



**Senate Ways and Means Subcommittee
Governor's Office Budget
Children's Advocacy Centers
March 6, 2008**

Thank you Mr. Chairman:

My name is Amy Boydston. I am the Director of the Kansas Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers. My organization coordinates the statewide network of children's advocacy centers (CACs) and provides training and technical assistance to CACs and multidisciplinary teams working to expand the children's advocacy center model into their communities.

On behalf of all Kansas CACs, I thank the Committee members for your previous support of children's advocacy centers. This support has strengthened public-private partnerships between the State and local communities working to effectively and compassionately respond to abused children in our state.

In the past year, two additional Kansas CACs have earned national accreditation. The CAC model is expanding in to eight new Kansas communities. CACs are more effectively serving abused children through increased staff capacity, greater access to professional training and use of state-of-the art case tracking technology to ensure no child "falls through the cracks."

CACs have become a recognized best practice model of child abuse intervention, and I ask for the Committee's support of the Governor's recommendation for children's advocacy centers.

Children's Advocacy Centers bring together professionals from law enforcement, child protective services (SRS), prosecution, mental health, medicine, victim advocacy and children's advocacy center staff in a formal commitment to a child-focused and team-based approach in handling child abuse cases. This collaborative model has been shown to achieve significant outcomes, including:

- Improved coordination between law enforcement and SRS
- Increased referral and linkages to medical and mental health services for victims
- Cost-savings of approximately \$1,000 per case

Our state network of CACs is working from a framework for building capacity of Centers statewide. This plan includes managing the growth and development of children's advocacy centers, bringing accountability to the system and ensuring statewide access to the services of accredited children's advocacy center.

The state's investment has provided start up or "seed" grants for developing centers, training for staff and community partners, improved technology services and operating support. Furthermore, the funds have supported the state Chapter as a resource to provide technical assistance and training for CACs to enhance their program's work toward meeting performance measures.

These funds are managed through a grant application and oversight process by the Governor's Grants Program. This process ensures CACs meet quality standards and are accountable for the dollars. As well, by working through the Governor's Grants Program office, the oversight of grants is managed by an entity that does not provide direct service in order to preserve the neutrality needed to successfully implement the CAC model.

Our local Centers face many challenges in the coming year. While all of our CACs are active in generating local financial support for their programs, the failing economy results in fewer business and individual dollars available for human services. As well, recently announced layoffs of several key corporations in our state not only impact philanthropy, but also trigger risk factors, such as familial stress, that contribute to an increase in child abuse.

Children's advocacy centers are designed to produce critical long-term benefits: children are protected from abuse. Their physical and mental health is improved. CACs increase accountability of agencies involved in child protection and improve consistency in the handling of child abuse cases.

I ask for your support of the Governor's recommendation for children's advocacy centers. In doing so, we will ensure a coordinated, child-centered response is available to every abused child when they need us. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Boydston, Director
Kansas Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers