

# INFOCUS



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## Children's Advocacy Centers

Child maltreatment is a serious national problem. In fiscal year 2018 alone, approximately 678,000 children in the United States experienced abuse and neglect, and 1,770 died as a result.<sup>1</sup>

Child abuse can have grave, lifelong consequences but these outcomes may be mitigated if children receive timely, evidence-based care. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) supports the important work of children's advocacy centers and their multidisciplinary teams of child abuse prevention and intervention professionals. In 2019, 900 local children's advocacy centers served more than 371,000 children across the country.

### Programs

The **Children's Advocacy Centers National Subgrant 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 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 Pornography** and a **Military Partnership Pilot Project** 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

#### Regional Children's Advocacy Centers Program

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

### For More Information

Access more information about the OJJDP-supported children's advocacy centers at <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/childrens-advocacy-centers>.

<sup>1</sup> Children's Bureau. 2020. *Child Maltreatment 2018*. 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 2017 and 2019, OJJDP awarded more than \$56 million to help the centers provide victims with the care, treatment, and justice they deserve.

- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2019—\$19.3 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2018—\$19.1 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2017—\$17.9 million**

### From the Field

As a teenager, Melanie Sachs was plagued by fear and shame from having been abused—until she walked into a children's advocacy center.

"I was greeted by a friendly face, a smile, and for the first time in a long time, I felt safe. I could sense immediately...that...my forensic interviewer understood and that she believed me," recalls Melanie. "Shame left the room for the first time that day in a truly impactful way."

Now an adult, Melanie works as a family advocate at a children's advocacy center in Massachusetts, helping to heal children and families who have experienced abuse.

Describing it as her 'dream job,' Melanie shares that advocating for survivors and helping them find their voice is her calling.



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