**National Children’s Alliance 2021 Leadership Conference - Legislative Priorities**

**Thank you:**

We want to thank you for your continued and consistent support of Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) through action and legislation passed over the past year. Specifically, we want to thank you for:

* House - Passing H.R. 1652, the VOCA Fix Act by a vote of 384 to 38 on March 17th
* Senate – 55 senators signing on in support of S. 611, the VOCA Fix Act
* Releasing as much funding as possible for VOCA grants ($2.065B in FY21; $2.65B in FY20)
  + CACS across the US have gone from receiving $21 million (total) seven years ago to more than $200 million (total) last year.
* Continually increasing funding the *Victims of Child Abuse Act* the past **NINE years** (most recently to $30 million.)

In the coming year, we look forward to continuing to work with you on:

**VOCA Fix Act**

Final passage of the *VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021* (H.R. 1652/S. 611). This bipartisan, bicameral bill address the long-term financial stability of VOCA and the Crime Victims Fund (CVF).

* As a background, it is projected that by the end of 2021, the balance of the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) could reach a 10-year low and may be depleted entirely, which could mean VOCA grants are cut by 80%.
* VOCA grants are the primary source of federal funding for victim assistance to programs serving victims of all crimes and the only source of federal support for state victim compensation funding.
* VOCA grants are funded by monetary penalties associated with federal convictions, *not with taxpayer monies.*
* H.R. 1652/S. 611 addresses these deep VOCA cuts by changing the way DOJ handles monetary penalties from deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements.
* 1,710 organizations and government agencies signed a letter in support of this fix.
* HR 1652 passed the House in March 384 to 38.
* 55 senators have currently signed onto S. 611

**Victims of Child Abuse Act Funding – FY22**

Federal funding for the *Victims of Child Abuse Act* provides grants and seed money for the development of CACs, and for the training and technical assistance for child abuse professionals. This funding is the only federal funding solely dedicated to CACs, and with the impacts of COVID and VOCA cuts, **we are currently urging Congress provide at least $48 million in funding in the FY22 budget for VOCAA.** We understand the tough budget climate and greatly appreciate the FY21 funding level of $30 million; however more is needed.

* *The President’s FY22 budget proposes $50 million for VOCAA*
* Last year, CACs served more than 338,000 kids, as well as provided more than 3.74 million individuals prevention education; however, an estimated additional 250,000 kids were likely abused but had no access to a CAC, thus these increased dollars will go towards shrinking that gap.
* These dollars are also needed to address the backlog of cases and additional pressures of COVID and assist the additional 600,000+ reported cases of abuse needing a forensic interview that did not get one.
* Finally, these dollars will also provide opportunities for new development to serve the more than 75,000 kids in unserved US Counties that may have been abused last year and went without access to services.

**Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) Reauthorization**

NCA has been working closely with the National Child Abuse Coalition, as well as House and Senate offices, on CAPTA Reauthorization, and the CAC needs in this bill:

* Increasing CAPTA funding;
* Including CACs as an “eligible use” of these funds and highlighting that CACs are the models that states should be using when using MDTs;
* Including provisions to provide for immunity from civil and criminal liability for individuals making good faith reports of suspected abuse
* Including NCA/National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths pushed recommendations on child abuse fatalities:
  + Annual reports on fatalities from review panels with a uniform set of definitions;
  + Requiring multidisciplinary team collaboration;
  + Disclosure of confidential information to state agents to ensure child safety;
  + Interstate Data Exchange System for CPS;
* Including Jenna’s Law/Erin’s Law/child sexual abuse prevention education for the schools

**We support the bipartisan efforts to reauthorize and update CAPTA to better reflect the needs of the states/child welfare workforce, including significant increased funding.**

As CACs and advocates for all victims of child abuse, we look forward to working with you on this critical issue.