



Innovations in Addressing Child Trafficking

Child-Friendly Spaces in
Guanacaste, Puntarenas, and San José

Costa Rica



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.

IACT is being implemented by The Warnath Group from 2020-2025 in close collaboration with the Government of Costa Rica and civil society organizations, through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The Warnath Group is an organization specialized in evidence-based programs to address human trafficking, including child trafficking.



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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.

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

Practitioners working with child and adolescent trafficking victims 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.



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-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 child and adolescent trafficking victims 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.



IACT Program

Child-Friendly Spaces in Costa Rica



**The IACT Program developed 60 child-friendly spaces
across 16 locations.**

PANI La Cruz, Guanacaste	5
PANI Liberia, Guanacaste	11
PANI DARI, Liberia, Guanacaste	15
Prosecutor Office, Liberia, Guanacaste	18
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Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI La Cruz**



The IACT Program developed five child-friendly spaces at the PANI La Cruz office.



The main waiting area for the PANI La Cruz office, which is the space where children and adolescents first interact with practitioners and is important to setting the foundation for a trauma-informed and child-friendly experience.

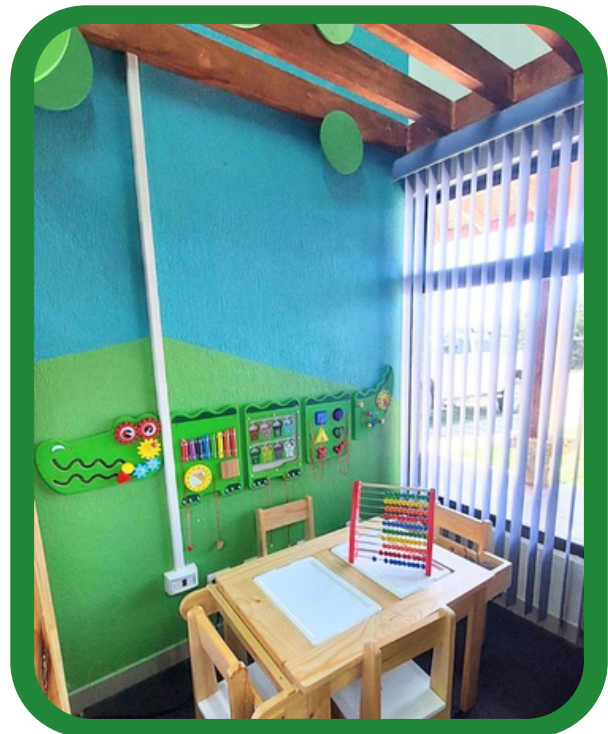


An open waiting area for younger children to wait for appointments and/or while their parents or siblings are meeting with PANI practitioners.

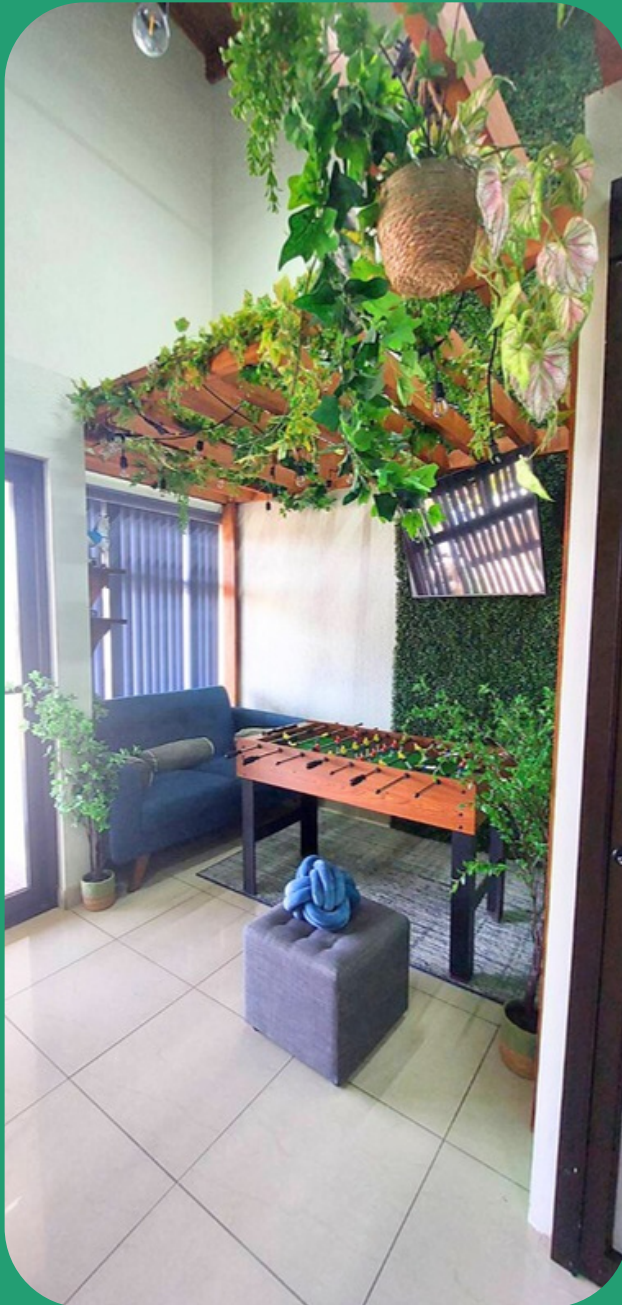


If a waiting area is child-friendly, the child or adolescent will be more likely to feel safe, calm, and comfortable as they wait to meet with practitioners.

In developing a child-friendly waiting area, think about the different ages of children and adolescents who will be waiting and how to accommodate their specific interests and needs.



A “teen zone” for adolescents to wait for appointments and/or to meet with PANI practitioners for receiving services such as psychological care, counseling, and case management.





A room where child and adolescent trafficking victims can meet with PANI practitioners for the purposes of preliminary identification and/or receiving services such as psychological care, counseling, and case management.





A second room where child and adolescent trafficking victims can meet with PANI practitioners for the purposes of preliminary identification and/or receiving services such as psychological care, counseling, and case management.



Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI Liberia**



The IACT Program developed three child-friendly spaces at the PANI Liberia office.



An office used by PANI practitioners 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.



Zona Adolescente

Teen zones give adolescents more privacy, which helps them to feel safe, calm, and comfortable.



This "teen zone" is a dedicated area for adolescents age 13 and older to wait where they can be safely supervised.





This open waiting area was designed specifically for younger children, utilizing engaging toys and child-size furniture to make the space more inviting.



Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI DARI Liberia**



The IACT Program developed two child-friendly spaces at the PANI DARI Liberia Office.



This child-friendly space is for PANI practitioners to provide emergency protection, psychological care, counseling, and case management to child and adolescent trafficking victims.



The main waiting area for the PANI DARI office was equipped with items to make children and adolescents feel as comfortable as possible during their first interactions with practitioners.



Child-friendly waiting areas are important to setting the foundation for a trauma-informed and child-friendly experience.



Child-Friendly Spaces at the **Liberia Prosecutor Office**



The IACT Program developed two child-friendly spaces at the Liberia Prosecutor Office.



This child-friendly Gesell Camera room is for conducting investigative or forensic interviews with child and adolescent trafficking victims who are involved in cases as victim-witnesses.





The room ("observer room") across from the Gesell camera room can be used by prosecutors or staff from the Department of Social Work and Psychology to meet with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



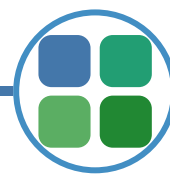
Child-Friendly Spaces at **CEPIA**



The IACT Program developed two child-friendly spaces at the NGO CEPIA.



An area where child and adolescent trafficking victims can engage in prevention and protection activities, meet with CEPIA staff, and/or receive services (psychological care, counseling, case management).





An “early childhood” waiting area and play area for younger children.

These areas can be used for interventions with younger children and/or for younger children to play while their parents or siblings are meeting with CEPIA staff.



Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI Santa Cruz**



The IACT Program developed five child-friendly spaces at the PANI Santa Cruz Office.



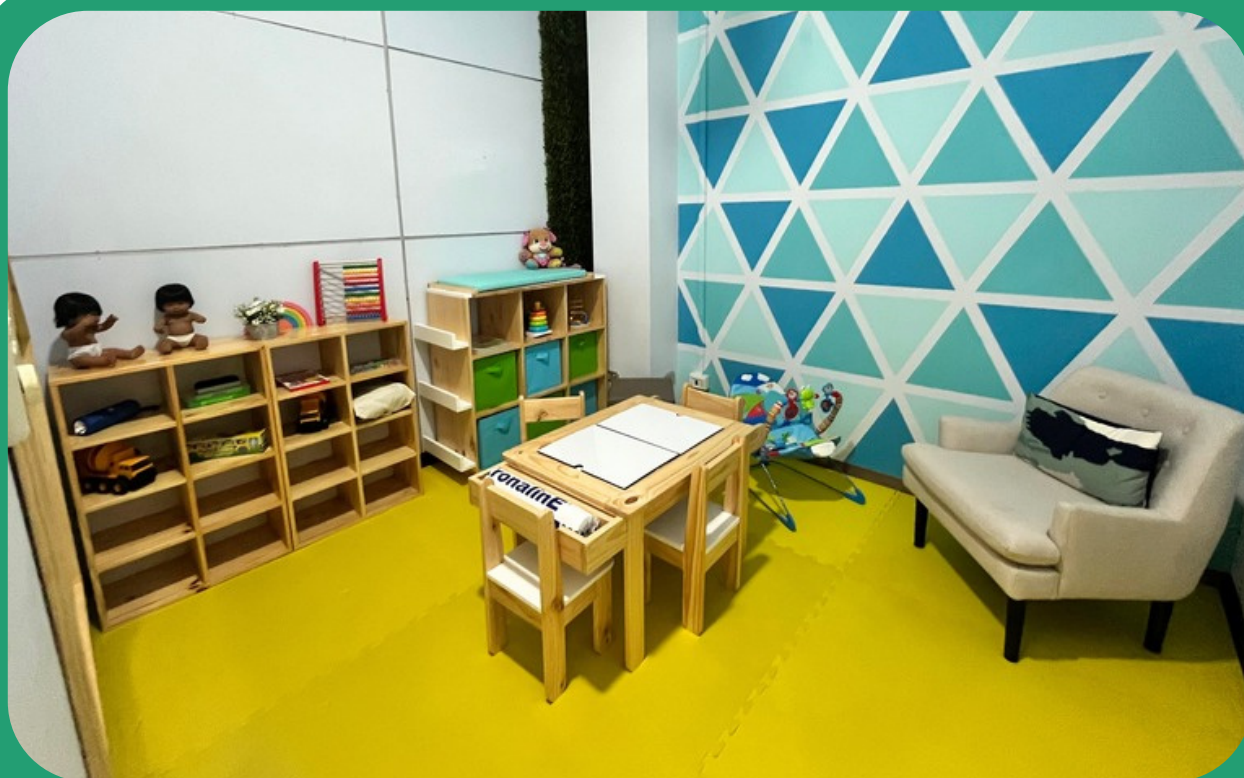
A room where child and adolescent trafficking victims can meet with PANI practitioners for the purposes of preliminary identification and receiving services such as psychological care, counseling, and case management.





Have you noticed these monster dolls in IACT Program child-friendly spaces?

Emotion Monsters represent the emotions of love, anger, fear, happiness, calmness, and sadness in colors that correlate with those feelings. These dolls are made locally in Costa Rica. Practitioners have found that these have been one of the best tools for children to use to explain their emotions.



An “early childhood” waiting room for younger children. This room can be used for interventions with younger children, as well as by adolescent mothers who are breastfeeding.



This “teen zone” is for 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.





The main waiting area for the PANI Santa Cruz office includes a mural that was created by a local artist with input from children and adolescents to promote calmness and well-being by connecting to the landscape of Guanacaste.



Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI Nicoya**



The IACT Program developed four child-friendly spaces at the PANI Nicoya Office.



These two rooms are for child and adolescent trafficking victims to meet with PANI practitioners to receive psychological care, counseling, and case management.





In this "teen zone," adolescents are surrounded by natural elements. The design is intended to evoke serenity, peace, and comfort while they wait for appointments or activities.





The main waiting area includes a play area designed specifically for younger children, utilizing engaging toys and child-size furniture to make the space more inviting. The IACT Program commissioned a mural that was created by a local artist with input from children and adolescents. The mural connects to the landscape and history of Nicoya.



Child-Friendly Spaces at the **Face of Justice Shelter**



The IACT Program (alongside other organizations) contributed to the development of a new, child-friendly safe house for adolescent trafficking victims, including the main salon where trafficking victims can engage in prevention and protection activities, meet with Face of Justice staff, and/or receive services (psychological care, counseling, case management).



Face of Justice provides a safe environment for females age 12-17 who are survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons.



Child-Friendly Spaces at the **Rahab Foundation**



The IACT Program developed four child-friendly spaces at the Rahab Foundation.



These offices are for trafficking victims to meet with Rahab staff for the purposes of receiving services (psychological care, counseling, case management).



The IACT Program also developed an area where trafficking victims can engage in prevention and protection activities, meet with Rahab staff, and/or receive services, as well as an “early childhood” play area for younger children (the children of trafficking victims).



Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI Paquera**



The IACT Program developed five child-friendly spaces at the PANI Paquera Office.



These two rooms are for child and adolescent trafficking victims to meet with PANI practitioners.



The open waiting area for younger children was created to give younger children a space to play and/or to meet with PANI practitioners to receive services.



Open waiting areas give children privacy and independence while allowing for supervision by parents, guards, or practitioners.



The “teen zone” utilizes materials and furniture that appeal to older children, like a foosball table and a television. The “teen zone” can be used by adolescents who are waiting for appointments or for engaging adolescents in structured activities.



The central area for the PANI Paquera office, which is visible from most of the building, was enhanced to make it feel safe, calm, and comfortable.



The IACT Program added a hanging garden in this space to make the entire office feel connected to nature and child-friendly.



Child-Friendly Spaces at the **Puntarenas Judicial Complex**



The IACT Program developed six child-friendly spaces at the Puntarenas Judicial Complex.

This multi-use room doubles as the “teen zone” for adolescents and an additional room for interviewing child and adolescent trafficking victims.

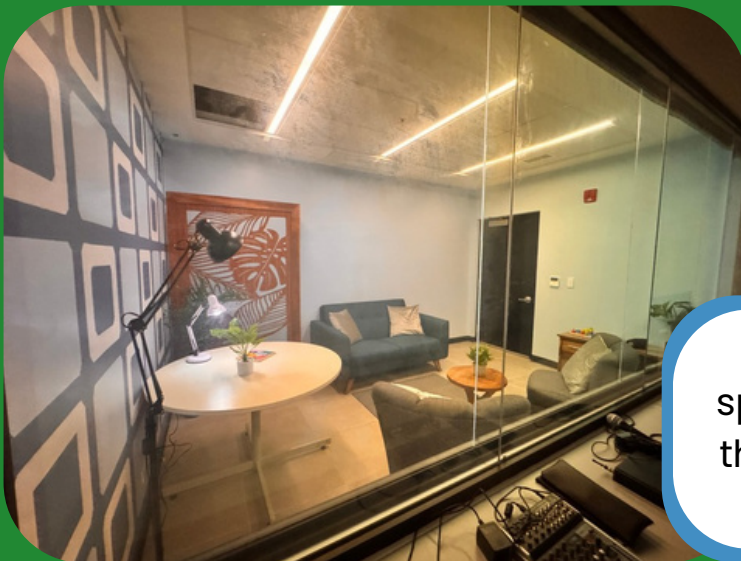




These two Department of Social Work and Psychology Gesell camera rooms are used to conduct investigative interviews with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



The prosecutor Gesell camera room is for conducting forensic interviews with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



Gesell Chambers are special observation rooms that are divided by a one-way mirror.



An “early childhood” waiting area for younger children.



Research shows that spaces with depictions of natural elements such as landscapes, animals, plants and/or water reduce stress and promote a sense of calm and comfort.



A room utilized by prosecutors to meet with child and adolescent trafficking victims.



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.



Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI DARI Puntarenas**



The IACT Program developed two child-friendly spaces at the PANI DARI Puntarenas Office.

The main waiting area for the PANI DARI office is a welcoming space for children, adolescents, and their families.



This child-friendly space is for PANI practitioners to provide emergency protection, psychological care, counseling, and case management to child and adolescent trafficking victims.



A couch offers a comfortable place for children and adolescents to sit or even lie down. At the PANI DARI office, the couch folds into a bed that can be used to provide emergency accommodation to children and adolescents.



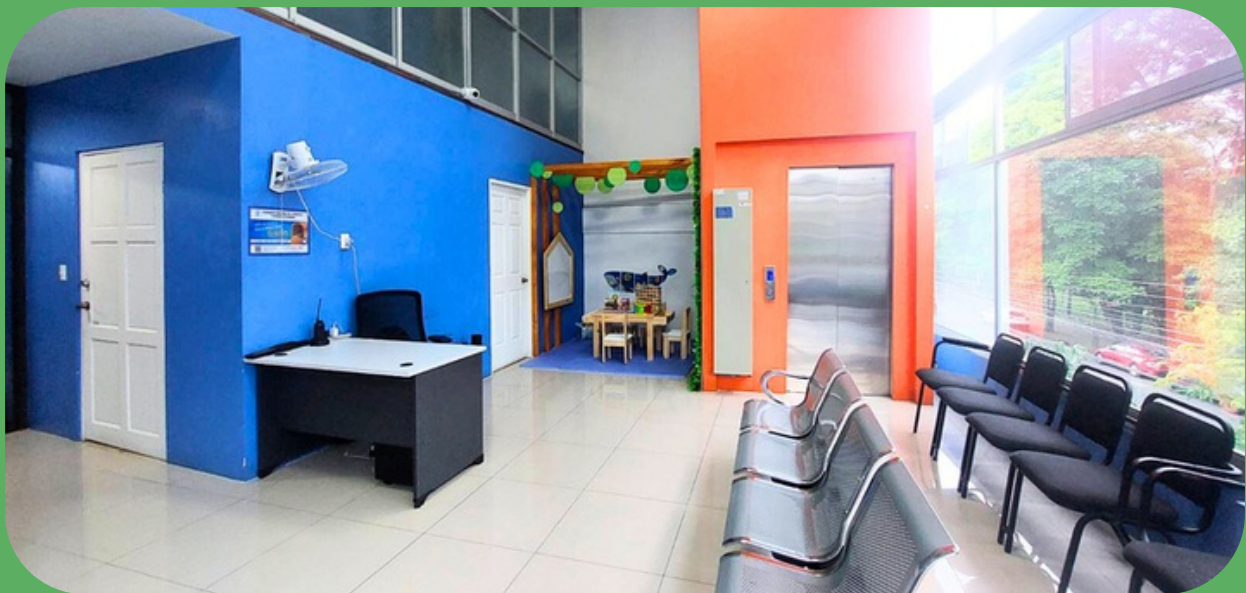
Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI Garabito**



The IACT Program developed six child-friendly spaces at the PANI Garabito Office.



The open waiting area for younger children features toys, art supplies, and educational tools to keep children occupied and comfortable while waiting for appointments.





This large and open child-friendly space can be used for educational or extracurricular group activities, such as prevention or risk reduction sessions 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.



Eliminating clutter and overcrowding can reduce stress and help children and adolescents to feel safe, calm, and comfortable.



This “teen zone” is for 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.



This “early childhood” waiting room can be used for interventions with younger children.



This room also provides space for adolescent mothers who are breastfeeding.





This room is for child and adolescent trafficking victims to engage in prevention and protection activities, meet with PANI practitioners, and/or receive services (psychological care, counseling, case management).



Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI Quepos**



The IACT Program developed six child-friendly spaces at the PANI Quepos Office.

The PANI Quepos Office includes four separate rooms that each provide a space for practitioners and child and adolescent trafficking victims to speak and address needed services.





The main waiting area for the PANI Quepos office, which is utilized by all visitors to PANI to wait for appointments, includes an area for younger children, as well as an area for adolescents.



Developing this area included additions to the “corridor” to make the entire office child-friendly.



Child-Friendly Spaces at **PANI Corredores**



The IACT Program developed three child-friendly spaces at the PANI Corredores Office.

Adolescents can utilize dedicated “teen zones” for a variety of reasons, like waiting for appointments with practitioners, finding calm in a possibly busy office, and playing games for entertainment.



Research shows that spaces with natural light and artificial lighting that mimics natural light can reduce stress and promote a sense of calm.

Lamps, pendants, and uplighting can also help to mitigate perceived stress or discomfort.





The open waiting area for younger children was created to give younger children a space to play and/or to meet with PANI practitioners to receive services.



Psychological care, counseling, and case management are some of the services that PANI practitioners provide in this dedicated child-friendly space.



The mural was created by a local artist with input from children and adolescents and connects to the natural environment of Corredores.



Child-Friendly Spaces at the **Golfito Hospital**



The IACT Program developed four child-friendly spaces at the Golfito Hospital.

The corridor leading to the Social Work Family Therapy Room.



Warnath Group added a mural to this space to make this part of the hospital feel connected to nature and child-friendly.



The Social Work Family Therapy Room is used to meet with child and adolescent trafficking victims and their family members.



Art and images on the wall, particularly those connected to nature, not only add visual interest but also can create distractions to alleviate stress.



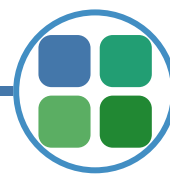


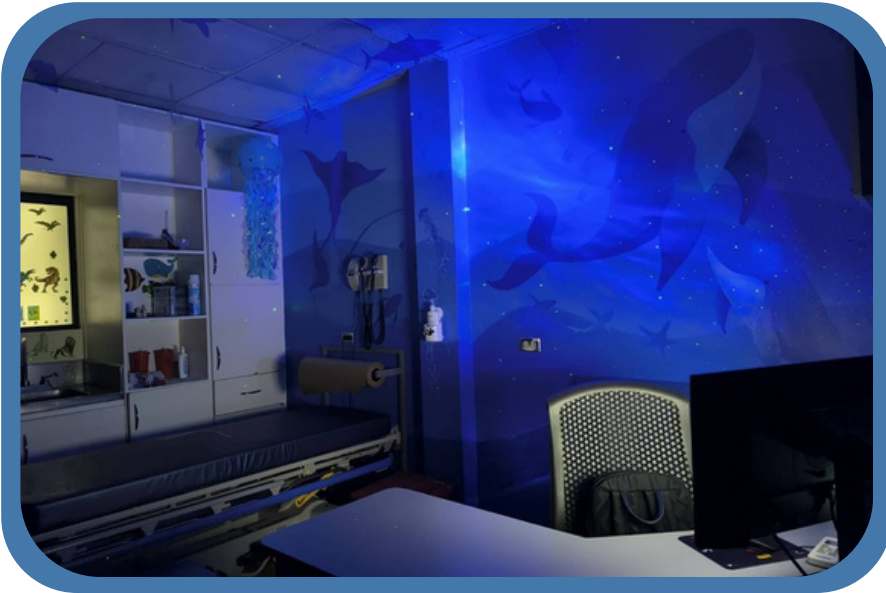
This examination room (with connected restroom) is used by medical professionals to provide medical care to child and adolescent trafficking victims.





Connected pediatric consultation and examination rooms are used by medical professionals to provide medical care to child and adolescent trafficking victims.





A special feature of the pediatric consultation and examination rooms is the decorative lighting.



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.



