

Washington State Association of Children's Advocacy Centers
2008 WSACAC Legislative Committee Position Statement

Children's Advocacy Centers

Children's Advocacy Centers are the most effective and cost effective way to meet the justice needs of children in our communities who have been victims of abuse.

In 1990 Congress determined that the child welfare system was having difficulty addressing the needs of children who had experienced abuse. The process of child abuse prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment involves numerous agencies, professionals and family members. Orchestrating coordination between everyone is challenging. Poor collaboration can result in aggravating the child's trauma or failing to prevent its recurrence.

The Children's Advocacy Center's evidence-based, nationally recognized approach of a collaborative, multidisciplinary team has been shown to improve communities' local response to child abuse and neglect.

In addition, a cost benefit analysis of CAC's found that investigations conducted at Children's Advocacy Centers were less costly, averaging \$1000 in savings, over traditional investigations.

In Washington State, Children's Advocacy Centers are the only fully collaborative response to child abuse. Pulling together representatives from law enforcement, Child Protective Services, prosecuting attorneys, medical providers, advocates, therapists, and others professionals, multidisciplinary teams meet on a regular basis to staff cases and track progress as cases move through the system.

Services are provided in a child-friendly environment with the goal of being a "one-stop-shop" for families. These services include forensic interviews, medical evaluations, child, family and justice system advocacy and therapeutic services.

In communities without Children's Advocacy Centers, a child is frequently shuffled between multiple offices and may need to repeat their story with multiple persons, some of which have no specific training in forensic interviewing of children.

Recognized by the Department of Justice as a best practice, the Children's Advocacy Center model has been replicated in over 600 communities in all 50 states and is beginning to spread internationally. Each year over 160,000 children are served at Children's Advocacy Centers across the country.

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