

POP # 309 – Child Advocacy Centers

Purpose: Oregon law (ORS 418.780) requires that all children have access to a skilled, competent and medically sound Medical Assessment completed at a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) regardless of ability to pay, yet ongoing state funding makes up only 17% of CAC budgets. One time funding, while helpful, poses challenges to meeting the greatest resource need of CACs, staff. On-going funding allows for program planning, development and execution.

The purpose of providing ongoing funding to Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) is to help ensure that children across the state who may have been abused have access to child abuse medical assessments and related services critical to ensuring their health and wellbeing. Currently, CACs are only able to serve 55% of the children referred and have reported that the complexity and severity of the cases they see has increased significantly since covid restrictions have been lifted and children are coming into contact with mandatory reporters for the first time since the beginning of COVID. Now, more than ever, access to CAC professionals is crucial.

CACs provide medically and forensically sound medical examinations and forensic interviews requiring the services of professionals with highly specialized training. CACs collect evidence of abuse, act as hubs for coordinating child abuse multidisciplinary response, and offer trauma informed therapy and referrals critical to helping children and families recover from abuse. Without access to these services, child abuse multidisciplinary intervention teams including DHS child welfare workers and law enforcement officers do not have access to expertise and resources essential to investigate and respond to child abuse.

How Achieved: This package requests General Fund for permanent funding for the support of Children’s Advocacy Centers. Administrative support for this work is included in DOJ – Policy Option Package # 115. The funds will be administered by CVSSD through grants to Oregon CACs.

CVSSD allocates funding by formula to each CAC. The formula consists of an \$80,000 per year base and an additional amount determined by the population of the county/counties served by the Children’s Advocacy Center. Funds were paid prospectively on an annual basis. The first payment when Grantee’s Children’s Advocacy Center Fund Application was moved to Grant Awarded status in CVSSD E-Grants. The second payment was based upon approval of the financial report for the quarter ending June 30, 2022.

Quantifying Results: Providing reliable and consistent state funding directly to Oregon’s CACs will help ensure the stability and ongoing operation of these statutorily required organizations. CACs will be able to use the funding to fill budget gaps and expand services by retaining existing staff, hiring additional staff to fill vacancies or expand services, and maintain critical infrastructure such as buildings and medical and forensic interviewing equipment. Qualitative and narrative feedback may more fully capture the impact of the funding. Possible quantifying measures might include staff size, recruitment periods or staff retention, measuring for decrease in wait times for children referred for services or the number of children referred for services compared with the number of children seen for services.

2023-25 Staffing Impact: None

2025-27 Staffing Impact: None

Revenue Source: \$ 6,000,000 General Fund