

“Ellen Cokinos is one of those people that when you meet her, you know you have met a force of nature. And, I am delighted that she uses her talents and energy on behalf of the most vulnerable people in our society.”

— SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON, FORMER FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES, IN A SPEECH IN HOUSTON ON MARCH 16, 1998.



**The Children's Assessment Center
Houston, Texas
Founder and Executive Director**

Ellen fondly describes The CAC as her “third child.” She created the model, established the entity, and implemented the program, establishing it as the largest child advocacy center of its kind in the world, serving over 5000 children annually. Here is the how:

- Began as a volunteer in 1987 and served as President of the Harris County Child Abuse Task Force and became a passionate advocate mobilizing key community and agency leaders to sign on to the concept.
- Secured initial start-up funding and was hired in 1991 as Executive Director. Provided leadership, vision, and effectively managed an innovative public/ private partnership to serve sexually abused children utilizing the multi-disciplinary approach with an initial annual budget of \$50,000 in 1991.
- As an appointed official of Harris County Commissioner's Court and a liaison with The Children's Assessment Center Foundation, provided strategic direction that resulted in program growth to an annual budget of over \$6MM in 2001, along with the fundraising and construction of a state of the art, \$12MM, 60,000 sq. ft. facility completed in 1998.

- Introduced and initiated the “social purpose enterprise” concept to the social service community through the launch of a unique endowment campaign, resulting in the purchase of retail property adjacent to the program; created separate non-profit corporation to manage center’s revenues, all to support program operations for The CAC.
- Obtained \$5MM loan/gift/match from single donor to purchase Kirby property as endowment funding for future revenue and space for additional agencies; obtained \$1MM matching gift as well.

Accomplishments:

- Established and built a private foundation to support and sustain the public/private partnership. Designed and implemented initial leadership structure as well as current business model.
- Designed and negotiated clinical and operational protocols and successfully launched ten core departments including medical evaluation, therapy, psychological testing and research, forensic interviewing, fund development, public relations, training, finance, and volunteer services.
- Negotiated the separation of the program as a department of Children’s Protective Services to an autonomous county department and supporting organization. Designed structure and cultivated Board of Directors and Honorary Directors, Partner Council, Board of Advisors, and conducted board development.
- Initiated and implemented five-year strategic plan in 2000.
- Drafted, negotiated, and implemented a 40-page protocol built around a partner agency structure between seventeen agencies including local, state, and federal agencies, non-profits, and the community.
- Solicited and secured almost \$30MM in funding for program and capital funds, the greatest majority coming from private sector sources including uniquely structured major gifts, growing the program each year in services provided to children.
- Provided strategic direction to architects and project managers on the location of the property, selection of all design, and construction of the facility.
- Managed professional staff and contract staff of 75, and mediated disagreements between seventeen co-housed partner agencies and staff totaling 200.
- Secured and hosted visits from numerous dignitaries/child advocates from around the world including then First Lady Hillary Clinton and Governor George W. Bush; visited and trained other states and other countries, including Iceland and Finland, Taiwan, and Japan, on the child advocacy center model and its implementation.
- Designed award winning marketing campaign used in print and media.
- Received sixteen awards in recognition of the program, including: *The 2000 National Association of Counties’ Acts of Caring Award*, *The Legacy Award*, *the 2001 National Crime Victims Service Award* from Attorney General John Ashcroft, *2000 Spirit of Collaboration Award from The Greater Houston Collaborative for Children*, and two *Addy Awards* for radio and video production.
- Personally recognized in the *Congressional Record*, *106th Congress* for personal and program accomplishments.

- Designed and implemented “*Friends of The Children’s Assessment Center Foundation*,” a guild which supports the operating budget of the program.
- Designed and implemented a diversified fundraising plan that included annual special events, support from statewide corporations/foundations/individuals, an endowment, county and state formula for allocation, a volunteer guild, and national funders.
- Provided training curriculum to partner agencies and area professionals in the field of child abuse.
- Served as chief spokesperson for agency with local, statewide, and national media, testifying to the Texas Legislature as well as local and national media outlets.