

Draft Recommendations for the Review of Funding and Support for Virginia's Children's Advocacy Centers

Recommendations to Address State General Fund and TANF Support

Recommendation 1: Introduce a budget amendment to Item 335 of the Appropriation Act to increase the General Fund appropriation and ensure a certain funding baseline going forward to cover direct core operational and medical costs. This is in light of increased budget expenses and the recent loss of federal Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) funding.

Recommendation 2: Introduce a budget amendment to Item 335 of the Appropriation Act to establish a phased General Fund (GF) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) rebalancing strategy over the 2027–2028 biennium by systematically replacing TANF block grant appropriations with State General Funds.

Item 335 currently allocates \$2,717,756 GF and \$6,236,500 TANF annually to contract with CACs, representing nearly 70% state reliance on TANF. TANF funding carries federal statutory restrictions, including a prohibition on its use for medical services and financial eligibility requirements for certain TANF-funded services. Transitioning state support to the General Fund will stabilize CAC funding against TANF restrictions and reserve depletions.

Recommendations to Incentivize Local Government Support

Recommendation 3: Introduce a budget amendment to Item 335 of the Appropriation Act to require local governments to provide support to the Children's Advocacy Center serving their locality. Support may include direct funding and/or qualifying in-kind contributions. Direct the Virginia Department of Social Services, in consultation with Children's Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA), Virginia Association of Counties (VACo), and Virginia Municipal League (VML), to convene a work group to develop implementation guidelines, including the required level of local support.

Recommendation 4: Introduce a budget amendment to Item 335 of the Appropriation Act to establish a state matching incentive above base allocations for localities that provide direct local appropriations to the Children's Advocacy Center serving their locality. The Virginia Department of Social Services shall establish matching rates based and a maintenance of effort rule based on a locality's ability to pay.

Recommendation 5: Introduce a budget amendment to Item 335 of the Appropriation Act to permit verified local government in-kind contributions to count toward the local contribution eligible for the state matching incentive. Direct the Virginia Department of Social Services to establish guidelines for eligible in-kind contributions, including limits on the proportion of the local contribution that may be satisfied through in-kind support, and requirements for valuation, documentation, and verification. The Virginia Department of Social Services shall establish matching rates based and a maintenance of effort rule based on a locality's ability to provide in-kind contributions.

Examples: In-kind contributions may include donated facility space, law enforcement or Child Protective Services personnel assigned to work at or regularly provide services from the CAC, or administrative and information technology support.

Recommendation regarding Outcomes and Performance Reporting

Recommendation 6: Introduce a budget amendment to Item 335 of the Appropriation Act directing the Children's Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA) to work with CACs to collect and report standardized annual performance and outcome metrics to the Virginia Department of Social Services, which shall report the information annually to the Chairs of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee and the House Appropriations Committee.

Metrics should include system efficiency and outcome measures, such as the average time from referral to forensic interview, average wait time for connection to mental health services, and case disposition outcomes, including plea agreements. CACs already collect and report a significant amount of this information. This recommendation would formalize and standardize the reporting process while placing greater emphasis on measuring outcomes and system performance.

Recommendations on Court Fine and Fee Allocations

Recommendation 7: Amend the *Code of Virginia* to establish an additional fee assessed for conviction of certain offenses upon conviction for felony sex offenses, crimes against children, or sexual exploitation offenses with proceeds deposited into a dedicated CAC Operational Fund. This would be similar to additional court fees under § 17.1-275.11 which goes to the General Fund or § 18.2-270.01 which goes to a special non-reverting fund.

Recommendation 8: Amend §§ 16.1-69.48:1 and 17.1-275.1 of the *Code of Virginia* to increase the fixed fee and reallocate a fractional percentage of existing fixed court costs to support Children's Advocacy Centers.

Recommendation regarding Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Funding and Training

Recommendation 9: Request that the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) review competitive state and federal grant opportunities and state victim assistance funding streams to support Children's Advocacy Centers to offset declining federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding.

DCJS previously provided pass-through funding to CACs. While 10% of VOCA funds are federally designated for child abuse under 28 C.F.R. § 94.104, much of that funding currently supports CASA programs housed under DCJS. Continued competitive grant opportunities from DCJS can help offset revenue shortfalls.

Recommendation on Funding Formula Modernization and Flexibility

Recommendation 10: Introduce a budget amendment to Item 335 of the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Department of Social Services, in direct partnership with Children's Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA), to convene a CAC Formula Review Committee. Currently, Virginia's funding distribution formula is codified in Item 335, establishing fixed percentages.

The Committee shall evaluate the current funding distribution model to specifically address:

- Recommendations to update formula metrics to better reflect core service demands, including unduplicated children served, forensic interview volume, mental health therapy hours provided, active military MOUs, and geographical/rural coverage challenges.
- Recommendations to permit more flexibility in updating the formula while promoting continuity and oversight.

The Committee shall submit recommendations to the Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee by November 1, 2027.

Recommendation on Service Expansion in Unserved Areas

Recommendation 11: Introduce a budget amendment to establish a state-administered Seed and Expansion Grant Program (\$100,000–\$150,000 per site over two to three years) through the Virginia Department of Social Services to cover initial start-up costs to establish satellite centers or new CACs in unserved jurisdictions. Currently, 25% of Virginia’s localities lack CAC coverage, and CACs cannot draw down state Item 335 funds until they are fully operational as an associate or accredited member by the National Children's Alliance.

Recommendation 12: Request the Virginia Commission on Youth to convene a stakeholder work group to study models for expanding Children’s Advocacy Centers’ access to Virginia's underserved and rural areas.

Recommendations related to Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) and Settlement Funds

Recommendation 13: Investigate the use of Commonwealth Opioid Abatement Remediation (COAR) Fund dollars to establish an additional revenue source for Children’s Advocacy Centers.

Recommendation 14: Request the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) and the Virginia Municipal League (VML) work with their members to encourage local governments to partner with regional Children’s Advocacy Centers as subrecipients on local competitive Opioid Abatement Authority grant applications.

Recommendation regarding Title IV-E Funding

Recommendation 15: Request that the Virginia Department of Social Services explore whether training, service, or administrative costs related to the CAC model are eligible for federal Title IV-E reimbursement, and work with Children’s Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA) to assist CACs in drawing down available funds.

Recommendation related to Medicaid Billing Infrastructure

Recommendation 16: Request that the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) work with Children's Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA) and local CACs to provide technical assistance and guidance on Medicaid billing for eligible clinical and mental health services. Most Virginia CACs lack the administrative billing infrastructure needed to bill Medicaid for eligible services.

Recommendation on Specialized Mental Health Treatment (PSB-CBT)

Recommendation 17: Introduce a budget amendment to Item 335 of the Appropriation Act to provide dedicated state funding to establish evidence-based Problematic Sexual Behavior Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (PSB-CBT) as a standard core service across Virginia CACs. Youth exhibiting Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB) require specialized outpatient therapy. Programs operating in Virginia demonstrate over a 90% non-reoffend rate, diverting youth from costly residential placements.

Recommendation on Child Victim and Witness Testimony Laws

Recommendation 18: Request the Virginia Commission on Youth to study § 18.2-67.9 of the *Code of Virginia* regarding testimony by child victims and witnesses using two-way closed-circuit television to evaluate age restrictions and potential barriers to its effectiveness in being used in situations where a child has been impacted by trauma. Section 18.2-67.9 was amended in 2025. Stakeholder feedback gathered during CAC site visits highlighted age and timeline restrictions and a higher threshold in current law compared to peer states.