



NEW YORK STATE CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE, INC.

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www.nyschildrensalliance.org

February 4, 2015

I would like to begin by thanking the New York State Legislature for its strong support of Child Advocacy Center (CAC) programs. Without the help you have provided in securing increased funds in the past several years, many CACs would be forced to cut essential services or, even worse, close their doors. **We are grateful for your continued support.**

We are here once again to ask the Legislature to provide us with the funds that CACs need to do the difficult work of responding to the state's most serious cases of child abuse. We are asking that state funding for CACs be maintained at the 2014 level of \$7.779 million.

When the State's fiscal climate was in jeopardy, Child Advocacy Centers suffered through several years of state budget cuts that reduced our funds by nearly \$2 million a year – a 25.6% loss of program revenue. During that time, our numbers grew from 16 to 40 programs, serving 43 of the state's 62 counties. Rising numbers of child victims were being served by CACs that were operating with substantially less funds. Last year, understanding the important role that CACs play in the health and safety of our children, you generously added \$2.57 million to our funds.

In an effort to preserve this level of funding, last fall representatives from NYSCA, Inc. met with the Governor's Office to request that the 2014 Legislative add-on be incorporated into the Executive Budget. Unfortunately, the 2015 Governor's Budget did not include the add-on. So, we come before you yet again to ask for your help in providing us with the funds that we need to be effective in meeting the needs of our state's most damaged children.

We know that CAC responses are not only more effective for children and their families, but they are also less expensive than traditional investigations. A recent study conducted by the University of New Hampshire found that on a per-case basis, traditional investigations are 36% more expensive than CAC investigations. The average per-case cost of a CAC investigation is \$2,902.00 compared to \$3,949.00 for a non-CAC facilitated investigation, a \$1000 per case savings of taxpayer dollars. **CACs make financial sense for New York.**

Child Advocacy Centers are the beacon in the dark for children who have been sexually or physically abused. We exist to provide children a safe environment in which to deal with the system response that is necessary in a child abuse case and to help them navigate that system. CACs provide a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to the handling of child abuse cases. A team of county and community agencies (child protective, law enforcement, prosecution, medical, mental health and family advocates) work together to investigate and prosecute these cases and serve child victims and their families. The goal is to minimize trauma to victims, while at the same time, holding offenders accountable.

With the \$7.779 million in aid that our programs were allocated in 2014, CACs have been able to increase program services. The funds have allowed programs to expand their hours of

operation to provide coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Programs have been able to hire additional service providers: mental health and medical professionals trained in treating child abuse victims and interviewers forensically trained to talk to children. Statewide, programs have used the additional funds to enlarge their service areas, reaching previously unserved neighboring counties and tribal communities, and to move some centers to more centralized, accessible locations.

Programs have used funds to support community education and prevention initiatives, replace outdated electronics and purchase video recording equipment to document child interviews. One program has hired a computer crimes consultant to assist and train local law enforcement in child sexual exploitation cases. In sum, the funds have enabled us to do a better job: conduct better interviews, provide more comprehensive medical exams and more effective therapy, offer children and families more suitable settings in which to deal with the crisis of child abuse. **If this funding level is not maintained, we will lose the gains that we have recently made.**

In 2014, the number of children seen at a NYS Child Advocacy Center totaled more than 18,500. These children come from every corner of our state and from all walks of life and they all still need your help. The impact of abuse on children is well documented. It affects school attendance, academic performance, and graduation rates. It affects children's ability to make and sustain friendships and trust adults. Most importantly, without proper interventions and support, childhood abuse affects physical and emotional health and well-being both in the short and long-term. The good news is with effective intervention and support children can and do heal from their abuse and go on to live happy, healthy lives. CACs provide the opportunity for children to be heard and to heal.

In closing, we wish to reiterate our gratitude to this body for its support of the work that we do and of the population that we serve. We have provided you with packets of information that contain the statistical data about the issue of child abuse and the use of CACs to respond to it. But, nothing underscores the value of a Child Advocacy Center to a child and family in crisis than to ask yourself this: What if it was your child, or grandchild or someone dear to you who were sexually or physically assaulted? What if the authorities needed to interview him or her about the experience and needed detailed information? Where would you want that interview to take place? At a police station or in a child-friendly setting? Who would you want handling that investigation? Wouldn't you want it to be an experienced team of professionals trained to speak with children about such horrific acts? Wouldn't you want your child or grandchild to be seen by a therapist trained to treat children exposed to such traumatic events? These are the types of services that New York's 40 CACs strive to provide every day. **Our programs make a difference in the lives of thousands of children and families in New York. We are asking for your help in continuing this important work.**

Sincerely,



Renee M. Smith-Rotondo, NYSCA Chair

On behalf of the NYSCA Board of Directors and NYSCA Membership

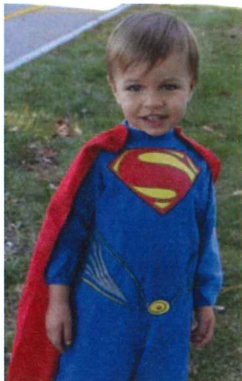
The Successes

**We would like to thank the NYS Legislature
for approving a \$2,570,000 add-on
to the 2014 Executive Budget.**



Below is a summary of how these funds were put to use in our Centers.

- ✓ **Expansion of Child Advocacy Center service area to include currently unserved neighboring counties and tribal community**
- ✓ **Service hours at Child Advocacy Centers extended to include weekends**
- ✓ **Increase in staffing: Therapists hired to provide free mental health services to child victims, Forensic Interviewers hired to enhance investigations, administrative staff hired to allow direct service staff to spend more time with clients, contracts expanded with medical professionals to increase ability to offer specialized forensic medical exams**
- ✓ **Increase in prevention work and community education**
- ✓ **Training provided for Multidisciplinary Team Members (forensic interview training, emerging trends in the investigation of child abuse, cultural competency, etc.)**



- ✓ **Replace outdated computer equipment**
- ✓ **Purchase interview recording systems for documenting forensic interviews**
- ✓ **Relocation of Child Advocacy Center to a centrally located, easily accessible area of the county**

New York State Child Advocacy Centers

Albany

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Allegany and Cattaraugus

Southern Tier Children's Advocacy Center
772 Main Street
Olean, NY 14760
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Bronx

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1775 Grand Concourse, 5th Floor
Bronx, NY 10453
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Broome

Broome County Child Advocacy Center
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Cayuga

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405 West Third Street
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Chemung

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Elmira, NY 14905
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Chenango

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Clinton

**Community Team Responding
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Child Advocacy Center**
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Cortland

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Dutchess

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Fulton

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Genesee

Justice for Children Center
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Nassau

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Onondaga

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Otsego

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Queens

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Rensselaer

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Rockland

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Suffolk

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Warren and Washington

Warren/Washington CARE Center
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Westchester

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The Problem: Child Abuse in New York State

The numbers:

- Only 38% of child victims disclose the fact that they have been sexually abused. *London, K., Bruck, M., Ceci, S., & Shuman, D. (2003) Disclosure of child sexual abuse: What does the research tell us about the ways that children tell? Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 11(1), 194-226, Ullman, S. E. (2007). Relationship to perpetrator, disclosure, social reactions, and PTSD symptoms in child sexual abuse survivors. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 16(1), 19-365*
- 90% of children who are victims of sexual abuse know their abuser. The younger the victim, the more likely it is that the abuser is a family member. *Finkelhor, D. (2012) Characteristics of crimes against juveniles. Durham, NH: Crimes against Children Research Center and Whealin, J. (2007-05-22). "Child Sexual Abuse". National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, US Department of Veterans Affairs and Snyder, H. N. (2000). Sexual assault of young children as reported to law enforcement: Victim, incident, and offender characteristics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics*
- 1 in 10 children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. *Townsend, C., & Rheingold, A.A., (2013). Estimating a child sexual abuse prevalence rate for practitioners: studies. Charleston, S.C., Darkness to Light.*
- In 2012, 275 children died in NYS of abuse and neglect. *NYS Office of Children and Family Services*
- Nearly 70% of all reported sexual assaults occur to children ages 17 and under. *Snyder, H. N. (2000). Sexual assault of young children as reported to law enforcement: Victim, incident, and offender characteristics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved January 12, 2009 from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/saycrlr.pdf> and National Crime Victimization Survey, Statistic calculated by staff at Crimes against Children Research Center 2002*
- 47 % of child abuse victims are under the age of 6, making this the largest victimization group. *Child Maltreatment 2012*
- In 2012 in New York State, there were 10,763 children involved in CPS reports with allegations of child sexual abuse. *NYS Office of Children and Family Services*
- In 2010, Child Protective Services investigated reports of child abuse and neglect involving 72,625 children in New York State. 7,991 children were alleged to have experienced physical abuse. *Child Maltreatment 2011*





Part of the Solution:

Child Advocacy Centers in New York State

“If we don’t stand up for children, then we don’t stand for much.”

-Marion Wright Edelman, founder
Children’s Defense Fund

- In October 2006, Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) were written into NYS law to provide child victims in every region of the state with “a coordinated and cooperative” system response to child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse “in an expert and timely manner” that “minimizes trauma to children and non-offending family members.” *NYS Social Services Law Section 423-a*
- Centers use a multi-disciplinary team approach to investigate, prosecute and provide treatment to children who are victims of abuse and their non-offending family members. These centers bring together specially-trained law enforcement, child protective, legal, medical, mental health and family advocacy services in a single, child-friendly location to respond to child abuse reports and the needs of child victims and their families.
- Increased usage of CACs and multidisciplinary teams nationally has resulted in increased successful prosecutions of child abuse perpetrators. One study shows an average 94% conviction rate for CAC cases carried forward. *Cross, T.P.; Jones, L.M., Walsh, W.A., Simone, M., & Kolko, D.J.(2007). Child forensic interviewing on children’s advocacy centers: Empirical data on a practice model. Child Abuse and Neglect, 31, 1031-1052 and Walsh, W.A., Lippert, T., Cross, T.E., Maurice, D.M., & Davison K.S. (2008). How long to prosecute child sexual abuse for a community using a children’s advocacy center and two comparison communities? Child Maltreatment, 13 (1), 3-13*
- CACs are often the first step that child victims take toward recovery from abuse. **96% of non-offending caregivers who received services for their child through a CAC would recommend the CAC to someone else in their situation.** *New York State Children’s Alliance 2013 OMS Report*
- Growth of CACs in New York State:
 - In 1994, the first NYS CACs were established in Dutchess and Erie Counties. *Office of Children and Family Services*
 - Today, **NYS has 40 CACs, serving 43 counties.** *New York State Children’s Alliance*
 - In 2013, **18,349** children were served by these 40 CACs. *2013 NYSCARCC Data Collection*
- **From 2007 to 2013, the number of children being served by NYS CACs increased by 70%.**



The Challenge: Funding for CACs

Studies have shown that CAC/MDT investigations save as much as \$1000 per case when compared with the cost of traditional investigations. Source: 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*

NYS Funding History

- In 2007, NYS had 32 CACs (16 Tier I, 13 Tier II and 3 Tier III) that shared \$7.808 million in state funding, including a \$1,500,000 legislative add-on.
- Between 2008 and 2011, the number of Tier 1 CACs steadily increased from 16 to 35, while state aid decreased by \$2 million, to a low of \$5.229 million in 2011 - a **25.6% loss** from the 2007 funding level.
- In 2012, the NYS Legislature restored \$750,000 of the \$2 million in lost state funding.
- In 2013, when the 2012 legislative add-on for CACs was not included in the Governor's budget, CACs worked with the NYS Legislature to restore the same \$750,000.
- In 2014, when the Governor's Budget remained at \$5,229,900 for the 5th consecutive year, the NYS Legislature responded with an add-on of \$2,570,000.
- **What this means to the children of our state:** Child victims of abuse are not getting the system response that they need. While CACs are serving more children and providing more services, state aid has shrunk. It has only been with the assistance of the State Legislature that we have been able to begin reversing this trend.

Year	CAC Funding in Original State Budget	Legislative Add-On	Total State Funding Available to CACs	Number of Children Served	Number of Tier I CACs**
2007	\$6,308,000	\$1,500,000	\$7,808,000	10,763	16
2008	\$6,181,840	\$0	\$6,181,840	11,643	16
2009	\$5,811,000	\$0	\$5,811,000	13,744	22
2010	\$5,229,900	\$0	\$5,229,900	15,851	24
2011	\$5,229,900	\$0	\$5,229,900	17,154	35
2012	\$5,229,900	\$750,000	\$5,979,900	17,762	40
2013	\$5,229,900	\$750,000	\$5,979,900	18,349	40
2014	\$5,229,900	\$2,570,000	\$7,779,900	*18,500	40

Source: NYS Office of Children and Family Services
 *Projected Total based on statistics from the first half of the year
 **Tier 1 programs meet all state standards

