

CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are safe and child-focused places that serve as the foundation of the investigation and prosecution of child physical and sexual abuse in Missouri. CACs coordinate the multi-disciplinary investigations of child abuse, providing forensic, medical, therapeutic, and case management services as part of a multidisciplinary response to child abuse allegations

REQUEST: Increase General Revenue funding for Child Advocacy Centers to \$3.5M (approximately \$600,000 or 20%)

Department of Social Services-Children's Division, Line Item 11.360 "Child Assessment Centers"

Services provided at Child Advocacy Centers:

- Forensic interviews
- Sexual assault and physical abuse forensic medical evaluations
- Victim advocacy to help families navigate the legal response and access resources
- Evidence-based mental health services
- Multi-disciplinary team case management

Children Served by MO Child Advocacy Centers:

State FY	Children Served
2015	7,073
2016	7,284
2017	7,423
2018	8,282
2019	11,225
2020	9,773
2021	10,097

Authorized under RSMo. Section 210.001, Missouri's 15 regional Child Advocacy Centers and 10 satellite sites serve children in every county of the state, over 10,000 each year.

- Lakes Area Child Advocacy Center (**Branson West**)
- Children's Center of Southwest Missouri (**Joplin, Monette, Nevada & Butler**)
- Ozark Foothills Child Advocacy Center (**Doniphan & Poplar Bluff**)
- St. Louis Great Child Advocacy Center (**St. Louis City & Kirkwood**)
- Children's Advocacy Center of East Central Missouri (**DeSoto, Union & Farmington**)
- Southeast Missouri Network Against Sexual Violence (**Cape Girardeau**)
- Child Advocacy Center, Inc. (**Springfield & West Plains**)
- Child Protection Center (**Kansas City**)
- Synergy Services (**North Kansas City**)
- Voices of Courage-Northwest Missouri Children's Advocacy Center (**St. Joseph**)
- North Central Children's Advocacy Center (**Trenton**)
- Child Safe of Central Missouri, Inc. (**Sedalia**)
- The Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri (**Wentzville & Hannibal**)
- Rainbow House (**Columbia**)
- Kids Harbor (**Osage Beach & St. Robert**)

Missouri KidsFirst is an Accredited Chapter of the National Children's Alliance and the Missouri Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America

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What services would be prioritized with a funding increase?

- An increase to the general revenue appropriation could help all Missouri CACs meet the service demands caused by their increased caseloads but specifically will improve their ability **to provide high-quality multi-disciplinary team (MDT) support in each county in their service region**. Research shows that a high-functioning child abuse investigation MDT leads to timelier case completion and increases in services provided to children and their non-offending caregivers. This ensures that children are put on the path to justice and healing from abuse.
- Missouri CACs are required to be accredited by the National Children's Alliance (NCA). New NCA standards go into effect in 2023 and include **a new requirement that CACs have at least one staff who coordinates and facilitates the day-to-day information sharing and activities of the MDT**. This role is essential to an effective MDT response yet less than half of MO CACs are able to meet this requirement due to lack of funding. Increased appropriations will build capacity for the CACs that do not have a dedicated MDT Coordinator/Facilitator and provide training and support to professionals serving in this role.
- **Funding history:** In SFY 2021, Missouri CACs served over 10,000 children. This program has been level funded since 2015 when it received a 5% increase and since that time, CACs have increased the *quantity* of services by more than 40% and the *quality* of services including prioritizing increasing access to family advocacy and evidence-based mental health services.

How are these funds distributed?

- Missouri KidsFirst, the accredited state association of Child Advocacy Centers, develops a funding formula **based on child population and county share** which is approved by the CACs and then reviewed, approved and implemented by Children's Division.

Contact:

Jessica Seitz, Executive Director
Missouri KidsFirst
(573) 415-6228

jessicaseitz@missourikidsfirst.org
