



[00:00:00] **Scott Steele:** I could, yes, make more working somewhere else, but I would never feel the same satisfaction working anywhere else.

[00:00:11] **Christina Rouse:** Welcome to the SRCAC Exchange, a podcast series for child abuse professionals who are looking to exchange innovative ideas and gain inspiration within the CAC movement. I'm your host, Christina Rouse, Program Manager for CAC Development.

[00:00:27] **Christina Rouse:** with SRCAC. This season, we'll be focusing on the invisible threads that sustain the dedicated professionals in Children's Advocacy Centers. Our guests will partake in dynamic discussions around supportive workplace cultures, the importance of MDT relationships, What we are telling ourselves about our work and so many other topics that will ignite passion.

[00:00:50] **Christina Rouse:** So whether you are a seasoned CAC professional or just starting out in your career, join us as we delve into this critical topic.[00:01:00]

[00:01:02] **Christina Rouse:** Why do some professionals remain committed to child advocacy despite the challenges? In this episode, we'll explore the experiences of three long serving CAC professionals who've navigated decades in this demanding field. Their stories will provide our listeners with valuable insights into what drives long term dedication and commitment to the work.

[00:01:26] **Christina Rouse:** Whether you're facing struggles yourself or simply curious about the heart behind CAC work, Today's episode is for you. Our first guest is Kay Phillips, the CAC Executive Director of the Dorchester Children's Advocacy Center in South Carolina. Kay has more than 20 years of experience as a dedicated leader, educator, and advocate who has devoted her career to improving the lives of children and families.

[00:01:56] **Christina Rouse:** Let's dive into her story and what keeps her  
[00:02:00] motivated. So since we're talking about staying power in the

CAC field, Kay, how long have you been working in the CAC or child abuse field?

[00:02:13] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** Well, August the 2nd will be 20 years for me.

[00:02:17] **Christina Rouse:** Wow. We just need to pause for a minute and really celebrate that tenure.

[00:02:24] **Christina Rouse:** That's amazing. And I know we're going to get into how you've managed to stay in the field for that long, but I do want to highlight how rare it is that CAC professionals stay. For 1015 plus years, and I know you're probably familiar with the staffing survey that NCA just recently put out, but I'm going to give you some statistics.

[00:02:48] **Christina Rouse:** And then I want to hear your thoughts on how you feel about that. Knowing how long you've been in the field. Okay. So, they reported that only 3 percent of the field has over 15 [00:03:00] years of experience. And if we think about how big our field has grown over the last couple of years, that might be surprising for folks.

[00:03:08] **Christina Rouse:** Of the over 6, 000 professionals that completed the survey, UK are among About 180 other people in our entire CAC field. So when you think about that comparison, what are your thoughts? How does that make you feel?

[00:03:25] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** I guess I'm a little surprised at that because that is such a low percentage in our field.

[00:03:32] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** But then on the other hand, as you watch the child protection field. There's so much turnover and it's definitely understandable for so many reasons and not to diminish the fact that the work is hard.

[00:03:46] **Christina Rouse:** You mentioned just our field in general, having high turnover rates, the survey not only talked about the tenure in the field and looked at how long people have stayed, but they also measured.

[00:03:57] **Christina Rouse:** That 42 percent of our [00:04:00] field only stay between about one to three years. The largest group of our field has such low tenure and longevity. Are you surprised by that data at all?

[00:04:12] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** Not at all. Not for one second. No, that is typical. And I have noticed that it's more typical post COVID. It just is. And maybe it's the new entries into the field.

[00:04:28] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** Every generation changes the way they like to work. That may have a lot to do with it as well. But definitely does not surprise me at all. We're experiencing that same thing at our CAC.

[00:04:39] **Christina Rouse:** Well, we're really here to highlight your secrets into how you stayed in the field for so long. So I know our listeners would love to know how you've managed to maintain Your passion and dedication to the field, despite kind of what you had already mentioned, the challenges and the stressors inherent in the work.

[00:04:59] **Christina Rouse:** So [00:05:00] what's your secrets? Kay.

[00:05:01] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** I think that for me personally, it was just a calling. It was definitely a calling for me. My background is business. And so I decided. After some life events changed for me, I decided to go back to school and I was running a successful business and decided to go back to school because I just personally wanted my life to mean more and I wanted to make my life more purposeful and give back more than I was doing.

[00:05:33] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** So I went back to school in my 30s. And everything just sort of fell into place at that point in time for me, based on my spirituality. The fact that I was seeking guidance for my purpose in life. And then over the years, it didn't just fall into place in a couple of years. By the way, it was. Years of school and all of that, but then it did it [00:06:00] just fell into place and I really didn't know what I wanted to do to be perfectly honest with you.

[00:06:04] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** I did not know what I wanted to do. So, the fact that I'm here, and this is our organization's 20th year as well.

It just was a calling and everything fell into place. And I always call it a God thing because it definitely was for me. Absolutely that way. And I think that that passion has never left. So never think of doing anything else because I love what I'm doing.

[00:06:27] **Christina Rouse:** And not a lot of people can say that they love what they do. So how do you remind yourself of that when you are dealing with Crisis, trauma, high stress, what do you go back to to keep that passion alive?

[00:06:41] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** I think the reason I can deal with it more so is that I always look at the successes and appreciate the successes we have.

[00:06:50] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** If we were not here, then we wouldn't have those successes. Those children may not get the care that they need if they had to go somewhere that was further away. [00:07:00] So I do appreciate those successes and know that we're doing good work. And so as long as I know overall we're doing good work, I also understand my limitations and I'm not not, and I cannot make sure that everything goes the way that we would like to see it go.

[00:07:17] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** And certainly when you're in MDT and cases you know are not going to go the way you would like to see them go, that's just something you have to accept. You can't change it, so you have to accept it.

[00:07:28] **Christina Rouse:** How would you help newer professionals, either right hired into the field or considering coming into the field?

[00:07:36] **Christina Rouse:** How would you help them or provide insight to them on how to build a long lasting career in the CAC movement?

[00:07:44] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** I think that it either. Is or is not something that you can stay in long term. I really am not sure that you can do anything if it is really weighing on you. It is really something that is not for you.

[00:07:59] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** I think really, [00:08:00] you do need to not stay in the profession. It's not good for yourself. It's not good for the people you're working with and it's not good for clients. So, as much as I hate to say that, I don't try to salvage when they're burnt out. I try to keep them from getting burnt out, but I don't try to salvage them when they feel like they cannot do this work anymore.

[00:08:20] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** I definitely support their decision to move on.

[00:08:24] **Christina Rouse:** You mentioned a couple of things when we started talking about what some of the challenges might be. 20 years that Might not keep people in the field as long as we'd like them to be

[00:08:40] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** we're not all powerful So there's a lot of things that we can't Control and I think that when you want to help and especially if you want to fix something You're not able to fix things Everyone doesn't think the same.

[00:08:55] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** And so one of the things that I had to learn early on [00:09:00] was that just because I think that this is what I think would be optimal for this family isn't necessarily what that family banks. And so you have to respect that, and that's not in that they're not protected. We're not taking care of, but just that your thoughts are not necessarily theirs and theirs are good enough.

[00:09:22] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** You can't control that. So you need to be able to accept it.

[00:09:26] **Christina Rouse:** And with longevity in the field comes wisdom. And I know you probably have some insightful wisdom as it relates to what could you tell another CAC director that might be dealing with high turnover. Or seeing a lot of staff come and go, what suggestions might you have for them?

[00:09:49] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** I really wish I know it is a struggle. There is no question about it. It's a challenge now more than it's ever been. And [00:10:00] that I will attribute to covet and then post covered covered

really changed the landscape for us as I know it did every other business that I know of across the board in every field is changed.

[00:10:13] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** So, I think that it is getting better now. Thank you. The applicants are more available now than they have been. We're getting more qualified people than we have been getting since COVID and our applications. It is getting better, so I'm hopeful in that respect. And so I can only say that it's a problem.

[00:10:34] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** And I think that that's 1 of those things that you have to deal with in running an organization that you have to deal with it. You do the best you can. I think that probably one of the best talents I have is to surround myself with really good people. So I really try to do that. And so when we're hiring, we're really trying to do that every time we hire.

[00:10:56] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** And so losing somebody that you really thought would really have been [00:11:00] great in this field long term is hard. But again. You can't control it. There's nothing you can do if it is not a good fit for them. And there's nothing you can do if they really get into the field and really don't like the work. So it's just something you have to accept.

[00:11:17] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** It just makes your job harder. You're having to then continually just try to Advertise in all ways you can to try to get the best applicants and then interview, try to make the best judgments when you interview and then try to keep them with all the best programs and benefits and just. Trying to make sure you're having to take care of themselves and you're taking care of them.

[00:11:45] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** You do everything you can, but in the long term, it's really. Sometimes not enough

[00:11:50] **Christina Rouse:** and in closing, Kay, I'd love to know what one word would you give someone if they're kind of [00:12:00] thinking about should I stay? Should I go? What should I do? What advice would you give that person?

[00:12:05] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** I don't think I can do it in 1 word, but I would have to say, do what you think is best for you.

[00:12:11] **Kay W Phillips, PhD, LISW-CP:** And the clients that you'd be serving.

[00:12:13] **Christina Rouse:** That was Kay, sharing some truly powerful insight into what drives long term commitment to this work. Next, we're joined by Jennifer Gamble, who has dedicated over 18 years to CAC work, specifically in family advocacy. Jennifer is the Family Services Coordinator at the Child Advocacy Center of Rutherford County in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

[00:12:37] **Christina Rouse:** Let's hear Jennifer's perspective on longevity in the field and the lessons she's learned along the way. All right. So to start, Jennifer, can you share with our listeners how long you've been working in the field of child advocacy and what initially drew you to this important work? Okay.

[00:12:59] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** Sure, [00:13:00] so I started my job here at the CAC in 2005.

[00:13:03] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** I actually did my student internship here. I studied social work at Middle Tennessee State University and this topic, which is very important to me, I've had some family members that were victims as children and I didn't know that until I was an adult, but it just made me really passionate. I really like the idea of being able to speak up for children when no one else is going to do that for them.

[00:13:27] **Christina Rouse:** So, you had an idea of the field through your internship before you decided to work in the field.

[00:13:33] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** Yes, I was very lucky. I was able to do my 1st practicum here. And I loved it, and I had to go somewhere else for the 2nd, because that was the rule back then. But then, luckily, this job came up, and I had had a few other jobs and I was working at and this job came open and I was so excited.

[00:13:52] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** And so blessed to get it because. This type of role is what I think I do the best in rather than investigating. I just [00:14:00] love my job. I really love it.

[00:14:02] **Christina Rouse:** So now that you're almost 20 years in to this, did you ever imagine that you would be in this role still almost 20 years later?

[00:14:15] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** I've always loved it, so I've never really thought about losing.

[00:14:17] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** I love it. It just kind of feels like a part of me if that makes sense. It's just part of who I

[00:14:22] **Christina Rouse:** am,

[00:14:23] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** my job.

[00:14:24] **Christina Rouse:** Has there been experiences you've had over the course of your career that have reinforced your decision to want to stay in the field? Absolutely.

[00:14:34] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** I've had some clients that have contacted me years later and told me really nice things and how much help it was to come through the CAC and how everybody helped them and how they couldn't have done it without us.

[00:14:48] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** And there's 1 time, I actually had a gift brought to me, which I know we're not supposed to accept gifts, but it was left on my desk and it was just a little figurine and there was a little note written by the mom. And it was wanted to let, you know, [00:15:00] how appreciative I am for you helping my children and getting them in with the counselor has made the world's difference or something like that.

[00:15:06] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** But it was just like a really sweet card. And so little reminders along the way. That you're helping people really kind of keeps you fresh.



[00:15:16] **Christina Rouse:** And so when we think about longevity, that comes with the increased exposure to secondary traumatic stress. So how have you managed? Being exposed to that trauma and also the dedication and passion you have for the work.

[00:15:35] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** In the last few years, I've really taken up exercise and weightlifting. So you have to have something to put yourself into that's not just work all the time. A long time ago when I first started, I don't think self care was a big Buzzword 20 years ago, if people went to a therapist, they didn't talk about it.

[00:15:53] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** But now I tell all of my students, if you don't have a therapist, and you're going to be a social worker, you need to find 1 [00:16:00] because I'm not ashamed to say I talked to 1 month a week usually. And it just kind of helps you out, keep you focused and not lose your life and. I truly feel called to this work, so I'm not going to leave it because I've seen how important it is.

[00:16:16] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** And I genuinely enjoy all of our detectives and people that we work with. It's just. I hate to say it's like a family, but it kind of is. So we're just all trying to do the best we can to get justice for children and safety. And to me, there's nothing better.

[00:16:34] **Christina Rouse:** Were there things that you wish you would have known about the work that might have made you want to stay longer?

[00:16:40] **Christina Rouse:** You've stayed very long, but were there things that you discovered that you were like, Oh, if I would have known this when I started, I either would have been like, Yeah, this is for me, or maybe I need to find a different job.

[00:16:51] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** I just wish I had known more about self care. Back then, because I was actually diagnosed with hypertension when I was [00:17:00] 26, I did not have a healthy balance.

[00:17:03] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** I just went all in to work, just all in and I neglected my exercise and I started eating good food because I was hearing sad stuff all the time. And let's go have lunch was the topic of the

day. So I have changed so much of that. And Try to put myself up there now and a long time ago, it was just about work, work, work.

[00:17:23] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** And it still is about work, but I'm also keeping myself healthy. And I really wish I had understood how

[00:17:30] **Christina Rouse:** important that was 20 years

[00:17:31] Jennifer Gamble, BSW: ago.

[00:17:32] **Christina Rouse:** Are those some of the messages that you talk to your new hires about, or even some of the interns you all have at your office?

[00:17:38] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** Yes, I share my story with all of my interns and employees about a better health journey and all the bad things that were going on.

[00:17:46] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** But I think I was just Absorbing everything of the job and not seeing a therapist, not eating healthy, not doing exercise. I was just working, working. So I really, really tried to explain [00:18:00] work balance to people and make sure that they're understanding. What can happen to you if you don't, because I do have a story that I share.

[00:18:08] **Christina Rouse:** What were some of those systems or resources that were the most helpful for you throughout your career? For

[00:18:14] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** Well, 1 thing is having a very supportive supervisor and our supervisor, she recognizes that most of us are moms. If I want to go see my child do a talent show at school, like, that's not a problem.

[00:18:29] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** I have a really good team. Somebody could cover for me. So she's always pressed into us that, you know, family first, but of course our job is first, but also she recognizes that we have things we want to do with our children sometimes. So that has definitely been a plus. And then she's always giving me positive feedback, told me I'm doing a good job.

[00:18:52] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** I can ask her anything, and we've known each other so long, you know, we can just shoot it straight with each other and talk. So having a [00:19:00] supportive supervisor, and we do really have a great team right now. Everybody knows their role, everybody's willing to pitch in and help. So, we just have a really great team, so that helps.

[00:19:11] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** But I also think establishing relationships with your CIPPIT partners is huge. Really get to know those detectives and CPS workers when they come in. Put them in your phone. Pay attention. Talk to them. And that can just be helpful.

[00:19:25] **Christina Rouse:** Are there things that individuals can say to themselves or maybe powerful questions they can ask themselves when they're considering staying in the work for a long period of time?

[00:19:37] **Christina Rouse:** Well, I think

[00:19:38] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** people should know when they're done, especially if you're done and you've got a bad attitude, it's going to show and you're not going to be helpful to children or families because I seriously get up as long as I'm okay. I'm ready to come to work. I'm excited. I love the people I work with.

[00:19:55] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** I love my mission. I love it all. So, if you wake up and you're hating going [00:20:00] to work, that's a big red flag. That helps me stay in the game and to know that child abuse, unfortunately, is not going to stop happening. But I know how to help fight against it in my own way and our team does too. So, I feel like there's nothing better than that.

[00:20:15] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** Just keep coming to work. Keep teaching the younger generation how to do things and learn from them too. I really do love it.

[00:20:24] **Christina Rouse:** To close this out, Jennifer, I'd be curious to know, what is the hope that you have for folks in the field who've been

around for a long time? And why does it matter that we have staff that have long tenure in the CAC field?

[00:20:42] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** Well, I think to me, my personal opinion, it matters. Because children are going to get the best service as possible. If you have people in the field that have been working these cases, and we know how child molesters think and the things that are in their mind, and we can bring that information when we're talking about cases and [00:21:00] say, well, you know, did this happen?

[00:21:01] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** Did this happen? And then detectives will be like, yes, that did happen. And I don't know. It's just crazy. After you work this so long, you kind of. Know some things about how people think and just knowing your network. There are people at our kids that have their personal cell phones. They're friends of mine and they do the medical exams here for us in Nashville.

[00:21:22] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** And so we're just so connected. It's small here, but it's not that small. I'm really know a lot of people and so I can be like, oh, yeah, let's call so and so and help us with that. And the longer you've been somewhere, the more people, you know, and I think people trust you more to, I know you've been. Doing this for whatever amount of time, so I think it's important for kids to not have people that are just coming to the door and leaving every 6 months because you're not learning.

[00:21:48] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** Like, people have been here for years, so you just build on your knowledge every year. I just did my best and that's really all you can do. But I think just longevity really helps children [00:22:00] and the more knowledge you have where you can help somebody. And that just comes with time when I 1st started, I wanted to know everything and I used to be so stressed out when I was super young.

[00:22:09] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** And then I finally realized this is going to come with time and experience and it just has to take time. So that was hard for me, but. It's really true with time, but you just get better. So, be patient, I would like to tell the new advocates to be patient with yourself, be gentle with yourself, ask questions.

[00:22:28] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** If there's something you think would be beneficial for a client, speak up. If a parent says something and you're not really sure what they mean, say, well, what do you mean by that? Or tell me more about that. Or did someone hurt you as a child? Just ask those hard questions because we're the only ones that probably will in that moment.

[00:22:46] **Jennifer Gamble, BSW:** And then we can potentially get them help. For their own child trauma.

[00:22:50] **Christina Rouse:** I say that a lot every week. We've just heard some incredible wisdom from Jennifer. And now let's turn our attention to our final [00:23:00] guest. Robert Scott Steele is the Senior Forensic Interviewer at Harmony House Children's Advocacy Center in St.

[00:23:06] **Christina Rouse:** Clairsville, Ohio. Scott has been a forensic interviewer for 16 years and brings yet another unique perspective on what it takes to stay satisfied in this work. and committed to making a difference in the lives of children and families. I think our listeners would love to hear from you. How have you managed to maintain your passion and dedication to the field, despite some of the challenges and the stressors that we know are inherent in our work?

[00:23:37] **Scott Steele:** We talk about that a lot in the CAC world and the forensic interviewing world, and I'm a bit of an oddball. From the very beginning, When I saw my first forensic interview, when I was just observing them before I was trained, before I did any, I was overwhelmed by the ability of the forensic interviewer to have a child trust them [00:24:00] and talk about things that are so intimate.

[00:24:02] **Scott Steele:** I was really surprised that that was happening before my eyes, live. And when I started doing the forensic interviews, It was even better, of course, because the child was responding to me,

[00:24:17] **Christina Rouse:** and

[00:24:17] **Scott Steele:** I was feeding off the positivity of this child just having met me, feeling safe enough, entrusted enough to tell me these things that maybe they hadn't told anyone else before, and I was elated.

[00:24:34] **Scott Steele:** Honestly, I thought it was a beautiful thing to have somebody trust you that much to have a child look into your eyes and feel safe enough to talk to you about things. A lot of times the kids will come in and they'll talk about things that they haven't disclosed. They come in for 1 thing and they disclose other things.

[00:24:51] **Scott Steele:** And when that happens internally, I'm thinking. They really trust me. They haven't told anybody this [00:25:00] stuff, but today, right now in this room with me, with this person, they just met, they feel that they can talk about anything. And I don't know that much has ever made me feel better in my life than a child trusting me.

[00:25:14] **Christina Rouse:** What do you get out of your job that leaves you so satisfied?

[00:25:18] **Scott Steele:** When I come in every day, I get excited about meeting a new family and about talking to someone and really reviewing within myself how I'm going to make this the best. Safest place that this child or special needs at all can talk about anything and it energizes me and it makes me feel like I've accomplished something that's as important as anything anybody else can accomplish to give everything over for an hour, 40 minutes, 20 minutes.

[00:25:49] **Scott Steele:** To a child or a special needs adult and allow them to have their say, and you're just allowing them to have the process that gives them that [00:26:00] opportunity. And so, when I leave at the end of the day, and we've done 1, 2, 3, 4 interviews. And I do my best. We all make mistakes when we're doing them. I feel like I've allowed them to have a voice that they didn't have before.

[00:26:15] **Scott Steele:** And I don't think there's anything more important in life than people recognizing your voice and listening to you. So I think they feel better when they leave. And then that in turn helps me feel better. So it's a little selfish too.

[00:26:29] **Christina Rouse:** Do you think there are common misconceptions about CAC work that you think important to learn early in your career that could help you maybe stay longer if you knew?

[00:26:40] **Christina Rouse:** We don't know what we don't know, but what are some things that you think might be good for new CAC professionals to know early,

[00:26:49] **Scott Steele:** for new people starting out in the CAC world? I think it's about perspective,

[00:26:56] **Christina Rouse:** and

[00:26:56] **Scott Steele:** I think it's about. Understanding that you're [00:27:00] here for them and that you're changing lives on a daily basis in a positive way.

[00:27:08] **Scott Steele:** We all know that these things are happening to children and special needs people, whether we talk to these people or not. But if they're in our place, they're in our CAC and are allowing us to talk to them, then we know that people are at least trying to help them. And I just think that is the most positive thing that you can experience, that we know it's happening.

[00:27:32] **Scott Steele:** We don't even really know what percentage we see, but we know if they're here, there are people that are going to recognize what this child is saying. It's their job. The police investigate it. The CPS workers make sure that the child is safe, but we've allowed them to have that voice and everybody can come together and at least hear what that child or that special needs adult is saying, and then they can decide what they're going to do after that.

[00:27:58] **Scott Steele:** But our job is just to give them that [00:28:00] voice and. As I said before, it's probably, I think, the most important thing in life is for you to feel like people are hearing you and also feel like they're believing you. You know, we know a lot of the research has said that even worse than the impact of abuse is the impact of that child or special needs adult telling someone what happened to them and being told that they're not believed.

[00:28:24] **Scott Steele:** So I think it's important. To be patient and take the time with them. And I think a lot of times when we're really busy, we forget

to do that. And I have to remind myself to do that. So I give them a tour and it gives them time to joke with me, to ask me questions for their parent, to ask me questions or their guardian, whoever it might be, and I think that just breaks down the walls a little bit.

[00:28:49] **Scott Steele:** So, that helps a lot.

[00:28:50] **Christina Rouse:** So, with your years of tenure comes wisdom. What advice would you give to other CAC professionals [00:29:00] struggling with either high staff turnover or maybe even they themselves are questioning whether they should stay in the field? What advice would you give kind of those folks right on that kind of edge?

[00:29:13] **Scott Steele:** So, I would say you really look at what do you want out of your job. That's really important. You really have to assess and look within yourself, especially when you're young, when you're looking at what am I going to do for the next 20 or 30 years, right? I'm not in that position anymore, so I'm fine where I'm at, but I think you have to be okay with it.

[00:29:33] **Scott Steele:** I think you have to look at your perspective. Can you change your perspective? Sometimes you can't. Sometimes people can't. Sometimes agencies can't. And I think you have to look at the support you're going to have within your agency and from your other partner organizations, too. Is everyone supportive at this organization?

[00:29:51] **Scott Steele:** Do they support the difficult work that a forensic interviewer is trying to do? And do you feel that support? Those are the biggest things. I'm [00:30:00] lucky. I feel support from my executive director and from my partners that work with me here and also my partners at other agencies. So you really have to do your own assessment and decide for yourself what is rewarding to you and what's rewarding to me.

[00:30:15] **Scott Steele:** has been really enjoying that level of trust I get from the person I'm talking to, whether it's a child or a special needs adult. There are success stories, and they might not be every one that you talk to, but that one made 16 years worthwhile for sure. It only takes one.



[00:30:36] **Christina Rouse:** And in closing, what would be one way that You could inspire others to love what they do.

[00:30:45] **Scott Steele:** One word? That is very difficult. But I'll tell you, what I see here is hope. And I see many people every day that come here that really care about what's going on. [00:31:00] And that gives me hope. And the resilience I see, especially in the children, gives me hope. We hear a lot of negative things about upcoming generations, and I can tell you that they are resilient and brave and fine.

[00:31:17] **Scott Steele:** It's a very, Hopeful service that we do provide and it saves lives and it can even save our lives.

[00:31:26] **Christina Rouse:** I hope you've enjoyed hearing the incredible conversations today with three inspiring CAC professionals who've shown us the power of long term dedication in this field. Whether you're just starting out or you've been in the field for decades, I hope today's episode reminded you of the impact you are making.

[00:31:45] **Christina Rouse:** And that you're not alone in facing the challenges that come with this work. It's not always easy, but as we've heard today, reminding yourself of why you do the work will help you stay passionately committed. [00:32:00] Thank you for joining us for a thought provoking conversation. Much appreciation for our guests on this episode.

[00:32:07] **Christina Rouse:** Remember, in the moments between episodes, look for the invisible threads that connect you to your purpose. If what you heard sparked your curiosity to learn more, hit the subscribe button and follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn at Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Center for more learning content.

[00:32:25] **Christina Rouse:** All resources mentioned in this podcast are linked in the show notes below. The SRCAC Exchange Podcast is made possible through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice under award number one five PJ DP 22 GK 0 3 0 5 9 jj The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this podcast are those of the guests and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice.

[00:32:59] **Christina Rouse:** The [00:33:00] SRCEC Exchange Podcast Season 3 is hosted by me, Christina Rouse, and produced by Peachtree Sound. Music provided by Midnight Dream.