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Vision & Mission

Vision

Children’s Advocacy Centers of Kansas, Inc., is the statewide membership association representing all children’s advocacy centers (CACs) in the Sunflower State. Children’s Advocacy Centers of Kansas (CACKS) provides facilitation, support, and collaborative leadership to the CACs in the state. Each CAC in Kansas is a nationally accredited independent entity, but all CACs share a common belief in our model: a coordinated, multidisciplinary response to child abuse is the most effective and most compassionate response to abused children. CACs improve the protection response to abused children. Child abuse cases handled through a CAC are better coordinated between law enforcement and child protection services, compared to a traditional investigation. More children involved with a CAC receive specialized medical evaluations and are referred to appropriate mental health services. Parents and caregivers of children served by CACs are more satisfied with the investigation process.

Mission

To promote Excellence in child abuse response and prevention through Training, Program Development, Advocacy, and Leadership.
What is a CAC?

A Children’s Advocacy Center provides a safe, child-friendly environment where advocates, law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medical and mental health professionals may share information and develop a coordinated strategy that seeks justice while also meeting the unique needs of each child and non-offending family member.
**HOW DOES THE CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTER MODEL WORK?**

**LAW ENFORCEMENT**
- The role of local law enforcement is grounded in public safety
- If not criminal in nature, law enforcement may not take action

**CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES**
- The role of CPS is to ensure that a child’s home is safe
- If the family/caretaker is not the alleged abuser, CPS may not take action

**Immediate Response**

**Priority Assigned (24-72 hours)**

**Child is brought to children’s advocacy center**

**Joint Investigation Begins**
- Forensic Interview
- Evidence Collected
- Photos Taken
- Witness Interview
- Medical Treatment and Exam

**CAC coordinates Case Review with all team members, including law enforcement, prosecution, Child Protective Services, the forensic interviewer, a mental health provider, a medical professional, and a family advocate**

**Case presented to District Attorney**

**Suspect Charged or Case Refused**

**Child & family receive mental health services—Family advocate works with family to assess critical resources and provide support as the case moves through the justice system**

**Child Removed from Home, or Case Opened for Services, or Case Closed**
**Who We Serve**

### Age

Though abuse affects children of all ages, the majority of children seen at Children’s Advocacy Centers in Kansas are under 12.

### Race

Many populations across Kansas still have barriers to accessing Advocacy Centers due to stigmas, lack of trust, or lack of access in some counties.

### Types of Abuse

The majority of cases seen at the CACs in Kansas involve an allegation of sexual abuse. In fact, more than one in ten of all substantiated victim abuse and neglect referrals to social service agencies nationwide are victims of sexual abuse.
Our Services

- Offsite Forensic Interview: 792
- Counseling/Therapy: 1,194
- Referral to Therapy: 2,163
- Onsite Forensic Interview: 3,510

Services Provided

- 69% Female
- 31% Male

Prevention Education

- Adult: 0
- Child: 4,401

Provided

Kansas CAC’s

8,211

Services to

4,401 children

in

2023

- 88% knew their offender. Most of the time, the dangers to children are not from strangers, but from someone they know and trust.
Attention to the needs and abilities of children is the hallmark of the Children’s Advocacy Center model to ensure that children are not further victimized by the systems intended to protect them. From the initial allegation of abuse, the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) approach allows the child an opportunity to talk with a single interviewer in a safe, neutral setting, thus protecting the victim from being unnecessarily interviewed by multiple people from each specific field. The team continues to work together to guide the investigation, treatment, management and possible prosecution of the case to ensure the greatest level of protection and care for the child and his/her family.

Forensic Interviews
Specially trained Forensic Interviewers work with the MDT to ensure victims are not interviewed unnecessarily and allow them to share their story in a safe, legally sound and neutral setting.

Advocacy Services
Advocacy focuses on the needs of the youth and non-offending caregiver(s), providing needed support and information along with a compassionate, listening ear.

Medical Evaluations
Specialized medical evaluations are offered to ensure the health and safety of each victim, identify any evidence of abuse, and refer for additional care as needed.

Mental Health Care
Specialized, evidence-based, trauma-focused mental health services are offered to the victim and family to help them cope with the trauma and to assist them through the healing process.

MDT Collaboration
CAC’s and MDT members come together to improve the response of the investigation and intervention of child abuse.

Prevention and Education
While there is no one thing we can do to guarantee children will be safe, there are things we can do to decrease the likelihood of abuse and improve our response to it.
Our Impact

“The fact that the facility is an actual house rather than building helped him feel even more calm and willing to speak about his trauma.”

Caregiver Survey Results

- I believe my child felt safe at the center.
  - 88.3%

- The CAC provided me with resources to support my child.
  - 93.6%

MDT Survey Results

- The CAC provides resources that build better cases.
  - 81.4%

- MDT members feel clients benefit from the collaborative approach.
  - 84.3%
Why It Matters

Child abuse and other forms of trauma can have lifelong effects on children, families, and communities.

Child trauma can last a lifetime.

Many studies have shown the strong relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), which include childhood trauma like abuse, and serious outcomes such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, substance use, health problems, and even poverty and early death.

Trauma is both common and costly to society.

How many children are we talking about? Nearly half of all U.S. children experience at least one type of childhood trauma. That exacts a toll on children, their caregivers, and their community, and our country as a whole also pays a price. Quite literally: In addition to the physical, emotional, and social costs of child abuse, it also carries economic costs.1

Abuse and other forms of trauma are common.

Nearly half of all U.S. children—some 34 million—have experienced at least one type of childhood trauma, while 16 million have experienced two or more types of trauma. (2)

Abuse carries a heavy cost.

The lifetime cost for each victim is $2.4 million

Each year, total lifetime costs of new cases of child abuse reach approximately (1)

$14.1 trillion
CACKS helps local centers identify and meet the needs of their communities by:

**Training & Technical Assistance**
Training and technical support services comprise a series of activities aimed at achieving specific learning objectives. These activities also aid in troubleshooting problems and promoting the use of innovative methods among members.

**Leadership**
Empowering members with effective leadership tips and tools. Leadership goes beyond management roles, personality traits, or hierarchy. Exceptional leaders embody credibility, trust, and authenticity. Providing you with the right guidance and tools to develop these essential skills.

**Connection to Resources**
Assisting Members in connecting with resources. Our goal is to help members access services and MDT partners available in their area, as well as to help them establish and maintain these connections over time.

**Program Development**
Supporting members to create programs that align with their CAC’s goals and objectives. Identifying the areas that need improvement and with potential growth opportunities. Aiding in engaging all necessary parties to facilitate the creation and implementation of effective program developments.

**Public Policy Activities**
Navigating the legal landscape can be difficult. CACs work within a complex web of laws, regulations, and government partnerships. Our team can help guide you through the legal maze and keep you informed about state-level developments.

The Statewide Membership Association representing all Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) in the Sunflower State.
Our Team

01. Kasey Dalke | Executive Director
02. Klarissa Ponce | Coordinator of Member Services
03. Kristena Shiflett | Operations Manager
04. Jamie Fager | Community Engagement Coordinator
05. Kimberly Garber | Accountant