

Maryland Children's Alliance Chapter
Public Policy Protocol GUIDELINES

The children's advocacy movement across Maryland is stronger when we consistently present a unified voice to elected officials. These protocols represent Maryland Children's Alliance and our member agencies' desires to work together, respectful of our differences and appreciative of our shared strengths.

The Executive Board of Maryland Children's Alliance (MCA) recognizes that it is the role and obligation of MCA to advance the best interests of the local children's advocacy centers and the entire statewide membership network by developing and advocating for legislative initiatives, funding and policies which represent the overall statewide interests of local CACs while advancing the CAC movement in Maryland.

Purpose of Protocols:

Maryland Children's Alliance embraces a collective responsibility for identifying and advocating for legislative initiatives, funding and policy efforts that represent the interests of Maryland's (1) child victims of maltreatment (2) children's advocacy centers (CAC)s and (3) the professionals working in partnership with the CACs. These written protocols, agreed upon and adopted by a majority of MCA member centers and binding on all, ensure that MCA can effectively meet this responsibility.

These protocols are designed to articulate the responsibilities of MCA and the local CAC membership to represent the best interests of the entire statewide children's advocacy center movement.

These protocols provide a proscribed formula for hearing the independent voices, positions and actions of local children's advocacy centers to ensure that Maryland Children's Alliance can be responsive to all points of view and where possible, incorporate those views into communications to our elected leaders in a meaningful and powerful manner.

EXPECTATIONS AND PROTOCOLS for MARYLAND CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE:

Maryland Children's Alliance will

1. Ensure local centers are kept informed of statewide policy initiatives;
2. Provide member centers with opportunity to provide valued input.
3. Develop policy platforms based on local input and focused on the best interests of the overall membership and sustainability of the CAC movement in Maryland.
4. Convene a Public Policy Committee which shall meet at least quarterly throughout the year to discuss possible issues or concerns, policies or legislation.
5. Consult with National Children's Alliance on national policy initiatives and trends; and support those as appropriate.
6. Support the Chapter Coordinator/Director (and any consultants deemed necessary) to develop a legislative agenda that reflects the initiatives and plans that MCA wishes to work for.

MCA will consider legislation for support that directly pertains to children's advocacy centers including funding, child well-being and/or maltreatment, victim advocacy or the functioning of multidisciplinary investigative, prosecution, or treatment responses. In legislation pertaining to above topics, the following evaluative guides will be used in decisions regarding MCA support:

- a. New initiatives should coordinate with existing programs and systems to maximize use of funds and personnel.
 - b. Initiatives should enhance existing partnerships with local multidisciplinary teams, local agencies and statewide organizations.
 - c. Initiatives should provide positive outcomes for the Maryland Children's Alliance network of children's advocacy centers rather than one specific location.
7. When developing these priorities, the Public Policy Committee shall gather input from:
- a. Member Centers;
 - b. Relevant collaborative partners;
 - c. Relevant state agencies;
 - d. National Children's Alliance
 - e. Other relevant national partners

The MCA Public Policy Legislative Agenda shall be presented to and approved by a consensus vote of the MCA membership present when presented. Members may abstain from a vote.

The Chapter Coordinator/Director shall serve as the primary legislative liaison and spokesperson for MCA regarding policy platforms. The Chapter Coordinator/Director

shall be responsible for the coordination of additional spokespersons as needed to speak on behalf of MCA.

The following items shall be included in every testimony or legislative visit made on behalf of Maryland Children's Alliance:

- f. The current number of member CACs;
- g. The total number of children served by MCA CACs in the previous year;
- h. Maryland Children's Alliance's membership and support of the National Children's Alliance Standards of Accreditation.

The Chapter Coordinator/Director shall update local member centers on developments related to the legislative agenda.

The Chapter Coordinator/Director shall make local centers aware of legislative contacts made by MCA with lawmakers representing their local districts. At the same time, the Chapter Coordinator/Director will rely on the local centers to share with MCA their level of relationship with their local legislator(s) so that those relationships are utilized to the fullest potential. Through this partnership and information sharing everyone knows the level of involvement and can be engaged if appropriate with that elected official(s) to the mutual involvement of MCA and local center.

The Chapter Coordinator/Director shall update statewide partners in government and nonprofit areas on issues facing Maryland Children's Alliance and the children's advocacy centers network.

EXPECTATIONS AND PROTOCOLS LOCAL MEMBER CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER:

Local members are key partners to the success of MCA's relationship and effectiveness with elected officials. Local members agree to the following:

1. Support and, as appropriate regarding local restrictions, promote the policy and legislative priorities of Maryland Children's Alliance as agreed to by consensus of the membership.
2. Communicate with Maryland Children's Alliance about local initiatives or legislation promoted by the local CAC so that MCA can review through the MCA Public Policy Committee, the local initiative and provide support, as appropriate. If the local initiative is not approved by the MCA Public Policy process the local center may proceed; but agrees to the following:
 - a. Consider the best interests of the CACs statewide;
 - b. Ensure that all communications reflect that this action is taken separate from MCA and its membership.
3. When invited by Maryland Children's Alliance and within the local CACs organizational structure, seek opportunities to communicate with local elected leaders about statewide initiatives that positively impact their local CAC.
4. Notify Maryland Children's Alliance Chapter Coordinator/Director of local CAC contacts with elected officials so that MCA can support the local CAC in their efforts.

Collaboration is often the key to mutual success of local CAC and statewide initiatives.
5. Only notify elected officials within their geographic area about MCA legislative policy issues on behalf of MCA; leaving other CACs to connect with their local legislators.

Adopted by vote of Membership as per Bylaws June 6, 20185

6. Where approved by the CAC governing entity the CAC agrees to:
 - a. Testify at a legislative hearing
 - b. Meet with legislator and/or staff
 - c. Meet with statewide elected official
 - d. Invite any of the above persons to local CAC activities
 - e. Invite any of the above persons to speak at local CAC events.

7. As possible within the context of the local CAC governing structure, agree to participate in Maryland Children's Alliance and/or NCA Legislative/Capitol Day activities during sessions. Such activity may include, as appropriate, attendance and participation by local center directors/coordinators, members of their local Boards of Directors and/or local partner agency representatives.