

# INFOCUS



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January 2024

## Children's Advocacy Centers

For young people to learn, grow, and thrive, they must first be safe. In fiscal year 2021, approximately 588,200 children in the United States experienced abuse and neglect, and 1,820 died as a result.<sup>1</sup> The effects of child abuse, which can include failure in school, depression, substance use, or involvement in the justice system, can be mitigated if children receive timely, trauma-informed services.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) supports the work and expansion of children's advocacy centers nationwide. In 2022 alone, the 950 centers served more than 380,000 children—treating victims and investigating and prosecuting cases of child abuse—and trained nearly 1.5 million people on how to prevent child abuse.

### Programs

The **Children's Advocacy Centers National Subgrants 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 multidisciplinary 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 sexual abuse material** and a **national military partnership** program 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

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

### For More Information

Learn more about the OJJDP-supported children's advocacy centers at [ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/childrens-advocacy-centers](https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/childrens-advocacy-centers).

<sup>1</sup> Children's Bureau. 2023. *Child Maltreatment 2021*. 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 2021 and 2023, OJJDP awarded \$92.4 million to help the centers provide victims with the care, treatment, and justice they deserve.

- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2023—\$35.2 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2022—\$28.4 million**
- ▶ **Fiscal Year 2021—\$28.8 million**

### From the Field

The **Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**, a federally recognized Tribe located in southeastern Oklahoma, opened a children's advocacy center in 2023 as part of an OJJDP initiative to improve support for child victims of abuse in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The Tribe is scheduled to open a second center in 2024. The two facilities will serve Choctaw children who did not have access to critical services for responding to abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence, as well as non-Tribal children living in underserved areas of the Choctaw Reservation.

The new centers will provide child victims with culturally informed care, including forensic interviews, sexual assault nursing exams, and therapy. They also will provide referrals for victim services, victim advocacy, and court preparation. The Tribe received support from OJJDP's training and technical assistance provider, the **Native Child Advocacy Resource Center**, to launch the two centers.



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NCJ 254817