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BETHPAGE

# Abuse victims get a Safe Place

■ Nassau, nonprofits open second location

■ Center combines child, domestic abuse services

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An initiative designed to help victims of child abuse and domestic violence in Nassau County officially opened its new location in Bethpage yesterday.

The Safe Place is a collaboration involving two nonprofit organizations — Coalition Against Child Abuse and Neglect, and the Nassau County Coalition Against Domestic Violence — as well as several county departments, including the district attorney, child protective services and Nassau County police.

The sprawling facility in an industrial section of Bethpage offers counseling services to victims of child abuse and domestic violence and is also the place to report the crimes to police.

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"With the opening of the Safe Place, we are now better equipped than ever before to tackle these problems," said Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

tackle these problems," said Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice, who was among a group of county officials attending the opening.

"Too often health and human services programs exist in silos — separate and

apart from each other," said Nassau County Department of Social Services Commissioner John Imhof. "This affords Nassau County residents one

place to go." The Safe Place has been running since February. The

two nonprofits had been planning the co-location for five years.

Cynthia Scott, executive director of the Coalition Against Child Abuse and Neglect, said that families that experience domestic violence

also often have child abuse issues, and vice versa. The center will allow victims to get services for both problems without having to go to two separate locations.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to have one-stop shopping," Scott said. The Safe Place has interview rooms with comfortable furniture, a medical exam room, and toys and games for children.

NEWSDAY PHOTO / KAREN WILES STABLE

The facility also includes a special-services squad of the Nassau County Police Department, where four detectives work on child-abuse cases, and two rooms where they can interview people accused of abuse. The squad is sectioned off from the rest of the center by a locked door and a separate entrance, so that victims don't come into contact with the accused.

The Safe Place is a model for other nonprofits, said Sandra Oliva, executive director of the Nassau County Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

"We're on the cusp of the kind of change the not-for-profit community really needs to explore and create in order to meet the economic challenges that we're all facing now," she said.