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Knoxville Family Justice Center Celebrates Grand Opening May 19

Victims of domestic violence have new hope with the opening of Knoxville's Family Justice Center (<http://www.fjcknoxville.org/>). "We didn't have a center like this for me. I've been in survivorship for 12 years now," says Melissa, a domestic violence survivor who had a hand in planning the Family Justice Center. It's designed to be a one stop resource center for victims of family violence. "We wanted a warm feel when the ladies come in. It's a scary situation. Every situation is different. Some women suffer one type of abuse. Others suffer many," Melissa says. The center is set up like a home with a front porch to greet victims and a relaxing living room where they can start to let down their guard. "Grab a cup of coffee, debrief, come into these rooms we call dens and talk with a social worker to make it more comforting and relaxing," says David Kitts, Ph.D., a training specialist with the Knoxville Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit.

Family violence is a Knoxville community problem with local law enforcement responding to nearly 17,000 calls in 2005 – for an average of 46 per day. Three domestic violence homicides were recorded in 2004. The center will have nine agencies on-site including Child and Family Tennessee, the Community Coalition on Family Violence, Legal Aid of East Tennessee, the Salvation Army, YWCA, the Knoxville Police Department and Knox County District Attorney, Probation, and Sheriff's Offices. Dozens more local government and non-profit agencies are serving as off-site partners. "Those who need help will find it easier to get at the Knoxville Family Justice Center, which provides one telephone number and one place for service to make it easier for those who need help to get it," said Randy Nichols, Knox County district attorney general and member of the center's executive board. "In addition, the center makes it easier for agencies to provide help in efficient and effective ways through continued cooperation and collaboration."

The Knoxville Family Justice Center is one of the 15 opening as part of the President's Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI) – designed to play a crucial role in developing multi-disciplinary service centers for victims of domestic violence and their children. In October of 2003, President George W. Bush announced the PFJCI, which is administered by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). The PFJCI is a pilot program that has awarded more than \$20 million to the 15 communities across the country for the planning, development, and establishment of comprehensive domestic violence victim service and support centers.