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Indiana Child Advocacy Centers conduct over 10,000 interviews in 2016

Caseload doubles in last ten years and could double again in next decade

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana's 24 active Child Advocacy Centers and Multidisciplinary Teams conducted 10,276 forensic interviews in 2016. The most ever in a single year.

In 2005, Indiana CACs conducted 4,689 forensic interviews. Since then, CACs have seen an average year-over-year increase in caseload of 7.64% a year. Forensic interviews are recorded neutral, child-focused interviews with children who have been abused, assaulted, neglected, or witnessed a crime that are later used as testimony in court.

"The notion that abuse, neglect, and maltreatment rates of children is dropping or leveling is not reflected in our work. The Department of Child Services, Police and county prosecutors are bringing children to CACs across Indiana at an average rate of 28 a day, every day of the year. And that's just a small sliver of the 150,000 reported cases of abuse made every year in Indiana," said Jan Lutz, Chapter Director of the Indiana Chapter of National Children's Alliance.

At the current rate of caseload increase, Indiana CACs can expect to see just over 11,000 cases in 2017 and around 14,000 cases by 2020. "Funding for CACs comes from community donors, private foundations, and grants from federal, state, and local governments. If funding doesn't keep up with demand, some CACs may be in the impossible situation of not being able to provide services to every child in need. Some are already facing tough decisions," said Emily Perry, Indiana Chapter Board President and Executive Director of Susie's Place Child Advocacy Centers.

"There is some positive news to this, however," said Carolyn Hahn, Executive Director of the CASIE Center in South Bend. "There are more CACs operating around Indiana now than ever before and we're interviewing more children in investigations to insure more comprehensive interviews," said Hahn.

Indiana CACs provide more than just forensic interviews of alleged abuse and maltreatment. Children and non-offending family members that visit a CAC can often receive mental and physical health screenings, therapy, and can pair with a Victim Advocate in 20 of Indiana's 24 CACs and MDTs. "Victim Advocates have provided hundreds of Hoosier families with thousands of hours of help navigating the court system, and accessing food, clean clothing, shelter, and other emergency help," said Lutz. Adding, "When you have to get out of a dangerous situation, not everyone knows people who can help."

"In the last 5-7 years, Indiana's CACs have shifted from being exclusively about sexual assault to a model that serves all victims of crime," said Perry. Indiana CACs also help children who may witness domestic abuse or other crimes or may be around heavy drug usage or be drug-addicted themselves. "CACs and MDTs are always trying to ensure the safety of children. Sometimes that's removal from the home, at times that's drug rehabilitation, family counseling, or other services," said Perry.

It is the vision of the Indiana Chapter of the National Children's Alliance that all children in Indiana alleged to be a victim of abuse will have reasonable access to a full array of evidence-based Child Advocacy Center services and an effective multidisciplinary response to their case and their care.

To learn more about the Chapter and your obligation to report suspected abuse under Indiana's Mandated Reporter law visit the Indiana Chapter of the National Children's Alliance at INCACs.org.