Putting the needs of child abuse victims first

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE®

The Colorado Children's Alliance is a membership organization dedicated to helping local communities respond to allegations of child abuse in ways that are effective and efficient – and put the needs of child victims first. The Colorado Children's Alliance provides training, support, technical assistance and leadership on a statewide level to local children's and child advocacy centers and communities throughout Colorado responding to reports of child abuse and neglect.

A children's advocacy center is a child-focused, facility-based program in which representatives from many disciplines, including law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, mental health, medical and victim advocacy, child advocacy, work together to conduct interviews and make team decisions about investigation, treatment, management and prosecution of child abuse cases.

The Colorado Children's Alliance strongly believes that the combined professional wisdom and skill of the multidisciplinary team approach results in a more complete understanding of case issues and the most effective child- and family-focused system response possible.

The Colorado Children's Alliance is an accredited chapter of the National Children's Alliance

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NCA Statistics - Statistical Report

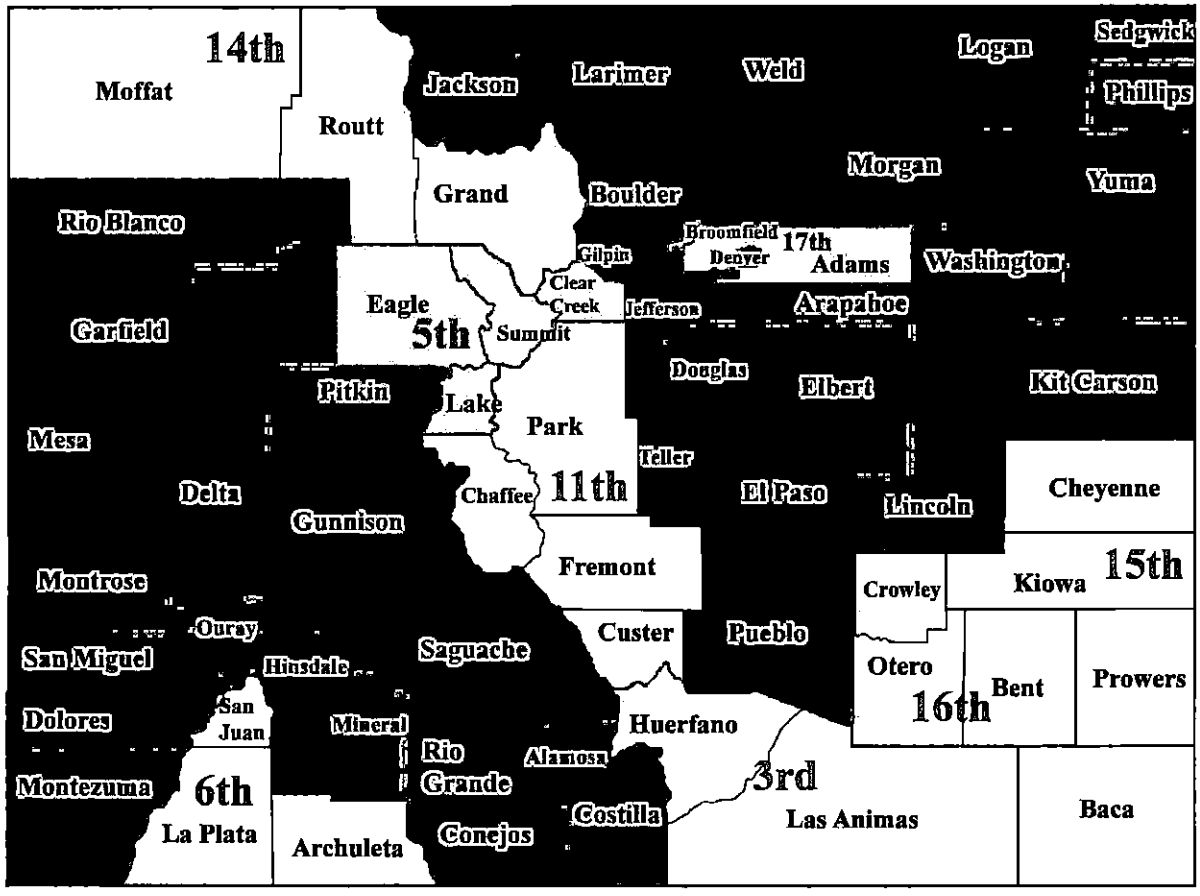
2016

State: Colorado

Total number of children served at the CAC:	5,812
Gender of children:	
Male	1,838
Female	3,962
Undisclosed	12
Age of children at first contact with center:	
0-6 years	1,670
7-12 years	2,348
13-18 years	1,794
Undisclosed	0
Total number of alleged offenders:	4,305
Relationship of alleged offender to child:	
Parent	1,066
Stepparent	324
Other Relative	1,135
Parent's boyfriend/girlfriend	284
Other known person	1,263
Unknown	380
Age of alleged offenders:	
Under 13	340
Age 13 to 17	610
Age 18+	2,281
Alleged Offender Age Undisclosed	1,094
Types of abuse reported:	
Sexual Abuse	4,511
Physical Abuse	619
Neglect	116
Witness to Violence	546
Drug Endangerment	82
Other	513
Race or ethnicity of total children seen at CAC:	
White	2,866
Black/African American	410
Hispanic/Latino	1,652
American Indian/Alaska Native	121
Asian/Pacific Islander	51
Other	378
Undisclosed	334
Number of the children receiving services:	
Medical Exam/Treatment	684
Counseling Therapy	930
Referral to Counseling Therapy	2,827
Onsite Forensic Interviewing	5,054
Offsite Forensic Interviewing	53

Other Services Provided By CAC	Children	Adults	Age Unknown
Case Management/Coordination	19,182	3,882	92
Prevention	23,518	4,442	0
Other Categories	926	5,790	2

COLORADO CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS – 15 ACCREDITED, TWO DEVELOPING 2018
Jurisdictions are by Judicial Districts.



CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS:

Helping children heal from abuse while holding offenders accountable

About CACs:

CACs are child-focused centers that coordinate the investigation, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse while helping abused children heal. CACs emphasize the coordination of investigation and intervention services by bringing together professionals and agencies as a multidisciplinary team to create a child-focused approach to child abuse cases. Although some aspects of a multidisciplinary approach to child abuse can exist without a facility, a supportive, child-focused facility is fundamental to a CAC. The location is designed to create a sense of safety and security for the children.

there are now 777 CACs nationwide, with new centers developing in communities across the country.

Each CAC is unique in its structure. Although every accredited CAC in the country shares elements in common, *each CAC is designed to meet the needs of its particular community*.

CACs Are Accountable:

Accreditation of CACs through the National Children's Alliance assures the highest standard of care is provided to victims.

Accredited membership in NCA requires that programs meet specific standards. These standards ensure effective, efficient and consistent delivery of services by children's advocacy centers to child abuse victims throughout the country.

The Standards themselves can be viewed on the NCA website (www.nationalchildrensalliance.org).

For every standard a CAC is required to meet, there is a tangible, measurable benefit to the child and a tangible, measurable benefit to the investigation, prosecution and long-term management of child abuse cases.

CACs Prevent Abuse and Keep Children Safe:

CACs provide intervention services. But CACs also share the goal of stopping abuse before it even starts. Nationwide, and in just the last year, CACs provided child sexual abuse prevention education to 1.6 million

individuals – adults and children. Often, this was in a school setting, but CACs were also out in the community meeting with civic organizations, church groups, and neighborhood groups, to help educate and raise awareness so the community can stop this devastating pattern before it starts.

CACs Save Money:

Coordinated investigations are more efficient and more effective; CACs make this a reality.

All CACs have multidisciplinary teams that meet regularly to plan cooperative protocols and review cases that are being investigated. Multidisciplinary teams are more successful in reducing duplication, ensuring that cases do not fall through the cracks, and resolving more cases successfully.[i] Collaborative approaches to investigation bring wider viewpoints into making decisions, help identify more resources for children, and provide a smoother experience for children and families;[ii] and CACs provide ongoing training to local communities to help support the use of multidisciplinary teams. Communities with CACs are more likely to review cases regularly, helping to work through particularly difficult cases and resolve them with the team's input.[iii] Not surprisingly, all 50 states have passed legislation requiring government agencies to collaborate on cases of child abuse and CACs are a key component to ensuring ongoing and effective collaboration.

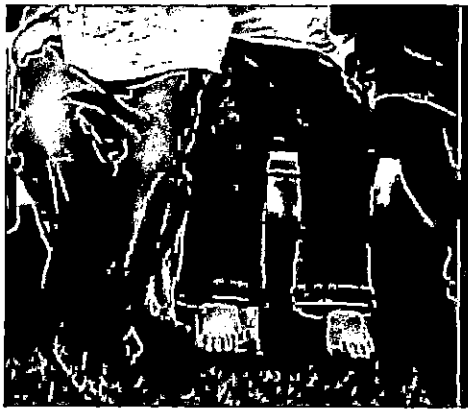
Beyond the common sense effects, there are real, demonstrable cost-savings to using CACs. A cost-benefit analysis showed that traditional investigations cost 36% more than CAC-collaborative investigations.[iv]

CACs can save as much as $1,000 per child abuse case by streamlining the process, creating efficiencies and providing effective services. As the National District Attorney's Association stated, "[d]ifficult economic times demand that police, prosecutors, and child abuse prevention professionals increase their efforts to stop child abuse through proven, effective and cost-effective methods. Multidisciplinary child abuse investigation teams ("MDTs") in association with child advocacy centers ("CACs") show the greatest potential for cost-efficient and effective prosecution."[v] The numbers bear this out: 81% of investigations in CACs were coordinated between law enforcement and child protective services, as compared with 52% in non-CAC communities.[vi]

CACs Hold Offenders Accountable:

Increased use of CACs and multidisciplinary teams has resulted in increased successful prosecutions of child abuse perpetrators. In a study comparing two districts of a large urban area over a period of 10 years, felony prosecutions of child sexual abuse doubled in the district where the use of CACs nearly tripled, while no increase in such prosecutions occurred in the district in which the use of CACs remained constant.[vii]

Other studies have shown that communities with CACs were able to make faster decisions to charge criminals with crimes against children.[viii, ix] Research also shows that defendants convicted of sex crimes against children were sentenced to longer prison terms when they had been investigated via the CAC-multidisciplinary model.[x]



Last year, CACs provided 315,806 child victims of abuse
with multidisciplinary team investigations, forensic interviews, specialized medical and mental healthcare, and victim advocacy.

Child abuse costs us $124 billion per year.[xxiii]

CACs SAVE money:

an investigation using a CAC can save as much as $1,000/child by streamlining the process, creating efficiencies and providing effective services.

What accounts for these differences? Over the last three decades, CACs have been at the forefront of efforts to improve, refine and define the way victims are interviewed, and to create a research-based methodology for forensic interviewing techniques.

The methods that specialized interviewers now use are based on extensive research showing the best ways to interview children to increase their accuracy and completeness and produce sound evidence. There is considerable agreement among experts about best practices.[xi, xii]

Moreover, CACs are significantly more likely to record the forensic interview than non-CAC agencies conducting interviews.[xiii] Recorded forensic interviews are more accurate than notes taken by interviewers, who are focused on the interview itself and not on providing a complete summary.[xiv] Children's disclosures provide a powerful incentive for suspects to confess,[xv] and recorded disclosures provide direct, reliable - and often the only - evidence to corroborate the allegations and prosecute crimes. Recording also makes the interview process transparent, so that all parties know exactly how the child was questioned. And recording pushes interviewers to become more proficient and self-aware.[xvi] Not only are offenders held accountable, but the system itself adheres to higher standards, ensuring a true measure of justice.

CACs Help Child Victims Heal:

Last year, CACs provided victim services to more than 315,000 children.[xviii] Child victims of sexual abuse who receive services at CACs are twice as likely to receive specialized medical exams, and four times so in cases not involving penetration.[xix, xx, xxi] Children seen at CACs are also more likely to receive referrals for specialized mental health treatment.

Prompt medical examinations of suspected child victims are critical to collect physical and other disclosure evidence, to begin treatment for sexually transmitted infections and to provide reassurance to the victims.

Sexual abuse victims are very likely to experience emotional trauma. They need □ and deserve □ appropriate mental health help. Here again the studies show that children seen at CACs were more often referred for behavioral health assessment than those from communities without CACs.[xxiii, xxiv]

CACs recognize and respond to the need for specialized mental health treatment for child abuse victims, and have focused on treatments that have a proven track record. CACs have been at the forefront of the movement to develop specific treatment for child abuse victims, and are working directly with mental health professionals who design and test new protocols for mental health screenings especially for CACs.[xxv] Moreover, the CAC movement has advanced the use of proven behavioral health treatment methods, including Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

CACs Are Effective:

Research demonstrates that caregivers in CAC cases are more satisfied with the investigation than those from non-CAC comparison sites. 97% of caregivers would tell others to seek help at a CAC.[xxvi]

CACs offer a child-centered, friendly location for children who have reported sexual abuse. The child-friendly environment helps the victim, while also serving the larger goal of community safety. The U.S. Department of Justice recognized and lauded this balance created by CACs, noting that children felt less intimidated at CACs than at other investigative locations.[xxvii]

The non-offending parents and caregivers of suspected child victims seen at CACs were more satisfied with their community's investigation process than those whose children were not served by CACs.[xxviii] One study cites caregivers who reported that it was the services delivered by their CAC, more than any other part of the system, that were the most important factors in helping them feel satisfied with their community's overall response.[xxix] They were especially happy with the way their CAC provided comfort to children and adults, provided information about the investigation process and coordinated the logistics for them. And of course, such comfort serves a therapeutic purpose as well, since child victims adjust better when they have greater support from their parent or caregiver.[xxx]

CACs Are Committed to Research-Supported Practice:

Last year, National Children's Alliance and its CAC members provided training to more than 53,000 child abuse professionals, ensuring sound investigations and compassionate treatment of victims nationwide.

CACs want to make sure that all child victims of abuse, in all communities, receive the help and support that they need. CACs provide training and outreach – virtually all of it at no cost or for a low cost – to communities throughout the country. The entire landscape of the field has been affected, so that even communities without CACs have adapted to the higher standards set by CACs.[xxxi] Spurred on by the growth of the CAC movement, the national professional associations of prosecutors, chiefs of police, lawyers and pediatricians have all adopted recommendations for more child-centered practices in the assessment, investigation and prosecution of child abuse. There can hardly be a community that has remained unchanged by the CAC movement.

To Help:

1. Fund the National Children's Alliance to support existing CACs and develop new ones in communities lacking one.
2. Support community education through CACs. CACs provide a single point of entry for both prevention education and effective, meaningful intervention, support and resources for child abuse victims.
3. Support CACs and their multidisciplinary team model for investigation, prosecution and treatment in child abuse cases in order to reach more children who need help.
4. Promote research-supported practices for child abuse cases in:
   a. Forensic Interviewing
   b. Medical Intervention
   c. Mental Health Treatments
5. Fund research projects to ensure quality and effectiveness of programming in CACs.

VIEW REFERENCES ONLINE

www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/NCAPolicyBriefReferences

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

NORTHEAST REGIONAL CAC

Thank you to author Chris Kenty and copyeditor Diana Goldberg for their invaluable assistance.

Through our 777 Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs), National Children's Alliance empowers local communities to effectively respond to victims of child abuse.

Last year, CACs provided victim services to more than

315,000 children[1]

www.nationalchildrensalliance.org

CACs prevent abuse and keep children safe.

Last year, CACs provided child sexual abuse prevention education to **1.6 million individuals,** many in school settings.[2]

CACs save money.

Their service delivery model saves court, child protection, and investigative dollars averaging **$1,000 per child abuse case** compared to non-CAC communities.[3]

CACs are efficient.

Providing significantly higher rates of coordinated investigations; **81 % of investigations** in CACs were coordinated between law enforcement and child protective services, compared with **52% in comparison communities.**[4]

CACs hold offenders accountable.

Increased usage of CACs and multidisciplinary teams has resulted in increased successful prosecutions of child abuse perpetrators.[5] One study shows an average **94% conviction rate** for CAC cases carried forward.[6]

CACs help child victims heal.

Child victims of sexual abuse who receive services at CACs are **four times more likely to receive forensic medical exams**[7] and increased referrals for mental health treatment[8] than children served by non-CAC communities.

CACs are effective.

Research demonstrates caregivers in CAC cases are more satisfied with the investigation than those from non-CAC comparison sites. **97% of parents would tell others to seek help at the CAC.**[10]

CACs are committed to research-supported practice.

Last year, National Children's Alliance and its CAC members provided training to **53,405 child abuse professionals,** ensuring sound investigations and compassionate treatment of victims nationwide.[11]

CACs are accountable.

Accreditation of CACs through National Children's Alliance assures the highest standard of care is provided to victims.

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"If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much."

- Marian Wright Edelman

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