



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From The Office of Barnstable County Board of Regional Commissioners



County Commissioners Announce Partnership between Children's Cove & Martha's Vineyard Community Services to Help Child Abuse Victims
Partnership Will Provide Services on Martha Vineyard

June 7, 2023 (Barnstable, MA) – Today the Barnstable County Commissioners executed an Interagency Agreement between Children's Cove: The Cape and Islands Child Advocacy Center, and Martha's Vineyard Community Services *CONNECT to End Violence* Program (CONNECT), to help child victims of crime on Martha's Vineyard. The Board also renewed an Intergovernmental Agreement with Dukes County to provide these services on Martha Vineyard.

“Children's Cove does tremendous work, and we are very excited to support this new partnership between Barnstable County, Martha's Vineyard Community Services and the Cape and Islands District Attorney's Office,” said Chairman Mark Forest.

For over 25 years, Children's Cove has delivered comprehensive response services on Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard to children who have survived sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, sexual exploitation or witnessed domestic violence. The physical space at Children's Cove is child-friendly, confidential, and safe where child victims of crime and abuse receive a streamlined, collaborative, and supportive approach to the investigation of these cases. This work is done in close collaboration with local law enforcement, the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, the Cape & Islands District Attorney's Office, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

“MVCS and the CONNECT to End Violence program have been vital partners with Children’s Cove for years. We are proud that by coming together and innovating, we can alleviate additional burdens for children and families who have already experienced such difficulty in their lives.” said Stacy Gallagher, Director of Children’s Cove.

In the past families on Martha’s Vineyard experienced challenges traveling by ferry and car to the Children’s Cove offices located in Barnstable County. Under the new agreement, Children’s Cove will conduct forensic interviews with child victims at the CONNECT Program’s offices located on Martha’s Vineyard.

CONNECT is a domestic violence program and rape crisis center on Martha’s Vineyard which provides free and confidential services, including counseling, safety planning, crisis intervention and advocacy to individuals who have experienced domestic abuse or sexual violence.

Children’s Cove and CONNECT have collaborated for many years coordinating services for child victims and their non-offending family members. In planning for the new office on Martha’s Vineyard, staff from both organizations worked together to develop a forensic interview room, an observation area for a multidisciplinary team, and family waiting room, which will allow families access to Children’s Cove services on Martha’s Vineyard.

The partnership between the two programs provides numerous benefits to children and families of victims of crime such as eliminating the burden of lengthy travel on children and their families and allowing an immediate and direct connection with CONNECT staff to support the family with access to the greater Martha’s Vineyard Community Services (MVCS) programs and services. Additionally, the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) approach already reduces costs for investigative agencies through its collaborative model. Each case referred from Martha’s Vineyard, with the multidisciplinary team meeting on-island, minimizes the number of individuals who need to travel to the mainland, decreasing cost and increasing productivity for law enforcement on-island.

This expanded partnership was established by a process like the one that created Children’s Cove - a small group of community leaders sat down and discussed the future of their children, and what the community needed to do to help children who are victims of sexual abuse and violence. Through foresight, commitment, compassion, and ingenuity each agency found a way to continue working together and expanding partnerships to help children.

Barnstable County Children’s Cove believes that with ongoing partnerships, like the one with MVCS, our communities will move closer a world where children are free of abuse, have a voice that is heard, and where they enjoy healthy, safe, and empowered lives.

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ABOUT CHILDREN'S COVE

Children's Cove, a department of Barnstable County, has been the Cape and the Island's Children's Advocacy Center since 1997. Children's Cove provides coordinated and comprehensive multidisciplinary services to child victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse, witness to domestic violence and child sexual exploitation and trafficking. To learn more visit www.ChildrensCove.org

ABOUT BARNSTABLE COUNTY REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF CAPE COD

Barnstable County provides exemplary government functions and services to keep our community healthy and safe, promote sustainable growth, and offer a proactive, open government that enhances the quality of life for the citizens of Barnstable County. Learn more at www.capecod.gov

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