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New ChildSafe Center being built with healing in mind

ChildSafe and Overland Partners teamed up to create a space that would interact with nature and provide a place for kids, families, and everyone who works at the center to heal from the trauma associated with child abuse and neglect.

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SAN ANTONIO — Bexar County struggles with one of the state's highest rates of child abuse and neglect. But a report or arrest is just the first step, and kids with trauma- and their families- have a long road to recovery ahead. That's where children's advocacy center "ChildSafe" comes in- and soon, they will have a much larger, state-of-the-art facility in which to provide support and services.

Surrounded by trees and tucked along parks and Salado Creek, Childsafe's new home near I-10 and East Houston is being built with a mission in mind.

"As you're walking or driving in, you're getting a natural environment," said Overland Partners Senior Principal and VP of Operations Michael Rey. "We did not want this to be an institutional building, we did not want it to be residential-- it was more of a visitors center, welcome center experience."

ChildSafe helps kids who've faced abuse and neglect, and their families. As more people needed their services, they needed more space- but wanted to put love into every detail.

"People go well why are you building this beautiful building and why is it so nice?" said ChildSafe CEO Kim Abernethy. "And I think...what could be more important than children being abused and neglected? When those children come in they're going to walk up to the building they are going to look at it and say we are so important, we are so important- and I'm going to be OK if I walk into this place. And that's what it projects."

With child-level windows, healing gardens, green roofs, and art kids can play in, the project - in the works for years - is taking shape and is expected to open this August. ChildSafe hopes it's a place where all of Bexar County will feel welcome, for everyone affected by child abuse and neglect- and the entire community.