



**STATE OF ARIZONA**  
**OFFICE OF THE**  
**AUDITOR GENERAL**

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June 30, 2008

Members of the Arizona Legislature

The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Governor

Tracy Wareing, Director  
Department of Economic Security

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, a Questions-and-Answers document on the Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families—Child Protective Services—Child and Family Advocacy Centers. This document was prepared pursuant to and under the authority vested in the Auditor General by Arizona Revised Statutes §41-1966.

Our questions-and-answers documents were created to provide answers to multiple questions on a particular subject area. We hope that these questions-and-answers documents will fill a need and provide you with timely and useful information on topics of particular interest.

My staff and I will be pleased to discuss or clarify items in this document.

This document will be released to the public on July 1, 2008.

Sincerely,

Debbie Davenport  
Auditor General

Attachment



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GENERAL**

## QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

### Summary

This document answers questions about Arizona's child and family advocacy centers. Advocacy centers are nonprofit organizations and municipal programs established and operated by local communities to coordinate a multi-disciplinary response to cases of child abuse, domestic violence, and/or sexual assault/abuse in a manner that ensures the victim receives the support services he/she needs and does not experience added trauma during the investigation. This document answers questions about Arizona's advocacy centers' structure and location, funding, number of victims assisted, differences from traditional approaches to investigating assault and abuse cases, Child Protective Services' (CPS) participation, and monitoring of the centers.



2008

## Child and Family Advocacy Centers

**Question: What are advocacy centers and how many are operating in Arizona?**

**Advocacy centers are non-profit organizations and municipal programs established and operated by local communities where multi-disciplinary teams work collaboratively to investigate, manage, and prosecute cases of child abuse, domestic violence, and/or sexual assault/abuse. As of May 2008, there were 18 child and family advocacy centers located in Arizona.**

Advocacy centers are nonprofit organizations and municipal programs established and operated by local communities to coordinate a multi-disciplinary response to cases of child abuse, domestic violence, and/or sexual assault/abuse in a manner that ensures victims receive needed support services without experiencing added trauma during the investigation. The advocacy centers bring together police, child and adult protective services investigators,

physicians, mental health professionals, and prosecutors as a multi-disciplinary team to investigate, manage, and prosecute assault and abuse cases and secure timely treatment for the victims and their families.

In a comfortable and safe atmosphere, information is gathered jointly and services are provided on-site. Many advocacy centers have specialized interviewers with education and training in child development and forensic interviewing. Typically, information concerning the assault or abuse is collected from an interview between the victim and an interview specialist in a comfortable setting while investigators from multiple agencies watch through a one-way mirror or closed circuit television. Services provided through the advocacy centers may include forensic interviews, medical examinations, counseling, crisis intervention, and preventative education. Victims of assault or abuse may go directly to the advocacy centers to seek assistance, but they are typically taken or referred to the centers by police, protective services workers, or community service providers.

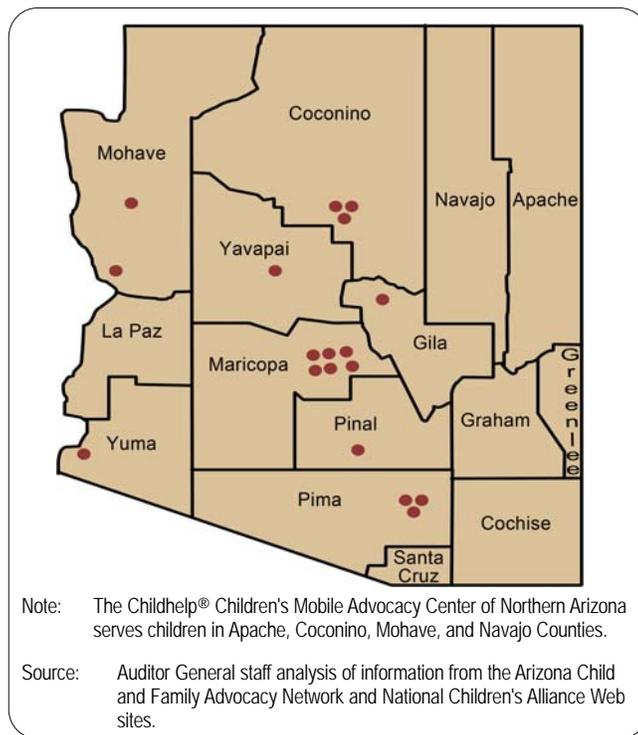
In 2005, the University of New Hampshire Crimes Against Children Research Center evaluated multiple advocacy centers and found that this model offers many benefits.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the evaluation found that advocacy centers provided more forensic medical examinations to

<sup>1</sup> Cross, Theodore, Lisa Jones, Wendy Walsh, and Monique Simone. *University of New Hampshire Multi-Site Evaluation of Children's Advocacy Centers (Executive Summary)*, 2005. Durham, NC: Crimes Against Children Research Center, 2008.

children, parents and caregivers were more satisfied with the investigations, child advocacy center cases were about three times more likely to include mental health referrals, and significantly more evidence was collected because of coordinated investigations.

As of May 2008, there were 18 advocacy centers located in 8 of Arizona's 15 counties, including a mobile advocacy center serving children in Apache, Coconino, Mohave, and Navajo Counties (see figure).<sup>1</sup> Of the 18 advocacy centers, 3 plus the mobile unit serve only children and are referred to as child advocacy centers. The remaining 14 advocacy centers serve both children and adults and are considered family advocacy centers. All 18 advocacy centers participate in the Arizona Child and Family Advocacy Network, which was created to support communities seeking to establish and improve advocacy centers and current advocacy programs.

Because advocacy centers are community-based programs designed to meet a community's specific needs, no two centers are exactly alike. The advocacy centers vary in a number of ways, including the populations they serve. For example, the Northern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault exclusively serves victims of sexual assault ages 16 and older, while the Pascua Yaqui Tribe Walking in Balance Victim Services center is available primarily to members of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe.



Further, some centers have all members of the multi-disciplinary team housed on-site, while others page members of the team when needed. Arizona's advocacy centers are decentralized and some are established as independent centers, as units in hospitals, or as departments in other agencies, such as a county prosecutor's office. See the table on page 6 for specific information about each of Arizona's child and family advocacy centers.

**Question: How are Arizona's advocacy centers funded?**

**Arizona's advocacy centers may receive funding through various sources, including local and state monies, federal grants, donations, and fund-raising.**

Arizona's advocacy centers reported receiving funding through various sources, including local and state monies, federal grants, donations, and fund-raising. The most frequently cited funding sources were local monies, donations, and federal grants. Specifically, 13 of the 18 advocacy centers indicated that part or all of their funding was with

local monies provided by the municipalities and/or counties in which they are located and operating. Twelve centers also indicated receiving monies through donations from corporations, organizations, and individuals. The next most commonly cited funding source was federal grants, with 11 of the 18 advocacy centers reporting receiving funds from the Children's Justice Act Grant, which is available for developing, establishing, and operating programs designed to improve the handling, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases; and/or the Victims of Crime Act Grant, which is available to recipients providing direct services to crime victims. Five of the 18 advocacy centers identified state monies provided through the Crime Victims Assistance Program and Victims' Rights Program, which are available to entities providing direct assistance to crime victims, and fund-raising as sources of funding.

<sup>1</sup> Arizona advocacy centers providing a multi-disciplinary response to cases of child abuse, domestic violence, and/or sexual assault/abuse were identified through information obtained from the Arizona Child and Family Advocacy Network; National Children's Alliance; the Arizona Governor's Office of Children, Youth and Families; and the Arizona Department of Economic Security.

**Question: How many victims of assault and abuse were served by Arizona's advocacy centers?**

**Based on estimates provided by the 18 advocacy centers, more than 13,000 adult and child victims were served by advocacy centers over the recent course of a year.**

Although there is no uniform tracking system to document the number of people served and the

types of services provided through Arizona's advocacy centers, estimates from personnel at the 18 advocacy centers indicate that over the recent course of a year, the centers served more than 13,000 adults and children who were victims of child abuse, domestic violence, and/or sexual assault/abuse.<sup>1</sup> The Governor's Office of Children, Youth and Families is working with a consultant to develop an integrated, automated database to be used by Arizona's advocacy centers. The database should help the advocacy centers accurately and consistently track services provided, improve data quality, and evaluate their performance.

**Question: How does the advocacy centers' approach to assisting victims of child abuse, domestic violence, and/or sexual assault/abuse differ from traditional approaches?**

**The primary difference is the advocacy centers' use of a collaborative multi-disciplinary team working in a family-friendly environment to assist the victim rather than multiple agencies working independently. This helps to minimize further trauma to the victim, improve coordination of services, and enhance communication and decision making.**

In contrast to traditional approaches to investigating and prosecuting child abuse, domestic violence, and/or sexual assault/abuse cases where there are often separate and independent reviews conducted by law enforcement personnel, protective services investigators, and prosecutors, the advocacy centers use a collaborative, multi-disciplinary team that works with the victims in a family-oriented environment. This approach minimizes additional trauma to the victims by providing a one-stop family-friendly location where trained professionals can provide timely and critical services such as

forensic interviews, medical examinations, counseling, and victim advocacy. Additionally, although each member of the multi-disciplinary team has an area of specialization (see textbox below), because of the close and collaborative nature of the team, decision-making is enhanced through greater communication and information sharing.

- **Law enforcement officers** document and investigate the alleged abuse.
- **Criminal justice personnel** conduct forensic interviews and prosecute the abuse case.
- **Child and adult protective services personnel** ensure the victim is protected and that the victim and his/her family receive needed services.
- **Medical professionals** conduct medical examinations and make determinations on the type and severity of abuse.
- **Mental health professionals** provide therapy, counseling, and other needed mental health services.

To facilitate a coordinated interdisciplinary response to severe cases of child abuse and neglect, the Arizona Legislature passed a law in 2003 requiring the development and implementation of county protocols for the joint investigation of child abuse involving extremely serious conduct, for example, sexual assault and felony physical abuse.<sup>2</sup> Similar to the advocacy

<sup>1</sup> Differences in how the advocacy centers track and report the number of clients they serve resulted in estimates being provided for either calendar year 2007 or fiscal year 2007. Therefore, auditors combined the annual numbers provided by each center to arrive at an estimated total annual count of clients served.

<sup>2</sup> Arizona Revised Statutes §8-817.

centers, the protocols are intended to improve coordination among the various agencies involved in investigating, treating, and prosecuting serious child abuse cases. Although the law requiring the protocols does not mandate the use of advocacy centers, some counties' protocols specifically recommend that investigative personnel use the centers when possible because of additional

perceived benefits. For example, the joint investigation protocols for Santa Cruz and Yavapai Counties encourage child protective services personnel and law enforcement officers to use the advocacy centers because the benefit, for both the investigators and victims, is that it is a one-stop location for the investigative process and for crisis intervention.

**Question: What is the extent of CPS' involvement in the advocacy centers?**

**CPS' involvement in the advocacy centers is limited primarily to participation on the multi-disciplinary teams.**

CPS' involvement in Arizona's advocacy centers is limited primarily to participation on the multi-disciplinary teams. To facilitate participation on the teams, CPS staff may be co-located at an advocacy center. According to management in the Department's Division of Children, Youth and Families (Division), which oversees the CPS program, the ability to co-locate CPS staff at an advocacy center depends on the center's location and space availability, and the volume of child abuse cases received by the center. If the Division cannot co-locate CPS staff at an advocacy center, it may still assign designated CPS specialists to the center. Assigned CPS staff may either work part of their schedule at the center or are immediately paged when needed. If an advocacy center has neither co-located nor assigned CPS staff, the center will typically request assistance by calling its local CPS office or the State's Child Abuse Hotline, a state-wide, toll-free telephone number for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. As of May 2008, division officials reported that 3 CPS supervisors and 19 CPS specialists were co-located at three advocacy centers—The

Center Against Family Violence in Mesa, Childhelp Children's Center of Arizona in Phoenix, and the Southwest Family Advocacy Center in Goodyear. Division officials also indicated that they anticipate co-locating 8 CPS staff at the Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center once it relocates to its new facility in Tucson in the fall of 2008.

The Division does not pay expenses, such as rent or utilities, to the advocacy centers where CPS staff are co-located or assigned. According to division officials, the Division may pay the cost for forensic interviews in rare instances where law enforcement determines a forensic interview is not needed, and CPS staff need it to complete an investigation or to provide additional information to the court.

Division officials report that although the Division makes every attempt to be timely and responsive to advocacy centers, it sometimes struggles with allocating already limited CPS staff. Thus, some advocacy centers without co-located CPS staff may perceive the Division to not be timely or as cooperative as they would like. To clarify expectations of all key partners in regard to the advocacy centers, a framework document has been drafted to further explain the relationship between the Division and the advocacy centers and provide an operational definition for the role of each key partner in the multi-disciplinary team at a state-wide level. The framework document is expected to be co-signed by the Deputy Director of the Division and the Director of the Arizona Child and Family Advocacy Network this year.

**Question: How is performance of Arizona's advocacy centers monitored?**

**There is no state-wide organization that oversees and monitors Arizona's advocacy centers. However, monitoring may be performed by the entities managing the advocacy centers, and there are often program reporting requirements tied to the funding received by the advocacy centers. Additionally, 5 of the 18 centers are accredited and undergo re-evaluation every 5 years while another 8 of the centers are considering or working toward becoming accredited.**

Although there is no state-wide oversight and monitoring of Arizona's advocacy centers, monitoring may be performed by the entity

managing the center. Advocacy centers may also be required to provide expenditure and program information such as the number and types of clients served, services provided, and prosecution results to the organizations that fund them. Additionally, 5 of Arizona's 18 advocacy centers have sought and received accreditation from the National Children's Alliance (NCA), a nation-wide not-for-profit membership organization, while another 8 centers are NCA associate members considering or working toward becoming accredited. Accreditation entails undergoing a review every 5 years to ensure compliance with NCA's 10 standards, which include providing a child-appropriate facility, multi-disciplinary team, forensic interviews, therapeutic intervention, and case tracking. The application fee for accredited members is \$2,250 and annual dues costs \$300. Members are eligible to receive technical assistance, quarterly newsletters, training, funding opportunities, and notification of pending legislation, and may attend conferences sponsored by NCA.

## Arizona's Child and Family Advocacy Centers As of May 2008

Advocacy Center Name and Location <sup>1</sup>	Type	Oversight Entity	CPS Involvement <sup>2</sup>	NCA Accredited <sup>3</sup>
Amberly's Place—Yuma	Family	Board of Directors	Call	Associate
Center Against Family Violence—Mesa	Family	Mesa Police Department	Co-located	Yes
Childhelp Children's Center of Arizona—Phoenix	Child	Childhelp	Co-located	Yes
Childhelp Children's Mobile Advocacy Center of Northern Arizona—Flagstaff <sup>4</sup>	Child	Childhelp	Call	No
Family Advocacy Center—Phoenix	Family	City of Phoenix	Call	No
Gila Family Advocacy Center—Payson	Family	Time Out, Inc.	Call	Associate
HAVEN Family Resource Center—Lake Havasu City	Family	Board of Directors	Call	Associate
Northern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault—Flagstaff	Family	North Country HealthCare	Call	No
Pascua Yaqui Tribe Walking in Balance Victim Services—Tucson	Family	Pascua Yaqui Tribal Counsel	Call	No
Pinal County Attorney Family Advocacy Center—Eloy	Family	Pinal County Attorney's Office	Assigned	Associate
Safe Child Center—Flagstaff	Child	Northern Arizona Healthcare	Call	Yes
Sarah's House—Kingman	Family	Sarah's House Foundation	Call	Associate
Scottsdale Family Advocacy Center—Scottsdale	Family	Scottsdale Police Department	Assigned	Associate
Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault—Tucson	Family	Board of Directors	Call	No
Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center—Tucson <sup>5</sup>	Child	Board of Directors	Call	Yes
Southwest Family Advocacy Center—Goodyear	Family	Avondale, Buckeye, and Goodyear Police Departments	Co-located	Associate
West Valley Advocacy Center—Glendale	Family	Glendale Police Department	Assigned	Associate
Yavapai Family Advocacy Center—Prescott Valley	Family	Prevent Child Abuse Arizona	Call	Yes

<sup>1</sup> Arizona advocacy centers providing a multi-disciplinary response to cases of child abuse, domestic violence, and/or sexual assault/abuse were identified through information obtained from the Arizona Child and Family Advocacy Network; National Children's Alliance; the Arizona Governor's Office of Children, Youth and Families; and the Arizona Department of Economic Security's Division of Children, Youth and Families.

<sup>2</sup> The Division may either co-locate or assign designated CPS staff to an advocacy center. Assigned CPS staff may either work part of their schedule at the center or are immediately paged when needed. If an advocacy center has neither co-located nor assigned CPS staff, the advocacy center may request assistance by calling its local CPS office or the State's Child Abuse Hotline, a state-wide, toll-free telephone number for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.

<sup>3</sup> Advocacy centers accredited by the National Children's Alliance must meet ten standards, including providing a child-appropriate facility, multi-disciplinary team, forensic interviews, therapeutic intervention, and case tracking. Associate members are those advocacy centers considering or working toward becoming accredited.

<sup>4</sup> The Childhelp Children's Mobile Advocacy Center of Northern Arizona serves Apache, Coconino, Mohave, and Navajo Counties.

<sup>5</sup> According to division personnel, the Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center will be relocating to a new facility in Tucson, Arizona, in the fall of 2008. The Division anticipates that eight CPS staff will be co-located at the new facility.

Source: Auditor General staff compilation of information obtained from interviews with division officials, advocacy center personnel, and the directors of the Arizona Child and Family Advocacy Network and the National Children's Alliance, reviews of the advocacy centers' and other relevant Web sites, and examination of reports and other documents provided by the advocacy centers.