



Massachusetts Children's Alliance

# STABILIZE AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CHILD VICTIMS WITH ARPA FUNDING

Essential services for child victims impacted by COVID-19 are **in jeopardy**

Without action, services will be **cut by \$1.75 million**

## COVID-19 and Child Abuse in Massachusetts

- Throughout 2020-2021 children have had **less contact with mandated reporters** leaving them **more vulnerable** to abuse and exploitation.
- As restrictions ease, CACs are seeing increased cases. **Now more than ever**, children need CAC services.



## Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

- 1,188 commercially sexually exploited, trafficked**, and high-risk children and youth received **specialized services** embedded in local CACs, through the VOCA-funded "Statewide CSEC Service Enhancement Project."
- Online exploitation** and enticement of children **doubled last year**<sup>1</sup>, so even more children are at risk.

## Investing in Intervention to Mitigate Long-term Impacts of Abuse

- Child abuse can have devastating impacts on short and long term mental and physical health, can lead to psychiatric disabilities, chronic and fatal health problems, and disrupt the course of emotional and intellectual development in children.<sup>2</sup>
- Timely intervention puts children on a path to healing.



## More Children Isolated, Endangered, and In Need

- Massachusetts **Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs)** partner with local law enforcement, prosecutors, child protection and providers to **serve and protect up to 8,500 children annually**.
- CACs **remained open** during the pandemic and **pivoted** to offer services **safely via telehealth platforms**. Now we are expected to **continue to offer services in-person and via telehealth**, doubling the workload.

## The Pandemic Shutdown, Fundraising, and the Economy

- Cases are expected to surge as new variants of the virus emerge.
- Due to restrictions and economic impacts of shutdowns, nonprofits have seen reduced funding** from fundraising, corporations, foundations, and donations (average loss of 34%)<sup>3</sup>



## Making It Worse: VOCA Cuts (\$1.75 MILLION Expected Loss For CACS)

- VOCA funding supports **specialized services for CSEC victims, Mental Health, Victim Advocacy, and Forensic Interviewing**. A projected 35% cut to VOCA funds for CACs and other victim services is expected next year (FY'23), and further, more severe cuts in the next two years (FY'24 - FY'25).
- VOCA funding supports **48 specialized victim service staff** who **serve over 9,000 children annually**.
- On July 20, the US Senate passed the Victims of Crime Act Fix to restore money allocated to victim service organizations. While excellent news, **it will be at least 2 years until annual funding levels are restored**. This **passage does not help Massachusetts now with pandemic-related expenses** to care for our children.

## ARPA Request

**We support MOVA's request for \$70 million from the American Rescue Plan Funds, to save this critical CAC lifeline for Massachusetts's children and all victims of crime.**

Help to ensure no victim is left unserved during these tumultuous times by investing in **one-time fix** to stabilize victim services and bridge the temporary gap in VOCA funding.

1. <https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2021/rise-in-online-enticement-and-other-trends--ncmec-releases-2020->

2. <https://calio.org/resources/prevention-fact-sheets-public-awareness-tools/>

3. <https://philanthropyma.org/in-philanthropy/survey-results-ongoing-impacts-covid-19-ma-nonprofits>

# COVID-19 Impact on Essential Services for Child Victims in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) is the statewide coalition of the twelve Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) throughout the Commonwealth. CACs are the **only** programs in Massachusetts that provide coordinated intervention with investigators and specialized services for child victims of **sexual and severe physical abuse, and commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking** (CSEC), including **mental health services, forensic interviews, victim advocacy, and case management**. CACs are effective, hold offenders accountable, and help victims heal. In addition, CACs provide child sexual abuse awareness education to local communities.

CACs provide **essential services** to children and families affected by abuse, remaining open during the pandemic for emergency cases and pivoting to provide services through telehealth platforms. With children cut off from teachers and mandated reporters, we are now seeing a surge of unreported child abuse cases.

A **one-of-a-kind** statewide response to **commercially sexually exploited children** is in jeopardy. A network of specialized case managers, embedded in CACs, provide intensive coordination and services to child victims of CSEC and trafficking. **1,188 of the most vulnerable victims** used these services 10,938 times in FY'21, and referrals have steadily increased. Coupled with the impacts of COVID - increased internet exploitation and economic hardship - a cut of 35% or more could decimate our "Statewide CSEC Service Enhancement Project."

VOCA Award	FY22	FY23 (-35%)	Difference
MACA Statewide CSEC Service Enhancement Project	\$1,059,504	\$688,678	-\$370,826

In addition, CACs depend on nearly \$4 million in VOCA funding each year to support **mental health, victim advocacy, and forensic interview** services **available nowhere else**. A cut of \$1.375 million next year - and more in the years that follow - would leave thousands of child victims without these **much needed services**.

VOCA Award to CACs	FY22	FY23 (-35%)	Difference
Baystate Family Advocacy Center	\$1,250,651	\$812,923	-\$437,728
Berkshire County Kids' Place	\$355,463	\$231,051	-\$124,412
Barnstable County: Children's Cove CAC	\$188,873	\$122,767	-\$66,106
CAC of Hampshire County	\$118,686	\$77,146	-\$41,540
Norfolk Advocates for Children, Inc.	\$185,508	\$120,580	-\$64,928
CAC of Suffolk County	\$477,694	\$310,501	-\$167,193
Essex CAC	\$301,500	\$195,975	-\$105,525
CAC of Franklin County & North Quabbin Area	\$125,344	\$81,474	-\$43,870
JRI's CAC of Bristol County	\$378,794	\$246,216	-\$132,578
CAC of Worcester County	\$436,804	\$283,923	-\$152,881
Plymouth County CAC	\$110,360	\$71,734	-\$38,626
	\$3,929,677	\$2,554,290	-\$1,375,387

Investing in services for child victims can mitigate the devastating and life-long impacts of trauma on mental health, physical health, emotional and intellectual development. Without a one-time investment to stabilize victim services, **VOCA cuts will leave the most vulnerable without services**, and result in **loss of the essential victim service workforce** dedicated to helping child victims of abuse and exploitation.

Replenishing the Crime Victims Fund will take time. For this reason, **we support MOVA's request for \$70 million to stabilize victim services and bridge the temporary funding gap for all victims of crime in Massachusetts.**