



NEW YORK STATE CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE, INC.

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My name is Renee Smith-Rotondo and I am the chair of the New York State Children's Alliance, the membership organization for the 40 Child Advocacy Center programs in New York State. I am here on behalf of our membership, to once again seek your support for these very vital programs.

First, I want to thank the New York State Legislature for its strong support of our programs. In 2014, this body added a legislative appropriation of \$2,570,000 to the SFY 2014-2015 adopted budget which greatly helped our programs provide an immediate response and quality services to child victims of abuse. Last year, you once again included this funding level in the SFY 2015-2016 adopted budget. We greatly appreciate that you recognize the importance of our programs to the communities in which we work and for the children and families that we serve.

This year, NYSCA submitted a formal request to the Governor's Office to, at a minimum, maintain this funding level in the state budget. Unfortunately, the proposed 2016-2017 budget does not include these funds. As a result, we come before you to ask for your support. **We are asking that state funding for CACs be maintained at the very least at last year's level of \$7.779 million.**

For many years, we have asked for your support and you have generously invested in our mission. In a very real sense, what we are asking you to INVEST in are the children of our state. Child Advocacy Centers serve the most vulnerable population in our state: abused children. Last year, our programs served approximately 18,000 children. We understand, as you decide where to put state dollars, that return on your investment is certainly a consideration. If you invest in New York State's Child Advocacy Center programs, here is what you can expect in return:

1. 40 counties that use a proven, effective model to respond to child abuse cases. CACs employ a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to these cases. Team members are specially trained in all aspects of a case, including investigation, prosecution, medical and mental health services and victim advocacy. Teams work together in a safe, comfortable environment in the best interests of children and families who have been exposed to horrific crimes.
2. 40 counties that now use one state-of-the-art case tracking system to monitor cases in a consistent manner, allowing our programs to collect and analyze data, identify patterns and trends and improve program responses.
3. 40 counties that have the capacity to survey client families for their feedback on the services they received through use of a web-based Outcome Measurement System, allowing all our

programs to assess how well we are responding to the community's needs and to adjust to meet those needs.

4. Sharing of program dollars with a whole community of agencies and providers charged with a duty to respond to child abuse. Law enforcement, child protective workers, prosecutors, medical providers, advocates and therapists are all supported in this work by the dollars that you provide. You help them do a better job through training and equipment. This directly impacts the children that we serve.

5. Programs that are experts at responding to and addressing childhood trauma. We know that a good result now, when a victim is young, can minimize the need for help – and the costs of that help to society - later on in life. A study called the Adverse Childhood Experiences study examined the impact that trauma at a young age has on health (physical, mental and emotional) later on in life. The correlation between incidents of trauma (abuse, maltreatment, domestic violence, parent in jail, divorce, substance abuse) as a child and health issues (diabetes, high blood pressure/cholesterol, substance abuse, depression/suicide and other mental health issues and anti-social behavior, including crime) as an adult is striking: the study found that the higher the incidence of early childhood trauma, the more serious and numerous the health issues as an adult. Our child-focused approach enables us to do a better job of responding to children experiencing trauma and directing them to the help that they need. What we don't do is add system trauma to what child abuse victims are already experiencing.

6. The growth of our membership in the past year with the regionalization of the North Country. One CAC director in Clinton County championed the effort to bring CAC services to 2 neighboring counties – Essex and Franklin - and one tribal community. As a result of that successful expansion of CAC services to previously unserved counties, regionalization is being considered for other unserved areas of the state.

These are the kinds of returns that you get on your investment in our programs. CACs are good at what we do, really good. We facilitate the hard work of responding to, investigating, prosecuting and serving cases of child abuse. In order to continue the really difficult work that we do in the way that we do it – with sensitivity, understanding, collaboration, competence and compassion, we need the financial support of the state.

**Our programs make a difference in the lives of thousands of children and families in New York. We see it every day. Please continue to financially support us as much as you possibly can. Thank you.**

Sincerely,



Renee M. Smith-Rotondo, NYSCA Chair

On behalf of the NYSCA Board of Directors and NYSCA Membership