



To the New York State Legislature,

My name is Linda Cleary and I am the Interim Executive Director of the New York State Children's Alliance, the membership organization for over 40 Child Advocacy Center (CAC) programs in New York State. I am writing on behalf of our membership and to extend our gratitude to the New York State Legislature for the continued support of our mission. CACs work daily to ensure that children throughout New York State receive the best possible system response to child abuse using a multidisciplinary team approach in a child focused setting where children can begin to heal. We greatly appreciate that you recognize the importance of our programs to the communities in which we work and for the children and families that we serve.

In 2007, 32 CACs, serving 10,753 children, received \$7,808,000 in state aid. Yet over the past 10 years, with the addition of new CACs, totaling over 40, serving more than 51 counties and responding to a 70% increase of child victims, state funding has decreased by more than \$2,500,000. The New York State Legislature has recognized the value of the crucial services provided by CACs, and has responded with restoration add-ons since 2012, although slightly less in 2016. These additional funds have enabled our centers to keep their doors open and to provide a higher level of services to child victims. **We respectfully request a legislative add-on to the 2018-2019 Executive Budget in the amount of \$3.2 million, so that we may continue to provide these critical services to children and their families.**

For many years, we have asked for your support and you have generously invested in our mission. In a very real sense, what we are asking you to INVEST in are the children of our state. Child Advocacy Centers serve the most vulnerable population in our state: abused children. Last year, Child Advocacy Centers provided the following:

- Served over **21,000** children who had been sexually or severely physically abused
- Provided **3,259** medical evaluations by medical personnel trained specifically in child abuse recognition and evaluation
- Over **6,600** children received trauma-informed therapy services to put them on a path to healing.

We understand, as you decide where to put state dollars, that return on your investment is certainly a consideration. If you invest in New York State's Child Advocacy Center programs, here is what you can expect in return:

1. Over 40 counties that use a proven, effective model to respond to child abuse cases. CACs employ a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to these cases. Team members are specially trained in all aspects of a case, including investigation, prosecution, medical and mental health services and victim advocacy. Teams work together in a safe, comfortable environment in the best interests of children and families who have been exposed to horrific crimes.



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2. Over 40 counties that use one state-of-the-art case tracking system to monitor cases in a consistent manner, allowing our programs to collect and analyze data, identify patterns and trends and improve program responses.
3. Over 40 counties that have the capacity to survey client families for their feedback on the services they received through use of a web-based Outcome Measurement System, allowing all our programs to assess how well we are responding to the community's needs and to adjust to meet those needs.
4. Sharing of program dollars with a whole community of agencies and providers charged with a duty to respond to child abuse. Law enforcement, child protective workers, prosecutors, medical providers, advocates and therapists are all supported in this work by the dollars that you provide. You help them do a better job through training and equipment. This directly impacts the children that we serve.
5. Programs that are experts at responding to and addressing childhood trauma. We know that a good result now, when a victim is young, can minimize the need for help – and the costs of that help society - later on in life. A study called the Adverse Childhood Experiences study examined the impact that trauma at a young age has on health (physical, mental and emotional) later on in life. The correlation between incidents of trauma (abuse, maltreatment, domestic violence, parent in jail, divorce, substance abuse) as a child and health issues (diabetes, high blood pressure/cholesterol, substance abuse, depression/suicide and other mental health issues and anti-social behavior, including crime) as an adult is striking: the study found that the higher the incidence of early childhood trauma, the more serious and numerous the health issues as an adult.
6. Programs that are now providing a multi-disciplinary response and wrap-around services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

These are the kinds of returns that you get on your investment in our programs. CACs are good at what we do, really good. We facilitate the hard, and often difficult, work of responding to, investigating, prosecuting and serving cases of child abuse – sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, and unfortunately child fatalities due to abuse. In order to continue the really difficult work that we do in the way that we do it – with sensitivity, understanding, collaboration, competence and compassion, we need the financial support of the state.

Our programs make a difference in the lives of thousands of children and families in New York. We see it every day. Please continue to financially support us as much as you possibly can. Thank you

Sincerely,

Linda Cleary, Interim Executive Director  
New York State Children's Alliance, Inc.

