



About Child-Friendly Spaces

Working with Child and Adolescent
Trafficking Victims in Costa Rica

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This publication was developed through the Innovations in Addressing Child Trafficking (IACT) Program, which is combating child sex trafficking in the provinces of Guanacaste and Puntarenas. The IACT Program works to protect and assist child and adolescent trafficking victims, strengthen the prosecution of trafficking crimes, and prevent the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

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About child-friendly spaces for child and adolescent trafficking victims

What is a child-friendly space?

A child-friendly space is an environment that is designed to help children and adolescents feel safe, calm, and comfortable while they are interacting with practitioners. A child-friendly space is about more than just the physical space. It is about how children and adolescents feel when they are in this space. For child and adolescent trafficking victims, child-friendly spaces are typically utilized in locations where practitioners interact with formerly trafficked children and adolescents in the course of their professional work. The practitioners who are present in a child-friendly space will depend on the nature of the space and the work being done. They may work for the government, non-governmental organizations, or private organizations.

Who is a child-friendly space for?

While child-friendly spaces can be used by all children and adolescents (anyone under age 18), they are commonly used in working with vulnerable children and adolescents. Child-friendly spaces originated in emergency and humanitarian settings as a means to provide children whose lives have been disrupted by conflict, disaster, or other emergencies with opportunities to engage in learning and developmental activities in a safe and stimulating environment (sometimes referred to as a “safe space”). They are increasingly used in working with child victims of abuse and violence, including child and adolescent trafficking victims.



This child-friendly space at the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Corredores, Costa Rica is used to meet with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



In Costa Rica, child-friendly spaces have been developed for child and adolescent trafficking victims within the framework of the Innovations in Addressing Child Trafficking (IACT) program to support child-friendly, victim-sensitive, and trauma-informed identification, protection, assistance, and access to justice for trafficking victims. Child and adolescent trafficking victims may come to a child-friendly space under different circumstances and at different points in time, including before being identified as victims of trafficking or in the course of identification; when receiving different assistance services; when being involved as victims and/or witnesses in civil or criminal proceedings related to their trafficking experiences; and in the course of their reintegration in their families or in a new setting. In Costa Rica, child-friendly spaces for child and adolescent trafficking victims have been developed in PANI offices, hospitals, prosecutor offices, and NGOs.

Why is a child-friendly space important for child and adolescent trafficking victims?

Child and adolescent trafficking victims have been subjected to physical and psychological violence and exploitation, usually over long periods of time, with devastating impacts on their development.

Trafficking inflicts deep physical, psychological, emotional, and social harm that can last a lifetime, especially for younger victims whose development and sense of identity are still forming. The impacts of trafficking are myriad, intersecting, and mutually reinforcing. Even after exit from trafficking, children and adolescents are still vulnerable to re-traumatization and re-victimization.

Keeping children safe and protected, while promoting their psychosocial well-being and recovery, is therefore essential. Child-friendly spaces play an important role in the protection and assistance of child trafficking victims and in preventing re-traumatization and further harm.

Who uses a child-friendly space with child and adolescent trafficking victims in their work?

Practitioners working in child-friendly spaces may include child protection specialists, counselors and psychologists, education professionals, judges, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, legal professionals, NGO staff, prosecutors, social workers and social assistants, among others.



Criteria for child-friendly spaces for child and adolescent trafficking victims

A space is considered child-friendly for children and adolescent trafficking victims when it meets the HAPPY criteria – Healthy, Accepting, Protective, Participatory, and Youth-Inclusive. These criteria are based on research and experience implementing child-friendly spaces for child and adolescent trafficking victims in diverse settings globally.¹

- H** Healthy
- A** Accepting
- P** Protective
- P** Participatory
- Y** Youth-Inclusive



Healthy

A child-friendly space is considered healthy when it promotes well-being. Well-being is a combination of feeling positive and functioning well. Promoting the well-being of children and adolescents is the ultimate goal of child-friendly spaces.

1. See childfriendlyspaces.warnathgroup.com



Accepting

A child-friendly space is welcoming, non-discriminatory, and non-judgmental. Everyone working in this space should be sensitive to the diversity of children and adolescents they may encounter (such as different ages and stages of development, different sexes, different ethnicities, different personal and family backgrounds, cultural differences, and so on). No child or adolescent should be excluded or treated differently based on their personal characteristics. Being accepting requires taking into account and embracing the many different children and adolescents accessing the child-friendly space.

Protective

A child-friendly space offers a secure physical location and an emotionally safe space for children and adolescents to interact with practitioners who have been trained in child protection. For child and adolescent trafficking victims who visit this space, this means following the steps of trafficking victim protection.²

Participatory

A child-friendly space should be designed with inputs and recommendations from children and adolescents. Children and adolescents have the right to participate and should be provided with opportunities to voice opinions about decisions that affect them.

Youth-Inclusive

Child-friendly spaces are accessed by children and adolescents of different ages and at different stages of development. A child-friendly space should therefore be designed to ensure that all children – from young children to older adolescents – will feel safe, calm, and comfortable. Being youth-inclusive means recognizing and responding to the different needs and emerging maturity of adolescents, including when adolescents may bring along their own children or a younger sibling they take care of. It is important that the different needs of all these individuals are recognized and accommodated.

2. The steps of trafficking victim protection in Costa Rica can be found here: aprendizaje.warnathgroup.com/trafficking-victim-protection/

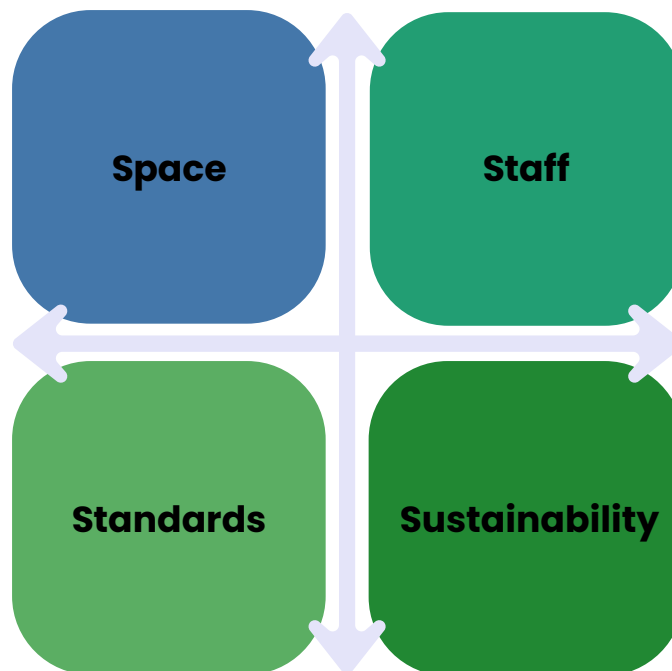


The 4S Approach to operating child-friendly spaces

Child-friendly spaces are situated in different locations where practitioners interact with children and adolescents in the course of their professional work. They are established in a variety of circumstances, operate at different institutions, and the practitioners in these spaces will work with different target groups and face specific challenges and constraints accordingly. Nonetheless, there are criteria that can be applied to the operation of all child-friendly spaces that are used with child and adolescent trafficking victims – these criteria are organized around the categories of space, staff, standards, and sustainability (the 4S approach). The 4S approach should be used to guide how child-friendly spaces for child and adolescent trafficking victims are managed and run.

Space. Making the physical space where practitioners interact with children and adolescents a safe, child-friendly, and positive environment.

Standards. Having protocols and policies in place to guide all interactions with children and adolescents and upkeep of the space.



Staff. Ensuring that all practitioners who interact with child and adolescent trafficking victims are trained.

Sustainability. Maintaining child-friendly spaces over time and in response to any changes or challenges that arise.





Space

Operating a child-friendly space requires ensuring that the physical space itself is safe, in addition to being a child-friendly and positive environment.

For a child-friendly space to be safe, it must provide protection from any risk of harm that children and adolescents may face in accessing the space.

This requires practitioners to ensure that children and adolescents are supervised in the space, that perpetrators do not have access to the space, and that child protection policies and procedures are in place and followed (see Standards). For child and adolescent trafficking victims, this also means following the steps of trafficking victim protection.

Making a child-friendly space for child and adolescent trafficking victims a child-friendly and positive environment means making the physical environment one in which children and adolescents feel safe, calm, and comfortable. This involves meeting the HAPPY criteria discussed above.



Staff

Operating a child-friendly space for child and adolescent trafficking victims requires that all practitioners who interact with child and adolescent trafficking victims have an understanding of trafficking in persons and their role in trafficking victim protection. The roles and responsibilities of different professionals working at a child-friendly space will depend on the services that are provided and/or the procedures that are undertaken at the specific location.

While there will be a wide range of different practitioners who interact with child and adolescent trafficking victims, all practitioners in a child-friendly space should nonetheless also have an understanding of child-friendly and trauma-informed interactions and communication. A physical space alone is not enough to ensure that child and adolescent trafficking victims are safe, calm, and comfortable. Practitioners themselves need to have skills and knowledge in how to be child-friendly and how to follow relevant child protection policies and procedures (see Standards).

The skills and abilities of practitioners who interact with child and adolescent victims at a child-friendly space should be assessed by management and ongoing training should be provided. It is essential that adequate resources and time are dedicated to staff training, supervision, and mentoring.



This will enable professionals working at a child-friendly space to keep children and adolescents safe and promote their psychosocial well-being.

All new staff members of the institution or organization at which a child-friendly space is located should receive appropriate training and ongoing support. To ensure high-quality professional conduct and protect practitioners from burnout and vicarious trauma, it is important that staff have regular access to guidance and support as needed on how to deal with specific cases or situations involving child and adolescent trafficking victims.

Standards

Operating a child-friendly space requires that there are standards (protocols and policies) in place to guide all interactions with children and adolescents and upkeep of the space. This includes child protection policies, protocols on trafficking victim protection, and procedures that are relevant to professional conduct and upkeep of the space in working with children and adolescents.

It is critical that all staff at a child-friendly space are aware of and follow the protocols and policies in place to ensure that children and adolescents are safe, calm, and comfortable.

Child protection involves identifying signs of potential harm and responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse, providing support and services to protect children and adolescents, and holding those who have harmed children and adolescents accountable. Child-friendly spaces must have a child protection policy in place to make sure that staff, operations, and programs do no harm to children and adolescents. Management must ensure that professionals working at a child-friendly space are clear about how they are expected to behave with children and adolescents and what to do if there are concerns about the safety of a child or adolescent.

Many institutions and organizations in which child-friendly spaces for child and adolescent trafficking victims are located will have specific protocols and procedures on trafficking victim protection. Child and adolescent trafficking victims are usually in need of a range of protection and assistance services, most of which will likely have to be provided by different institutions or organizations. It is paramount that practitioners working at a child-friendly space follow existing protocols and procedures to assist and refer child and adolescent victims of trafficking to the different services that they may need. This will help to establish a



a consistent, coordinated, and victim-centered approach among law enforcement, social and child protection services, healthcare providers, and other institutions and organizations involved in assisting and protecting child and adolescent victims of trafficking.

Finally, practitioners in a child-friendly space should be familiar with the policies and procedures that are relevant to their professional conduct and upkeep of the space in working with child and adolescent trafficking victims. This includes standards of ethics and behavior, standards concerning the services that are offered to children and adolescents, procedures established at institutional/organizational level, and/or deriving from inter-institutional agreements.

Sustainability

Operating a child-friendly space requires considering sustainability – ensuring that the child-friendly space continues over time and that it responds and adapts to changes or challenges that may arise. Child-friendly spaces for child and adolescent trafficking victims are generally conceived as long-term, permanent structures. Ensuring their sustainability entails several aspects and commitments over time.

- **Maintenance of facilities.** Child-friendly spaces should be kept clean and well-maintained. This concerns both the functional and aesthetic aspects of the space. Materials in the space should be regularly replaced when they run out or when they fall into disrepair.
- **Maintenance of expertise, experience, and information.** Time and resources are needed to develop knowledge and capacities among practitioners working in a child-friendly space and the knowledge and experience accrued by these practitioners should be preserved. Over time, there is a risk that institutional knowledge will wane as people take on new job positions, relocate, or retire. It is important for management to identify ways to preserve the knowledge and experience required to effectively operate a child-friendly space, such as:

- Documenting procedures and practices applied at the child-friendly space

- Encouraging knowledge sharing among professionals working at the child-friendly space such as through workshops, seminars, and inter-departmental meetings



- Utilizing knowledge repositories, such as databases and digital libraries, and making them well-organized and easy to use
 - Promoting continuous learning by providing practitioners with opportunities for professional development and training
 - Envisaging mentorship programs, by pairing experienced practitioners with newer or less experienced ones to facilitate knowledge transfer
 - Creating a culture that values knowledge retention by encouraging practitioners to contribute to the maintenance and retention of expertise, experience, and information
- **Financial sustainability.** Operating a child-friendly space involves costs, such as for staff, materials, equipment, utilities, training, transportation, among others. It may be necessary to identify available sources of funding in order to secure the financial sustainability of a child-friendly space in the long-term. Partnership and relationships with donors who are committed to supporting child and adolescent trafficking victims should be built and maintained over time.
 - **Advocacy.** Ensuring sustainability also involves advocating for sustained policy support and resources dedicated to supporting child and adolescent trafficking victims in the long-term. Data collected about the child-friendly space for monitoring purposes should be used to also support awareness raising and advocacy activities for sustainability purposes.
 - **Adaptability.** Changes in trafficking trends, including in traffickers' modus operandi, as well as in victims' profiles and needs, occur over time. The services being offered to child and adolescent victims, as well as judicial or other administrative procedures they are involved in might undergo transformations as well. For these reasons, it is essential that the operation of child-friendly spaces for child and adolescent trafficking victims is regularly reviewed and adapted in order to meet any changing needs of those who use them.



Using child-friendly spaces in work with trafficked children and adolescents

There are different kinds of child-friendly spaces that are used with child and adolescent trafficking victims. How a space is used will depend on the specific child-friendly space and the individual's specific professional role in working with trafficked children and adolescents.

For example:

- Child protection professionals and service providers may use child-friendly spaces for children and adolescents to wait for appointments, to conduct initial conversations or screening interviews, and to provide assistance and services.
- A receptionist or guard may be responsible for welcoming children into child-friendly waiting areas or teen zones, supervising them while they are in these spaces, and explaining to them about the space and how they can use it.
- Legal professionals such as prosecutors and judges may use child-friendly spaces in the criminal justice system, such as for children and adolescents while waiting at prosecutor offices or at court, during investigative interviews, and while providing testimony as victim-witnesses.
- Healthcare professionals may use child-friendly spaces for children and adolescents to wait for appointments, to conduct initial conversations or screening interviews, and to provide physiological and psychological care.

Below is some general guidance on different child-friendly spaces and how these can be used to support child and adolescent trafficking victims. Often times, an institution or organization will have multiple child-friendly spaces that should be utilized together to create an overall sense of well-being through every interaction that a child or adolescent has at the location.

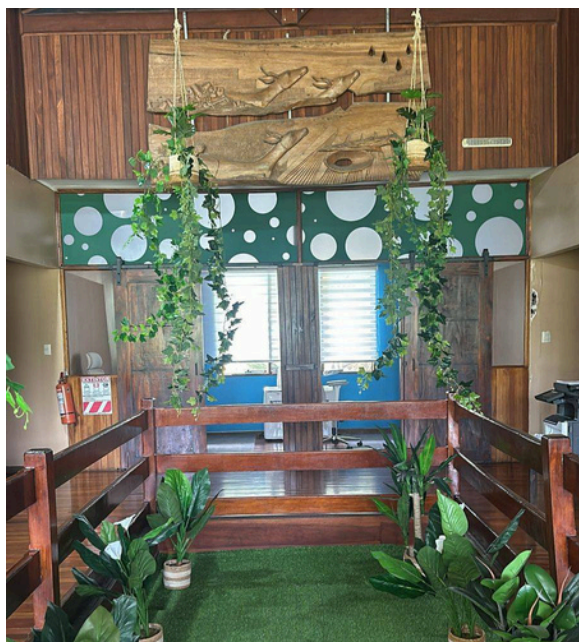


Child-Friendly General Waiting Areas

A general waiting area is commonly a child or adolescent's first point of contact with someone who works at the institution or organization. You should use the child-friendly general waiting area to ensure that children and adolescents feel safe and have the information they need (how long they will be waiting, what will happen next).

If there is a mural or other artwork in the general waiting area, you could consider drawing attention to it as a way to help them feel calmer. If there are toys or activities available in the general waiting area, you can remind younger children or adolescent parents with children along that these are available. If drinking water or restrooms are available, you should let children and adolescents know this.

If there are other waiting areas specific to certain ages (e.g. early childhood or teen zones), children and adolescents should be invited to use these spaces as well and introduced to these locations and the resources within them. For example, playing ping pong in a teen zone can be a welcome distraction for adolescents who are waiting to meet with a practitioner.



The general waiting area at the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Paquera, Costa Rica includes decorations connecting to nature to reduce stress and provide a sense of calm and comfort.



The general waiting area at the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Nicoya, Costa Rica includes a mural that was designed with the input of local children and adolescents.



Early Childhood Waiting Areas

Early childhood waiting areas should be used by younger children (up to age 8). These waiting areas include toys and activities that are appropriate for younger children.

It is important to introduce young children to these areas, to make them feel welcome, and to ensure that they understand how they can use the space. You should show children the toys and activities in the early childhood waiting area so that they know what is available.

Early childhood waiting areas can also be used to meet with parents of younger children while their children are playing.

Toys and activities should be put away when not in use to keep the room or area tidy. Eliminating clutter can reduce stress and help children to feel safe, calm, and comfortable.



The general waiting area at the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in La Cruz, Costa Rica includes a corner that is specifically for younger children to wait.



The National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Santa Cruz, Costa Rica has an early childhood waiting room specifically for younger children and their parents.



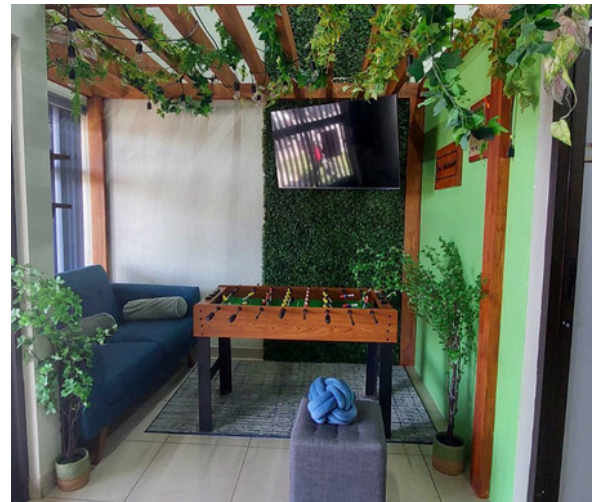
Teen Zones

Teen zones should be used by adolescents (ages 13+) who are waiting to meet with a practitioner or attend an activity. These areas are designed for adolescents, with furniture and decorations that appeal to teenagers. They also give adolescents more privacy, which helps them to feel safe, calm, and comfortable.

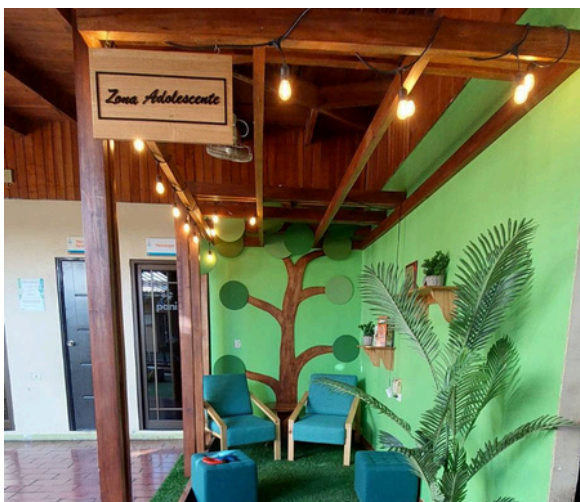
It is important to introduce adolescents to these areas, to make them feel welcome, and to ensure they know that they can use these spaces to wait. You should ensure that adolescents are supervised while they are in the teen zones.



The National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Santa Cruz, Costa Rica has a teen zone specifically for adolescents to wait.



The general waiting area at the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in La Cruz, Costa Rica has a teen zone specifically for adolescents to wait.



The National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Liberia, Costa Rica has a teen zone specifically for adolescents to wait.



The National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Nicoya, Costa Rica has a teen zone specifically for adolescents to wait.



Child-Friendly Practitioner Offices and Counseling Rooms

Child-friendly offices or counseling rooms should be used by professionals to meet with children and adolescents in the context of day-to-day work. With child and adolescent trafficking victims, this might include initial conversations, screening interviews, case management, providing psychological care and counseling, or providing other forms of assistance. You should use child-friendly offices or counseling rooms for direct work with children and adolescents.



This child-friendly room at the hospital in Golfito, Costa Rica is used to provide counseling and other forms of assistance to child and adolescent trafficking victims.



This child-friendly office at the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Liberia, Costa Rica is used to meet with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



This child-friendly office at the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Paquera, Costa Rica is used to meet with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



This child-friendly office at the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Santa Cruz, Costa Rica is used to meet with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



Child-Friendly Meeting Rooms

Child-friendly meeting rooms should be used when conducting activities with children and adolescents. These meeting rooms can be used for group counseling sessions or meeting with children alongside their family members. These spaces can also be used for educational or extracurricular group activities, such as a prevention or risk reduction session on trafficking in persons with a group of adolescents, sessions with adolescent mothers and their children, or various skills-building workshops with children and adolescents.



This child-friendly meeting room at the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) office in Liberia, Costa Rica is used to conduct prevention and risk reduction sessions on trafficking in persons with adolescents.



This child-friendly activity room at an NGO in Costa Rica is used to conduct group activities with child and adolescent trafficking victims.

Child-Friendly Activity Rooms

Child-friendly activity rooms should be used for activities with children and adolescents. In some of these spaces, there are ping pong tables or foosball tables for children and adolescents to use for recreation. You should ensure that children and adolescents know what the space is being used for at different times. Toys and activities should be put away when not in use to keep the room or area tidy. Eliminating clutter can reduce stress and help children and adolescents to feel safe, calm, and comfortable.



Child-Friendly Examination Rooms

Child-friendly examination rooms in hospitals or healthcare facilities should be used for medical examinations of children and adolescents. You should follow the protocols and procedures in place for use of these child-friendly spaces.



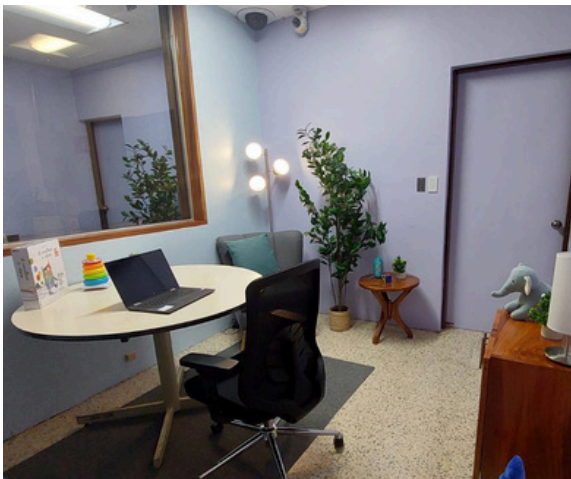
This child-friendly examination room at the hospital in Golfito, Costa Rica is used for medical examinations with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



This child-friendly examination room at the hospital in Golfito, Costa Rica is used for medical examinations with child and adolescent trafficking victims.

Child-Friendly Gesell Camera Rooms or Interview Rooms

Child-friendly Gesell Camera rooms or interview rooms should be used to conduct investigative or forensic interviews with child and adolescent trafficking victims who are involved in cases as victim-witnesses. You should follow the protocols and procedures in place for use of these child-friendly spaces, including for recording of interviews.



This child-friendly Gesell Camera room at the prosecutor's office in Liberia, Costa Rica is used to conduct investigative interviews with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



This child-friendly activity room at an NGO in Costa Rica is used to conduct group activities with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



Different items in child-friendly spaces

Different furniture and decorations, as well as materials and supplies should be used in child-friendly spaces. While there are best practices that can be applied in the choice of furniture and decorations, materials and supplies,³ there are many different ways to utilize child-friendly spaces and the choice of what is included in the space will depend on the location itself, the children and adolescents that you are working with, and in what capacity you work with them. Below are some options and ideas that have been used by the IACT Program in creating child-friendly spaces.

Furniture and Decorations

Couch: A couch offers a comfortable place for children and adolescents to sit or even lie down. Practitioners can use a couch to sit next to a child or adolescent instead of across from them, which can facilitate trauma-informed interactions.

Soft Chair: Soft chairs (versus hard plastic or hard wooden chairs) offer comfortable places for children and adolescents to sit. Two soft chairs can be set across from one another to facilitate interactions with children and adolescents and can feel less confrontational than chairs separated by a desk.

Nesting Table: Nesting tables (tables that can be stacked over one another) can be utilized for children and adolescents to do activities (such as writing, drawing, playing with toys) or by practitioners, such as a moveable desk. These tables are easily rearranged, which offers agency to children and adolescents in how they want to interact with the child-friendly space.

3. See Creating Child-Friendly Spaces: A How-To Guide available at aprendizaje.warnathgroup.com



Ottoman or Stool: Ottomans and stools provide options for children and adolescents to sit and can also be used as tables for activities (such as writing, drawing, or playing a game). Because ottomans and stools can be easily moved, this offers a sense of control to children and adolescents in the child-friendly space as they can select where to place them. Ottomans and stools can also be used for additional seating if parents or others are utilizing the space.

Console Table: A console table provides storage for materials and supplies (such as games or toys). Console tables can be used to eliminate clutter and keep the child-friendly space open.

Rug: Rugs can be used to make a child-friendly space feel more comfortable and also allow for children and adolescents to sit on the floor.

Plant: Plants (real or artificial) connote a connection to nature and are shown to reduce stress and promote a sense of calm and comfort.

Mural or Artwork: A mural or artwork can make a child-friendly space feel more calm and comfortable. Art and images on the wall, particularly those connected to nature, not only add visual interest but also can create distractions to alleviate stress.

Decorative Lights: Decorative lights can be used to make a child-friendly space feel calm. If appropriate, some decorative lights (such as in examination rooms) can be used to create distractions to alleviate stress.

Pillow or Cushion: Pillows and cushions serve multiple purposes. They make a room more comfortable. They can provide a place for a child or adolescent to lay their head. They are also an item to hold and squeeze or use as a barrier to “protect” themselves and feel safe.

Furniture and Decorations

Games and Toys: Games and toys can be used by children and adolescents while they are waiting to meet with practitioners or used by practitioners to help children and adolescents share their stories and emotions.

Art Supplies: Art supplies can be provided to children and adolescents as an activity while they are waiting to meet with practitioners or used by practitioners to help children and adolescents share their stories and emotions.



