



CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS OF NORTH DAKOTA

House Appropriations – Education and Environment Division Committee Hearing

Testimony In Support of Senate Bill #2003

3-8-23

Mister Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Greg Kasowski, and I am the executive director of the Children's Advocacy Centers of North Dakota. I appear today in support of Senate Bill 2003, with a request for an increase in funding for child forensic interviews, which is included under line 24 titled "Medical examinations."

What is a forensic interview?

Before Children's Advocacy Centers existed in North Dakota, children would have to tell of their experience of abuse an average of 10 to 12 times—as they shared with law enforcement, human services, prosecutors, and therapists—further traumatizing the child. **Now children only need to tell of their experience once in a forensic interview.**

Our Children's Advocacy Centers conduct the forensic interview in a safe, child-friendly environment. Law enforcement, prosecution and social services observe the forensic interview through a closed-circuit television and can request the forensic interviewer ask specific questions.

Background on "Medical examinations" \$660,000 (page 1, line 24)

- [12.1-34.07](#) is the statute related to this funding.
- The \$660,000 is managed by a trust under the Insurance Department called the Insurance Regulatory Trust Fund.
- Our medical partners who conduct medical exams for children (e.g., Sanford, Central Dakota Forensic Nurse Examiners, Altru, etc.) request reimbursements at the time of service throughout the biennium.
- In April at the end of each biennium, Children's Advocacy Centers take three steps before submitting reimbursements to receive any remaining funding:
 - Request reimbursement through **Medicaid: ~50% of claims**
 - Request reimbursement through **Crime Victims Compensation: ~8% of claims**
 - Request reimbursement through **private health insurance: 0%**

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- The Attorney General's Office, through the Insurance Regulatory Trust, reimburses the remaining 42% of claims.
- **However, in the 19-21 biennium**, the budget was depleted and Children's Advocacy Centers did not receive \$73,058 in needed reimbursements for forensic interviews.
- **For the current 21-23 biennium**, we expect another funding shortfall, but DHHS has been able to provide one-time funding to cover the depletion.
- **For the upcoming 23-25 biennium**, we expect another funding shortfall.

How much funding is needed for "Medical examinations?"

For the 23-25 biennium, we project a total of **\$943,400** is needed. This is detailed on the accompanying chart on page 4.

SANE exams are projected to be \$638,900, and we expect 846 children will need a forensic interview as they experience the trauma of abuse (\$304,560).

The 846 child forensic interview projection is based on:

- 1) The number of forensic interviews increases nearly every biennium, and
- 2) The Red River Children's Advocacy Center, which serves children and families in Fargo, Grand Forks and surrounding counties, has not requested forensic interview reimbursements in the past and is expected to begin doing so.

Please note that this is a request to meet the increased number of forensic interviews and is **not a request to increase the forensic interview reimbursement amount** (\$360), which has remained level the past 6 years.

Another solution that has been proposed is to split the "Medical examinations" pot into two, with one for SANE exams and one for forensic interviews.

Where else do Children's Advocacy Centers receive funding?

About 20% of our funding comes from the state of North Dakota. We cover the remaining 80% through fundraising, federal grants, and private foundations.

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Of the state funding, our primary funder is the Department of Health and Human Services. In the Attorney General's budget, our Children's Advocacy Centers also receive 1-2% of the amount under "Human trafficking victims grants" (page 1, line 20) through the ND Human Trafficking Taskforce. We also receive forensic interview reimbursements through Medicaid and Crime Victims Compensation Fund (DOCR) as noted above.

We have sought funding from multiple areas in an attempt to secure critical resources to help victims of child abuse.

Senate Bill 2067

A related bill to this funding is SB 2067, which makes two policy changes to [12.1-34.07](#) (Attorney General's forensic interview reimbursement) by:

1. Removing the April reimbursement window requirement so CACs can bill at the time of service.
2. Removing the private health insurance submission requirement, as health insurers do not reimburse for evidence collection of a crime, which will save us hundreds of hours in unnecessary paperwork.

Thank you for your time and I will stand for questions.

Sincerely,

Greg Kasowski
Executive Director

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MEDICAL EXAMS FUNDING – ATTORNEY GENERAL

	13-15	15-17	17-19	19-21	21-23	23-25
Available	\$660,000	\$660,000	\$660,000	\$660,000	\$660,000	\$660,000
SANE Exams	\$408,890	\$539,261	\$547,900	\$604,400	\$608,470 ¹	\$638,900 ²
Forensic Interviews	\$0	\$0	\$111,420	\$55,600 ³	\$51,530 ⁴	\$304,500
Remaining	\$251,110	\$120,739	\$879	\$0	\$0	-\$283,400

¹ Projected amount for the rest of the 21-23 biennium based on the amount of reimbursements through Feb. 23, 2023 (\$433,900). (An average of 71.3% was reimbursed as of Feb 23 before the end of each biennium.)

² A projected 5% increase for 23-25 after biennium increases of 31.88%, 1.56%, 10.33% and .06% respectively.

³ Fund was depleted and \$73,058 in requested reimbursements were not reimbursed to Children's Advocacy Centers.

⁴ CACs project \$210,000 will be needed this biennium. The fund will be depleted again, but Children's Advocacy Centers have received one-time funding from NDDHHS to cover this shortage.

