



**CHILDREN'S
ADVOCACY
CENTERS**
OF NORTH DAKOTA

SB 2173

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES
CHAIR: SENATOR JUDY LEE

JANUARY 20, 2025

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact subsection 10 of section 50-25.1-02 and section 50-25.1-11.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the definition of a children's advocacy center and the confidentiality of communications and records in the possession of a children's advocacy center.



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WHAT IS A CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CAC)?

A place for victims of child abuse to heal

Our state's 3 Children's Advocacy Centers operate in 11 locations, serving all 53 counties and 5 Tribal nations.



Fargo | Grand Forks | Devils Lake
www.rrcac.org



Dakota Children's
ADVOCACY CENTER

Bismarck | Dickinson | Watford City
Standing Rock | Jamestown
www.dakotacac.org



Northern Plains
Children's Advocacy Center

Minot | Stanley | Bottineau
www.northernplainscac.org



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WHAT IS A CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CAC)?

Without CACs



With CACs





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WHAT IS A CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CAC)?

2023

1,058

Forensic Interviews

Highly trained professionals, guided by research and best practices, ask age-appropriate questions to gather evidence and allow kids to share their story of abuse.

6,625

Mental Health Sessions

Trauma-informed, evidenced-based therapists offer in-person and telehealth counseling to combat the emotional effects of child abuse.

248

Medical Exams

Trained medical professionals ensure the health and safety of children while identifying any evidence of sexual or physical abuse.

46,637

Victim Advocacy Services

With a compassionate, listening ear, advocates provide needed support, resources, referrals, and information—from the first day, throughout the court process, and beyond.

502

Multidisciplinary Team Partners

Law enforcement, human services, prosecutors, mental health, forensic interviewers, victim advocates, and medical professionals gathered to provide a collaborative response to cases of child abuse.



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OVERVIEW

SB 2173

- Updates the definition of a Children's Advocacy Center.
- Clarifies how Children's Advocacy Centers should handle confidential verbal communications about cases.
- Current Century Code only addresses records and digital media.



**CHILDREN'S
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SECTION 1 AMENDMENT

Subsection 10 of section 50-25.1-02

~~“a full”~~ an accredited”

- Updates the definition of a Children's Advocacy Center
- Aligns with language used by our accrediting body the National Children's Alliance

<https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/ncas-standards-for-accredited-members/>



**CHILDREN'S
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SECTION 2 AMENDMENT

Section 50-25.1-11.1

advocacy,

- Adds victim advocacy to the list, as this a core service of CACs.

or shared with

- This could be amended out because it is covered under the verbal communication section.

a prosecutor,

- Prosecutors are also part of the multidisciplinary team —along with law enforcement, human services, medical, and mental health.

a court,

- CACs may receive a request for information from a court, such as Juvenile Court.



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SECTION 2 AMENDMENT

Section 50-25.1-11.1

another children's advocacy center,

- CACs are each independent nonprofits.
- CACs best serve children and families when working cohesively and providing a continuity of care.
 - Children may receive a forensic interview at one location and counseling services in another. Information sharing would prevent revisiting further trauma.
 - A family may not like an outcome of a case and may seek assistance from another jurisdiction.
 - It's not uncommon for families experiencing child abuse to move to another area.



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SECTION 2 AMENDMENT

Section 50-25.1-11.1

2. The staff of a children's advocacy center may communicate with a law enforcement agency, the department or the department's authorized agent, a prosecutor, a court, another children's advocacy center, or a medical or mental health professional in that individual's official capacity, for the purpose of discussing a forensic medical examination, forensic interview, advocacy, or therapy.

- Clarifies how Children's Advocacy Centers should handle confidential verbal communications about cases.
- Current Century Code only addresses records and digital media.