



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

SB 2173

HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES
CHAIR: REP. MATTHEW RUBY

MARCH 12, 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.



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

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



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



Northern Plains
Children's Advocacy Center

Minot | Stanley | Bottineau
www.northernplainscac.org



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

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

Without CACs



With CACs





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

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

2024

1,921

Children Served



362

Medical Exams

Trained medical professionals ensure the health and safety of children while identifying any evidence of sexual or physical abuse. These medical services are referred to partners.

1,109

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.

27,401

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.

7,458

Mental Health Sessions

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

573

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.



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

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, because current Century Code only addresses records and digital media.



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

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.

only may be released ~~only~~

- Grammar change for consistency with Century Code

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.



**CHILDREN'S
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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.



**CHILDREN'S
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SECTION 2 AMENDMENT

Section 50-25.1-11.1

~~person~~ individual

- Should be updated on:
 - Page 1: Line 22
 - Page 2: Line 3
- This was missed in the latest version of the bill and may need to be amended.



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

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.



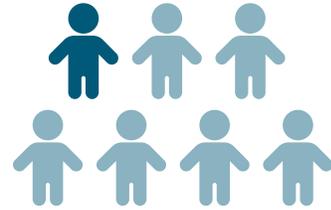
ANNUAL REPORT



2024



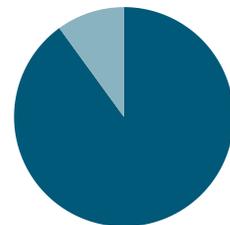
THE ISSUE OF **CHILD ABUSE**



**1 IN 7 CHILDREN EXPERIENCED
CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN
THE LAST YEAR**



**ESTIMATED KIDS IN NORTH DAKOTA
WHO EXPERIENCED CHILD ABUSE
AND NEGLECT LAST YEAR**



**90%+ OF CHILD
VICTIMS KNOW AND
TRUST THEIR ABUSER**



**MOST CHILD VICTIMS
DELAY OR NEVER DISCLOSE
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**



WHAT IS A **CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY**

A Safe, Child-Friendly Place for Forensic Interviews

Highly trained professionals, guided by evidence-based research and trauma informed principles, allow kids to share their story of abuse.

Wraparound Mental Health and Medical Services for Victims

Trained professionals interview children, guided by evidence based research and trauma informed principles to ensure every child has an opportunity to share their story.

A Coordinated, Multi-Disciplinary Team Response to Child Abuse

Law enforcement, child protective services, mental health, medical, prosecution, and advocacy collaborate to provide compassionate care.

“

As a police officer, we rely heavily on the child-centered approach and expertise of Children's Advocacy Centers.

-North Dakota Police Officer

”



CENTER



Before CACs children had to tell the worst story of their life over and over again to social workers, nurses, law enforcement, lawyers, therapists, investigators, etc.



With CACs children only need to tell their story once to a trained interviewer who knows the right questions to ask in a way that does not retraumatize the child.

WHAT SERVICES CACs OFFER

Total number of services for all Children's Advocacy Centers in North Dakota in 2024

3,153

Total Number of Individuals Served

1,921

Total Number of Children Served

1,109

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.

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Victim Advocacy

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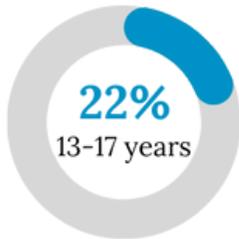
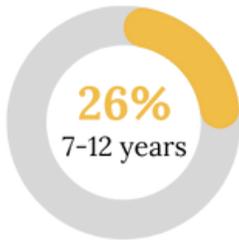
Multidisciplinary Team

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.

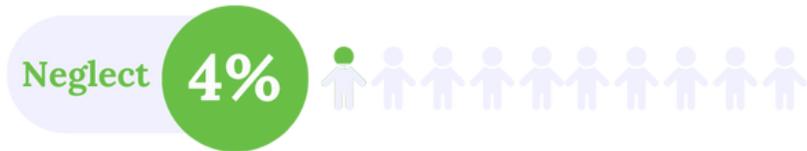
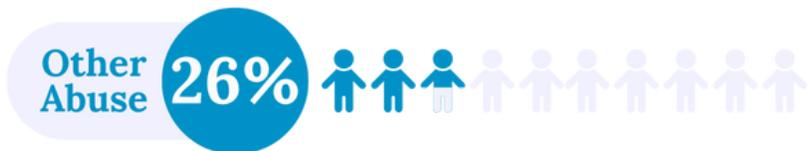


WHO CACs SERVE

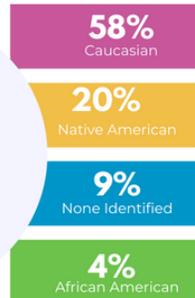
Age of Individuals Served



Type of Abuse



Race & Ethnicity

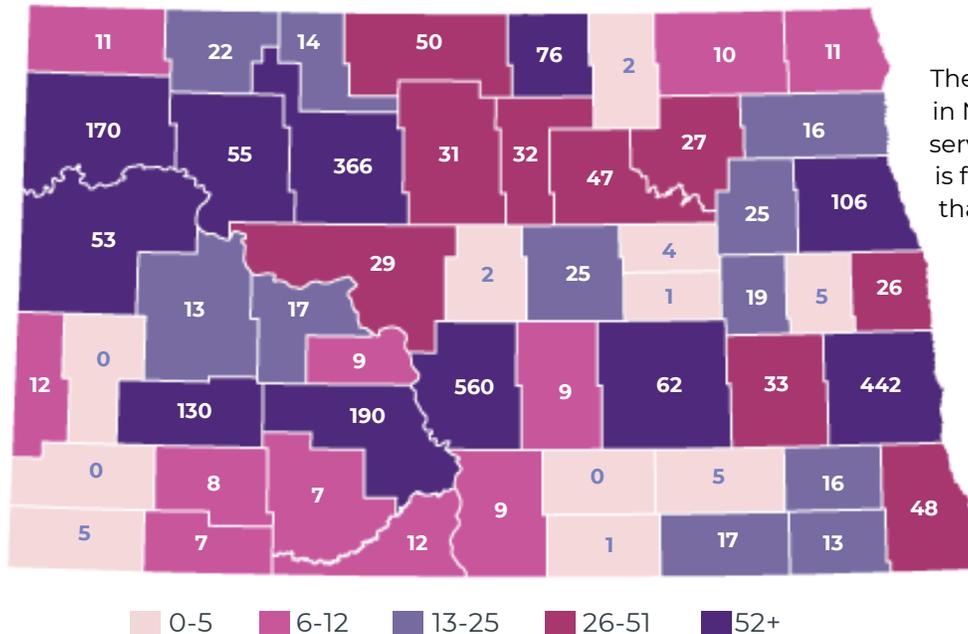


This year's report on Children's Advocacy Centers provides a glimpse into the reality of child sexual abuse and other forms of maltreatment in our state. While our Children's Advocacy Centers' staff's tireless efforts have provided crucial support and services to countless children and families, the numbers underscore the urgent need for continued intervention, prevention, and community awareness.



WHERE CACs SERVE

Children served by county



The number of children impacted by abuse in North Dakota is much higher than those served by Children’s Advocacy Centers. This is for a variety of reasons including the fact that only 16% of child sexual abuse victims disclose the abuse.

Münzer et al. (2016)
 Collin-Vézina et al. (2015)
 Foster & Hagedorn (2014)
 Sorsoli et al. (2008)

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RED RIVER CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTER
 Fargo | Grand Forks | Devils Lake
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Northern Plains Children’s Advocacy Center
 Minot | Stanley | Bottineau
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Dakota Children’s ADVOCACY CENTER
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 Standing Rock | Jamestown
www.dakotacac.org

“ The Children’s Advocacy Center is completely victim centered. Kids who are abused have a story to tell and the CAC offers that safe space. ”

Steph Wieland,
 Buffalo Bridges Human Service Zone

THE EFFICACY OF THE CAC MODEL

\$2.4 million

Lifetime Cost for Each Victim of Child Abuse or Neglect in the U.S.

Due to increased medical and mental health costs, risky behaviors, and reduced productivity



\$87,528

Yearly Cost for Each Victim of Child Abuse and Neglect in the U.S.



\$663

Amount Saved for Every \$1 Spent on a Children's Advocacy Center

What Caregivers Are Saying

This has been very stressful and hard on our family. I am so thankful the CAC is listening and helping us.

Mental health therapy at the CAC has saved my daughter's life and our relationship.

I brought my daughter to the CAC after she disclosed trauma. Her therapy sessions have been successful and now we can move forward as a family and establish healing for all of us.

Peterson. Economic Burden of Health Conditions Associated With Adverse Childhood Experiences Among US Adults. JAMA Netw Open. Published December 06, 2023. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.46323
Gelles, R. J., & Perlman, S. (Eds.). (2012). Estimated annual cost of child abuse and neglect. Office of Justice Programs. Amount adjusted for inflation. Maryland Children's Alliance, 2021

How CACs Are Funded



Federal Grants



State Grants



Donations



Community Foundations



Third-Party Payments