Healing, Justice, & Trust
A National Report on Outcomes for Children’s Advocacy Centers

97% of caregivers agree that Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) provide them with resources to support their children.

99% of professionals working with CACs believe clients benefit from the collaborative approach of the multidisciplinary team (MDT).

99% of children say CAC staff were good at listening to them.
This report uses data from Outcome Measurement System (OMS) surveys administered in 2021 to explore how CACs are doing in three categories: healing, justice, and trust.

National Children’s Alliance (NCA) offers multiple OMS surveys that CACs can use to evaluate their programs in order to increase the quality of services they provide to children and families and improve the collaborative efforts of their MDT members.

The questions on each survey were designed to measure two overarching outcomes:

1. The CAC facilitates healing for children and caregivers.
2. The MDT approach results in more collaborative and efficient case investigations.

The first outcome is measured through two caregiver surveys and the newly developed Youth Feedback Survey, and the second outcome is measured through an MDT survey. Youth and caregivers are both asked to complete a survey at the end of their first visit to the CAC, and then a follow-up survey is offered to caregivers approximately two months later to provide feedback on the family’s experiences with the CAC. MDT surveys are given to all team members once every six to 12 months, so they can give feedback on the current functioning of the MDT across all cases.

In 2021, **852** Children’s Advocacy Centers submitted a total of:

- **56,249** Initial Visit Caregiver Surveys
- **10,657** Caregiver Follow-Up Surveys
- **15,485** Multidisciplinary Team Surveys
- **13,245** Youth Feedback Surveys
Development of the Youth Feedback Survey

A new survey, piloted in 2020 and launched nationally in 2021

“All the people are really nice, and I could let out all my emotions and things I had to say.”

“I liked how I was in control the whole time, it made me feel safer with everything going on.”

“They made me feel more calm and collected while talking about what happened.”

“I really loved how nice everyone was. I felt safe and heard.”

The CAC model is based on giving youth a voice to share what has happened to them and what they need to heal and thrive in the future. By asking youth for feedback about their experience at the CAC directly, we are showing youth that their opinions are truly important to our work. Youth also have a unique perspective compared to the feedback from caregivers and MDT members—putting together all three perspectives gives us a more complete picture of our work. For all of these reasons, we believe youth should have an opportunity to give feedback.

Standardizing the questions all CACs ask nationally through OMS allows the entire CAC field to identify needed resources based on the same core set of information.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The OMS Youth Feedback Survey was developed based on the following guiding principles:

**Research-based**
- The questions and survey collection process should reflect research on best practices for surveying youth, tools should be piloted with a diverse group of CACs to ensure they are generalizable to the CAC field, and the final surveys should be verified valid and reliable.

**Developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and empowering**
- With a target age range of 10 to 17, a second-grade reading level, familiar terms, and an inviting format are essential.
- The approach must be trauma-informed, like all CAC best practices.
- The experience of giving feedback should be empowering for youth, giving them an authentic opportunity to share their voice in the CAC process.

**Anonymous and private**
- Like all OMS surveys, anonymity is key. The survey should not capture any names, case numbers, or other identifying information that could link responses back to the child or case.
- To avoid potential bias from caregivers and unwanted disruptions to the child’s life outside of the CAC, the survey should only be offered on-site.

In the first year after the survey launched nationally in January 2021, **332** CACs in **46** states collected **13,245** Youth Feedback Surveys.

To learn more about how this survey can impact CAC services, read NCA’s **2021 Annual Report**, in which we highlight the work of ChildSafe San Antonio to align services with youth feedback.
CACs help children and families heal

For youth, being able to speak about what happened to them helps them heal:

“I like how I can be very open with my feelings and not keep everything bottled up.”

“This center helps me understand more about my feelings and my secrets.”

“I liked how they are respectful of feelings and boundaries.”

“I liked how they really helped me, this is part of what I needed to do to heal.”

For youth, being able to speak about what happened to them helps them heal:

Did they care about you?

84% A lot
9% A little

Did they help you feel safe?

69% Very helpful
24% Helpful

What were the people at the center like?

98% Nice

94% Felt safe

93% Felt staff cared

82% Very nice
16% Nice

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Caregivers appreciate CACs’ guidance and support:

“I appreciate the guidance on how to keep my children and family safe and healthy at this time.”

“You are helping my grandson become a healthy individual.”

“The staff was super nice to me and my son and gave great support and offered counseling so we can start healing.”

“This gave my son an opportunity to speak out and get the help he needs to cope and heal.”

97% Agree

I believe my child felt safe at the center.

90% Strongly agree
7% Somewhat agree

92% Agree

I was given information about possible behaviors I might expect from my child in the days and weeks ahead.

82% Strongly agree
10% Somewhat agree

97% Agree

The center staff provided me with resources to support my child and respond to his or her needs in the days and weeks ahead.

92% Strongly agree
5% Somewhat agree
Were caregivers satisfied with their child’s medical exam, if they received one?

- 78% Very satisfied
- 11% Somewhat satisfied
- 88% Satisfied

Were caregivers satisfied with their child’s forensic interview?

- 81% Very satisfied
- 11% Somewhat satisfied
- 92% Satisfied

Were caregivers satisfied with mental health services for themselves?

- 72% Very satisfied
- 12% Somewhat satisfied
- 84% Satisfied

Were caregivers satisfied with mental health services for their children?

- 78% Very satisfied
- 11% Somewhat satisfied
- 89% Satisfied

Overall, the services we have received from the center have been helpful to me and my child.

- 96% Agree
- 87% Strongly agree
- 9% Somewhat agree

Most caregivers are satisfied with the types of services available from CACs. Only 2-6% of caregivers indicated they would have liked additional services at either the initial visit or by the time of the follow-up survey, either for their child or for themselves.
MDT members see children and families begin to heal at CACs:

“Many children have benefited from the services and been able to heal from a lot of trauma. This is one of the greatest resources we have.”

“The MDT is a wonderful opportunity to help our kids find success, health, and happiness in life.”

“The advocates and mental health providers do a great job working with families, engaging families in mental health treatment, and work very well with other MDT members.”

“Victims and their families are treated with the utmost care and compassion and are provided with and referred to a variety of services/resources that enable them to feel empowered and to begin the healing process.”

Full national results are available exclusively to NCA members on the OMS Learning Center page on NCA Engage.
CACs strive to ensure just outcomes for children and protect them from abusers

Youth feel validated, accepted, and reassured at CACs:

“I loved how accepted they made me feel. I felt like my story was valid.”

“I liked that it wasn’t just about getting my side of the story but also about knowing me and understanding me as a person.”

“Everyone did very well at informing me on what will and was happening.”

“Helped feel confident I was doing the right thing.”

**What were the people at the center like?**

- **98%** They were nice
- **82%** Very nice
- **16%** Nice

**Were they good at listening to you?**

- **98%** They listened
- **81%** Very good
- **17%** Good
CAC staff and MDT members guide caregivers and children through the investigative process:

“Everyone here is so kind and supportive of my children and myself. Everything was explained and we all knew what to be expecting.”

“I appreciated that the staff took time to make us comfortable with the process and helped us understand what the investigation meant/how to handle it.”

“All the staff helped exactly as I expected. They are awesome as a team!”

“I feel the center has done everything it can to assist my child and me.”

95% Agree
87% Strongly agree
9% Somewhat agree

Caregivers are satisfied with ongoing information/data about the child’s case.

83% Satisfied
65% Very satisfied
18% Somewhat satisfied
MDT members see the benefit of the collaborative CAC/MDT approach:

“The CAC is a great organization with great people. They are integral to the mission of protecting children and bringing offenders to justice.”

“In order to get victims the services and justice they need, it takes team work. The MDT gets this accomplished.”

“The CAC is an integral part of our investigative process. I appreciate their work and expertise that they provide.”

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98% Agree

I can provide input during the forensic interview process.

83% Strongly agree
13% Somewhat agree

97% Agree

I can get the information I need to fulfill my areas of responsibility on cases.

81% Strongly agree
17% Somewhat agree

98% Agree

Resources provided by the center help to improve work on our team’s cases.

82% Strongly agree
16% Somewhat agree
98% Agree

I believe the clients served through the center benefit from the collaborative approach of our MDT.

86% Strongly agree
13% Somewhat agree

92% Agree

Case review team meetings help me with my work on cases.

67% Strongly agree
26% Somewhat agree

86% Strongly agree
13% Somewhat agree

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For children, families, and MDT members, trust is an essential component of the CAC model.

Youth served at CACs can tell that the centers prioritize being a safe space for them:

“I liked that everyone got to help me answer some questions that I had. I trust them and I know I’m safe.”

“The employees here are really nice and supportive and made me feel like I really could trust them.”

“I liked how genuine and honest everyone was. I felt so comfortable and safe.”

**Did CAC staff help you understand what to expect at the center?**

- 94% Felt staff helped
- 57% Very helpful
- 37% Helpful

**Were CAC staff good at listening to you?**

- 98% Felt staff listened
- 81% Very good
- 17% Good

**How good were CAC staff at answering your questions?**

- 84% Felt staff answered
- 55% Very good
- 29% Good
- 13% of youth didn’t have any questions
Caregivers trust CACs to help them and their children:

“I trust that she will be there through the whole process. I know we’re not alone.”

“She was kind and explained to me what to expect. Gave me several opportunities to ask questions.”

“Everything was handled with care and sensitivity.”

The staff members at the center were friendly and pleasant. 100% Agree

- 2% Somewhat agree
- 98% Strongly agree

When I came to the center, my child and I were greeted and received attention in a timely manner. 99% Agree

- 3% Somewhat agree
- 97% Strongly agree

If I knew anyone else who was dealing with a situation like the one my family faced, I would tell that person about the center. 96% Agree

- 5% Somewhat agree
- 91% Strongly agree
The process for the interview of my child at the center was clearly explained to me. 99% Agree
- 4% Somewhat agree
- 94% Strongly agree

My questions were answered to my satisfaction. 99% Agree
- 5% Somewhat agree
- 94% Strongly agree

After our visit at the center, I feel I know what to expect with the situation facing my child and me. 95% Agree
- 12% Somewhat agree
- 83% Strongly agree

I feel I have received information that has helped me understand how I can best keep my child safe in the future. 95% Agree
- 11% Somewhat agree
- 84% Strongly agree
MDT members and their agencies trust the CAC model:

“It provides a place to form trusting relationships with other agencies and professionals, which in turn allows us to best serve the families in our area.”

“The team members trust other members in their area of expertise. Communication is solid.”

“The CAC employees are professional and a trusted resource for students who have been abused. Thank you for your important work!”

Team members willingly share information relevant to our cases. 98% Agree

- 15% Somewhat agree
- 83% Strongly agree

The Children’s Advocacy Center Model fosters collaboration on the multidisciplinary teams. 98% Agree

- 11% Somewhat agree
- 86% Strongly agree
The center provides an environment where I feel safe expressing my concerns or making suggestions about the functioning of the multidisciplinary team. 95% Agree

- 15% Somewhat agree
- 81% Strongly agree

Team meetings are a productive use of my time. 94% Agree

- 26% Somewhat agree
- 67% Strongly agree

Other team members understand my role on the team. 95% Agree

- 23% Somewhat agree
- 72% Strongly agree

All members of the multidisciplinary team are actively involved in cases relevant to their role. 95% Agree

- 24% Somewhat agree
- 71% Strongly agree

Other team members turn to my agency for information, expertise, and direction. 95% Agree

- 22% Somewhat agree
- 73% Strongly agree

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Improved MDT collaboration during the pandemic

MDT members met the challenge of a public health crisis

Despite the challenges brought by COVID-19, teams weathered the storm very well. Unlike widespread polarization in current society, the proportion of MDT members strongly agreeing that members demonstrate respect for the perspectives and informational needs of other team members increased by 2 percentage points (from 77% in 2018 to 79% in 2021).

And despite most teams switching to remote case review during the pandemic, according to a recent report based on 2020 NCA Member Census data regarding the expanded use of teleservices, there were no decreases in the productivity of team meetings and a slight increase in MDT members saying case review helps with work on cases (increased, with 67% strongly agreeing in 2021 compared to 65% in 2018).
“I loved how accepted they made me feel. I felt like my story was valid.”

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This project was supported by Grant #2021 15PJDP-21-GK-02759 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

National Children's Alliance
The Force Behind Children’s Advocacy Centers

National Children’s Alliance
c/o Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital
921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20003

membership@nca-online.org
nationalchildrensalliance.org