

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P.O.BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

April 29, 2004

MEMORANDUM**WHAT'S INSIDE:**

- **What are CACs**
- **History of CACs**
- **Missouri CAC providers**
- **CD involvement with CACs**

TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS AND ALL CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

FROM: FREDERIC M. SIMMENS, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: MISSOURI NETWORK OF CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS (CAC)

REFERENCE: CHILDREN'S DIVISION

DISCUSSION:

Reports of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse, present a unique challenge to Children's Division staff and other professionals who investigate these reports. It is vital that a comprehensive multidisciplinary investigation be conducted to assure the safety of the child is assessed and a comprehensive evaluation is conducted. When children are sexually abused, they may be subjected to a series of medical examinations and interviews conducted in an array of settings. Such fragmentation can cause unnecessary trauma to the child and result in an inadequate investigation.

What are CACs

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are neutral, child-focused facilities where forensic interviews may be conducted with children in appropriate cases of suspected child sexual abuse and physical abuse. All multidisciplinary team members are able to meet in one location to collaborate in the investigative or treatment needs of the child and family from the report of the abuse through disposition of the case. The cooperation of the multidisciplinary team helps to prevent trauma to the child and non-offending family members caused by multiple contacts with different community professionals. The combined wisdom and professional knowledge of Children's Division staff, law enforcement, prosecution, medical, and mental health results in a more complete understanding of case issues and the most effective system response possible.

History of CACs

Through the tireless efforts of Division personnel, legislators, and other child advocates, Child Advocacy Centers were developed in Missouri using the "Best Practices of the National Child Advocacy Center." The Division received an appropriation of \$1,450,000.00 to support regional Child Advocacy Centers throughout the state. CACs to receive funding from this appropriation included: St. Louis City, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Kansas City, St. Joseph, Springfield, Joplin, and Columbia. The Division's budget request to increase funding for the addition of

centers and expansion of services provided in existing centers was approved in the 1997-98 legislative session and an additional \$250,000.00 was allocated for Child Advocacy Centers in Missouri.

Following the 1999 - 2000 Legislative session, the Division's responsibility to fund CACs was placed in statute (210.001.2 RSMo) which also identified specific Regional Child Advocacy Centers throughout the state. In order to receive state funds, a CAC must be listed in statute. To address issues of decreased funding from yearly budget cuts, CAC directors have come together to develop a funding formula which provides guidelines for the disbursement of funds to each center. The funding formula also takes into consideration and provides funding for additional centers to be created.

The Missouri Network of Child Advocacy Centers was established as CAC directors and coordinators joined together to ensure the needs of sexually abused children and their families could receive services utilizing the multidisciplinary approach. The Network works to promote, assist, and support the development and continuation of CACs across the state. It was the hope and intent of the Network to be able to serve any child in the state of Missouri.

Missouri Regional CAC Providers

There are currently sixteen (16) statutorily identified Regional Child Advocacy Centers located in Missouri. Each center is part of a local multidisciplinary team to investigate appropriately referred reports of child sexual and physical abuse. Representatives from the different disciplines meet to discuss and make decisions about the investigation, treatment, and prosecution of the child abuse cases. The center's staff conduct or assist in forensic interviews of the child. Some centers are able to provide medical services at the center or make referrals to a specific SAFE-CARE physician. The center staff also assists the child and family with treatment services either provided by the center or other appropriate providers.

Regional Child Advocacy Centers are currently located in the following areas:

Buchanan County	Pettis County	Cape Girardeau County
Clay-Platte County	Boone County	Jefferson County
Jackson County	Camden County	Grundy County
Greene County	St. Charles County	Ripley County
Jasper County	St. Louis County	
Branson West	St. Louis City	

(Contact listing for each CAC is attached)

Children's Division Involvement

The Children's Division Central Office supports the work and cooperation of Regional CACs and local multidisciplinary teams in their response to child abuse. Division staff are encouraged to utilize CACs when possible and to strengthen the commitment to work with other multidisciplinary team members. Central Office staff also recognizes multidisciplinary teams developed where a CAC does not exist or is readily available.

The Missouri Network of CACs continues to assess the needs of Missouri children, and has developed a growth plan to address the issue of expanding CAC services to all children throughout the state. As state funding of CACs is dependent on statutory listing, current CACs are committed to expand services via satellite offices. For information regarding such office, staff should contact the Regional CAC office coordinators.

NECESSARY ACTION:

1. Share this memorandum with all Children's Division staff.
2. All questions related to this memorandum should go through normal supervisory channels.

FMS/CG/cb
Attachment