

State Laws Defining CACs



State statutes that clearly define Children's Advocacy centers and their role in the response to allegations of criminal child abuse, greatly enhance the ability for the model to develop services, expand coverage and pursue additional resources, particularly state funding. Chapters without so-called defining legislation should work with legislative allies to enact it

A Definition Can

Protect the Integrity of the Model

Provide Assurances to Victims and Families

Maintain Standards that Provide Assurances to the Legal System

Offer Assurances to Funders that their dollars will be well used

Give Policy Makers a Model to Work With When Crafting Child Abuse Laws

A Definition Should

Require CACs to meet National Accreditation Standards

Designate CACs as the Preferred Response to Allegations of Abuse

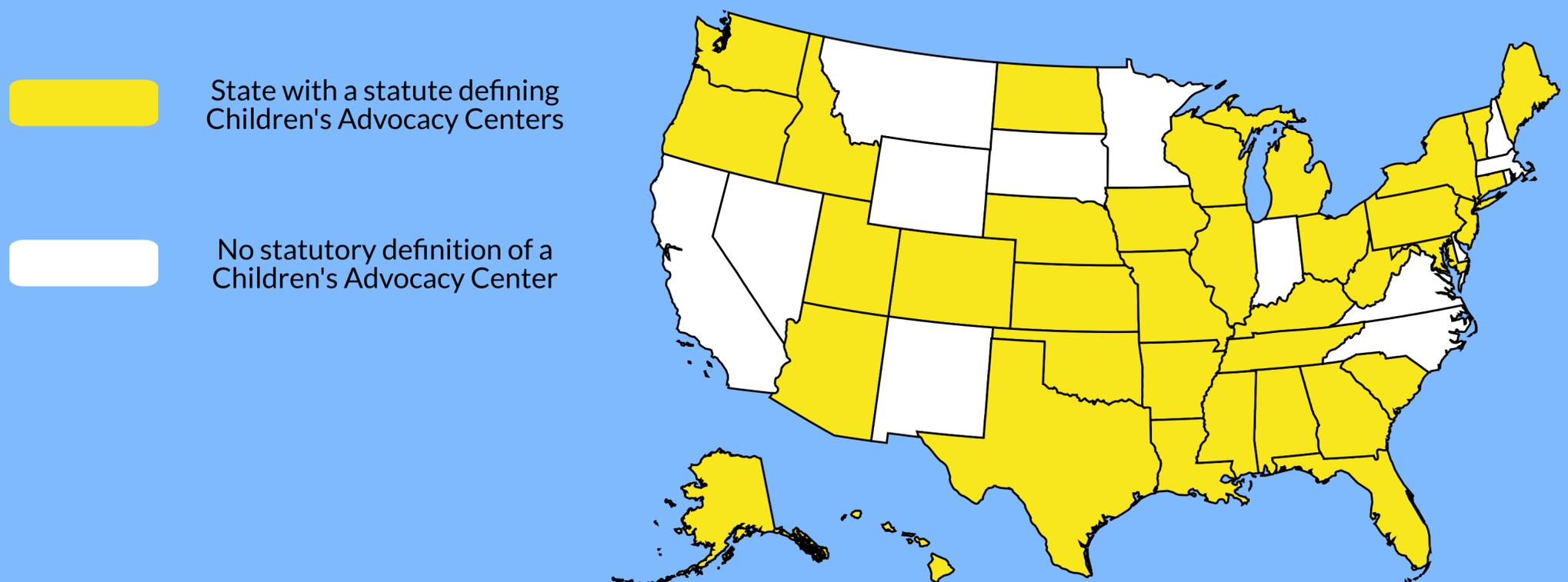
Encourage Greater CAC Coverage

Support Wrap Around Services

Provide for Immunity from Civil Liability for CAC Employees

Which States have defining legislation for CACs?

At present, at least 34 states have adopted defining legislation to varying degrees. Definitions range from a short paragraph as part of a larger child abuse statute, to an entire code section or chapter mandating the use of CACs, defining requirements, and in some instances, establishing a funding formula for the allocation of state funds.



Additional Reasons to Define CACs in State Statute

Here are a few examples of ways that defining legislation has helped CACs at the federal level. With statutes on the books, imagine what's possible at the state level, which provides the largest share of all funding for CACs nationally.

-  The National Children's Alliance has built a tremendous network of support at the Congressional level. As a result, **CACs are being written into federal bills, rules and guidelines**, many of which include federal appropriations
-  **Congress has identified CACs as the preferred model** for the pursuit of justice and healing for child victims of human trafficking, mainly child sex trafficking. Any federal efforts in this area are likely to contain a CAC component
-  The National Children's Alliance has developed and signed an MOU with the FBI that **allows the FBI to use the services and/or facilities of a local CAC** in their investigations. A statutory definition, that includes rigorous standards, provides quality assurances to the FBI.
-  The National Children's Alliance, at the request of Congress, is working with the Department of Defense to develop protocols that will promote the use of CACs as the **preferred response to allegations of abuse that occur on military bases**. Congress has included \$1 million in the Federal Budget to develop a pilot project to coordinate these efforts.
-  The Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victims Assistance Grants made available to the states from the Crime Victims Fund have increased significantly in recent years. A rule regarding VOCA Victims' Assistance grants recently adopted by the Department of Justice specifically references the use of **CACs for forensic interviews as an eligible expense**.
-  Congress recently received a report from the Commission to End Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities (CECANF) which highlighted the need for a multi system approach. CACs are and will continue to be **a key component in efforts to prevent child abuse fatalities**.

Next Steps

State statutes that define, promote, and/or require the use of the CAC model are foundational to the pursuit of state funding and clearly contribute to the success and long-term viability of this proven approach to providing justice and healing to victims of child abuse.

States should prioritize advocacy efforts to codify a comprehensive definition of CACs in state law. States with definitions should explore opportunities to strengthen their language, requirements and protections. States should leverage statutory definitions to secure additional resources.