

AB 477 (Rubio) – Children’s Advocacy Centers and Multidisciplinary Teams

Bill Summary

This bill would clarify what role Children’s Advocacy Centers (CAC’s) play in communicating with multidisciplinary teams and ensures timely relevant information is available to teams investigating child abuse.

Problem

In cases of child abuse, Children’s Advocacy Centers provide invaluable resources to children and families in need. As codified under AB 2741 (Rubio), CAC’s coordinate with a multidisciplinary team of law enforcement, child protective services, district attorneys and medical personal trained in cultural competency to ensure proper care is provided to those in need. However, some lawyers - particularly county counsels - interpret the laws surrounding these multidisciplinary teams to not include CACs regardless of the defining legislation. This causes delays and confusion when sharing information due to CAC’s not expressly being listed in the code defining these teams (Penal Code 18961.7).

Background

UC Berkeley researchers estimated that child maltreatment cost California over \$19 Billion in 2017. In 2018, over 12,000 children were served in California by a CAC according to the National Children’s Alliance. The use of CACs to coordinate investigations of child abuse and neglect has been shown to save as much as \$1,000 per child in investigation costs.

Currently, there are 22 CACs in California fully accredited by the National Children’s Alliance (NCA). These centers meet ten nationally accepted research and evidence-based standards about the best way to provide child abuse intervention and treatment. There are several other counties in California who are in process of creating CACs and/or getting them accredited by NCA.

Solution

- This bill would ensure at minimum 17 centers, serving 13 counties in California be included in the multi-disciplinary team response to child abuse.
- This bill helps to clarify what confidential information is shared between child welfare agencies with regards to children’s advocacy centers.
- This bill ensures that counties have freedom to pick the best CAC structure for their community by clarifying the information shared between entities investigating abuse.

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