BIG VOICES IN SMALL PACKAGES
Empowering Child Victims in the Criminal Justice System
Your presenters:

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Background

- Maricopa County – 3.8 million people
- Fourth largest county in the country
- 9224 Square miles
HOW WE COME IN CONTACT CHILD VICTIMS

• Referred cases at the time of investigation or charging
• Follow case all the way through to trial or plea and then sentencing
• Multiple opportunities for contact – court hearings, home visits, trial preparation
• Average caseloads
Case Study - Storm
Common reactions of kids to the criminal justice system

There are none.
Every child is different.
Kids have great questions

Why is it so important to answer them?
BECAUSE THEY WILL GET ANSWERS TO THEIR BURNING QUESTIONS!
SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Littles

• Age appropriate options
• Answer questions
TEENS

• Good predictors of needs and abilities
• Many desire to testify
• Judges can make or break their experience
Kids in protective custody

• The importance of accessing these children who have no parent caring for them and fighting to protect them
Cultural Considerations
Meet a teen victim
WHY IS EMPOWERMENT SO IMPORTANT?
BARRIERS

Parents
Over-protective
Under-protective
WHAT EVERY CHILD NEEDS IS...

Choice
Empowering kids by empowering their parents

- Educate about parental needs vs. child needs
- Educate about the importance of choice
- Teach and model praising the child for their bravery
- Teach them to tell the child this wasn’t their fault
- Continually tell the parent this wasn’t their fault
Empowering parents

• Encourage involvement in the court process
• Encourage counseling for parent and child
• Talk with parents about the appropriate outlet for feelings of doubt
• Prepare them for what to expect at trial for themselves and for their children
In the words of a parent...
In closing

• Do start talking with parents and kids together early on
• Do encourage BOTH kids and parents to get into counseling
• Do teach parents about the importance of choice to a survivor of abuse
DO...

• A significant amount of preparation with children before they have to testify
• Answer questions early and often
How do we know this works?