



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 13, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 1100– Health - Child Advocacy Centers - Reporting Requirements and Investigations - Letter of Information

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Committee members:

The Maryland Department of Health respectfully submits this letter of information for House Bill (HB) 1100 - Health - Child Advocacy Centers - Reporting Requirements and Investigations.

The proposed legislation stipulates that child advocacy centers must report annually to the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) on the behavioral health care services provided at these centers. The BHA is responsible for including the data received in its [annual report](#)¹ on behavioral health services for children and young adults in the state. Additionally, the legislation gives the Secretary of Health the authority to investigate complaints related to child advocacy centers and may delegate this authority to a health occupations board, the Office of Health Care Quality, or the Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Health.

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) play a pivotal role in coordinating the investigation, treatment, and prosecution of child abuse cases². These centers employ a child-focused approach, utilizing multidisciplinary teams of professionals from child protective and victim advocacy services, law enforcement and prosecution, and physical and mental health to ensure comprehensive care. They are accredited by the National Children Alliance, which provides national leadership and advocacy, accreditation training, technical assistance, and networking opportunities to empower communities to plan, establish, or improve local CACs while adhering to evidence-based, research-supported standards.

The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services oversees Maryland's CACs, to include the provision of grants to coordinate investigative and intervention services by bringing together professionals and agencies as a multi-disciplinary team to create a child-focused approach to child abuse cases³.

¹ [https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDH/BHA/HG7.5-209\(e\).FY_2021.pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDH/BHA/HG7.5-209(e).FY_2021.pdf)

² <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/childrens-advocacy-centers#overview>

³ <https://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/cacs/>

CACs may collaborate with external providers for some or all of their behavioral health service needs. These behavioral health service providers are already individually licensed through their respective health occupation board and licensed as a facility or practice through BHA; if they accept Medicaid funds, they are also subject to provisions in their Medicaid agreements. Therefore, the Department already has the authority to investigate complaints against these medical providers through the given avenues above via existing regulations and processes (health occupations boards, BHA, Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Health).

The Department notes that the definition of CACs already exists in Md. Criminal Procedure Code Ann. §11-928 along with the requirement for an annual report on CACs. The Department also respectfully notes that while it has the authority to investigate complaints against medical providers and medical facilities, it does not have the authority to investigate facilities outside this authority conducting activities outside the health space (e.g. formal case review process). These facilities and activities are contracted through the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services to public and private nonprofit organizations which may include private nonprofit organizations, local departments of social services, local law enforcement agencies, or a partnership among any of these entities.

The Department remains committed to coordinating with child-serving agencies to ensure the highest quality of care for all children, but especially the most vulnerable children being served at CACs.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary