



## BONNIE'S STORY

Bonnie is a 12-year-old girl with long, dark hair and glasses. When she was first brought to the Children's Advocacy Center, she looked fragile and avoided eye contact. She had just come from the hospital, where she was under observation for having lost 10 pounds in one week.

During her Forensic Interview, we learned that Bonnie's stepdad had started sexually assaulting her three years previously, when she was only 9 years old. She never told anyone until she hit her breaking point, and could no longer eat or sleep at all. She was miserable. She told us, "I just want it to stop."

Unfortunately, this is very common, and we meet kids like Bonnie every day. Girls and boys who endure abuse for years ... Hoping it will stop; believing it is somehow their fault; Waiting for it to end. We know how much they suffer, and we know that they need a lot of support to heal.

Our team rallied to help this beautiful little girl and her family. We gave her a complete physical exam and treated her injuries while we documented them for the police. We worked with her mom to create a safety plan to keep Bonnie and her little brother safe until their stepdad was arrested (and yes, he was arrested).

We also connected Bonnie and her family with long-term healing services, like counseling and our family support groups. Since the stepdad was the one paying most of the bills, we provided grocery store gift cards and gas money to tide them over while Bonnie's mom started working with other, long-term supports like the food bank. We know it will be a lot to manage, but we will be there every step of the way. We also know they are on the right path. Even before she left the Center that first time, Bonnie was smiling and playing with us. While playing a card game, she blurted out, "I feel so happy! It's been a long time."

A few weeks later, we asked Bonnie's mom how things are going at home. We learned that Bonnie is no longer afraid, and is eating and sleeping normally. It will take years for Bonnie and her family to fully recover from what she endured, but it is our honor to be the place where abuse like this ends and healing begins.

Thank you for helping us protect children like Bonnie. We couldn't do this without you.