



# Children's Advocacy Centers of Kentucky

2024 Annual Report

# A Model That Stands the Test of Time

The challenges associated with an investigation of child abuse are often too numerous to count. Children may not have the capacity to understand what has happened to them. Many children may not know how to communicate the act of abuse even if they know something was wrong. And because child abuse is frequently a crime committed with no witnesses, authorities may be required to work with limited information. The Children's Advocacy Center model was built on a vision that we must seek to overcome these challenges. The model involves a formal collaborative approach to investigations and specialized services designed to **ensure each child victim receives the response they deserve.**

What began with a group of dedicated professionals sitting around a table and brainstorming about how we can improve our approach to child abuse cases became a formal statewide network of Children's Advocacy Center's (CACs) 25 years ago. The model has withstood the test of time and is now well respected in Kentucky.

Thank you to everyone who has joined us on this journey and believed, as we do, that we can improve the way we serve child victims and their families. Our work is not finished and we will continue to need your support during the next phase of our journey.



**AMY WICKLIFFE**  
BOARD PRESIDENT



**CAROLINE RUSCHELL**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who is CAC Kentucky	04
Who Children's Advocacy Centers Serve	06
Support from CAC Kentucky	08
A Specialized Approach	09
Training	10
Peer Connection	11
Multidisciplinary Teams	12
Multidisciplinary Enhancement Project	14
CAC Kentucky Financials	16

## We are the bridge to hope and healing.

The Children's Advocacy Centers of Kentucky (CAC Kentucky) is the statewide coalition of CACs dedicated to helping every child impacted by abuse. CAC Kentucky connects local CACs and our partners with the tools, resources, and support needed to provide a comprehensive response to child abuse.





# OUR PEOPLE

The governing Board of Directors for CAC Kentucky brings a variety of vital professional expertise and experience to the organization. This list includes all current board members.

Amy Wickliffe - President  
*McCarthy Strategic Solutions*

Jillian Carden, Psy.D.  
*Silverleaf Sexual Trauma Recovery Services*

Janine Webb  
*Yum! Brands, Inc.*

Brady Dunnigan - Past President  
*Stites & Harbison, PLLC*

Catherine Robinette, DMD  
*Dentistry for Children*

Kristin Jacobson  
*Lake Cumberland Children's Advocacy Center*

Winn Stephens - Secretary  
*Children's Advocacy Center of the Bluegrass*

Jason Sauer  
*Churchill Downs, Inc.*

Gary McCollum  
*Alliance Resource Partners*

Rick Shields, CPA, CFE - Treasurer  
*Blue & Co., LLC*

Renee Shepard  
*Energy Insurance Agency*

Jamie Mullins  
*Zayo Group*

Sue Perram  
*Brown-Forman*

Children's Advocacy Centers of Kentucky employs a staff of experienced professionals dedicated to serving the needs of its 15 member centers across the Commonwealth.

Caroline Ruschell



Chief Executive  
Officer

Laura Kretzer



Chief Strategy  
Officer

Blair Lee



Chief Financial  
Officer

Shelly Kidd



Finance  
Manager

Ellie Young



Program  
Compliance  
Manager

Candice Humphrey



Communications  
& Outreach  
Coordinator

Jackie Kuryla



Multidisciplinary  
Enhancement  
Program Manager

# WHO CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS SERVE

A Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) is a child-focused facility where representatives from many disciplines come together to provide the best possible response to child abuse. Decisions are made about the investigations, treatment, management, and prosecution of child abuse cases by teams comprised of:

- Law enforcement
- Child protection
- Prosecution
- Mental health
- Medical
- Victim advocacy

CACs are designed to promote the well-being of children by facilitating the most effective investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases. Every geographic region of Kentucky is served by our 15 Children's Advocacy Centers and a growing list of additional service locations. These centers provide direct forensic and supportive services to children and non-offending caregivers impacted by child sexual abuse, physical abuse, and other forms of maltreatment. CACs streamline the systemic response to child abuse by offering:

- Forensic interviews
- Victim support
- Advocacy
- Medical evaluations
- Mental health services

All services are provided at a child-friendly location by trauma-informed professionals.

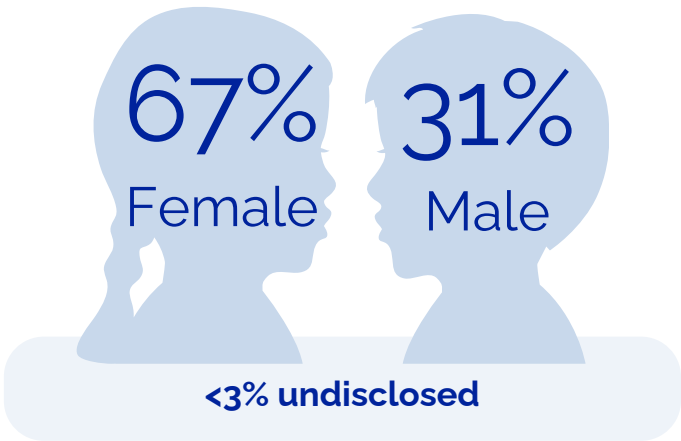
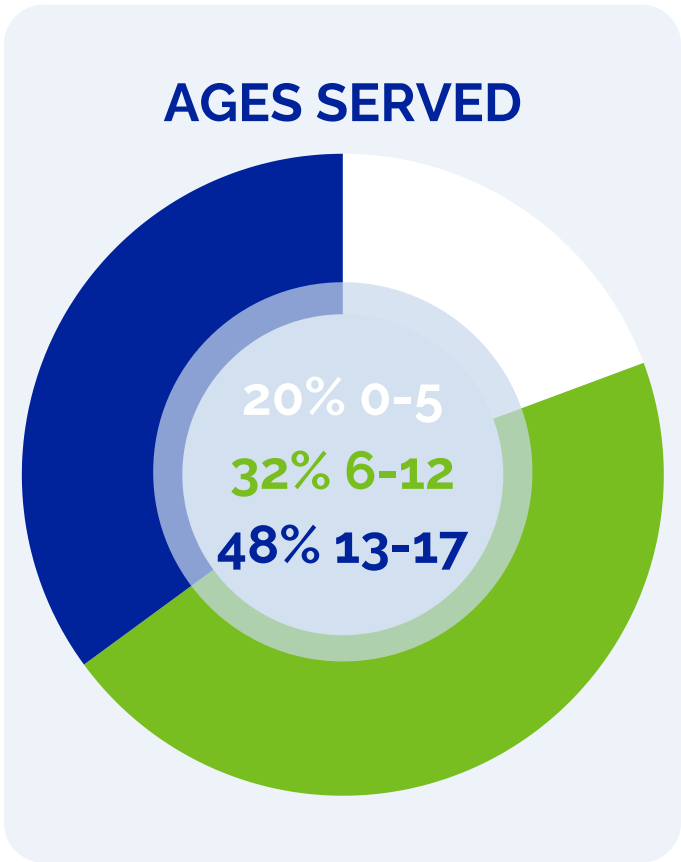
*"I am overwhelmingly grateful for the heart & professional commitment of each person we've encountered from the initial call until now. In the darkest hour our family has faced, the CAC has been a lighthouse, guiding us back to solid ground."*

*- Caregiver*

In fiscal year 2024:

7,337  
Children

4,684  
Caregivers



"The CAC serves as a vital role in our community and I am thankful for each person who is willing to walk through the doors to serve these kids. Every discipline plays a vital role on the team, and **when we are all working together, we see the kind of justice each child deserves.**"

-Community Partner

- TYPES OF ABUSE
- 54% sexual abuse
  - 14% physical abuse
  - 14% risk of harm - sexual abuse
  - 4% other
  - 3% witness to violence
  - 3% neglect/dependency
  - 3% risk of harm - physical abuse
  - 3% human trafficking
  - 2% child sexual abuse material

Children from each of Kentucky's 120 counties received services from one of the 22 locations across our commonwealth.

5,796  
Forensic Interviews

1,333  
Case Review Meetings

8,207  
Mental Health Services

572  
Medical Exams & Services

118,370  
Case Management Services

39,240  
Total Cases Reviewed

# SUPPORT FROM CAC KENTUCKY

CAC Kentucky is dedicated to supporting quality implementation of the children's advocacy center model statewide. CAC Kentucky's experienced staff provides a variety of means of support to its fifteen member CACs, community partners, and other stakeholders.

3,429

Technical Assistance

1,251

Research

151

External Stakeholder Meetings

75

Product Development

26

Training

CAC Kentucky staff conducted on-site monitoring and technical assistance at **all** regionally designated Children's Advocacy Centers.

*"We appreciate all that CAC KY does for our agency and staff, we feel 100% supported."*

*-CAC Director Needs Assessment Survey Response*



# A SPECIALIZED APPROACH

Technical assistance (TA) takes many forms. Some TA involves creating materials to support all CACs and MDTs, such as producing monthly e-newsletters with timely information and maintaining online resources for member CACs and the public. Other TA involves on-site visits to programs for purposes of monitoring compliance with established standards. Customized TA is also available upon request from any CAC or MDT regarding specific issues that arise.

CAC Kentucky cultivates expertise in many areas, including legal services, human resources, medical support and data tracking. CACs statewide have access to a broad range of services to support their work on behalf of child victims of abuse.



*“The center is happy to have all the statewide resources available to our region to help serve our child victims and caregivers more efficiently. All these services are valuable to our center, it helps us to have methods and procedures put in place and gives us feedback to grow and improve our services.”*

*- CAC Director Needs Assessment Survey Response*

# TRAINING

CAC Kentucky provides and facilitates access to high-quality training to enhance the skills of the professionals working in CACs and partner agencies. Continuing education is critical to a quality, up-to-date response to child abuse.



**449** Training Participants  
**26** Training Opportunities

## Training Content Areas

Victim  
Advocacy

Medical

Child Sex  
Trafficking

First Response

Multidisciplinary  
Teams

Human  
Resources &  
Legal

Finance

Standards of  
Practice &  
Monitoring

*Children served by CACs receive a multidisciplinary team (MDT) response which brings together professionals from law enforcement, child protection, medical, prosecution, victim advocacy, and mental health fields.*

*"The instructors kept us engaged in the topic and made it very easy to following along. I learned a lot and was able to retain most if not all of the information."*

*-Training Participant Survey*

# PEER CONNECTIONS

Many specialized services at regional children's advocacy centers are provided by a few or sometimes only one professional in each region, making the work feel isolating. CAC Kentucky facilitated a variety of ways to connect peers statewide in structured settings focused on skill building and support. While different from traditional training, these virtual gatherings fill an essential role.

- The Multidisciplinary Enhancement Project (MEP) Community of Practice focused on implementing the routing of central intake reports and overall team functioning.
- Peer review is part of the standard for ensuring the quality of both child sexual abuse medical examinations and forensic interviews.
- The Victim Advocacy Peer Support group focuses on connecting advocates, discussing best practices, and sharing resources.

**79 unique participants • 330 total participants in these offerings**

**3**

**MDT Facilitation  
Peer Group**

**14**

**MEP Community  
of Practice**

**21**

**Medical Peer  
Review Sessions**

**5**

**Victim Advocacy  
Peer Support**

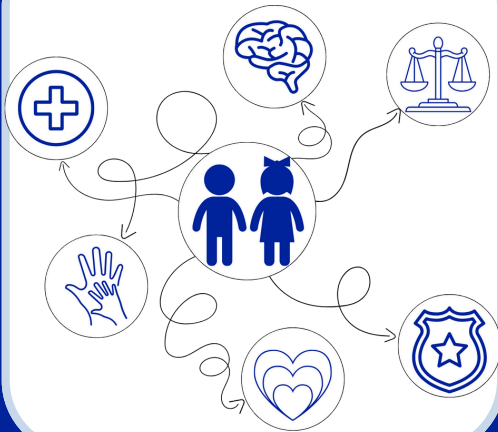
**1**

**Forensic Interview  
Peer Review**

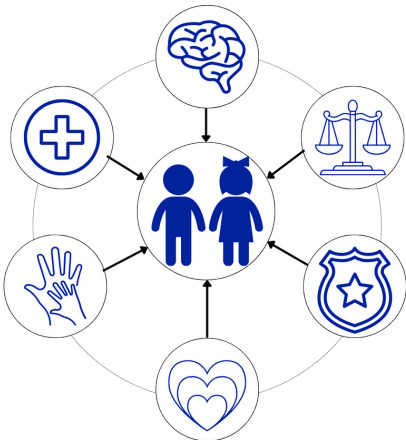
Peer Learning Cohorts offer an opportunity for Chapters to provide ways for CACs across their state to collaborate, share experiences, and learn from one another to enhance their organizations' effectiveness and impact.

# MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS

## Without CACs



## With CACs



The heart of the children's advocacy center model is the multidisciplinary team of professionals working together in a coordinated response to child abuse. This model is designed to create better outcomes for children and families by bringing the full team of experts to the child, reducing their trauma and facilitating justice, support, and healing.

MDT related technical assistance was in the top three of overall focus areas of CAC Kentucky staff this year. Examples of assistance include:

- Conducting MDT Facilitator Peer Group in partnership with the Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Center
- Facilitating monthly Community of Practice sessions for the MEP
- Reviewing and providing feedback on local MDT protocols which document the local partnerships and practices of each MDT

Additionally, CEO Caroline Ruschell continues to chair the Kentucky Multidisciplinary Commission on Child Sexual Abuse, a statutory commission comprised of leaders in the core MDT disciplines which focuses on model protocol development and reporting on the work and needs of MDTs.

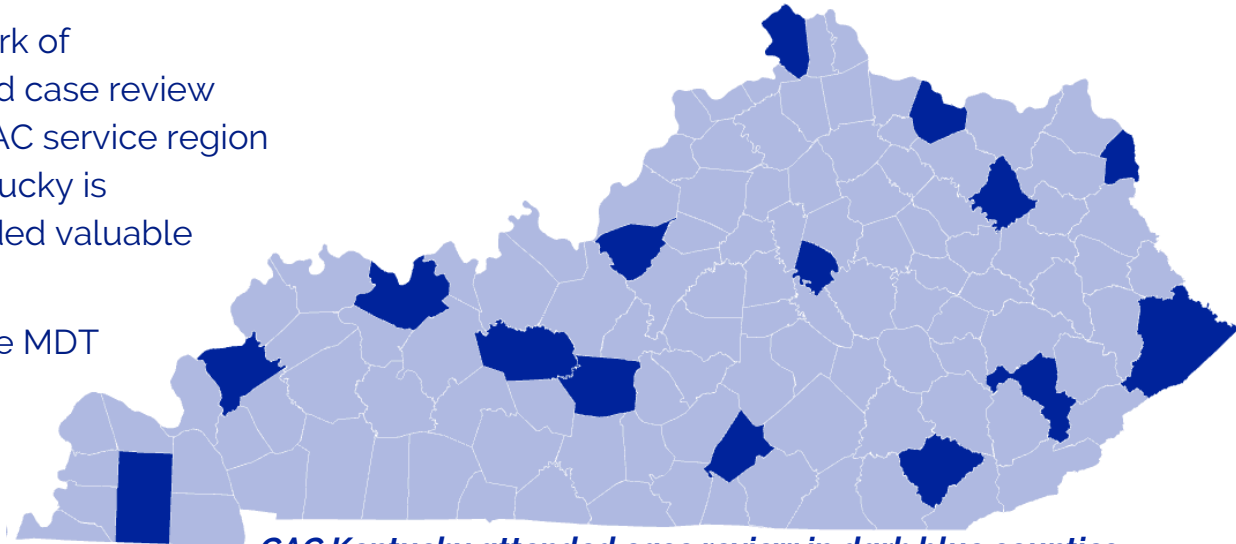


# MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM SUPPORT

CAC Kentucky is committed to supporting the work of multidisciplinary teams. CAC Kentucky staff visited case review meetings of one multidisciplinary team in each CAC service region to learn about team practices firsthand. CAC Kentucky is appreciative of the sharing by teams which provided valuable information about their strengths and needs.

Case review is the formal process that enables the MDT to monitor and assess its independent and collective effectiveness to ensure the safety and well-being of children and families. The process encourages mutual accountability and helps to assure that children's and families' needs are met sensitively, effectively and in a timely manner. Case review serves multiple purposes:

- Experience and expertise of MDT members is shared and discussed
- Collaborative efforts are fostered
- Formal and informal communications are promoted
- Mutual support is provided
- Protocols and procedures are reviewed
- Informed, collective decisions are made
- Services are coordinated



*CAC Kentucky attended case review in dark blue counties.*

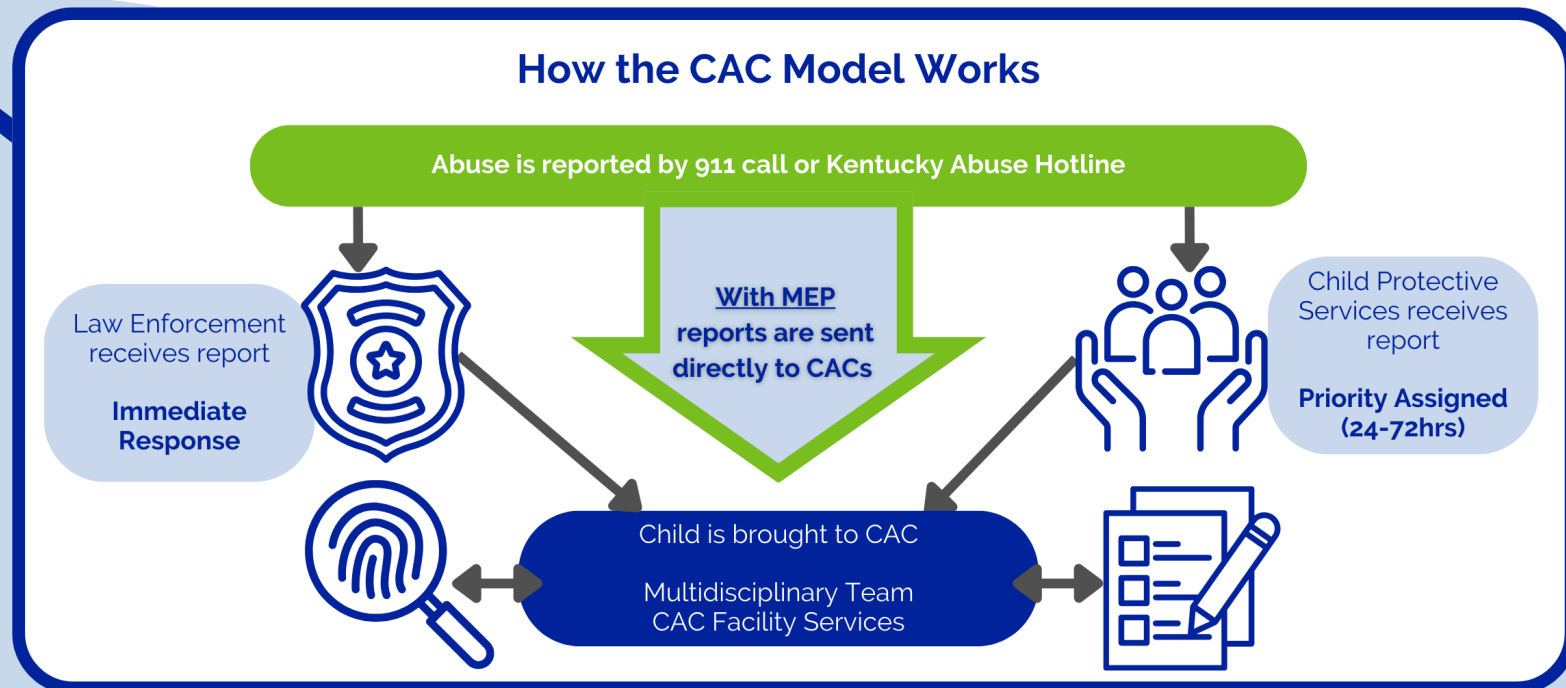
*"We are so thankful for our **collaboration** with the CAC. The services they offer families are **invaluable** and help promote a safe, **positive environment** for children/caregivers."*

*- Community Partner*

# MULTIDISCIPLINARY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

A key responsibility of CACs is to promote the coordination of services for children when there are allegations of child abuse. CACs first need the information about the allegation to provide this coordination. Historically, most reports of child abuse are reported to the Cabinet for Health & Family Services child abuse reporting hotline, also called Central Intake. Then, these reports were shared with law enforcement and prosecutors. The CAC would only learn of a report if a referral was made to the CAC by one of these partners. With MEP, sharing the intake reports with CACs enhances communication and improves the efficient response of all team members, ultimately benefiting children.

MEP started as a pilot project and involved multiple steps and a manual process for intake reports to reach a CAC. Thanks to a strong partnership with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), technology makes it possible to expand MEP statewide by automating this process.



# MULTIDISCIPLINARY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

**2024**

118 counties are enrolled!

**2023**

June: At least one county from each region is enrolled in the program

**2023**

May: Technology solution tested

**2022**

API integration requirements

**2019**

Pilot project is launched in three counties

*Continuous data collection & analysis:* from the pilot we were able to determine that 15% of reports were identified as meeting MDT/CAC response.

The journey to implementing the statewide multidisciplinary enhancement program required participation from CHFS and local community partners. This year CAC Kentucky supported expansion of the project from just three counties to 118 counties. This included specialized technical assistance, empowering community members, and creation of various resources.

CAC Kentucky is thankful for the partnership and diligent efforts of everyone involved to expand MEP during a short period of time. The expansion of MEP is the beginning of this new way to communicate and coordinate the response to child abuse. CAC Kentucky is committed to continuing to support the work of MDTs.

## ***Improved Communication - Better Outcomes***

Through MEP, the CAC received a report that the Department of Community Based Services accepted for an investigation of physical abuse by a caretaker. While providing expert review of the report, the CAC staff member identified non-caretaker allegations of child sexual abuse in the narrative. The CAC coordinates routine staffing of any cases identified through MEP that may benefit from services at the CAC.

Staffing includes law enforcement, DCBS, and the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office. During the staffing of this report, these professionals worked together to coordinate the law enforcement investigation and schedule a forensic interview for the child in a timely manner. The child disclosed the abuse in the forensic interview, and the case was staffed with the entire multidisciplinary team for appropriate next steps.

Because the child was already in therapy, the team ensured that the therapist was aware of the new disclosure. Ultimately, the child's needs were met in a timely, comprehensive, and coordinated manner.

## CAC KENTUCKY FINANCIALS

July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024

## Support and Revenue

Grants and Contracts	\$9,803,500
Contributions	\$35,492
Program Fees	\$32,800
Other Income	\$3,127
Net Assets Released from Restriction	\$36,769
<b>Total Support, Gains and Revenue</b>	<b>\$9,911,688</b>

## Expenses

Program Services	\$9,603,005
Management and General	\$303,063
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$9,906,068</b>
<b>Changes in Net Assets with Donor Restrictions</b>	<b>\$20,750</b>



As of June 30, 2024

## Assets

Cash	\$564,799
Accounts Receivable	\$1,853,535
Prepaid Expenses	\$9,785
Furniture and Equipment, Net	\$19,547
Right-of-Use Leased Asset	\$20,629
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$2,468,205</b>

## Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$2,197,321
Accrued Payroll	\$35,562
Operating Lease Payable	\$20,629
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$2,253,512</b>
<b>Net assets (unrestricted)</b>	<b>\$178,443</b>
<b>Net assets (restricted)</b>	<b>\$36,250</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$2,468,205</b>

**Thank you to our generous partners who support our mission to help child victims of abuse.**

### **Foundation and Charitable Partners**

Elgin Foundation  
Frank A. & Edith Orechio Foundation  
Kosair for Kids

### **Corporate Sponsors**

Churchill Downs  
Devan Medical

### **Protector's Circle**

Amy Wickliffe  
Marcia & Jeff Carpenter

### **Healing Partners**

Luke Morgan	Emily & Jeff England
Jason Sauer	Leigh Ann Finley McLaughlin
Susan Sears	Laura Hayden & John van Nagell III
Cassidy Rosenthal	Jack & Rebecca Wilkinson
Applied Digital Solutions	Gary McCollum
Rick & Amy Shields	Renee Shepard

### **Public Partners**

Kentucky Cabinet for Health & Family Services  
Kentucky Justice & Public Safety Cabinet  
Kentucky Office of the Governor  
Kentucky Office of the Attorney General  
National Children's Alliance  
Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Centers



**CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY  
CENTERS OF KENTUCKY**

---

128 Kentucky Avenue, Suite 115  
Lexington, KY 40502

**[CAKentucky.org](http://CAKentucky.org)**

Children's Advocacy Centers of Kentucky is  
funded in whole or part by Federal, Cabinet for  
Health and Family Services and other state funds.