for other participants. Thus, a community of parents emerges to support each other and share the responsibility of creating a path to healthy adulthood for their children.

While the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has made improvements in the Tribal response to child maltreatment on the reservation, high rates of physical and sexual child abuse and neglect remain. Many perpetrators were themselves abused as children. In addition, many of the nonoffending parents who participate in Project PONY reveal that they grew up in families with child abuse and domestic violence.

CCAC's Project PONY attempts to raise awareness and break the intergenerational cycle of maltreatment. The program builds on the Tribal tradition that children are valued and that children are a community responsibility.

Project PONY's core family resource and support services consist of 12 weekly noncompulsory sessions of parent education, support group participation, outreach services, community and social service referrals, and follow-up services. Sessions are led by the Program Manager and other staff, and some classes are taught in Choctaw, incorporating poems, stories, and traditional cultural activities. Visiting speakers from the Tribal attorney general's office and other organizations talk about how to identify and report abuse and how to prepare for the courtroom experience. Attendance is helped by providing a meal and child care.

CCAC staff have noted a number of challenges with Project PONY, including the need to serve eight Tribal communities that are widely dispersed across the area. In addition, many parents are reluctant to admit that their children have been abused, especially by a family member. This reluctance is finally beginning to give way with programs like Project PONY that have a strong educational component regarding what constitutes abuse and the widespread nature of abuse.

Parents and caregivers who complete 8 of the 12 PONY sessions are asked to answer a survey about the experience. Project PONY staff are currently gathering these data for a later evaluation. Anecdotal evidence indicates that several parents transitioned from believing that the system did not work to appreciating the project's services and support. Many parents have been grateful for the help in understanding what their children have gone through and in learning how they can better protect their children in the future.

Reprinted from *Children's Bureau Express*, "Site Visit: Tribal Program for Strengthening Parental Protectiveness" (<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/>).

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **Abstract** *(adapted from the project's grant proposal)*

The Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center (CCAC) operates under the Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS), an organizational entity of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, which is responsible for the program and fiscal operations for the following seven other major service programs operated by the Tribe: the Children and Family Services, Behavioral Health Program, Assistance Services Program, Food Distribution Program, Elderly Social and Nutrition Program, Family Violence and Victim's Services, and the Choctaw Boys and Girls Club .

In 2004, 82 percent (87 of 106) of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' CCAC cases for child abuse had previously entered the system through Children and Family Services (CFS) Behavioral Health, and the Tribal Court systems due to victimization. The cause of the initial entrance into Tribal systems range from previous disclosures of abuse that could not be prosecuted or pursued, domestic violence events, neglect, and injuries or delinquency associated with victimization. The reentrance into Tribal systems illustrates that the current approach to intervention has failed to foster sufficient protective behaviors in parents and caregivers. If protective behavior could be successfully acquired by nonoffending parents and caregivers, CCAC could document a reduction of future traumas to children by realizing fewer reoccurrences. The overall goal of Project Protecting Our Native Young (PONY) is to prevent reoccurrences, identify risk factor for revictimization, and foster parental protectiveness. The CCAC process to affect this goal will be to document previous victimization, provide intervention services to nonoffending parent/caregivers, apply the Family Advocate model to case management, and increase community awareness concerning child abuse.

### **Need for this service** *(adapted from the project's grant proposal)*

Child abuse and neglect occurs in families at all levels of socioeconomic standards. There is no single identifiable cause of child abuse, but rather it seems to occur in the midst of other negative forces impacting a family. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has made significant improvements in its response to child abuse on the reservation in the last few years. This includes the development of a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and the CCAC to foster a coordinated, collaborative response when a suspicion or disclosure of abuse is made known. Presently, there is growing social and political concern about the lack of an effective system of child abuse and neglect prevention, identification, and prosecution.

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, Title II-Community-Based Family Resource and Support Grants are authorized to bridge this gap between culture and positive outcomes by supporting State and Tribal communities to:

- Assess community assets and needs
- Develop strategies to provide preventive family-centered services to children and families
- Provide core family resource and support services
- Develop leadership roles among the parents and the community to develop and sustain program services
- Form networking partnerships with other community-based, prevention-focused family resources and support program grantees

Project PONY proposes to nurture protective factors in the nonoffending caregiver who remains after an occurrence of child abuse to prevent further victimization. Moreover, the implementation of Project PONY, the referral services incorporated, and the attention of the Multi-Disciplinary Team in the project will create a centralized location for existing services that are available, which are currently fragmented and difficult to navigate.

It is the aim of Project PONY to empower nonoffending caregivers who have successfully completed the project to return in subsequent sessions as mentors for other participants in the project. Thus, a community of parents emerges to support each other and share the responsibility of creating a path to a healthy adulthood for their children.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is located in rural, East-Central Mississippi and has a Tribal membership in excess of 9,800. Approximately 35 percent of the Tribal members are between the ages of zero and 18. The majority of Choctaw youth live in pervasive at-risk situations that include household issues consisting of alcoholism, substance abuse, verbal and physical abuse, sexual abuse, poor marital relationships, low academic performance, and juvenile delinquency. For many Choctaw youth, domestic violence is part of their daily experience.

Despite changes in the structure, the Choctaw family unit is culturally the foundation of Choctaw society. Unfortunately, in victimization of children younger than 12, a family member is much more likely to be the perpetrator (OJJDP Bulletin, November 2003) than not. A contributing factor to how well a child recovers from the abuse with minimum adversity is determined by the mother's response and the protective behaviors she exhibits toward the child (Summit, 1983). Therefore, in cases of familial abuse, it becomes vital to strengthen the nonoffending parent/caregiver to be the supportive and nurturing mentor to promote healing and well-being of an abused child. There is a great need for supportive efforts among Choctaw families to build resilience to meet everyday challenges and the impact of traumatic events such as child abuse. One of the most profound statistics available for child sexual assault in Choctaw families is the fact that on average and year to year 95 percent to 98 percent of all Choctaw female adults and equally 95 percent to 98 percent of all Choctaw male adults who seek substance abuse and/or mental health services on the reservation confirm that they were sexually abused prior to becoming a teenager (Choctaw Behavioral Health, 2005).

Although there is agreement that interventions in child abuse response needs to be culturally sensitive, there is little information or model programs available regarding immersion of culture in prevention efforts. Programs that include pictures or "Indian"

themes such as “powwow dancing,” “sweat lodges,” or “fry bread” are not sufficient when addressing the cultural needs of the Choctaw community. Child abuse prevention efforts that foster positive behavioral changes must include the specific Tribal factors of history, language, and oral traditions immersed in to the interventions (DeBruyn, Chino, Serna, Fulleton-Gleason, 2001).

Research shows that it takes 120 days to establish a habit and 3 to 5 years to internalize a habit. So, parental involvement must be ongoing. Any project addressing the adjustment of parental behavior around issues concerning child abuse must be continual and not a limited obligation set forth by the courts.

Project PONY will be a quarterly series of twelve meetings with a maximum of eight participants per session. There will be two support groups per quarter, one held on Tuesday nights and the other held on Thursday afternoons to accommodate work schedules. A total of 16 participants will be served per quarter (*Note: as the program was implemented, participants were not limited to this number*). If this schedule needs adaptation throughout the year, it will be adjusted to fit the needs of the participants. The CCAC staff, provides transportation if necessary for any participant. Due to the fact that many victims of abuse suppress abuse events in their past, immediate Crisis Intervention services from a Behavioral Health therapists will be available if the nonoffending parents experience any resurfacing events of abuse while being exposed to this series.

Project PONY’s core family resource and support services will consist of nonoffending parent/caregiver education, support group participation, outreach services, community and social service referrals, and follow-up services. These services will be delivered over a 3-month period with weekly sessions of educational programs and activities. As discussed above, there will be a total of 12 sessions including a Family Fun Day activity at the last session. The Family Fun Day events will offer the nonoffending caregiver and their families an opportunity to bond with one another and celebrate with food and family activities. The activities laid out in this proposal will model and promote healthy interaction and protectiveness between children and their parents/caregivers.

### **Goals of Project** (*adapted from the project’s grant proposal*)

#### **Goal 1: Prevent reoccurrences of child abuse**

**Objective 1** - Incidences of abuse to children of parents who are participants in the project during the 12-week program period will be prevented.

- Project staff will make contact by mail, telephone, or home visit on referrals received to garner participation in Project PONY for each session.
- Project staff will implement a support group which includes self-development activities and an educational component that will include culturally competent topics such as program objectives and goals, community resources, child development, discipline, perpetrator dynamics, child abuse dynamics, positive behavior management ability, etc.

**Objective 2** - Twelve of the 16 quarterly participants will attend at least eight sessions per program period.

- There will be two support groups, one held on Tuesday nights and the other held on Thursday afternoons, to accommodate work schedules.
- Each absence at a session or reports of revictimization of a child will be followed up with a weekly home visit until the participant can return to the sessions for the remainder of the program.

## **Goal 2: Identify risk factors for revictimization**

**Objective 1** - By the end of the first quarter of the first year, project staff will review current child physical and sexual abuse cases and case histories to determine abuse dynamics.

- Project staff will evaluate and adapt the Family Advocate model to the Choctaw community's needs for implementation in Project PONY (caregiver support, education, and outreach).
- For all cases, a historical search will be conducted through the MDT and other service programs to identify previous incidences of child abuse or neglect, witnesses to violence in the homes, delinquency, truancy, mental health interventions and/or other forms of entry into public service programs that would place children at risk for abuse.

**Objective 2** - By the end of the first quarter of the first year, project staff will train the community of providers on the MDT about Project PONY and its goals and objectives.

- Conduct a 1-hour inservice for the MDT during the monthly case review meeting.

**Objective 3** - By the end of the first quarter of the first year, project staff will establish a referral system for Project PONY with the MDT.

- The point of entry for the service population will be through the CCAC based on referrals from Children and Family Services and its Family Preservation Program, Family Violence and Victim's Services, Choctaw Law Enforcement, and Choctaw Behavioral Health.
- Upon initiation of services, an assessment of needs will be made on an ongoing basis and will include considerations such as transportation to support groups, medical, therapeutic, or investigative interventions.
- All services other than child interviews and education for the nonoffending caregivers will be accessed through referral services to providers within the Tribal organizational system.

## **Goal 3: Foster parental protectiveness**

**Objective 1** – 50 percent of the participants completing the exit satisfaction survey will report an increase in their understanding of their role in preventing child victimization.

- Develop satisfaction surveys as part of the exit process.
- Each participant will score an 80 or above in a posttest that incorporates program material on appropriate parenting in multiple-choice scenarios.

**Objective 2** - By the end of the funding period, there will be a 25 percent decrease of child abuse in children of Project PONY participants who were revictimized when entering the program.

- The internal evaluation will be received.
- An additional annual outside annual review (contractual) will be received.

**Objective 3** - By the end of the funding period, there will be a 50 percent decrease of reoccurrences of child abuse in children of Project PONY participants who had no history of victimization prior to participation in the project.

- By the end of the first quarter of the first year, a component for Project PONY will be incorporated into the existing database at the CCAC.
- The information obtained from implementation of the program will be retrieved and incorporated into the evaluation process.

## **SITE VISIT HIGHLIGHTS**

The site visit included meetings with staff, attendance at a Project Protecting Our Native Young (PONY) session and a tour of the surrounding area. The site visitor met with the following people:

- Leland Lewis, Office Aide
- Melinda Ben, Forensic Interviewer
- Tina Scott, Deputy Director
- Pam Jimmie, Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center (CCAC) Case Manager
- Maurice Calistro, Director, DFCS
- Sam Valentine, Planning, Policy and Compliance Coordinator, Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS)
- Felicia Smith, Evaluation Survey Clerk in training
- Captain Harold Comby, Law Enforcement
- Honorable Melissa Carleton, Tribal Attorney General's Office (AGO)
- Betty Tate-Gardner, Clinical Supervisor, DFCS
- Sharon Hockett, RN, Choctaw Health Center
- Mae Bell, Children and Family Services (CFS) Program Manager
- Lanisha Bell, Family Violence and Victim's Services
- Janis Jimmie, PONY Program Manager (former)

## **Project PONY**

- Project staff adapted the Family Advocate Model (FAM) when developing Project PONY. They believe this is the first Tribal adaptation of FAM. In the Huntsville FAM program, participation can be required, and the course is 16 weeks long. Project PONY lasts 12 weeks, and it is not compulsory at Choctaw. Other FAM adaptations included working with the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) to bridge the gap between system and families, build partnerships, and generate more community support for child welfare. Since there are already several programs on the reservation which make comprehensive assessments and referrals, the Project PONY assessment is not as thorough as the FAM assessment. With Project PONY, project staff perform a basic screening (legal, substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, and financial) so families do not have to answer the same questions over and over. They think FAM is a good program, but have found it challenging to implement on the Choctaw Reservation. Their approach is based on studies showing that a child's response to abuse depends on the mother's reaction to the situation. They believe there is potential here to impact the abused child and other children in the home. The Project PONY curriculum and instructor's manual are attached to this report.

- Project PONY participants are nonoffending parents only. Project PONY has solidified and defined services for nonoffending caregivers. Before Project PONY, the main focus in child maltreatment cases was the perpetrator. While Project PONY focuses on the nonoffending caregiver and the victims' needs, project staff also look at the offender's needs, so they will not offend again. Once a victim is identified, they provide therapeutic services to the whole family. Project PONY has been an important link in providing holistic services. Their goal is to deliver information and plant a seed, so parents will make good decisions about their children. They work to be supportive and prevent recurrence of child maltreatment. They build stronger families one brick at a time. Participation is voluntary. They could have mandated it, but they did not want to become part of the penal system.
- Some classes are taught in Choctaw, with instructors translating the curriculum into Choctaw. They incorporate cultural poems, stories, and traditional cultural activities. Project PONY can be delivered by nonprofessionals, but project staff believe that it is probably better to use a therapist. Representatives of the AGO speak at Project PONY sessions. They talk about resources and Tribal and Federal laws. Participants learn about consequences and what the law can and cannot do. CFS staff tell Project PONY participants about their roles and what CFS does. They talk about what is considered abuse. The parents are interested in hearing about this, particularly the facts about reporting child maltreatment and reasons why it is important to report.
- Project PONY is seen as a resource to the community, providing information on child maltreatment. Their partners include the Boys and Girls Club, foster parents, domestic violence services, community education, the hospital, nurses, church groups, day care providers, and recreation services.

### **Participants**

- Project PONY participants meet once a week for 12 weeks. Each session is conducted in two communities, usually somewhat close together. Participants come from nine counties and drive up to 25 miles one way. The most distant community is 2 hours away. When gas prices are high, these distances are particularly challenging.
- Nonoffending caregivers have a different set of parameters. Some parents are embarrassed and do not want to come to group meetings. Most participants are mothers. While a few fathers participate, it is unusual for both parents to be in a class. Alcohol is often a factor. Parents attend consistently, but the extent to which their behavior changes is not yet clear. Participants include many Native language speakers with dialectic differences.
- A large number of nonoffenders and perpetrator are victims themselves. They did not anticipate Project PONY participants would have their own history of maltreatment, but all but two have disclosed abuse. Several parents have shared stories of being maltreated as children. Eight or nine of these parents revealed this for the first time. When this happens, staff suggest counseling. This takes time, but it helps parents to trust and understand that it is not their fault.

### **Recommendations**

- The staff recommends from their experience the first year should be spent on intense awareness development. Project staff would give out data on the previous year's abuse statistics and stories from local Tribal families. Then in the

second year, they would begin a nonpenal intervention program building on the partnership between social services and law enforcement. They would use a universal strategy, serving all parents, not just nonoffenders. In the third year, they would add additional partners.

- Project staff recommends starting sooner with families- identifying high risk moms prenatally and modifying Project PONY for them.
- Staff would like to try providing Project PONY with families one-on-one. They do this occasionally now for parents who miss a class, but Project PONY was set up as a group support program.
- Project staff have found that 1.5 hours per class is insufficient and would recommend. They think 2 hour sessions would be better.

### **Observation of a Project PONY session**

- The site visitor observed Project PONY Session 8 - How the Snake Acquires its Poison.
- This was a noontime session for parents who work nearby. A light lunch was served.
- This session was held in the CCAC office multipurpose room. This is a central location for the Choctaw Tribe. Several other Tribal offices and many businesses are nearby.
- The participants consisted of a middle-aged woman and a young couple.
- A video was shown of white men describing their sexual abuse of children with a psychologist commenting on their stories. The men were a youth minister, a handyman, and a grocery store manager. After a very brief discussion, the instructor read the story, *How the Snake Got its Poison*.
- Sexual abuse resources were handed out, including information about the online offender registry. The instructor pointed out that 38 offenders were listed in Neshoba County, and approximately one half of the offenders were Indians.

### **Tour**

- In addition to Pearl River, Project PONY classes are held in several nearby communities. In order to gain a better understanding of the service area, the site visitor was given a tour of the surrounding communities. Pearl River is the largest of eight Tribal communities. Most of them have a community center and some services, but families have to come to Pearl River for most services.
- The main Tribal complex in Pearl River includes legislative, executive, justice, health, high school, and boarding facilities. The health center was built in 1976, for a population of 3,000, which has now grown to 9,800. The health center does some prevention work and provides sexual abuse exams or makes referrals to another medical center for children who are brought in by a parent. Staff said physical needs are being met, but mental health needs are not always met. The new justice complex houses the Tribal police force and court system. Most jobs are in Pearl River in the casinos, the water park, the tech park, child care, Head Start, and medical facilities. There also is some farming and a few people are self-employed.
- Red Water is 30 minutes from Pearl River. It has a satellite health clinic, but most other Tribal communities do not. It also has a recreation facility and community center and a large new child care facility. There were no homes visible in the immediate vicinity.
- A new school was visible in Standing Pine.

- A large new school and a Boys and Girls Club are located in Conehatta. A Project PONY session was planned for January.
- Numerous large brick homes that were built with Department of Housing and Urban Development grants and many dilapidated frame houses could be seen while driving through the countryside.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Challenges

- Of the 115 child maltreatment cases that came to the Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center (CCAC) last year, only one perpetrator was a stranger. Extensive family links often make it hard for people to imagine abuse is occurring or to accuse the abuser, especially if it is an older family member. There is a perception that deep down, people don't want to accuse a family member. Sometimes the whole family covers up. Although this is changing for the better, project staff still find that a lot of nonoffending parents do not believe or support their child. They would prefer to believe that the offender is innocent. Staff related a situation in which a child was sexually assaulted by a relative. She reported it, was removed from the home, then recanted her allegations under family pressure. They say they don't see this kind of thing as much any more. They credit nonoffending caregiver training programs like Project PONY, the Multi-disciplinary team (MDT), and victim education programs.
- Some Tribal traditions can create challenges. For example, it is a Tribal value that it is not OK to say no to an elder. In one case, a grandmother expected other parents to watch her grandchild when she left him at a restaurant playground, even though she had not specifically asked them to do so. She was surprised when her actions were deemed neglectful. Project staff are seeing a lot of women who think they must have a man in their life for support. They have a fear of being alone so they don't pursue prosecution, and they do not follow through. They place their child right back in that abusive situation. Some say, "abuse is not a crime, that's how I was raised." Some parents in abusive homes still say they grew up like this and they are OK, so why change? This is how many of them grew up, so it seems normal and right to them. Project PONY helps them to see that there is another way.
- There are eight Tribal communities to serve. Doing this work involves large distances. Most Tribal communities are about 30 miles away, and the furthest is 96 miles away from Tribal Headquarters in Pearl River. When an officer calls, social services are needed there right away. Tribal police and caseworkers feel they have too many irons in the fire and too many meetings to attend. Social services staff believe that they need more staff to investigate allegations and to better track these children.
- Project staff believe that parent engagement and participation are the biggest challenges. For some, coming to Project PONY might seem to be an admission of the truth that their child was abused. They offered Project PONY services each quarter, but no one attended the summer sessions. Summer is filled with many sporting events. Success requires 75 percent attendance, but families tend to drop out after about eight sessions. They think providing transportation, food, and child care makes a difference. Time is a challenge for many families. In the

evening, by the time parents get home and eat, it is late, so Project PONY started preparing a light dinner and providing child care. It was so popular that as many as ten children were coming to the sessions, and they started offering children's programs.

- While speaking of prevention, law enforcement staff shared that it took a long time for a situation to get bad. It seems that everything is an epidemic- substance abuse, child abuse, domestic violence- both here and on other Indian reservations. Many Tribal children are at risk of child abuse and other problems. If one child in a home is abused, then other children in that home probably are at risk, so there is a need to monitor these families. Staff see abuse jump from generation to generation. They believe they need to resolve this, not put band-aids on the problem, but their role is not prevention. Whatever the cause, they are trying to resolve and prevent these issues, but progress is slow. Law enforcement gets a lot of child abuse complaints. They would like to handle them more quickly. Founded cases are turned over to the Federal court, but the court will not take cases if evidence is not strong. Federal authorities have other priorities (i.e., homeland security), so some maltreatment cases are not prosecuted.
- Staff shared a belief that the court system needs to be more aggressive in pursuit of offenders. They said that on the reservation, sentences tend to be light and not deterrent to the offender. Parents who are offenders or who live with offenders try to find ways around court orders that the offender is not to be near the child. This is frustrating to staff when they see repeat cases. They believe that nonoffenders need to be educated that this is not acceptable. All of the systems do their part, but some parents just go through the motions and keep breaking restraining order rules. They see that offenders seem to have a real ability to pick victims who will enable them. Often the perpetrator has set up the environment so the child will stay quiet. They believe that nonoffending caregiver education is critical. These nonoffending parents need to know how to deal with someone who is abusing their child.
- When social services takes custody of children, they are first placed in an emergency foster family. Children often go into temporary foster care first. In a short time, they try to place the child with relatives. In many cases, that relative placement allows the child to go back under the parents care. Sometimes money is the issue. They have very little control over foster care or relative placement. Finding foster parents is a steady challenge. They are always looking for foster parents in all communities, but not too many people are interested. Many times grandparents are already caring for their own grandchildren so they don't have time to be foster parents. There is a need to screen relatives just like regular foster care providers.
- Project staff consider child abuse prevention to be relatively new here and feel they are mostly still focused on intervention. They currently have a program where all children are given a car seat and fitted for a booster seat. Many parents do not use them, which staff consider neglectful. They believe parents need a lot of education and that this should be required of parents who are at risk.
- There are a lot of young children living on the reservation. Most of the reservation communities have preschool and day care services available. Many of the children in these programs have relatives working at these centers. These relatives may be reluctant to report signs of abuse. When they do, parents are outraged. They have conducted some educational programs at these centers but

more are needed. Most child maltreatment referrals come from the schools. During the summer this referral source dries up.

- Tribal families have many needs, and at risk families have more than most. Domestic violence problems complicate other problems, and there is a high rate of substance abuse. Other family stressors include high numbers of single parents, high unemployment, poverty, and under-education. There are housing projects in each of the Tribal communities where there is a high level of violence and poverty. Staff stated that they have a real problem with teen pregnancies. Many young parents are not prepared to raise their children. Some parents are under 12 years of age (these are often child sexual assault cases). Gambling is a new problem in the Tribal community. Although they are a two hour drive away from the gulf coast, Hurricane Katrina shut down this area for 30 days. Thirty homes were damaged, and electricity was out for 2 months. Project PONY staff came in and tried to help, but parents were in a state of vulnerability.
- The readiness assessment tool results indicated that the Tribal community is generally not aware and denies that there is a child maltreatment problem. Parents are not aware enough and often have their own history of being maltreated. They do not accept that child abuse is a crime, it can be prevented, and it is their job to protect their children. Staff believe that prevention programs will fail here until this changes.
- So many Tribal families have already had interactions with the system. They view it as penal and to be avoided. It is a strongly held belief on the reservation that social services takes children away. Staff see a need to change this world view/paradigm.

## **Successful Strategies and Keys to Success**

### **Collaboration**

- In the Tribal community everything is connected - agencies, school, church - so work with children and families needs to be a community effort. Project PONY is well integrated into the Choctaw Tribal service and support system.
- The MDT meets monthly. They review the list of children and families the various members are working with and coordinate their plans. The MDT includes law enforcement investigators, medical professionals, counselors, Family Violence and Victim's Services (FVVS), advocates, and attorneys. They have found that often times, the same people with the same issues end up at the doorstep of all the services represented on the MDT. They all know what is happening with a family at each office, so they can coordinate efforts and ensure that each agency provides support based on consistent information about the family. Members find it helpful to learn from each other about the children and families they are working with. MDT and Children and Family Services have increased collaboration. They work together to support children and families and to provide educational events and community education. It took a great deal of work to reduce turf issues at first, but the situation is much better now.
- FVVS is 10 years old. They file restraining orders, support the prosecutor, provide information to the MDT, and provide continuous counseling to address trauma and prevent recurrence. One counselor, who also works with CCAC, specializes in counseling abused children. Often both mothers and children are victims, so they are supported by joint efforts by both programs. The Tribal Council now believes in domestic violence prevention and services, but it took

- awhile to lay the groundwork. It is now an award- winning program with good staff and high security. It is a referral source for CCAC and vice versa.
- CCAC brings child maltreatment prevention programs to the Tribal community. Raising awareness helps to break the cycle of maltreatment. They build on a Tribal tradition that children are valued and that children are a community responsibility. The CCAC office is conveniently located in the midst of other program offices that provide services for troubled Tribal families.
  - The Behavioral Health Services program has evolved. It has become very sophisticated in service delivery. It is regarded as superior to mainstream services and much more personalized. Staff get to know clients and work together as a team to address the needs of children and families. This is considered a key ingredient of the nonoffending caregiver program. Their protocol team meets to review policies regarding collaboration (e.g., on-call system for after-hours calls). They have found that success requires much communication and energy. Therapy for children often includes nonoffending parents. This is often the first time the parents hear whole story. For example, one mother whose daughter was mistreated by her boyfriend disbelieved her child at first, but during therapy sessions she came to believe her daughter. Behavioral health provides prevention workshops for children in the schools, teaching them that it is “ok to tell”, and the Boys and Girls Club teaches children how to be good parents when they grow up.
  - Tribal programs are finding it works well to use a variety of techniques to recruit and engage families. They offer bingo with practical prizes- money, gift cards, household products, and gas cards. After families are engaged, they participate, learn, and change. Sometimes Tribal programs also provide transportation. The Tribe also set up sweat lodges for Tribal inmates in Federal and State prisons.
  - Captain Harold Comby in Law Enforcement has a background in social work and 26 years of experience. They have a beautiful new law enforcement facility. They found it helpful that law enforcement had a van for weekend and after hours calls, and they had a person who was trained to handle child abuse cases.
  - On the Choctaw reservation, the Tribal Attorney General’s Office (AGO) is held in high regard. Their involvement in the MDT shows that the Tribe takes abuse prevention seriously. Tribal members put much stock into the AGO’s ability to help them and to enforce consequences for criminal activities. They trust them to do what they think is best for the child. They have found that knowledge of child abuse and its prevention is power for families and for AGO.

### **Referral and Engagement**

- Child abuse report calls go to the Tribal police. They investigate and turn the information over to the Federal court, which prosecutes the clear-cut cases. They receive six to seven reports a day. Most are custody issues while, only one or two need to be investigated. Investigations are performed by law enforcement and social services. This year there has been an average of two interviews per month. The forensic interviewer talks with children and gets more information when abuse is alleged. She is someone most families have known all their lives, so she is accepted in their homes. She has also facilitated for Project PONY sessions.
- Judicial options include the Tribal court, the Federal felony court, the Federal magistrate court, and the State court. Although the courts sometimes refer

- families to Project PONY, whether the allegations are founded or not, staff would like more families referred to Project PONY.
- A Tribal caseworker works with the family when a child is taken into custody. This caseworker coordinates with Project PONY. Referrals also come from the families themselves, other helping agencies, schools, and medical facilities. Sometimes children are in foster care when they disclose some other form of abuse. Anytime a referral comes in for abuse or neglect, it is immediately referred to Project PONY case management for assessment. When a referral comes in, Project PONY staff follow up with the family. The nonoffending caregiver is invited to participate in Project PONY. If, after three or four invitations they have not started attending, the case manager makes another contact. Many Project PONY clients also are receiving clinical services. They often realize during Project PONY sessions that they want/need clinical services.
  - In cases of child abuse and neglect, the offending parent is referred to Behavioral Health for assessment and a range of services. Sometimes the whole family is referred for family services. Children are referred to another project to see court videos. They work closely with prosecuting attorneys and victim advocates. They role play and visit the court ahead of time. This helps keep parents engaged in Project PONY.
  - When sexual abuse is suspected, parents can take their child to the health clinic for assessment. Most sexual abuse examinations are performed in the emergency room or referrals are made to another medical facility after assessment. They have tried to set up a confidential area for this. Three Tribal communities have satellite clinics. Often too much time elapses between disclosure and examination resulting in too little or no evidence.

### **Choctaw Tribe**

- The Choctaw Tribe is both a government and a small community with political influences. There is a sense of community cohesiveness- families and generations are known to one another. Traditionally, Choctaw people think of any gathering as a time to socialize and eat. They are currently two years into a new administration with members becoming acquainted with the new administration after the end of the previous Chief's six terms as elected Tribal leader.
- There is a history of penal response to child abuse allegations. In the past, there was a negative perception in the Tribal community that the courts and social services just took children away from their families. Twelve years ago there were 210 Tribal children in foster care. Last year the number was 160, and it is now 47. The community is beginning to understand when the courts and social services intervene, there is a reason, and the system was placed to help families in need. People understand the system helps and does not disband the family, and gives them another avenue of thinking.

## **OUTCOMES**

### **Evaluation**

- After the final Project PONY session, project staff give a 4-page family support outcome survey to parents who have completed at least 8 of 12 sessions. They explain to parents the purpose of the survey. The survey asks what worked well

and how the program could be improved. Staff help parents if they want assistance. After the surveys are completed, the results are entered into their database.

- The Tribal Attorney General's Office reported parents say this program is making a difference.
- They have seen several parents transition from believing the system does not work to showing appreciation for services and support. They often find caregivers are victims themselves. They appreciate receiving help with education, understanding the process, and understanding what their child is experiencing. Staff find providing preparation for the court room experience makes it less intimidating for the child.
- In one family, one of the children disclosed maltreatment. It was found all her older sisters had been abused. The mother was aware of the situation but did not stop it. Later the mother came to Project PONY with her children. As a result, when another child in this same family was later abused and disclosed there had been maltreatment three times, the mother finally went to the police.

### **Sustainability**

- The consensus is Project PONY is a necessary program, which needs to continue in some form. There is a commitment to find a way to continue providing education and prevention services for nonoffending caregivers.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- CBCAP Grantees Meeting Presentation
- CCAC Road Map to Choctaw Child Protection System
- Evaluation Survey 1
- Evaluation Survey 2
- Family Support Program Outcome Survey translated into Choctaw
- Project PONY Evaluation Plan
- Project PONY Accomplishments and Highlights
- Project PONY Curriculum
- Project PONY Instructor's Manual
- Project PONY Brochure
- Project PONY Surveys 2007



# A Project to Protect Our Native Young (PONY)

Janis Jimmie, Project Director  
Sam Valentine, Project Evaluator

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# Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

7 communities in MS

- 1 community in TN

- Demographics

- Population appr. 9500

- Females – appr. 5000

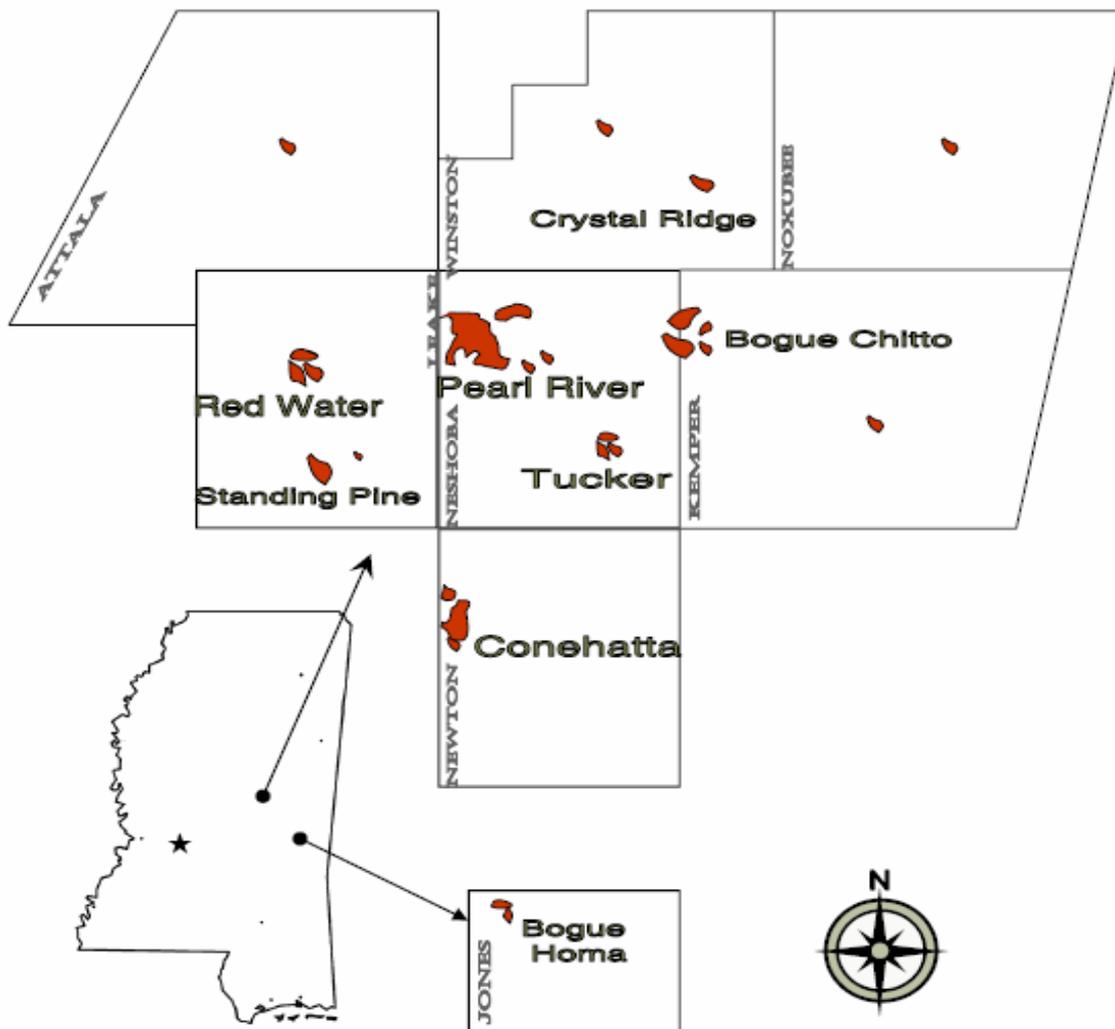
- Male – appr. 4,500

- 0 – 18 appr. 4,300





# TRIBAL LANDS



# History of Program



- Adapted from Family Advocate Model -Initiated at the National Children's Advocacy Center, Huntsville, AL
- Integrally linked with the multidisciplinary team in child abuse investigations
- Gap in services to families

**Choctaw MDT**



- Mission Statement - *Project PONY is designed to provide education and support to the non-offending caregiver in child abuse cases so they can protect and support the victimized child.*



# Program Parameters

- Staff – Program Director, PT Data Processor, IN-KIND case mgr
- Duration – 12 weeks
- Caseload – 16 per session
- Target population – non-offending caregivers



# Program considerations

## ● Strengths

- Vibrant culture
- Choctaw speaking providers
- Interested elders
- Written stories/legends
- Multi-disciplinary team support
- Extended families

## ● Challenges

- Transportation
- Child care
- Communication
- NOC dynamics
- Length of sessions
- Group format



# Overcoming Challenges

- Face to face contacts to solicit participation
- Incorporate into MDT case plans
- Planned fun activities
- Vary Delivery of educational topics
- Provide transportation
- Home visits for missed sessions



# Program Outcomes

- Ensure safety of child and family
  - Safety plan
  - Identify 2 family & 1 community support systems
  - Completion of case plan with DSS
- Educate the non-offending caregiver
  - Attend 75% of participant will complete 8 sessions
  - Retrospective pre-post test
  - Understand role in investigative process
- Empower NOC to rebuild safe and stable home
  - Resource contact name and number of contact
  - Improved ability to navigate system





*Yakokih!*



## ***What is a case plan?***

The DSS caseworker will develop a case plan, with as much family participation as possible, and identify services that would meet the needs of the child and family. These services may be provided directly by DSS, or by other tribal programs. The caseworker cannot force your family to use these services but, if the CI or DSS believes that a child needs care or protection and the family is not willing to provide it, they petition the Youth Court to order the necessary services.

## ***What services are available from social services to help families who face abuse or neglect situations?***

Many of the services try to help relieve the pressures and frustrations of parenthood. For example, they may recommend counseling, parent education or a drug or alcohol program, if appropriate. The caseworker cannot force your family to use these services but, if the CI or DSS believes that a child needs care or protection and the family is not willing to provide it, they petition the Youth Court to order the necessary services.

## ***What are my rights as a parent if a report is indicated?***

- Parents have the right to know the name and phone number of the caseworker.
- Parents have the right to see any letters, pamphlets, court orders, etc. dealing with their case.
- Parents have the right to ask the caseworker and supervisor about the status of the case at any time. It is important that you attend meetings that you are invited to.
- Parents have the right to appeal any legal decisions or action.

**Remember, if you have questions, ask. It is never too late to take control of your situation and help yourself and your family.**

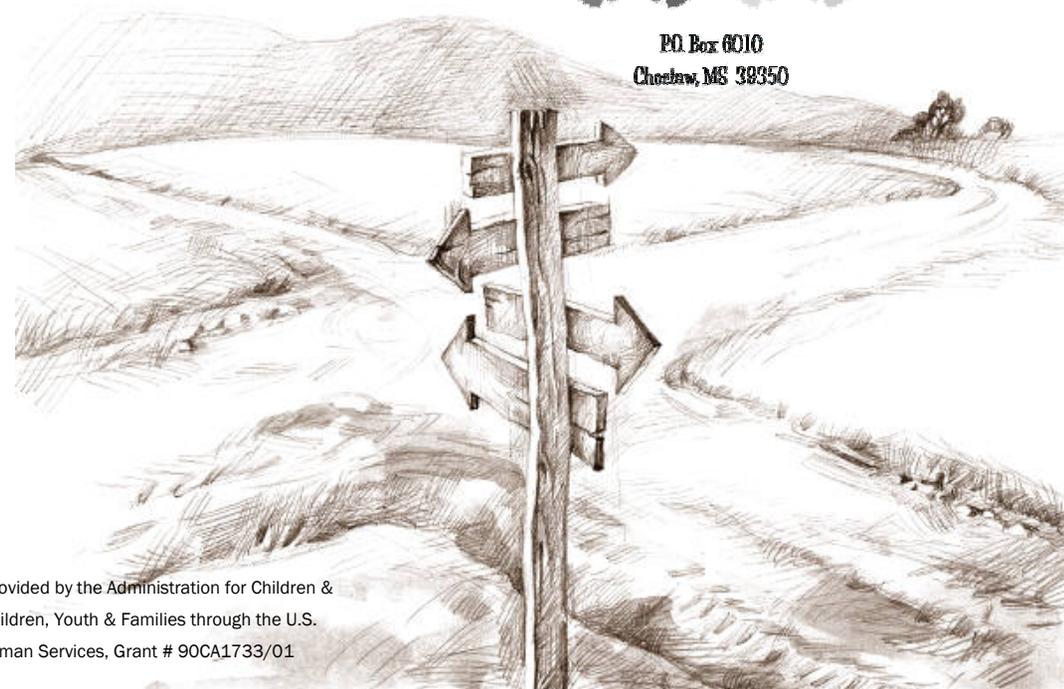
# A Road Map to the Choctaw Tribal Child Protection System

## "Putting Children First"

**Choctaw Children's  
Advocacy Center  
(CCAC)**



PO. Box 6010  
Choctaw, MS 38950



# Introduction

Being involved in a child abuse case is an additional stress on the entire family. It is common to feel helpless, alone, and attacked. Not knowing what to expect can make it harder. This brochure was written to help you understand what happens or what is likely to happen during the handling of child abuse cases

## ***How does a child abuse or neglect investigation begin?***

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Child Abuse code was adopted to protect children from dangerous situations and help parents create a safer home for their family.

The Tribal child protection process begins when somebody becomes concerned because they believe that a child is being abused or neglected. Anyone can report suspected abuse.

To make a report a person only has to have a “reasonable suspicion” or reason to suspect abuse or neglect. This can be based on what they see, hear or saw in the behaviors of children.

**A report is made out of concern, it is not an accusation!**

## ***Can I find out who called in a report?***

The Tribal Code and Federal laws does not allow DSS to release the names of the person who reported or cooperated in a child abuse investigation unless it is by court order.

## ***What happens during a child abuse or neglect investigation by social services?***

When Social Services receives a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, a caseworker is assigned to look into the complaint. The caseworker must gather information about how the family is functioning to (1) determine whether abuse or neglect is occurring and, if so, (2) what steps are required to protect the child and help the family.

## ***Can the Division of Social Services remove my children from my care during an investigation?***

Children may be removed from their home and placed in protective custody only if the caseworker believes that there is immediate danger to their life or health while at home. If the children are in immediate danger, they may be placed temporarily without a court order.

## ***What happens if the judge does not return my child to my care during the preliminary hearing?***

Youth Court involvement in a child abuse case starts when a petition is filed, usually by a DSS caseworker. There are steps to the court process in child abuse cases that you should be familiar with:

- The *preliminary hearing*, is held within three working days for a youth court judge to review the temporary placement of children. Parents may provide their own lawyer, or they may request that one be assigned for them.
- *Adjudication* is to determine if what the petition says is true. Evidence is presented which could include the parents' statements. Then the judge must decide if there is a need for the court to be involved. If there is not sufficient evidence of abuse or neglect, the case will be dismissed. If the judge determines the children are being abused or neglected more investigations or services by DSS or the court probation department may be ordered.
- If the case was not adjourned, the third stage, a *dispositional hearing*, is held to determine what actions should be taken.

Project PONY  
NOC Evaluation Survey

Site \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose Test understanding of survey questions

1. Why did you want to come to the Project PONY sessions?
  - get custody of child
  - get custody of children
  - after bad experience with system, want to help other parents
  - help understand part of previous experiences with system
  
2. What do you think is the most important thing about this program?
  - healing
  - good parenting
  - learn the importance of child in families
  - the understanding, parents need to be understood and not pushed away or labeled
  
3. What do you think will happen because you attend Project PONY sessions?
  - get custody of children
  - custody of child
  - first step in healing for parent
  - rebuild family
  
4. What needs do you have that are being met by the program?
  - healing of past experiences with their child's victimization and their (mother's) response
  - education about children
  - ventilate without having to be judgedONE PARENT DOES NOT RESPOND
  
5. What needs do you have that are not yet being met?
  - need to know about immediate effects upon children.F/U question – Do you mean ask a child to come and describe their feelings or a survivor describe the effects upon them as children. Answer- An adult victim who can speak about their feelings and thoughts when it was happening to give a better idea of what a child goes through.  
THE OTHER THREE PARENTS AGREE AND HAVE NO OTHER RESPONSE.
  
6. What do you hope will change for you or your family because you participate?
  - children will be at home (two parents)
  - rebuild families (two parents)
  
7. Are there any changes that have already occurred because of participation in the program?
  - more self awareness (less angry outburst at children, less self blame)
  - kids at home
  - attitude change (more insight and more attention given to children)NO RESPONSE FROM ONE PARENT

8. What will you miss the most about the program when it ends?
  - home cooked meals
  - support – really for parents like us-“I can walk out with a smile on my face”
  - TWO PARENTS DO NOT RESPOND
  - ALL PARENTS SAY THEY ARE NOT READY TO STOP COMING
  
9. What changes would you like to see in the program that would make it better for other parents?
  - Speaker – Survivor
  - Speakers to be unrushed
  - NO RESPONSE FROM TWO PARENTS
  
10. What would you like more of or less of from this program?
  - Grooming dynamics – more explanation
  - NO RESPONSE FROM OTHER PARENTS

Project PONY  
NOC Evaluation Survey

Site \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose Program and participant evaluation

1. How was the Project PONY program helpful to you in understanding about child abuse?
2. How was the Project PONY program helpful to you in understanding the Choctaw community's programs responding to child abuse?
3. How was the Project PONY program helpful to you in understanding about you and your child(ren's) situation?
4. How has the Project PONY program been helpful to you in understanding about keeping children safe?
5. What good thing will happen for your family because you attend Project PONY sessions?
6. What not so good thing will happen for your family because you attended Project PONY sessions?
7. What changes have you or will you make as a parent to prevent the abuse of children in your home as a result of attending program sessions?
8. What areas do you still need help with as a parent to prevent the abuse of children in your home?
9. What do you think the program can do to help parents prevent abuse of children in their homes?
10. What is one reason that kept you coming back to the program sessions?

**Family Support Program Outcome Survey Cover Sheet**

Program Code \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR STAFF USE ONLY**

1. Date survey completed: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ 2. Date participant began program \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

3. Participant ID # \_\_\_\_\_

4. Participant referred by or has had involvement with child protection system.

NO       YES       NOT SURE

5. How was the survey completed? Check One:

- A Questionnaire completed by face to face interview (interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_)
- B Questionnaire completed by phone interview (interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_)
- C Questionnaire completed by participant with program staff available to explain items as needed
- D Questionnaire completed by participant without program staff present for assistance
- E Questionnaire was mailed to participant, completed, and returned without program staff assistance

5a. If survey was not administered in English, which language was used?  N/A \_\_\_\_\_

6. Type of program: Check all that apply

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Parent Education                | <input type="checkbox"/> B Parent Support Group                               | <input type="checkbox"/> C Adult Ed/GED Preparation  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D Planned and/or Crisis Respite   | <input type="checkbox"/> E Home Visiting                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> F Fatherhood Program        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> G School-based Skills/Readiness   | <input type="checkbox"/> H Couples Group                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> I Teen Parent Support Group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> J Parent/Child Interaction        | <input type="checkbox"/> K Literacy Program                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> L Parenting Teens           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> M Homeless/Transitional Housing   | <input type="checkbox"/> N Family Resource Center                             | <input type="checkbox"/> O Pre-Natal Class           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> P Advocacy (self, community)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Q Resource and Referral                              | <input type="checkbox"/> R Employment                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> S Skill Building/Ed. for Children | <input type="checkbox"/> T <u>Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Services</u> |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> U Other _____                     |   |  |



10. Nan ayyikana ya katomi alhi ont ish talitok? \_\_\_\_ (1 yr. of college, answer "13", 2 yrs, answer 14, etc.)

**Family Support Program Outcome Survey, Page 2**

Acaffa hikit Q toklo ona Ka, 1(achaffa) yat achi kat “Ak iba achaffo ayyalhi hokih”, hikmat 7 (Q toklo) at achimat, “Iba achaffali Ayyalhi hokih”. I chowa aka tokomaya yapa, ish iba achaffa kaniayylhi hokma, holissochit takachi. I chowa ayokali ka hitokla hosh nan ish ahni tokma takachi, amona kano, Isht á toksali (Program) yapa nan ish ahni tokma holissochi hicha himaka nan ish ahnika holissochit takachi.

	Ak iba achaffa ayyalhi							Iba achaffali ayyalhi	
	Himmak Chash								Siya
1) Alhpilla ya sana hok <u>m</u> a, okla siyapilla alhiha ma, I kana kaniyali hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	halayya	
	Himak <u>a</u>								kiyo <input type="checkbox"/>
	Himmak Chash								Siya
2) Nan alhpilla ya sana hok <u>m</u> a, kana yat siya pilla hina k <u>a</u> , ikhanali hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	halayya	
	Himak <u>a</u>								kiyo <input type="checkbox"/>
	Himmak Chash								Siya
3) Amalla alhiha ya isht <u>y</u> a kat, i sa kamota kiyo hokih, isht <u>y</u> a kat ikhanali hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	halayya	
	Himak <u>a</u>								kiyo <input type="checkbox"/>

3a) Na toksali (Program) yapa ish foka kat chimall alhiha ya, iki hicha ishki ish toba kat chi ponnat mahaya ho?

3b) Chim alla ishishtya kat, ayyabit ik chi ponno hicha makashini omi hosh ishishtya kat kanichi hosh i chiya pilla hina ka hapim anoli, makomat, all ishtya kat chi ponna taha hina.

	Ak iba achaffa ayyalhi							Iba achaffali ayyalhi	
	Himmak Chash								Siya
4) Amalla isht ima ya ish it siya taklamma hokma, kana ya isht ittim annopla hina k <u>a</u> ikhanali hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	halayya	
	Himak <u>a</u>								kiyo <input type="checkbox"/>
	Himmak Chash								Siya
5) Kanichit iskalí hicha nana yohmi k <u>a</u> amokla alhiha ishtapila la hina kat ikhanali hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	halayya	
									kiyo <input type="checkbox"/>

Himaka 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

---

6) Amokla hicha amalla alhiha yat nana  
ho bana hokma, apilachit imma la chi  
hokih.

Himmak Chash

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Himaka 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Siya  
halayya  
kiyo

---

7) Nan ataklammi okla kilono ka chi ka,  
anakosh nana ittiyakaya michi ya  
attahlili hokih.

Himmak Chash

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Himaka 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Siya  
halayya  
kiyo

---

**Family Support Program Outcome Survey, Page 3**

Achaffa hikit Q toklo onaka, 1(achuffa) yat achi Kat, “Ak iba achaffo ayyalhi hokih” hikmat 7(Q toklo) at achimat, “Iba achaffali ayyalhi hokih”, kanoma kano i chot takachi. Himmona achaffa ila ho i chot takachi.

	Ak iba achaffo ayyalhi					Iba achaffali ayyalhi		
8) Nanatoksali yapat, siya pilla na alla ishtaya kat <u>a</u> ponnat taha.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9) Nan a toksali yapat siya pilla na, ishtataklammi <u>ya</u> aka <u>a</u> pillat taha hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10) Nan anakfilili <u>ka</u> hicha nan ahnili yohmi <u>ka</u> , na toksali (Program) yapat holitobli hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11) Na toksali alhiha yapat sa holi tobli fihna hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12) Nana micha sana ya tikba bolili kash <u>a</u> , na toksali yapat ano hicha amokla ya hapiya pilla na, nana michi hapina atokma, <u>i</u> micha <u>chi</u> hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13) Ishki hicha <u>Iki</u> alhiha yat nan <u>a</u> toksali <u>yapa</u> okla nan okla ittimayikhanna hokih.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Does not Apply <input type="checkbox"/>

14) A toksali yapa, nata ho ish ayyachokmani kat moma i shahli?

15) Nan a toksali yapat i shat achokmalachi kat alhpilla nana kiya ish im anola hina ho?

**Additional Questions.**

**Family Support Program Outcome Survey, Additional Program Items**

On a scale from 1-7, with 1 as ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 as ‘strongly agree’, please rate how much you agree with the following statements. Please rate each statement twice—how you felt before this program and how you feel today.

	Ak iba achaffo ayyalhi				Iba achaffali ayyalhi			
Your survey item here	Before	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Today	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Your survey item here	Before	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Today	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Your survey item here	Before	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Today	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Your survey item here	Before	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Today	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Achaffa hikit Q toklo onaka, 1(achuffa) yat achi kat, “Ak iba achaffo ayyalhi hokih” hikmat 7(Q toklo) at achimat, “Iba achaffali ayyalhi hokih”, kanoma kano i chot takachi. Himmona achaffa ila ho ichot takachi.

	Ak iba achaffa ayyalhi				Iba achaffali ayyalhi			
PONY isht a <u>toksali</u> yapat, alla alhiha hotobali ishtima <u>ya</u> amabachi tok hicha alla alhiha yat hotoba <u>tokma</u> hicha ishki/ <u>iki</u> alhiha isht a hotoba yosh <u>atakma</u> nana yohmi kat akanimi hokat isht imma hapim abachi tok.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Am alla alhiha yat <u>a</u> choka annoka ik a hotobo ka <u>chi</u> <u>ka</u> , PONY isht <u>atoksali</u> yapat amabachi na, ikhanali tok.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Na yokahi alhiha hicha okla alhiha apilachi yat alla <u>ya</u> ik ahotobo kachi <u>ka</u> na alhpissa kalo <u>ya</u> onotola hokih, PONY isht <u>atoksali</u> yapat.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
PONY isht a <u>toksali</u> isht imma yapat Chahta hicha Nahollo im annopa <u>ya</u> isht a tosholi atok, hina, im a kostinichili tok.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

## Project PONY Evaluation Plan

The effectiveness of Project PONY in nurturing protection and support of the abused child in the non-offending parents who participate will be determined through a questionnaire analysis. Historically, the average participants in voluntary educational programs in the Choctaw community have consisted of individuals who would be considered in the higher income, higher educational levels of the society. This factor was considered in the initial plan to conduct a retrospective post-tests exam to be administered to the participants; however the socio-economic and educational demographics of actual participants are at the extremes. A survey questionnaire was selected after review of various instruments on the CB-CAP website. The Family Support Programs Outcome Survey has been approved by the Department's internal evaluator to evaluate the client's participation in the program. The information gleaned from this survey will give insight to the effectiveness of the interventions in providing support and education to the participants so they may better equipped to prevent subsequent victimization of the abused child. Additionally, suggestions for program improvement and for individual motivation to participate are also questioned. Although this questionnaire has not been piloted to assess the instrument's clarity and ease of translation, an unbiased surveyor who is fluent in Choctaw and English will be sought to administer the survey. A copy of the questionnaire will be submitted to the Choctaw language program with a request for possible translations that is generally accepted by the various dialects of the Choctaw language in use in the tribal communities.

Because of the small numbers of parents participating it is difficult to administer a comprehensive post test as planned which can be generalized and used as a determinate of program interventions. The participant's subjective explanation of the program's impact upon themselves or their family will be a reliable indicator of the program's effectiveness in meeting

the goal to foster protectiveness which will prevent first time abuse of siblings, and re-victimization of an abused child.

A case tracking system will be initiated between partner agencies and the multidisciplinary team through case reviews with other programs. The CCAC conducts a screening assessment of participants at program entry to identify other services that may benefit the family. These referral sources include Behavioral Health, Victim's Advocacy, Family and Children's Services, Legal Aid, and Medical services. Two areas to measure in program delivery that are sought through case reviews are; 1) effective access to services and follow up on barriers to access if any and 2) track any new events of victimization of children in household of program participants that are reported and/or followed up. These outcomes and the value to program efficacy is explained to the parents upon entry into the program and appropriate consents secured. Then contact is made with the partner programs that receive information on family violence and victimizations during the periods of active program participation, and at 3, 6, and 12 months status post participation. The numbers of referrals received from Law enforcement, mental health, and medical and child protection are then recorded through a pen and paper system and evaluated for occurrences.

Other data that are to be tracked for program delivery include participant attendance (to evaluate correlation between exposure to program interventions and the occurrences of re-victimization), service need identified through family screening, the numbers of referrals for other services and the number of parents who access services after referrals are made.

Two major changes in service delivery that have been made to the program since onset has been for participant solicitation and child care needs. The population of non-offending caregivers has not been addressed previously for specific services. It is reported by the few who

have participated to present in Project PONY that they have been treated as offenders also. This compounds the stigma of child abuse that is prevailing in the Choctaw society today. The combined effects enhances this populations resistance to services during the critical period of investigation when they too, could benefit from support and education about their child's abuse event. Program solicitation has warranted a face to face interaction with parents and the Director to make sure a solid foundation of understanding the goals of the programs exists. It is taking upon average, three to four home visits before actual contact is made or a phone call is received concerning participation. These home visits are tracked in addition to the visits that are made to follow up missed sessions to ensure information is delivered.

## Project PONY Accomplishments and Highlights

**Non-Offending caregiver sessions to educate and support the non abusing parent of children who allege abuse.** Three 12 week sessions are provided in a Fiscal year. To support this program several brochures and handouts have been developed at the CAC which are geared specifically to the Choctaw community. A risk assessment has been identified and is used to base delivery of tailored sessions. Parents are provided 1:1 session if the sessions do not adequately address each family's needs for education on child abuse issues.

A curriculum for the sessions along with a facilitator's manual was developed and evaluated for consistency with teaching goals and expected outcomes. The evaluator also reviewed the cultural sensitivity in the subject matter and materials used in the sessions. The manuals were professionally printed and are being provided to each participant who attends sessions. The ease of program delivery has been improved since the manual includes all the materials needed for each session's topics, however each session can be tailored to the audience. There is no need for strict adherence to the outline.

The program is being evaluated through the Family Support Programs Outcome Survey developed by FRIENDS and tailored. Additional questions were added and recently revised to solicit responses to measure satisfaction of clients with programs, staff and services at the CAC. The FSPOS is conducted at the end of each session and delivered to those who successfully completed 8 of the 12 sessions offered. The surveyor obtains the same identifying information in the FSPOS, but only the questions applicable to satisfaction are asked in those clients who did not complete the sessions.

Linkages have been solidified with other partners through the multidisciplinary team (MDT). The MDT is the source of reviewing child abuse reports and other reports of victimizations that occur in participant homes. The MDT is also become a client of the program, and training is being provided each month to maintain the group collaboration at a functional level.

Several awareness and prevention activities have been conducted through out the term of the program. These include partnerships with other programs in the community such as the Foster Families Day with approx 250 in attendance, an awareness golf tournament for 36 adults, Boys n Girls Clubs activities, and promotion of Child Abuse awareness in April at community events, the schools, and churches.

A multidisciplinary team training was sponsored in Year One, with partnerships for training in years two and three. Staff contributions and promotional items were provided in provider training where child abuse topics were presented by program staff. Local, state and national presentations have been conducted by staff with topics including, Starting a CAC in a Tribal Community, The CAC and Advocating for Children, and several Child Abuse presentations to local nurses, teachers, youth and churches.

An interview at the local television station was aired which highlighted Child Abuse prevention in April 2007 and TV “ blurbs” were aired in the same month during other telecasts. The Stewards of Children Program developed by Darkness to Light Foundation was brought to the Choctaw community as an intensive training on child abuse recognition, reporting and prevention effort. This 2 ½ training curriculum has been given to 431 adults in the Choctaw community. This number represents approx 9% of the total adult population that are registered members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

Throughout the award period the CAC Staff have responded to set up informational booths with promotional items and informational handouts that focus on child abuse issues, parenting, and child safety. These activities occur in concert with other program partners which address other community problems such as domestic violence, substance abuse, teen violence, and diabetes awareness activities.

The greatest impact upon the community has been the efforts to raise the level of awareness of the need to improve the response to abused children and their families. This has been achieved through provider education, and efforts to assist in the revision or improvement of guidelines that address abuse for each agency. The CAC has been able to reach the level of tribal legislatures with messages that saw the fruition of multidisciplinary guidelines that were sanctioned by the tribal government in April 2006. This action has served as a catalyst which has drawn more attention and spawned new efforts to develop children’s codes for the Choctaw Tribe in the future.

Although the numbers of families reached through the Non-offending caregiver sessions has not been significant, the impact upon the community has been more dynamic. Tribal laws exist to regulate the protection of Choctaw children to reinforce parental expectations or to encourage change. These laws are more effective when they are consistent with the most generally accepted societal norms. In a recent Community Readiness Assessment, the Choctaw community ranked at the level of No Awareness to Denial of child abuse issues as a community problem. The impact of program activities through utilization of funding, is that providers and leaders have greater awareness and acceptance of child abuse as a community problem. This increased awareness provides the needed platform to the need to bridge the gap between child abuse prevention, and generating sound public policies to help strengthen families and protect Choctaw children.

Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center

Project  
PONY



Protecting Our Native Young

**Educational**  
**Curriculum**

A Program of the Department of Family & Community Services  
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians  
Choctaw, MS 39350

April 2006

## **Project PONY Format**

Week 1:	“One Brick at a Time”	(Intro to program/group)
Week 2:	“When Mothers Cry”	(Domestic Violence and Child Abuse)
Week 3:	“The Path Begins Here”	(Speaker – Survivor)
Week 4:	“Stretch marks on my Sanity”	(Self-care/NOC needs)
Week 5:	“Bring in the Mop”	(Crisis/Stress mgmt-grp support)
Week 6:	Open Break	Group break or alternate activity
Week 7:	“Recipe for a Healthy Child”	(Child Development and Discipline)
Week 8:	“Protecting the Gift”	(Healthy relationships)
Week 9:	“How the snakes acquired their poison”	(Sex Offender Dynamics)
Week 10:	“Protectors of the Village”	(MDT – Criminal Investigations/AGO)
Week 11:	“It Takes a Village...”	(MDT- Soc Svc Investigations)
Week 12:	“It’s a celebration!”	(Family Day/Night Activities)

## Week 1 – “One Brick at a Time”

Project PONY	Goal 1 – Prevent reoccurrences of child abuse Goal 2 – Foster parental protectiveness
Objectives	Introduction to program, define child abuse, engage participants
Outcome:	Participant will acknowledge that other parents of children who have been abused can support one another in positive ways Participant will acknowledge that they can be proactive in creating a safe home environment for their children.
Indicators:	___% of participants Commit to attending 8 of the 12 sessions by a show of hands Participants will manage family life to promote self sufficiency, safety and stability.
Intervention:	“Choices Questionnaire” – Adapted from the “LAMS” – Learning About Myself self revealing exercise

The main premise of this lesson is that life is made up of choices, both good and bad. Some parents may feel they have made bad choices, or no choices and that life has “just happened” and is beyond their control. The activities in this session will mark a beginning of opening minds to see that many life happenings that were thought of as “happenings” are the results of choices made. The negative events in life can then be changed by making more informed decisions and thinking about the possible outcomes of our choices. Bad choices can be recognized, acknowledged, and many times changed. Group members can learn to live their lives by choice, not chance.

### Making Choices

You may feel that a lot of things have just “happened” to you in your life. Really, you have made them happen. Your past choices have put you where you are today. When you learn how to make the right choices, you can choose what you want your life to be like and change what it is like now. You can choose to live your life by *choice*, not by *chance*.

### Brain and Storage

All life experience are stored in the brain and nothing is ever erased unless there is an injury to the brain. Everything that has been seen, heard, said or done is stored in the many compartments of the brain like a file drawer. You may forget some things are in the drawer, but they are still there. We learned to sit, crawl and walk as children, but we don’t have to be reminded how to do these activities today. When decisions are to be made, sometimes without thinking, we look into the drawers in our brain to help us make choices. What we have stored in our brains have a big influence on the decisions we make all the time. We can take more charge of our lives by putting more thought into the choices in our lives.

“One Brick at a Time” – Project PONY Brochure  
Nane Chaha –Choctaw legend of beginnings – handout

The legend is an example of new beginnings and the participation in the program is a new beginning for the parents. The program will introduce activities for parents so they can take insight of their attitudes and beliefs, parenting styles and nurture interaction with the system in place to protect children. The brochure outlines the topics to be discussed in future sessions and also introduces the Project PONY staff.

Activity: “Top Secret”

This activity is conducted by asking participants to write anonymously on a piece of paper the one thing they would be most reluctant to share with the group. Then the papers are given to another group member to read and discuss. This reinforces group cohesiveness as the members perceive the similarities that usually result from this activity.

## Session 2 – “When Mothers Cry”

Project PONY Goal 1 – Prevent reoccurrences of child abuse.

Goal 3 – Identify risk factors for victimization

Objective: To promote the reduction of risk factors by increasing the knowledge of the link between Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Outcome: Participants will:  
Understand the effects of Domestic Violence upon the family  
Create violence free homes.

Indicators: \_\_\_% of the participant do not re-enter the system for new or repeat events of violence in the home at 3, 6, and 12 months after participation.

Intervention: Speaker – Domestic Violence program specialist or survivor(20 minutes)  
Children are In Pain Handout

Activity: Bracelets for children – (15 minutes)

The speakers come to share their knowledge and/or their experience of Domestic Violence and the effects it has upon the well being of the family. The professional will describe what domestic violence is and explain the programs that are available to assist the parent who chooses to stop the violence. The professional will also conduct a self assessment to help the participant perceive their relationships and the potential negative impact it has upon the children. The survivor is able to share their experience of a domestic violent relationship, and the strength that helped them remove those risk factors for the safety of their children. The handout describes the effect of Domestic Violence upon the children, and what s describe what an MDT is and who is part of the MDT. The non-offending parents learn who to address specific questions to and where to get information during the process of investigations and prosecution of their case.

The bracelet activity is to reinforce to parents that choices are made in selection the different colors and aligning them to make a pattern that is pleasing to the eye. Similarly, creating a safe home for children requires conscious decision making and choosing those options that promote wellness for the family.

### Week 3 – “The Path Begins Here”

Project PONY Goal 1 – Prevent reoccurrences of child abuse.

Goal 2 – To foster parental protectiveness

Outcome: Participant will  
Understand the effects of child abuse on children  
Understand how to meet the child’s need for health and safety.

Indicators: \_\_\_\_\_ % of participants will  
attend intake and therapy sessions for child and family as appropriate.  
Practice giving and receiving emotional reaffirmation in the Car Wash activity  
that children and parents need during the crisis and aftermath of child abuse

Intervention: Speaker or video(Child Sexual Abuse Survivor) – 30 min  
Video – Hidden Shame 17 min  
“If Angels Could Speak” Handout

Activity: Car Wash Exercise – 5 min  
(Reference – LAMS self esteem building activity, page 49)

The speakers in the video share experiences about the abuse events in their life and how childhood abuse has impacted their life. The speakers also communicate what they viewed as lessening the impact of the trauma they suffered and the impact of the experienced in their life.

The handout reflects real statements made by individuals who have suffered sexual abuse. Some of the statements reinforce what research continues to show that children who are listened to and understood do much better than those who are not. The response to the disclosure of sexual abuse is critical to the child's ability to resolve and heal the trauma of sexual abuse.

When a child tells someone about sexual abuse, a supportive, caring response is the first step in getting help for the child and reestablishing their trust in adults. Adults, because of their maturity and knowledge, are always the ones to blame when they abuse children. The abused children should never be blamed.

The exercise is a group and individual building activity. This helps the participants become aware that any time a traumatic memory is re-lived, there is a need to put everything back together through support systems. This activity encourages the participants to give and receive the emotional reaffirmation that is needed during the crisis and aftermath of child abuse.

#### Week 4 – “Stretch Marks on My Sanity”

Project PONY Goal 2 – To foster parental protectiveness

Goal 1 –Identify risk factors for victimization.

Outcome: To develop self awareness of psycho-social limitations.  
Know when their emotions interfere with their ability to provide good parenting

Indicators: \_\_\_% of the participants will  
Make self reports engaging in an activity that “feed your soul” (hobbies or other activity for self affirmation) during the program.  
Make use of the opportunity to participate in the support program for families impacted by child abuse.

Intervention: Healthy Life Brochure ([www.herhealthylife.org](http://www.herhealthylife.org))  
Self awareness and setting boundaries activity

Activity: Examples of Hobbies-craft activity, crossword puzzles, etc

Child abuse seems to occur in the midst of families suffering stress or crisis in various forms. The stress upon the family becomes compounded with a disclosure of child abuse and the response from systems such as the police, child welfare and the courts. For families to build healthy relationships and adapt to the stressors of the child abuse response, it is necessary to address the needs of the parent who remains to re-build the family. Building a healthy mind and body for the individual is vital to managing stress and developing family resiliency.

The information presented are suggestions on managing routine activities and preparing simple, healthy, meals that children may enjoy helping to prepare. This allows the parent and child to build team work while managing routine chores.

The activity of making hair bows or bows for packages can also allow a parent to learn a simple craft. The exercise will allow parents to explore their creativity and give them an opportunity to realize the positive results of a hobby which is a healthy escape from worries. Other hobbies may be used during the session which may include, puzzles, sewing, etc.

## Week 5 – “Bring in the Mop”

Project PONY Goal 1 – Prevent reoccurrences of child abuse.

Goal 2 – Foster parental protectiveness

Outcome: Participants will  
Practice prosocial methods of stress and anger management.  
Access help when their emotions (depression, anxiety, anger, fear, etc.) interfere with their ability to provide good parenting.

Indicators: \_\_\_% of the participants will  
Identify times when the anxiety, exhaustion, anger, depression or other stressors affecting their mental health has affected their parenting decisions.  
Utilize community resources or self help groups

Intervention: Speaker (Behavioral Health – Stress)  
Stress self-evaluation  
Choctaw Legend “Help from Above”-handout

Activity: Stress Relief Exercise

Everyone has stress, regardless of age, sex or race. In every day terms, stress is better known as the tension or pressure we feel as our bodies respond to everyday demands and changes. All stress is not bad nor does all stress have a negative effect on us. Some stress we experience is good and has a positive and motivating effect on us. Too much stress causes us to feel tense and pressured; this creates conflict in our experiences. Stress also affects the way parents relate to their children. Children of all ages require an enormous amount of their parents' energy and patience - sometimes more than you feel you can give. It's reassuring to know that all parents find it difficult at times. Children from all kinds of social, religious and cultural backgrounds can grow up to be happy, well adjusted adults - so long as their basic needs for love, physical care, security and respect are met. Parents all have their 'off days', but if they feel that their lives are bad most of the time, it can be difficult to meet their children's needs. Some adults may take out their anger and frustration on their children, or blame them for the problems in their own lives. Stress can sometimes push parents past their limit and lead parents to discipline or punish their children in ways which can do them harm.

Whatever happens in life, it is always easier to cope if you have a supportive partner, family and friends. If you are bringing up children alone, the problems you face may not be so different from those faced by two-parent families but they will quite often feel very different and are frequently more difficult to solve. There's nearly always something you can do to reduce there are often people who are willing to help. Remember that being a parent is one of the most valuable and important jobs you can do. The occasional angry word to your child probably won't do much harm, as long as the relationship is basically good. But if you get angry and find yourself shouting at your child a lot, they will suffer - and you'll probably not feel so good either.

Week 6 – Open (goals accomplished by Week 4)

Goal: To promote recognition of common bonds among group members.

Outcome: Participant will gain an understanding of individual and group needs.  
Participants will gain an understanding of collaboration for shared decision-making.

Indicators: Participants will identify and voice individual needs.  
Participants will identify a common topic of interest or need they all share.

Intervention: Open to group

Activity: Open to group

This session is open to allow a group break or an enjoyable activity for participants. This also allows for holidays or make up days in case a class is canceled.

Suggestions: elder to speak about traditions, cultural activity, movie related to parenting, movie with children, etc.

## Week 7 – “Recipe for a Healthy Child”

Project PONY Goal 1 – Prevent re-occurrences of child abuse.

Goal 2 – To foster parental protectiveness

Outcome: Participant will  
Understand the need for an effective and nurturing manner in management of child behaviors that foster optimal child development  
apply knowledge of child development in mediating their child’s challenging behaviors

Indicators: \_\_\_% of the participants will  
Address one problem behaviors of toddler, school age child or adolescent where they can use appropriate discipline techniques.  
Identify one new approach to address their child’s behavior pattern

Intervention: “Discipling Kids” –Video  
“Effective Discipline and Child Development of the Toddler” Brochure

Activity: Puzzles

Discipline can be defined as *a process to help children learn appropriate behaviors and make good choices*. Effective discipline aids a child in exercising self-control, responsibility, and respect. Through proper discipline, children learn how to function in a family and society that is full of boundaries, rules, and laws by which we all must abide. All parents seek disciplinary techniques that work. However, not all techniques work for all ages or for all children.

Children learn primarily through example and learn more from parents than all of their peers. The messages that parents send concerning their own personal goal directed activities are what children will adapt as theirs. Parenting and teaching takes not only sacrifice and energy, but also consistency. Good parents and teachers don't just happen by accident. People plan to be good parents and teachers and good parents and teachers plan. Good planning requires consistency.

Jigsaw puzzles can offer an escape from the routine or troubled times, as well as provide parents an opportunity to succeed with their children in a modest way. The team of parents and children completing a jigsaw can give a sense of accomplishment that is shared among the family of puzzlers. This simple and inexpensive task of completing a jigsaw puzzle also provides the family time together in a relaxed natural environment for conversation and relationship building. Puzzles and discipline have a similar goal—a sense of team develops as participants work toward accomplishment of a meaningful product.

## Week 8 –“Protecting the Gift”

**Goal:** To guide and assist the non-offending caregivers’ ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children to live and grow.

**Outcome:** Gain an understanding of characteristics of healthy vs unhealthy relationships.  
Gain an understanding of elements vital to building healthy relationships.

**Indicators:** \_\_\_% of the participants will  
complete a self-evaluation quiz of their relationship with their partner.  
identify two elements in their relationships with their children to improve.

**Intervention:** Healthy Relationships brochure  
Speaker – Victim of Domestic Violence, or History of Child Witness to Violence

**Activity:** Describe a Shape Exercise (Adapted from the LAMS curricula)

Communication is at the heart of every successful relationship. When there is no communication it is hard to tell someone exactly what you mean. This is important in an argument with a partner or when telling children what is expected of them. For example, when you ask a child(ren) to “clean up your room”. They may have a different understanding of what that means than their parents. The exercise to describe a shape is an example of how what we say is not always what another person hears.

Draw several geometric figures on blank 3 X 5 (or larger) cards, one on each card. Distribute blank cards of the same size and a pencil to each participant. The facilitator picks up one figure card and describes the shape aloud, very precisely. (Example-this shape is one and one half inches from the right side of the card, straight up three inches, one inch to the left, etc). Group members listen and try to reproduce the shape on one of their blank cards. The Leader cannot use gestures, only words, and cannot answer questions. On completion of the diagram, participants are asked to hold up their cards so the leader can see the results. Comments can be made that some are close, but no identification should be made of a correct copy. Then participants are asked to turn the same card over and redraw the diagram as the leader describes the shape again—this time with gestures and responses to questions from the group. Ask them to hold up their drawing, then the facilitator shows them the diagram they have been trying to copy.

When the exercise is completed, explain that they have just illustrated how hard it is to tell someone exactly what you mean. The speaker may think that what they are saying is perfectly clear; yet the listener is hearing something very different. Gestures and answers to questions make it clearer, but it is still hard to see what someone else is seeing or trying to explain.

## Week 9 – “How the Snakes Acquired their Poison”

Project PONY Goal 2 – Prevent revictimization  
Goal 2 – Foster parental protectiveness  
Goal 3 – Identify risk factors

Outcome: Understand the dynamics of the sexual offender.  
advocate for their abused child(ren).

Indicators: \_\_\_% of the participants will  
be able to identify three personal safety rules to teach their children.  
Not have any events of child maltreatment in their homes for up to 1 year after  
interventions

Intervention: Speaker – Behavioral Health  
Video – “Truth, Lies and Sex Offenders”  
Choctaw Legend, “How the Snake Acquired their Poison”

Perpetrators know they have to lower their victim’s guard to successfully engage their victim. There are many techniques perpetrators use to gain cooperation from their victims. Perpetrators also know that the acts they commit with children must be kept in secrecy to continue their victimization. In many instances, the non-offending caregiver may not be aware of abuse until much later when it is disclosed by the child. This session focuses on bringing to the surface the methods perpetrators use to manipulate children into cooperation and the need to teach parents and children about recognition and responding appropriately to “lures”.

Activity: Checklist for Protecting Children

This activity focuses on the parents as the “teachers” of personal safety to their children. The check list is designed to identify protective factors that can be taught by a parent. The parents are also asked to self-examine their ability to prevent abuse, and their willingness to strengthen those areas of doubts. The checklist is to help bring awareness of protective factors and is not an evaluation of learning.

## Week 10– “Protectors of the Village”

Project PONY Goal 1 – Prevent re-occurrences of child abuse.

Outcome: Participant will  
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities that can help families reduce the likeliness of child maltreatment.  
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities to reduce risk factors in their local community.

Indicators: \_\_\_% of the participants will  
Engage as a partner with the criminal justice system in the community to hold offenders accountable.

Intervention: Speaker (Criminal investigator or prosecutor)

The CI or prosecutor will give an overview of the investigation process and prosecution phase of the criminal justice system. The speaker will provide information on federal and tribal laws that govern child abuse and the overall goal of protection and safety for the community.

Activity: Pipe cleaner Art

Most people worry about what will happen in the future. Not knowing if something good or bad will happen to you can produce a lot of fear and anxiety. This is especially true when faced with the unknowns that can happen through the court and judicial system in cases involving children who are alleged to be abused. No one can predict the future with 100 Percent certainty. A lot of times, our worrying can make problems even worse. It is not easy to deal with the fear of the unknown; however the way we react to the fear can be worse than the situation. You have a choice, a choice you can make again and again or that you can change based on what is best for you.

The items in this activity are available to help with bringing to conscious the fears surrounding your encounter with the court system. Or these items can be used to plan a different action you will take when overcome with the fears that prevent you from handling the situation facing your family. You are free to choose whether you want to create an item that represents your fears, or something that you can hold in your hand that represents the strength you will rely on when faced with the fear of the unknown.

Example: the creation of the hot air balloon represents the fear of height, the butterfly can represent freedom from fear, etc

## Week 11 –“It Takes a Village to Raise a Child”

Project PONY Goal 1 – Prevent reoccurrences of child abuse.

Outcome: Participant will  
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities that can help families reduce the likeliness of child maltreatment.  
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities to reduce risk factors in their local community.

Indicators: \_\_\_% of the participants will  
Engage with their case workers to develop treatment plans that promote the safety of children in their homes.

Intervention: Speaker – Division of Social Services  
Handout – Parent Guide to the Division of Social Services  
Choctaw story of “Iyyi-Kowa”

This African saying teaches unending truth, that no man, woman or child can stand alone. The Choctaw tribe once had a similar outlook on families and the community. The “Iyyi-Kowa” is the Choctaw tradition of families coming together to help a member who had become sick or injured and found themselves and their family in need. The community took care of their members, whether it was a financial problem or family disputes.

We all want to live in a place were people care about others—where people pitch in to help when things get rough—where its safe to leave the door unlocked and where kids can safely play by themselves outside. Today, communities are not always what they should be. Today the Choctaw communities face challenges such as poverty, drug abuse, violence in the home and sadly, child abuse. Today, we have laws to keep the social order in our community and helpers like the police and social services.

It does take a village to work with a family, raise a child and weather the storms of life. It takes cooperation of family, schools, leaders and community programs working together to make sure a child lives a healthy and safe life. It is this same village that is called upon to build a foundation of support when a child is abused. Keeping families safe and intact is the goal of the Division of Social Services.

Activity: Garbage Pail/Treasure Chest  
Adapted from “Creative Therapy” page 7

This activity encourages the participants to review the negative outlook they harbor which may hinder their current involvements with the criminal justice system. Each participant is asked to discard one negative belief they have concerning the police, the courts or the child abuse response system in the garbage pail. Then the same activity is repeated except a positive outcome is placed in the treasure chest. Then the facilitator gets approval to read the results to stimulate group discussion.

Week 12 – “Celebrate”

Goal: To create an opportunity for caregivers and their children to experience positive and enjoyable interactions with each other and their peers.

Outcome: Participants will plan a family day for children.

Indicators: Parents will participate in activities with children.

Intervention: meal and activities

Activity: Affirmation

I am important  
What I say is important  
What I think is important  
What I do is important,  
To myself and those around me.  
I choose to be the best, most caring, accepting and  
Understanding person I can be.

Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center

# Project PONY



Protecting Our Native Young

## Facilitator's Guide

A Program of the Department of Family & Community Services  
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians  
Choctaw, MS 39350

April 2006

## ***From the Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center:***

***This handbook was put together to provide a guide for the presenter to bring information and support to the non-offending caregiver of children who allege abuse. It is merely a guide to give the presenter ideas on topics that the staff feel are important to help parents create violence free homes in the Choctaw Community. We encourage the presenter to take into consideration the needs of the parents who attend and tailor the content appropriately.***

***We as staff have developed this curriculum to be in agreement with our mission and guiding principals which directs all our interventions.***

### **Mission Statement**

***The mission of the Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center is to provide interventions in a safe, neutral environment that extends hope and healing for abused children and their family.***

### **CCAC Guiding Principles**

***We are committed to provide an environment in which people, their culture and their beliefs are honored.***

***We are committed to provide actions that will be guided by Best Practice Standards and ethical practices that truly serve the best interest of a child.***

***We are committed to help affirm and strengthen the Choctaw family unit as safe keepers of Choctaw children.***

***We are committed to seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership with individual and other programs that share our mission.***

## **Project PONY Format**

Week 1:	“One Brick at a Time”	(Intro to program/group)
Week 2:	“Shelter During the Storms...”	(Build Group Cohesiveness)
Week 3:	“When Mothers Cry”	(Domestic Violence and Child Abuse)
Week 4:	“The Path Begins Here”	(Speaker – Survivor)
Week 5:	“Stretch marks on my Sanity”	(Self-care/NOC needs)
Week 6:	“Bring in the Mop”	(Crisis/Stress mgmt-grp support)
Week 7:	“Recipe for a Healthy Child”	(Child Development and Discipline)
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Week 11:	“It Takes a Village...”	(MDT- Soc Svc Investigations)
Week 12:	“It’s a celebration!”	(Family Day/Night Activities)

Week 1 – “One Brick at a Time”  
Project PONY Goals 1/2

Instructional Goals – To introduce the program and engage participants

Objectives Introduction to program, define child abuse, achieve program participation,

Outcome:

Indicators: Participants attending will  
Commit to attending 8 of the 12 sessions by a show of hands  
Manage family life to promote self sufficiency, safety and stability.

Intervention:

“One Brick at a Time” – Project PONY Brochure

The brochure can be use to introduce the CCAC, staff and the PONY program to participants. The program consists of a series of 12-one hour sessions where non-offending caregivers of Choctaw children who have alleged abuse come together to share experience, strength and hope. Other topics to introduce are the dynamics of the non-offending caregiver that is described briefly in the brochure.

Myths and Facts brochure to define child abuse

There are misconceptions and social stigmas that have an effect on the parent’s response to children who allege abuse, especially when the perpetrator is a family member, step-parent or close relative. However, a supportive and protective parent or caregiver is important if a child is to recover from abuse experiences with minimal distress. In addition to the misconceptions and stigmas surrounding child abuse, learning about the sexual victimization of one’s child can be a confusing and disturbing event. Whether parents themselves are able to cope positively with the distress they feel following a disclosure weighs heavily on how they will be able to respond to their child. The program is designed to support and educate the parent so in turn become supportive and protective of their abused child and siblings.

The Legend of Nanih Waiya

The legend describes the journey taken by Choctaw ancestors and of new beginnings. Participation in the program will take parents on their own journey of healing, perhaps in ways unfamiliar to them.

Activity: “Top Secret”

Self-disclosure is not simply providing information to another person, but is the sharing with others information that they would not normally know. Self-disclosure involves risk and vulnerability on the part of the person sharing the information. The leader emphasizes that the NOC group is to be an understanding and trusting environment which can be the basis for a meaningful interpersonal relationship among the participants. It is valuable for some members to disclose information that have been kept locked for many months or even years, to finally disclose and be understood and fully accepted.

The sharing of sensitive information in a non-threatening environment builds group cohesiveness for building a system of informal support for each other.

Week 2 – “Shelter During the Storms of Life”  
Project PONY Goals 1/2/3

Instructional Goals - To promote social and group connectedness and recognition of common bonds among group members.

Objectives: Share with the group the benefits of social connections, and explore the needs of others.

Outcome: Participant will recognize that other parents of children who have been abused can support one another in positive ways

Indicators: Participants will  
identify and verbalize a time when their needs were met by someone else.  
identify a common experience or need they all share.

Intervention: Discussion on the dynamics of the non-offending caregiver  
Poem “One Brick At a Time”

Activity: “Shopping Trip”

The purpose of this activity is to reveal the individual’s self through choice of objects and explore the needs of others through the expression of their wishes and desires.

Each person goes on a pretend shopping spree and later describes the contents of their shopping and explains the significance of the items selected.

Before the discussion begins about their selection, each person draws a participant’s name at random and sets aside a gift for that person. Once this is completed the discussion begins with what each has selected for them, and what they chose to give to the person whose name was drawn.

Session 3 – “When Mothers Cry”  
Project PONY Goal 1/3

Instructional Goals – To increase the awareness of domestic violence upon children

To increase the awareness that mothers who cannot protect themselves increase the risk of violence upon their children.

Objective: promote the reduction of risk factors by demonstrating the similarities between Domestic Violence and Child Abuse.

Outcome: Participants will understand the effects of Domestic Violence upon the family  
Participants will create violence free homes.

Indicators: Participants do not re-enter the social system for new or repeat events of violence in the home at 3, 6, and 12 months after participation.

Intervention:

Speaker – Domestic Violence program specialist, survivor or video

The speakers/video shares their knowledge and/or experience of Domestic Violence and the effects it has upon the well being of the family. The professional will describe what are domestic violence and the services that are available to victims and their families. The survivor is able to share their experience of a domestic violent relationship, and the strength that helped them remove those risk factors for the safety of their children.

Brochures- “Love is Not Hurtful”, “Children are In Pain” Handout

The handout describes the effect of Domestic Violence upon children, and the MDT response to this multifaceted problem. The non-offending parent learns names of people in the child abuse response to address specific questions and concerns during the process of investigations and prosecution of their case.

Activity: Self – Assessment on Brochure  
Bracelets using PONY Beads (15 minutes)

A self assessment will be completed for the participant to perceive their relationships and the potential negative impact it has upon children in the home. Making designs using beads requires making color choices by the crafter. Similarly, creating a safe home for children requires conscious decision making and choosing those options that promote wellness for the family.

Discussion questions:

1. Which risk factors are present in your relationship?
2. Which risk factors are you willing to remove from your home to increase safety for your children?
3. What factors are present for you as an individual that prevents you from making decisions concerning an abusive relationship?

Week 4 – “The Path Begins Here”

Project PONY Goal 1/2

Instructional Goals – To promote the supportive caregiver-abused child relationship by addressing the psychological consequences of the child’s victimization.

Outcome: Participant will  
Become more aware of the effects of child abuse on children  
Acknowledge the child’s need for health and safety.

Indicators: Participants will  
attend intake and therapy sessions for child and family as appropriate.  
Practice giving and receiving emotional reaffirmation that children and parents need during the crisis and aftermath of child abuse

Intervention: Speaker or video (Child Sexual Abuse Survivor)  
Video – Hidden Shame 17 min  
The speakers and/or video share survivor’s experiences about the abuse events in their life and how childhood abuse has impacted them being able to live a productive life. The speakers also communicate the elements they viewed lessened or could have lessened the trauma they suffered.

“If Angels Could Speak” Brochure

When a child tells someone about sexual abuse, a supportive, caring response is the first step in getting help for the child and reestablishing their trust in adults. Adults, because of their maturity and knowledge, are always the ones to blame when they abuse children. The abused children should never be blamed.

The brochure reflects real statements made by individuals who have suffered sexual abuse. Some of the statements reinforce what research continues to show that children who are listened to and understood do much better than those who are not. The response to the disclosure of sexual abuse is critical to the child’s ability to resolve and heal the trauma of sexual abuse.

Activity: Car Wash Exercise – 5 min  
(Reference – LAMS self esteem building activity, page 49)

The exercise is a group and individual building activity. This helps the participants become aware that any time a traumatic memory is re-lived; supportive systems are there to help restore personal harmony. This activity encourages the participants to give and receive the emotional reaffirmation that is needed during the crisis and aftermath of child abuse.

Week 5 – “Stretch Marks on My Sanity”

Project PONY Goal 1 / 2

Instructional Goals – To promote improved functioning of the non-offending caregiver through self-care of their mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs.

Outcome: Awareness that poor health can interfere with their ability to provide good parenting.  
Awareness of common health problems, risks and ways to prevent illness.

Indicators: Participants will  
Identify areas of health and well being that can be improved.  
Self report activities to improve health during the program period.

Intervention: Healthy Life Brochure ([www.herhealthylife.org](http://www.herhealthylife.org))

General good healths, as well as preventive measures to avoid illness have a positive impact upon the quality of life for all individuals. A parent who makes positive lifestyle choices will most likely make positive choices for their family.

Activity: Health knowledge Assessment

The responses to the health questions allow the provider to assess the knowledge needs of the group and discuss appropriate topics to discuss. All the information can be accessed from [www2a.cdc.gov/od...](http://www2a.cdc.gov/od...) Then a discussion following the choices participants have made about their health and life can follow with an explanation of free services available at the health care facility. This session will aide the individual to prioritize what kinds of health changes that they may need to make based on risks.

Week 6 – “Bring in the Mop”

Project PONY Goal 1/ 2

Outcome: Participants will  
Practice pro-social methods of stress and anger management.  
Access help when their emotions (depression, anxiety, anger, fear, etc.) interfere with their ability to provide good parenting.

Indicators: Participants will  
Identify times when the anxiety, exhaustion, anger, depression or other stressors affecting their mental health has affected their parenting decisions.  
Utilize community resources or self help groups

Intervention: Speaker (Behavioral Health – Stress)  
Stress self-evaluation  
Choctaw Legend “Help from Above”-handout

Activity: Stress Relief Exercise

Everyone has stress, regardless of age, sex or race. In every day terms, stress is better known as the tension or pressure we feel as our bodies respond to everyday demands and changes. All stress is not bad nor does all stress have a negative effect on us. Some stress we experience is good and has a positive and motivating effect on us. Too much stress causes us to feel tense and pressured; this creates conflict in our experiences. Stress also affects the way parents relate to their children. Children of all ages require an enormous amount of their parents' energy and patience - sometimes more than you feel you can give. It's reassuring to know that all parents find it difficult at times. Children from all kinds of social, religious and cultural backgrounds can grow up to be happy, well adjusted adults - so long as their basic needs for love, physical care, security and respect are met. Parents all have their 'off days', but if they feel that their lives are bad most of the time, it can be difficult to meet their children's needs. Some adults may take out their anger and frustration on their children, or blame them for the problems in their own lives. Stress can sometimes push parents past their limit and lead parents to discipline or punish their children in ways which can do them harm.

Whatever happens in life, it is always easier to cope if you have a supportive partner, family and friends. If you are bringing up children alone, the problems you face may not be so different from those faced by two-parent families but they will quite often feel very different and are frequently more difficult to solve. There's nearly always something you can do to reduce there are often people who are willing to help. Remember that being a parent is one of the most valuable and important jobs you can do. The occasional angry word to your child probably won't do much harm, as long as the relationship is basically good. But if you get angry and find yourself shouting at your child a lot, they will suffer - and you'll probably not feel so good either.

## Week 7 – “Recipe for a Healthy Child”

Project PONY Goal 2 / 3

Outcome: Participant will  
Understand the need for an effective and nurturing manner in management of child behaviors that foster optimal child development  
apply knowledge of child development in mediating their child’s challenging behaviors

Indicators: Participants will  
Address one problem behaviors of toddler, school age child or adolescent where they can use appropriate discipline techniques.  
Identify one new approach to address their child’s behavior pattern

Intervention: “ Discipling Kids” –Video  
“Effective Discipline and Child Development of the Toddler” Brochure

Activity: Puzzles

Discipline can be defined as *a process to help children learn appropriate behaviors and make good choices*. Effective discipline aids a child in exercising self-control, responsibility, and respect. Through proper discipline, children learn how to function in a family and society that is full of boundaries, rules, and laws by which we all must abide. All parents seek disciplinary techniques that work. However, not all techniques work for all ages or for all children.

Children learn primarily through example and learn more from parents than all of their peers. The messages that parents send concerning their own personal goal directed activities are what children will adapt as theirs. Parenting and teaching takes not only sacrifice and energy, but also consistency. Good parents and teachers don't just happen by accident. People plan to be good parents and teachers and good parents and teachers plan. Good planning requires consistency.

Jigsaw puzzles can offer an escape from the routine or troubled times, as well as provide parents an opportunity to succeed with their children in a modest way. The team of parents and children completing a jigsaw can give a sense of accomplishment that is shared among the family of puzzlers. This simple and inexpensive task of completing a jigsaw puzzle also provides the family time together in a relaxed natural environment for conversation and relationship building. Puzzles and discipline have a similar goal—a sense of team develops as participants work toward accomplishment of a meaningful product.

## Week 8 –“Protecting the Gift”

### Project PONY Goal 1 / 2 / 3

**Goal:** To guide and assist the non-offending caregivers’ ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children to live and grow.

**Outcome:** Gain an understanding of characteristics of healthy vs unhealthy relationships.  
Gain an understanding of elements vital to building healthy relationships.

**Indicators:** Participants will  
complete a self-evaluation quiz of their relationship with their partner.  
identify two elements in their relationships with their children to improve.

**Intervention:** Healthy Relationships brochure  
Speaker –History of Child Witness to Violence

**Activity:** Describe a Shape Exercise (Adapted from the LAMS curricula)

Communication is at the heart of every successful relationship. When there is no communication it is hard to tell someone exactly what you mean. This is important in an argument with a partner or when telling children what is expected of them. For example, when you ask a child(ren) to “clean up your room”. They may have a different understanding of what that means than their parents. The exercise to describe a shape is an example of how what we say is not always what another person hears.

Draw several geometric figures on blank 3 X 5 (or larger) cards, one on each card. Distribute blank cards of the same size and a pencil to each participant. The facilitator picks up one figure card and describes the shape aloud, very precisely. (Example-this shape is one and one half inches from the right side of the card, straight up three inches, one inch to the left, etc).

Group members listen and try to reproduce the shape on one of their blank cards. The Leader cannot use gestures, only words, and cannot answer questions. On completion of the diagram, participants are asked to hold up their cards so the leader can see the results. Comments can be made that some are close, but no identification should be made of a correct copy. Then participants are asked to turn the same card over and redraw the diagram as the leader describes the shape again—this time with gestures and responses to questions from the group. Ask them to hold up their drawing, then the facilitator shows them the diagram they have been trying to copy.

When the exercise is completed, explain that they have just illustrated how hard it is to tell someone exactly what you mean. The speaker may think that what they are saying is perfectly clear; yet the listener is hearing something very different.

Week 9 – “How the Snakes Acquired their Poison”

Project PONY Goal 1/ 2/3

Outcome: Understand the dynamics of the sexual offender.  
Advocate for their abused child(ren).

Indicators: Participants will  
be able to identify three personal safety rules to teach their children.  
Not have any events of child maltreatment in their homes for up to 1 year after  
interventions

Intervention: Speaker – Behavioral Health  
Video – “Truth, Lies and Sex Offenders”  
Choctaw Legend, “How the Snake Acquired their Poison”

Perpetrators know they have to lower their victim’s guard to successfully engage their victim. There are many techniques perpetrators use to gain cooperation from their victims. Perpetrators also know that the acts they commit with children must be kept in secrecy to continue their victimization. In many instances, the non-offending caregiver may not be aware of abuse until much later when it is disclosed by the child. This session focuses on bringing to the surface the methods perpetrators use to manipulate children into cooperation and the need to teach parents and children about recognition and responding appropriately to “lures”.

Activity: Checklist for Protecting Children

This activity focuses on the parents as the “teachers” of personal safety to their children. The check list is designed to identify protective factors that can be taught by a parent. The parents are also asked to self-examine their ability to prevent abuse, and their willingness to strengthen those areas of doubts. The checklist is to help bring awareness of protective factors and is not an evaluation of learning.

Week 10– “Protectors of the Village”

Project PONY Goal 1

Outcome: Participant will  
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities that can help families reduce the likeliness of child maltreatment.  
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities to reduce risk factors in their local community.

Indicators: Participants will  
Participate as a partner with the criminal justice system in the community to hold offenders accountable.

Intervention: Speaker (Criminal investigator or prosecutor)  
Court Terms Brochure

The CI or prosecutor will give an overview of the investigation process and prosecution phase of the criminal justice system. The speaker will provide information on federal and tribal laws that govern child abuse and the overall goal of protection and safety for the community.

Activity: Pipe cleaner Art

Most people worry about what will happen in the future. Not knowing if something good or bad will happen to you can produce a lot of fear and anxiety. This is especially true when faced with the unknowns that can happen through the court and judicial system in cases involving children who are alleged to be abused. No one can predict the future with 100 Percent certainty. A lot of times, our worrying can make problems even worse. It is not easy to deal with the fear of the unknown; however the way we react to the fear can be worse than the situation. You have a choice, a choice you can make again and again or that you can change based on what is best for you.

The items in this activity are available to help with bringing to conscious the fears surrounding your encounter with the court system. Or these items can be used to plan a different action you will take when overcome with the fears that prevent you from handling the situation facing your family. You are free to choose whether you want to create an item that represents your fears, or something that you can hold in your hand that represents the strength you will rely on when faced with the fear of the unknown.

Example: the creation of the hot air balloon represents the fear of height, the butterfly can represent freedom from fear, etc

Week 11 –“It Takes a Village to Raise a Child”

Project PONY Goal 1 – Prevent reoccurrences of child abuse.

Outcome: Participant will  
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities that can help families reduce the likeliness of child maltreatment.  
Understand that professional in the community are involved in activities to reduce risk factors in their local community.

Indicators: Participants will  
Engage with their case workers to develop treatment plans that promote the safety of children in their homes.

Intervention: Speaker – Division of Social Services  
Handout – Parent Guide to the Division of Social Services  
Choctaw story of “Iyyi-Kowa”

This African saying teaches unending truth, that no man, woman or child can stand alone. The Choctaw tribe once had a similar outlook on families and the community. The “Iyyi-Kowa” is the Choctaw tradition of families coming together to help a member who had become sick or injured and found themselves and their family in need. The community took care of their members, whether it was a financial problem or family disputes.

We all want to live in a place were people care about others—where people pitch in to help when things get rough—where its safe to leave the door unlocked and where kids can safely play by themselves outside. Today, communities are not always what they should be. Today the Choctaw communities face challenges such as poverty, drug abuse, violence in the home and sadly, child abuse. Today, we have laws to keep the social order in our community and helpers like the police and social services.

It does take a village to work with a family, raise a child and weather the storms of life. It takes cooperation of family, schools, leaders and community programs working together to make sure a child lives a healthy and safe life. It is this same village that is called upon to build a foundation of support when a child is abused. Keeping families safe and intact is the goal of the Division of Social Services.

Activity: Garbage Pail/Treasure Chest  
Adapted from “Creative Therapy” page 7

This activity encourages the participants to review the negative outlook they harbor which may hinder their current involvements with the criminal justice system. Each participant is asked to discard one negative belief they have concerning the police, the courts or the child abuse response system in the garbage pail. Variation: the same activity can include a positive outcome placed in the treasure chest. Then the facilitator gets approval to read the results to stimulate group discussion.

Week 12 – “Celebrate”

Project PONY Goal 3

Goal: To create an opportunity for caregivers and their children to experience positive and enjoyable interactions with each other and their peers.

Outcome: Participants will plan a family day for children.

Indicators: Parents will participate in activities with children.

Intervention: meal and activities

Activity: Affirmation

I am important  
What I say is important  
What I think is important  
What I do is important,  
To myself and those around me.  
I choose to be the best, most caring, accepting and  
Understanding person I can be.

*Project PONY Schedule*

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All Pearl River Community sessions are held at the CCAC in Pearl River. Thursday sessions will be held at Bogue Chitto Facility Building for Bogue Chitto and Tucker Residents.

Tuesday sessions – 12:00p – 1:00p

Thursday sessions – 6:00p – 7:00p

Fourth Quarter	August 5, 2008
	September 30, 2008
	To
First Quarter	October 14, 2008
	December 31, 2008
	to
Second Quarter	January 13, 2009
	March 31, 2009
	to

Third Quarter

Fourth Quarter

Maximum eight participants per session.



*From the Project PONY staff...*

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*Every child should be happy!*

In the Choctaw home it is not unusual that a child abuse victim also suffers the effects of domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse within a family. These negative influences rob them of the encouraging home life a child needs. But every child deserves a good home where they are cared for, loved and feels secure to discover and reach their maximum potential.

It is our personal desire to help create a healthy community for the Choctaw child to live and grow. The overall goal of Project PONY is to offer the caregiver an opportunity to work through their own concerns so they can support and protect the abused child.

By offering a curriculum of child abuse educational topics and support to the non-offending caregiver, we hope to help rebuild the families who lives have been shattered by child abuse –

One Brick at a time!

*Thank you for taking part in this effort!*

*The Staff at Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center*

Choctaw Children's Advocacy Center

Project  
PONY



Protecting Our Native Young

*Rebuilding the Choctaw Family -*

**"ONE BRICK AT A TIME"**

A program of the  
Department of Family & Community Services  
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians  
P.O. Box 6010  
Choctaw, MS 39350

601/663-7790

Made possible through a Grant to Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Migrant Programs for Community-based Child Abuse Prevention Programs

Award # 90CA1733/03

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I once had a home that stood straight  
and tall,  
A solid foundation built with bricks  
and all.  
This home had withstood so many a  
storm.  
But the last disaster was not of the  
norm.

As the storm slowly passed and a  
new morning dawned,  
I thought all was gone, but I was  
so very wrong.  
The foundation I found was still  
standing intact,  
Although shaken a bit, I found only  
a crack.  
Three walls remained with missing  
bricks just a few,  
The fourth wall was crumbled and  
would need to be new.  
The process would be slow but the  
reward would be mine,  
For with courage and strength,  
I'm rebuilding my family –

*Project PONY*  
*ONE BRICK AT A TIME*

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By Elizabeth Neview

The Project to Protect Our Native Young (PONY) was developed to offer services to the non-offending caregiver of children alleged to be abused. The program is funded by a grant from the Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau – Child Abuse Prevention (CB-CAP) programs.

Studies show that non-offending parents of children who are sexually abused suffer distress when the abuse is discovered. Studies also show mother of sexually abused children experience greater levels of depression than mothers whose children are not abused.

It is known that an abused child's ability to cope with being victimized depends upon the caregiver's response to the discovery of abuse. It is also known that psychological stress can affect a parent's ability to provide the type of support that is needed to decrease the negative effects of abuse upon a child. Thus, it is very important to provide an opportunity for the non-offending caregiver to work through their concerns about the abuse event. Then they can be well prepared to support their child effectively with abuse-related issues.

The supporters of Project PONY recognize that in the Choctaw community, physical and sexual abuse indicates a need for interventions with a family. Therefore, the educational and support services provided by Project PONY are offered to any family impacted by any type of child abuse.

*Project PONY Curriculum*

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- Week 1: "One Brick at a Time"  
(Introduction to the program)
- Week 2: "The Healing Journey"  
(Speaker – Non-offending parent)
- Week 3: "The Path Begins Here"  
(Speaker – Survivor)
- Week 4: "Stretch Marks on my Sanity"  
(Self care – NOC needs)
- Week 5: "Bring in the Mop!"  
(Crisis-Stress management)
- Week 6: Open  
(Or Alternate Activity)
- Week 7: "Recipe for a Healthy Child"  
(Child Development/Discipline)
- Week 8: "It Takes a Village"  
(Sex Offender Dynamics)
- Week 9: "How the Snake Acquired their  
(Sex Offender Dynamics)
- Week 10: "Protectors of the Village"  
(Criminal investigations)
- Week 11: "Protecting the Gift"  
(Healthy Relationships)
- Week 12: "It's a celebration!"  
(Family Day/Night Activities)

# Memo

**To:** Janis Jimmie  
**From:** Sam Valentine  
**CC:** Tina Scott  
**Date:** April 05,2007  
**Re:** Review of Non Offender Care Giver Training

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The Child Advocacy Center has utilized project PONY to conduct non offender care giver training. An independent contractor was used to conduct a survey of the family member who attended the training. The contractor who was selected was a Choctaw speaking health care provider. The results of the survey indicates that 15 family members were initially enrolled in the twelve week program with 11 completing the training. Included in the number who completed the program were 10 birth parents and 1 community volunteer. All participants were enrolled tribal members.

Marital status was varied for those reporting, 4 were single parents, 2 were married, 2 widowed, and 1 divorced. All reported an annual income below \$30,000 with 7 below \$20,000. Only 4 of the participants reported having completed High School. The average household contained 2.9 children.

Pre and post questioning was used to determine the impact of the training on participant's knowledge and feelings of security for them and their children. Eleven questions of this type were used in the survey and all responses showed some or significant improvement in the knowledge of feelings of security for participants.

A group of six questions were used to determine the participants feeling about the quality of the program as it might have impacted their lives. These questions were overwhelmingly in the affirmative in their response.

### Conclusions

This survey was an evaluation of the first efforts of Project PONY at training non offender care giver. The goal of these training efforts is to improve the safety of the environment where children both previous victims and at risk children are housed. Lessons were learned by both the staff and participants that will help in future sessions. The survey response indicates that families did find the training to be valuable in improving their knowledge about protecting the safety of their children. It is significant to note that the survey was conducted several days after the training was completed. In addition the surveys were administered by a third party many times in the participant's home. This fact should improve the accuracy of the response and willingness of the participant to be honest. The feedback is very positive and clearly indicates that the training effort has had a positive impact on these parents. I will recommend to the CAC staff that we make an effort at tracking the children from these households to determine if any of the at risk children of previously victimized children return to the system. This will be our best indicator of the effectiveness of this training effort.

# Memo

**To:** Janis Jimmie  
**From:** Sam Valentine  
**CC:** Maurice Calistro, Tina Scott  
**Date:** October 30, 2007  
**Re:** CAC Survey Review

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I have conducted a review of the survey result of the survey administered by the Child Advocacy Center with participants of training for non offender caregivers. My findings were as follows:

1. The surveys were conducted with representatives of 21 families in Choctaw Communities.
2. 90% of the surveys were conducted using Choctaw Language.
3. 94% of those surveyed were female.
4. The mean number of children in each household surveyed was 2.7 children per household.
5. 67% of those surveyed were the birth parent of the effected child.
6. 100% of those participating were Native American.
7. 77% of the participants were divorced, single, widowed or separated.

8. Only 35% of the participants owned their own home.

9. 76% of those surveyed made less than \$20,000 annually.

Note: 120% of the National Poverty Guidelines for a family of 3 is \$20,604

10. Thirteen questions in the survey were concerning life improvements following the training. Of the thirteen questions over 75% received positive responses.

11. Questions involving improvement in parenting skills and dealing with stress and decision making all had positive responses.

12. There were three questions dealing with the activities of Project PONY specifically. Over 50% of these responses indicated the Project PONY had provided an impact on the families who were served.

### Summary

The training that was reviewed served 21 families. The surveys were conducted by Choctaw speaking Tribal Members who were not staff members of the CAC. The total result of the survey strongly indicates that the training has been effective in improving the life skills of the parents and family members involved. The program needs to monitor these families to be sure that there are no new cases of victimization in these households.