

# INFOCUS



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## Children's Advocacy Centers

For young people to learn, grow, and thrive, they must first be safe. In fiscal year 2020, approximately 618,000 children in the United States experienced abuse and neglect, and 1,750 died as a result.<sup>1</sup> The effects of child abuse, which can include failure in school, depression, substance use, or involvement in the justice system, can be mitigated if children receive timely, trauma-informed services.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) supports the work and expansion of children's advocacy centers nationwide. In 2021 alone, the 939 centers served more than 386,000 children—treating victims and investigating and prosecuting cases of child abuse—and trained nearly 2.9 million people on how to prevent child abuse.

### Programs

The **Children's Advocacy Centers National Subgrants program** funds children's advocacy centers—local child-friendly facilities where professionals from victim advocacy and child protective services, law enforcement and prosecution, and the medical and mental health fields work together to investigate, prosecute, and treat child abuse. The multidisciplinary team approach improves interagency communication, increases the effectiveness of the investigation and prosecution, and results in fewer interviews with and less trauma for the child.

OJJDP also supports a subgrant program specific to **victims of child sexual abuse material** and a **national military partnership** program that explores how the children's advocacy center model can help address child abuse cases on U.S. military installations.

Through the **Children's Advocacy Centers Membership and Accreditation program**, OJJDP's grantee maintains and enhances **national standards for accreditation** and offers training and technical assistance to help the centers obtain or maintain accreditation. The standards ensure that all victims served by the children's advocacy centers receive consistent, evidence-based interventions.

### Training and Technical Assistance

Four **Regional Children's Advocacy Centers** located in the Northeast, South, Midwest, and West help develop and strengthen local children's advocacy centers within each geographic area. Each center tailors its training and technical assistance to the region and helps the local centers develop comprehensive, multidisciplinary responses to meet the needs of child victims and their families.

### For More Information

Learn more about the OJJDP-supported children's advocacy centers at [ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/childrens-advocacy-centers](https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/childrens-advocacy-centers).

<sup>1</sup> Children's Bureau. 2022. *Child Maltreatment 2020*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

### Funding

Between fiscal years 2019 and 2021, OJJDP awarded \$71.5 million to help the centers provide victims with the care, treatment, and justice they deserve.

- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2021—\$28.8 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2020—\$23.4 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2019—\$19.3 million**

### From the Field

Funding to the **National Children's Alliance** supports local children's advocacy centers, state chapters, and multidisciplinary teams. In 2021, the Alliance intensified efforts to reach victims whose abuse may have gone unreported during the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. Consequently, children's advocacy centers nationwide reached and served a record number of children—nearly 390,000—in 2021.

To ensure children receive the highest quality service, the Alliance sets national standards and helps members obtain accreditation. "The standards allow us to be consistent ... [everyone knows] exactly how to react, what's expected," says Dominic Prophete, chief executive officer of a New Jersey-based center and member of the Alliance's Standards Revision Task Force. "All of that collectively allows optimal safety and response for children and families in crisis." In 2021, 18 centers received accreditation for the first time and 128 centers were reaccredited.



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