

Backgrounder Child Advocacy Centres

Child Advocacy Centres (CAC) are child-focused centres that coordinate the investigation, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse while helping abused children. They adopt a seamless and collaborative approach to addressing the needs of child and youth victims of crime. CACs seek to minimize system-induced trauma by providing a child-friendly setting for a young victim and his or her family. Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CYAC) offer the same services as a CAC, but to a broader age-range of victims.

Child Advocacy Centres bring together a multidisciplinary team of police, child protection, medical services, mental health services, and victim services. Professional services offered by CACs include coordinated forensic interviews; examination of the child by a medical professional; victim advocacy, including court preparation and support; trauma assessment; and counselling.

CACs help children and their families navigate the justice system in a number of ways. For example, CACs provide a child or youth with a safe and comfortable environment in which to be interviewed by criminal justice professionals and seek to reduce the number of interviews and questions directed at a child, thereby minimizing system-induced trauma. CACs may also provide education and training to justice professionals on best practices for interviewing child victims and witnesses. For example, interviews recorded by video are an effective method for gathering valuable information that can help both the young victim and the justice system. Ultimately, CACs lead to better communication between agencies supporting young victims and to increased access to services for young victims and their families or caregivers.

It has been shown that investigations conducted by CACs are cost-effective and can expedite decision making by Crown prosecutors laying criminal charges. Parents whose children receive services from CACs are more satisfied with the investigation process and interview procedures, and those children who attend CACs are generally satisfied with the investigation and are more likely to state they were not scared during the forensic interviewing process.

Since 2010, the Government of Canada has allocated \$10.25 million for new or enhanced Child Advocacy Centres to address the needs of child and youth victims of crime. CACs that have benefited from Government of Canada funding, either directly or through funding provided to one of their partners, include the following:

Nova Scotia

Halifax (Child and Youth Advocacy Centre Demonstration Project)

Quebec

Centre d'expertise Marie-Vincent, Montréal

Ontario

Child and Youth Advocacy Centre at Boost, Toronto

Child Advocacy Centre Niagara, St. Catharines

Manitoba

Winnipeg Children's Advocacy Centre, Winnipeg

Saskatchewan

Saskatoon Centre for Children's Justice, Saskatoon

Regina Children's Justice Centre, Regina

Alberta

Caribou Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, Grand Prairie

Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre, Calgary

British Columbia

Sophie's Place, Surrey

Alisa's Wish, Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows

The Government has also provided funding for projects that explore the creation or development of a CAC in the following communities:

Ontario

Brampton

Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry, and Akwesasne

Kitchener

Orillia

Ottawa

Sioux Lookout

British Columbia

Vancouver

West Kootenay Boundary

Vernon

Victoria

Yukon

Whitehorse

Northwest Territories

Yellowknife