



CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS OF CALIFORNIA

On September 30, 2020, Governor Newsom signed AB 2741 (Rubio), a bill that creates statutory requirements for children's advocacy centers (CAC). These requirements clarify what services must be provided to qualify as a CAC. This historic move helps ensure that abused children receive the specific services they need for healing and justice, minimizes re-traumatization to hurt children, improves investigations into allegations of child abuse, and decreases investigational costs. Erin Harper, Executive Director of Children's Advocacy Centers of California (CACC) stated, "All children in California who have been abused deserve an equal chance to heal and receive justice, no matter where in the state they live. This law is an essential first step to ensuring that happens. We are very grateful for Governor Newsom's commitment to the well-being of California's children who have experienced trauma."

A CAC is a child-friendly facility in which law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, mental health, medical and victim advocacy professionals work together to investigate abuse, help children heal from abuse, and hold offenders accountable. In the neutral setting of the CAC, team members can collaborate on strategies that will aid investigators and prosecutors without causing further harm to the child victim.

The passage of this bill is timely. Experts are concerned that the pandemic will increase child abuse rates. Indeed, during quarantine and lockdown the incidents that are being reported are often heinous and often require immediate law enforcement, child welfare, and medical intervention. Now more than ever, California needs to provide guidance for responding to allegations of child abuse in the trauma-informed, evidence-based manner that most other states recognize.

According to the National Children's Alliance, abused children who visit a CAC are four times more likely to receive medical care and increased referrals for mental health treatment than children served by non-CAC communities. Survivor Ally Loo, who testified on previous iterations of the bill, stated, "I am thrilled that AB 2741 has been signed into law. Children's advocacy centers are a huge step toward ensuring that all victims of child abuse receive the love and care they need and definitely deserve. Thirteen years ago, CALICO Center, a child advocacy center, helped me feel safe by protecting me from having to repeatedly relive the worst moments of my life and put me on a path to healing. AB 2741 will help bring that same standard of care and compassion to child victims across California."

CACC applauds California's latest work to keep the children of the state safe and healthy and looks forward to the continued partnership with Governor Newsom on this important issue.

To learn more about children's advocacy centers in California visit cacc-online.org