

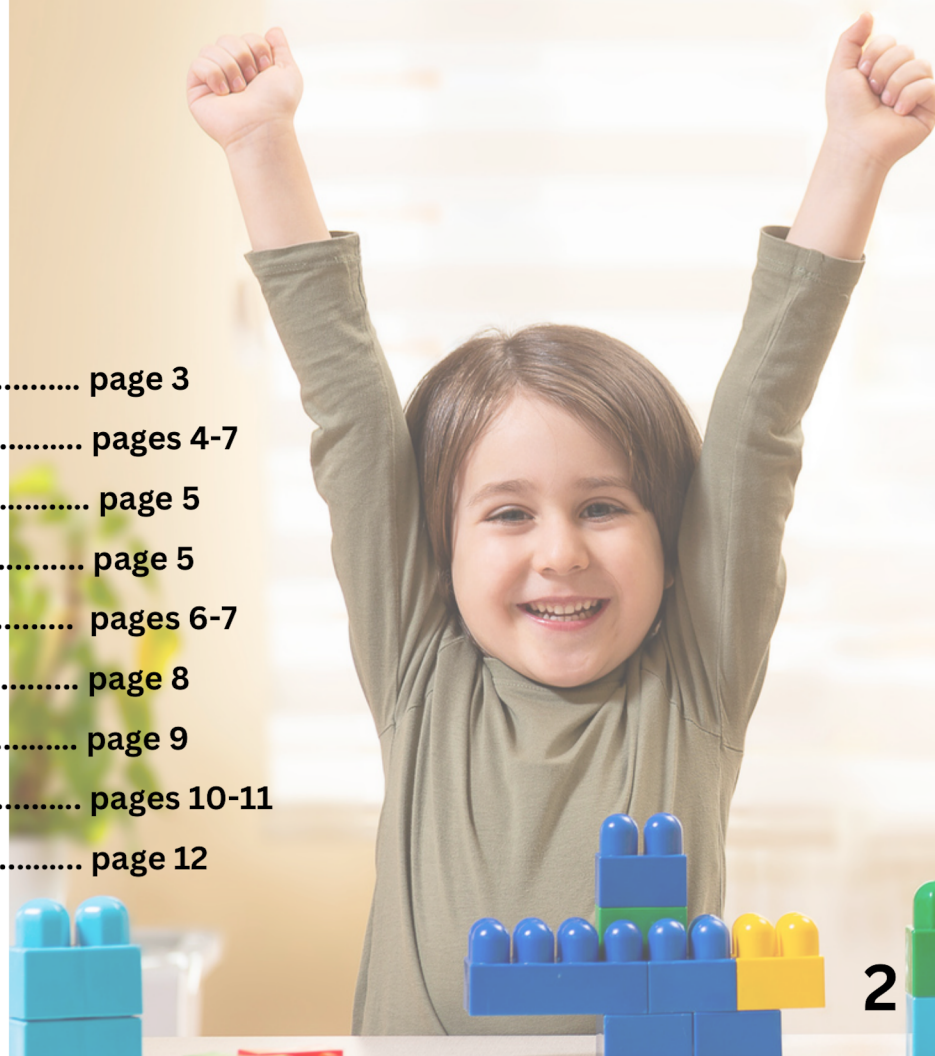
2023 Legislative Session Guide

A one-stop resource for CACs to easily access legislator contact information, key bills for CACs, correspondence templates, quick tips, and other resources to help make outreach and advocacy efforts a success!

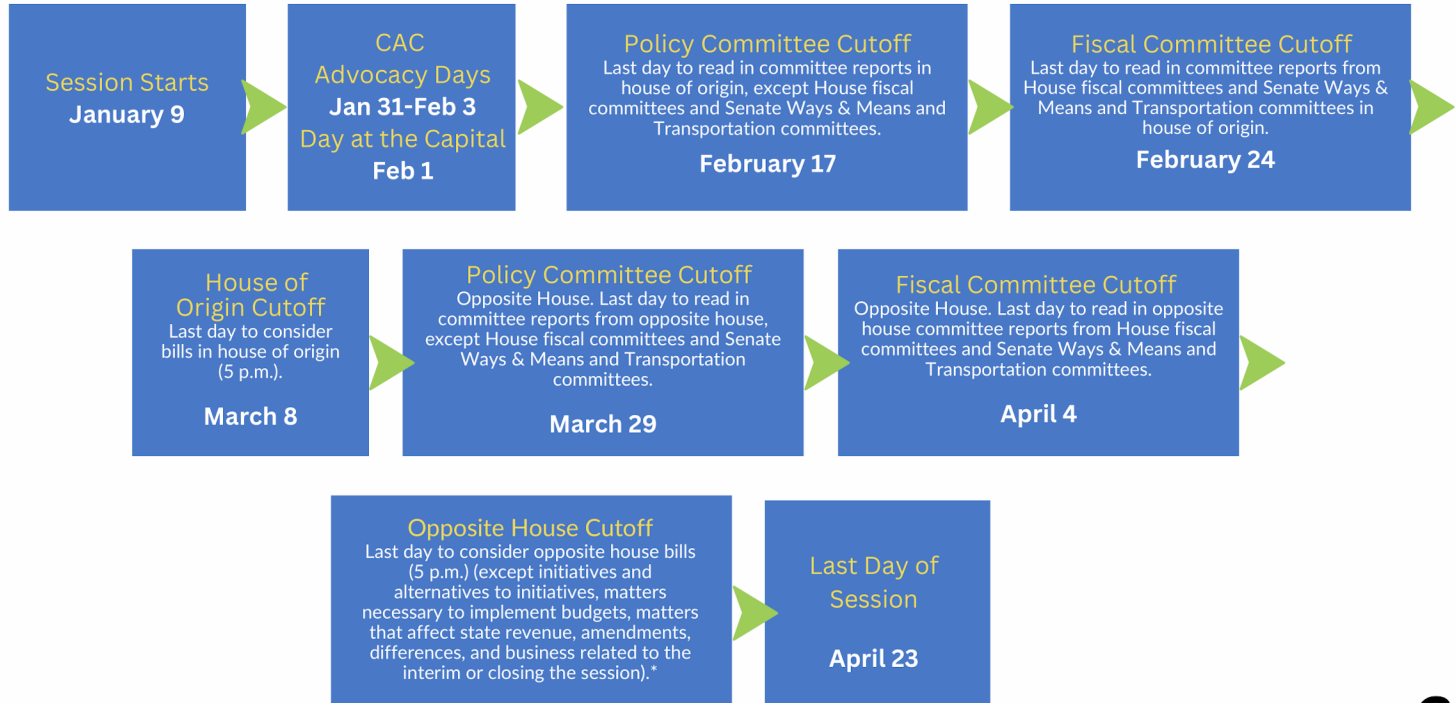


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2023 Legislative Session Key Dates





Children's Advocacy Centers of Washington 2023 Legislative Session Priorities

\$132 million budget proviso

- CACWA and the following statewide entities have joined together to request ongoing state funding to support crime victim services: WCSAP, WSCADV, Office of Civil Legal Aid, NW Immigrant Rights Project, WA Sexual Assault Working Group
- We are requesting that \$132 million be allocated in the 2024-2025 state budget for crime victim services
- Our goal is to secure a more stable source of ongoing state funding for victim services and meet rising demand and costs. While demand for CAC services has increased, programs are not adequately funded. State general funding for CACs is just \$1.245 million - a fraction of what our state invests in other crime victim services. Additionally, CACs are disproportionately reliant on federal VOCA funding, which represents approximately 75% of current support.

SEE and share this one-pager!

SEE and share the CAC case doc!

Crime Victims Programs

Request: **\$132 Million**

WA Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Office of Civil Legal Aid, WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Children's Advocacy Centers of WA, WA Immigrant Rights Project, Washington Sexual Assault Working Group



Support victims of crime and protect those at risk

Programs that support crime victims across Washington have been chronically underfunded and have had to rely on unstable federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to keep their doors open. Significant state investment is needed to meet the rapidly rising needs, retain staff and ensure that quality services continue to be available in every county.

Programs in your community that support survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, trafficking and extreme violence need your help NOW.

Demand for services has never been greater

Decades of inadequate funding from the State and the loss of VOCA dollars, combined with the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, has put vulnerable individuals and families at even higher risk. Service providers across our state are resorting to wait lists for services.

A snapshot of the escalating need:

Children's Advocacy Centers	Domestic Violence Programs	Sexual Assault Program	Civil Legal Services
Double-digit increase statewide, between 15-43%	Single day court 2020, 73% of WA programs served 2,286 survivors; 583 requests for help went unmet	Double-digit increases statewide; King County increased by 19%	Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault experience 2x as many civil legal problems each year

Working together to strengthen the safety net for victims

A broad coalition of statewide programs are working together to protect and strengthen the services and supports provided to survivors in Washington by respectfully requesting ongoing stable state funding to ensure quality and dependable services for our communities.

These life-saving programs are struggling to provide trauma-informed care and direct services to those in need and are at a breaking point. No one asks to be a victim of crime - it is our duty to step up and fund the services they need to recover.

Please support our \$132M request to support victims of crime

Funds to be allocated according to current state plans and formulas

Sustainable funding is necessary for the following vital Domestic Violence Services:

- Domestic Violence Services
- Sexual Assault Services
- Children's Advocacy Center Services
- Civil Legal Aid for Victims of Crime and their Families
- Civil Legal Aid for Immigrant Victims of Crime
- Services for Victims of Trafficking
- Crime Victim Witness Assistance Services
- Tribal Government Crime Victims Services

For Additional Information Please Contact:
 Rebecca Johnson (206) 219-8812 rebecca@rebeccajohnson.com
 Corey Harris (206) 790-7120 coreyharris@tyghed.com

Child Victims of Crime Need Your Help!

Please support Children's Advocacy Centers of Washington (CACWA) and our coalition of statewide partners by including our request for \$132M in the State budget to protect, strengthen and sustain vital services and support for child and adult victims of crime.

Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) help children heal from abuse. Without your help, children and families will lose these vital supports!

Without a sustained commitment of state funding:

- CAC funding will drop by more than \$2M in SFY24.
- Some CACs will have to close their doors
- CACs that can stay open will not have adequate capacity to support the increasing numbers of children who need help.
- Efforts to expand access and will cease due to lack of funding.

CACs are on track to exceed pre-pandemic client totals this year. Without this funding child victims of abuse will not receive the comprehensive, trauma-informed victim services that help them heal and reduce the risk of future abuse and other negative consequences.

Here's what CACs are seeing when children come through their doors:

- Increased incidences of child physical abuse
- Increased severity of abuse
- More children with extensive histories of abuse and trauma
- More complex abuse cases
- More cases involving children exposed to violence and/or drug endangerment
- Increased number of children exhibiting problematic sexual behaviors

CACs are also experiencing:

- Increased referrals and forensic interviews
- Longer waits for needed mental health services
- Higher costs and fewer resources for families

Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) provide services to child victims unlike any other organization.

CACs are healing places that help reduce trauma for young victims of violence and sexual abuse by:

- o Providing a safe, child-focused environment where forensic interviews are conducted by professionals with specialized training for working with children;
- o Coordinating the MDT Response to ensure communication and collaboration across the various disciplines involved;



- o Ensuring children and families are connected with the services and support they need, such as advocacy, specialized medical care and evidence-based, mental health trauma treatment.

2023 Legislative Session Priorities

House Bill 1439 / Sponsors - Eslick & Goodman

- Updates definitions: CACs, Child Forensic Interviews
- Adds defining language for State Chapter
- Adds exposure to violence language & definition
- Adds language to allow use of forensic interview recordings for peer review (closed cases)
- Creates Task Force for CEV (Children Exposed to Violence)

Link to bill [HERE](#)



Why is 1439 Important?

- ▶ Current language defining Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) was written more than 20 years ago, when such centers were just beginning to develop in our state. Today there is a network of 17 accredited CACs, 2 satellite CACs, 6 developing CACs providing services in 34 of 39 counties.
- ▶ Current language defining forensic interviews was also written at a time when there were few, if any, designated specialized forensic interviewers in Washington. Today, CACs utilize designated specialized child forensic interviewers who participate in ongoing education, advanced training and peer review to remain current on emerging research and best practices. 1439 would add language authorizing the use of forensic interview recordings for peer review (closed cases).
- ▶ Current statute references, but does not include a definition for, the State Chapter. HB1439 would add that definition.
- ▶ With increased crime and violence across the state and children witnesses those occurrences, HB1439 adds defining language for child exposure to violence and establishes a Task Force to examine and recommend best practices for effective trauma-informed programs for children who are witnesses or exposed to violence.

Children's exposure to violence is associated with long-term impacts on physical, psychological, and emotional health; suicide attempts; alcohol and drug problems; and school related issues including increased truancy, learning issues and poor academic performance. Children exposed to violence are at higher risk of engaging in criminal behavior and/or being victimized later in life, thus becoming a root cause of an ongoing and intergenerational cycle of violence. This traumatic disruption of healthy development is a significant public health crisis.



Get Involved!

- **Talk to your legislators!**
- **Watch for email action alerts & updates!**
- **Participate in CACWA Advocacy Days Jan 31-Feb 3 and make in person or virtual visits! CAC Day at the Capital Feb 1st!**



Know the Legislators within your CAC Service Area

Legislators want to ensure their constituents have access to the services and supports they need, so it's important to let them know how funding cuts will impact your local programs!

Use the following links to access contact lists so you can reach out today!



- [House Member Contacts](#)
- [Senate Contacts](#)
- [All House & Senate Contacts](#)
- [Lists by CAC](#)

What Can You Do?



Contact your legislators

Share more about your program, who you serve in the community, and what you're advocating for.

- **Email** them directly (see contact lists on prior slide)
 - You can also use the web form [here](#). (Just click on legislator name to open form) *Remember - legislators receive hundreds of emails each day during session, but they do read them. So even if you don't receive a response, your opinion is still noted!*
 - Remember - legislators receive hundreds of emails each day during session, but they do read them. So even if you don't receive a response, your opinion is still noted!
- **Call their office** (see contact lists) or Leave a message fusing the Legislative HOTLINE at 1 (800)562-6000.
- **Meet with your legislators**
 - Reach out for a 15-minute virtual or in-person meeting in Olympia during session
 - Meet with staff if legislator is not free

Let Your Voice Be Heard

- **Advocate for/against bills** that impact your community, CAC services and clients.
 - **Get your position on a bill noted** for the legislative record
 - Be ready to provide the committee information which can be found [here](#)
 - [Sign up to testify](#) on a bill, if able (virtual testimony now available)
 - Email your legislators - they tally up these emails!
- **Tell your stories!** That's what folks will remember Showing how these huge policy decisions impact everyday people in their communities is so impactful

Stay Connected & Informed

- The **legislative website** (www.leg.wa.gov) is your best friend.
 - You can find out who your legislators are, look up bills, create your own bill tracker, etc.
 - A virtual website tour can be found [here](#).
- **Email, call, text me anytime.** I want to hear from YOU! You are the eyes and ears of your local community - let's do this together!

Additional Resources

*Click on any of the document titles below to open.
Please contact Paula if you have any problems.*

- [CACWA Public Policy & Advocacy Toolkit](#)
- [How to Testify in Virtual Committee Hearing](#)
- [Tips for Testifying](#) (Seth Dawson)
- [Tips for Communicating with Legislators](#)
- [Description of Crime Victim Services](#)
- [Sample Email to Legislator re support for CACWA Bill \(HB1439\)](#)
- [Sample Email to Legislator re support of \\$132M funding request](#)