



## Position Statement

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### Why Children's Advocacy Centers are a Good Investment During Times of Economic Uncertainty

**Children's Advocacy Centers are the most efficient and cost-effective way to meet the justice needs of children impacted by abuse or neglect in our communities.**

During times of economic uncertainty, the risk of child abuse and neglect increases.<sup>i</sup> At the same time, states and local governments, struggling to balance their budgets, reduce staff, including prosecutors, law enforcement officers, caseworkers, and others involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect. As a result, there is an increased need for efficient and cost-effective responses to child abuse and neglect.

In 2014, Children's Advocacy Centers in North Carolina served 7706 total new children, the majority of whom (66.4%) were alleged victims of sexual abuse. Three-quarters of those children were under the age of 12 and of those, 39% were under the age of six.

Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) are a nationally recognized model for providing a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, community response to child abuse and neglect. These centers coordinate the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse and neglect at the local level. Working with law enforcement, CPS, prosecutors, medical personnel, therapists, and advocates, Children's Advocacy Centers coordinate a wide range of services including forensic interviews, medical evaluations, advocacy, and evidence based therapeutic intervention. Research<sup>ii</sup> has found that children who receive services from a CAC are:

- More likely to have access to medical evaluations and other forms of medical care.
- More likely to have a referral to therapeutic services.
- Have greater access to community resources needed to help them recover from the abuse

In addition, parents are more likely to report a high rate of satisfaction with the process.

For cases of child sexual abuse coordinated through Children's Advocacy Centers, research<sup>iii</sup> has found:

- Greater police involvement in CPS cases and joint investigations
- Greater involvement by multidisciplinary team members in observing forensic interviews
- Greater involvement by multidisciplinary team members in case review.

CACs increase training to professionals, consultation with other agencies, child abuse prevention and community education on maltreatment and mandated reporting.



Additionally, Children's Advocacy Centers have been found to be cost effective. Research by the National Children's Advocacy Center found that on average, there was a \$1,318 savings in the prosecution of cases investigated through a Children's Advocacy Center than those of a community without a CAC. A cost benefit analysis done by the National Children's Advocacy Center suggests that for every dollar spent on a CAC, there is a benefit of \$3.33 provided.<sup>iv</sup>

Children's Advocacy Centers in North Carolina leverage funding, state funding represents 3% of the total accredited CAC's budgets. For each dollar of state funding, CACs provide another \$25.66 of federal or local funding as match.

In times of economic uncertainty, Children's Advocacy Centers are an even more important part of the community response to child abuse and neglect, and provide a cost-effective, efficient, compassionate multidisciplinary response to child victims of abuse and their families.

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<sup>i</sup> Houshyar, S. (December 2008) *Addressing the Needs of Vulnerable Families During an Economic Crisis*, First Focus. Retrieved from [www.firstfocus.com](http://www.firstfocus.com) 1/5/09.

<sup>ii</sup> Cross, T., Jones, L., Walsh, W. et al., (2008) *Evaluating Children's Advocacy Centers' Response to Child Sexual Abuse*, Juvenile Justice Bulletin, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. (NCJ218530)

<sup>iii</sup> Cross, T., Jones, L., Walsh, W.; et al, (2007) *Child forensic interviewing in Children's Advocacy Centers: Empirical data on a practice model*. Child Abuse & Neglect 31 - 1031-1052

<sup>iv</sup> Formby, J., Shadoin, A. L., Shao, L, Magnuson, S. N., & Overman, L. B. (2006). *Cost-benefit Analysis of community responses to child maltreatment: A comparison of communities with and without Child Advocacy Centers*. (Research Report No. 06-3). Huntsville, AL: National Children's Advocacy Center.