

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1480 (Delegate Cardin, *et al.*)
 Appropriations

Child Advocacy Centers - Continuity of Care Standards for Health Care Professionals and Reports of Violations

This bill requires the standards established by the Maryland Statewide Organization for Child Advocacy Centers to require (1) an individual providing medical or mental health services to be licensed or certified by the appropriate health occupations board and provide services within the scope of the provider’s license or certification and (2) each child advocacy center to establish a specified continuity of care plan. Each child advocacy center must report a complaint that is based on the established standards to the Department of Human Services (DHS) for investigation and further action. By January 1 each year, DHS must publish specified information on the department’s website for the immediately preceding year.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: DHS general/federal fund expenditures increase by \$41,500 in FY 2026 for contractual staff, as discussed below. Federal fund revenues correspondingly increase by \$6,200, as discussed below. Future years reflect annualization and inflation.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
FF Revenue	\$6,200	\$6,600	\$6,900	\$7,200	\$7,500
GF/FF Exp.	\$41,500	\$44,000	\$45,900	\$47,900	\$50,000
Net Effect	(\$35,300)	(\$37,400)	(\$39,100)	(\$40,800)	(\$42,500)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: The bill does not materially impact local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Each continuity of care plan at minimum must:

- provide written notification to the child and parent or guardian when there is a change in a provider of medical or mental health services that includes (1) the name and contact information of the new and former provider to provide a means through which the child and parent or guardian can contact the new and former provider and (2) a contingency notification process if notification to the parent or guardian or contact with the former provider will endanger the child; and
- allow the former provider, in accordance with the provider's professional ethics and standards of care, to contact the child and parent or guardian to conduct a termination session and assist in the transfer of care (subject to the latter provision above).

By January 1 each year, DHS must publish on its website, for the immediately preceding year (1) a description of the standards for child advocacy centers established by the Maryland Statewide Organization for Child Advocacy Centers and detailed information on compliance of each child advocacy center with the standards; (2) a description of any data collected by the Maryland Statewide Organization for Child Advocacy Centers, including how and to whom collected data is reported; and (3) complaint information related to each child advocacy center, if applicable, and the resolution of any complaint received by DHS.

Current Law: The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) must establish and sustain child advocacy centers and ensure that every child in the State has access to a child advocacy center. In general, a child advocacy center provides services to children who have been abused.

The centers (1) may be based in private nonprofit organizations, local departments of social services, local law enforcement agencies, or a partnership among any of these entities; (2) must be developed and located to facilitate their use by alleged victims residing in the surrounding area; (3) must assist in the response to or investigation of allegations of sexual crimes against children and sexual abuse of minors; (4) may assist in the response to or investigation of allegations of child abuse and neglect and allegations of a crime of violence in the presence of a minor; (5) must provide a level of care that meets or exceeds the national accreditation standards for child advocacy centers; and (6) must be included in all joint investigation procedures, as specified.

GOCPP may contract with public or private nonprofit organizations to operate child advocacy centers. GOCPP must contract with a nonprofit organization that represents urban, rural, and suburban child advocacy centers in the State to establish a statewide organization. The purpose of the statewide organization is to provide training, technical

assistance, data collection, and capacity building to meet local, State, and national requirements for child advocacy centers.

The Maryland Statewide Organization for Child Advocacy Centers must establish standards for child advocacy centers that meet national accreditation standards for child advocacy standards and must include:

- multidisciplinary teams that include representation from law enforcement, prosecutors, child protective services, the medical and mental health fields, and victim advocacy;
- cultural competency and diversity;
- forensic interviews that are neutral, fact-finding, and avoid duplicative interviewing;
- victim support and advocacy for children and caregivers, including appropriate counseling, legal, and medical services or referrals;
- medical evaluations;
- mental health services;
- a formal case review process;
- a case tracking, monitoring, and outcomes process;
- organizational capacity;
- creating a child-focused setting that is comfortable, safe, and private; and
- any additional necessary standards.

Money for child advocacy centers (1) must be distributed in accordance with a formula agreed on by the Maryland Statewide Organization for Child Advocacy Centers and GOCPP; (2) must be used to supplement, and not supplant, money that the program receives from other sources; and (3) may be used to assist centers in meeting the required standards.

State Fiscal Effect:

Department of Human Services

DHS general/federal fund expenditures increase by \$41,501 in fiscal 2026 (discussed below), which accounts for the bill's October 1, 2025 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one part-time social services administrator to (1) respond to and investigate child advocacy center complaints and (2) publish specified information for the department's website. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual Position	0.5
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$34,546
Operating Expenses	<u>6,955</u>
Total FY 2026 State Expenditures	\$41,501

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State’s implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

DHS advises that the contractual position is eligible for a 15% federal fund reimbursement. Accordingly, of the expenditures reflected above, \$35,276 are supported by general funds; federal fund expenditures (and corresponding revenues) increase by \$6,225.

Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy

GOCPP provides grants to the Maryland Children’s Alliance (MCA) and 24 local child advocacy centers to ensure that every child in the State has access to a child advocacy center. GOCPP advises that the bill may require some child advocacy centers to hire additional staff; however, the Department of Legislative Services notes that the bill’s requirements for child advocacy centers are procedural in nature and can likely be absorbed within existing budgeted resources.

The fiscal 2026 budget as introduced includes \$300,000 in funding for child advocacy centers.

Additional Comments: [MCA](#) is a nonprofit organization aimed to promote the well-being of children by supporting the development, growth, and continuation of children’s advocacy centers throughout the State.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Human Services; Department of Legislative Services

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km/jkb

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