

PRESS RELEASE

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Children's Advocacy Centers
of Washington

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Massive Funding Cuts to Children's Advocacy Center Services Will Directly and Negatively Impact Child Victims of Abuse

Children's Advocacy Center services across Washington State are facing a massive 34% to 38% cut in state funding contracts, that will go into effect July 1. CACs deliver a best practice model that brings together child protective services investigators, law enforcement, forensic interviewers, prosecutors, advocates, and medical and mental health professionals to provide a coordinated, comprehensive response to child victims and their caregivers. This approach reduces trauma, helps children heal, and lowers the risk of future abuse and other negative consequences.

Studies show that communities that have a CAC experience many benefits, such as:

- More immediate follow-up to child abuse reports.
- More efficient medical and mental health referrals.
- A reduction in the number of child interviews
- Increased successful prosecutions.
- Consistent support for child victims and their families.

The projected cuts in funding will dramatically impact the ability of CACs to maintain the level of intervention currently available to children and families at a time when demand for services has never been greater. Deep funding cuts will reduce programming and options available, putting children and our communities at risk.

Children's Advocacy Centers and their services are supported by a combination of federal and state general funds. The primary federal fund source for all survivor and crime victim services in Washington State (funding from the Victims of Crime Act), has dropped by \$50 million or 38% in recent years. At the same time, state general funding for all crime victim services has remained flat.

For Washington CACs, state dollars represent only a quarter of total CAC funding, with federal VOCA dollars disproportionately making up 75% of what CACs rely upon to support their work. This over-reliance on federal funds puts CACs in a particularly vulnerable position.

“Cutting funding for Children’s Advocacy Centers by as much as 38% will devastate these vital programs. CACs will struggle to maintain services, and some programs may close completely,” said Paula Reed, Executive Director for Children’s Advocacy Centers of Washington (CACWA). “Deep and sudden cut in services will delay the progress of child abuse investigations, continue to expose vulnerable children to their abusers, deprive children of necessary trauma-informed specialized mental health services, cause the closure of many rural CACs, and increase the burden on law enforcement. Survivors of abuse and their caregivers will be forced to navigate systemic barriers instead of having child-friendly, dedicated CACs to provide these critical services. We greatly appreciate that state lawmakers stepped up and did the right thing by adding short-term funding for the last two years, but we really need a long-term solution.”

A snapshot of escalating need in recent years:

- Children's Advocacy Centers saw a double-digit increase in requests for services statewide, between 15-43%
- On a single day in 2020, 75% of Washington State domestic violence programs served 2,306 survivors; 603 requests for help went unmet.
- Sexual assault programs saw double-digit increase in requests for services statewide; King County increased by 19%.
- Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault have experienced twice as many civil legal problems each year.

A network of coalitions, including Children's Advocacy Centers of Washington, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Office of Civil Legal Aid, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, and the Washington Sexual Assault Working Group, have come together to strategize how to strengthen the safety net for survivors. This group has spent three years pinpointing these funding gaps and identifying long-term solutions. They have just [issued a request](#) to Washington State lawmakers for a support plan that will stabilize essential survivor services.

Trauma-informed advocacy services are proven to increase safety, reduce further victimization, and help survivors and their children heal. Our communities cannot afford cuts to these life-saving programs.

About the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Washington

Established in 2007, Children’s Advocacy Centers of Washington (CACWA) is a nationally accredited membership organization that supports existing and developing Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) and Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) in Washington. CACWA provides training, technical assistance, outreach, fund development, and other supportive resources to both established CACs and communities wishing to establish CACs and is committed to the ongoing development, growth, and sustainability of CACs across the state, so that every child has access to a trained team of professionals at a local CAC.

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