



Maryland Children's Alliance, Inc.

2023 Annual Report

Empowering Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers



Backed by
National Children's Alliance®
Accredited Chapter

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A Message from our Executive Director

Greetings Board of Directors, Stakeholders, Donors and Friends.

We are pleased to share our Maryland Children's Alliance (MCA) Annual Report. In 2023, MCA provided 391 hours of training to 536 Maryland child abuse professionals. All 24 Maryland child advocacy centers (CACs) are valued members of MCA and all were active within our network and participated in statewide training last year. Additionally, every CAC in Maryland is a member of National Children's Alliance (NCA). MCA provides a protective circle around the professionals who support child victims throughout Maryland. Each year, more than 5,000 children arrive at our Maryland CACs as a result of allegations of physical or sexual abuse, exploitation, assault, witness to violence, and/or trafficking. Each year, professionals across the state provide the support and assistance required in order for the child victim and family to move toward healing.



MCA supports professionals. Our vision is that every child in Maryland will have access to a fully functioning, funded and accredited CAC. Currently, 17 of our CACs have achieved NCA accreditation. The remaining 7 are fully committed to becoming accredited in the near future. We are working to ensure that our child welfare system provides evidence-based and trauma-informed services by a network of supportive professionals. Each year, we enhance our training and assistance by responding to the needs expressed by CAC leadership throughout the state. This process ensures the very best outcomes for child victims and non-offending family members.

MCA supports children. The programs we initiate at the statewide level are critically important at the local level. The key to strengthening our statewide response is to provide the most updated opportunities for our teams to learn and develop according to current best practice standards of care. We remain focused on programming so CACs are able to remain focused on the unique needs of each child.

MCA supports communities. We continue to strengthen our network by joining efforts with various coalitions related to victim services. We are joining hands to improve our impact across the state. We are actively engaged with the network of Southern Regional CACs and NCA in order to share resources and ideas. We are increasing prevention efforts. We advocate for legislation which impacts child victims, their families and the professionals who serve them. We strive to understand the unique challenges for victims and providers in Maryland. Establishing relationships within our communities is critical to awareness of child abuse, prevention, and long-term resource sustainability.

MCA is making a difference. We partner with every jurisdiction in Maryland. We work together to determine the needs and challenges in the field in order to tailor our training and technical assistance to those specific needs. We collect and analyze data in order to understand the needs of our communities. We are increasing our focus on preventing child abuse so that we can protect our children instead of only responding after abuse occurs. We are building capacity at MCA. Our staff is committed to our mission and focused on increasing our resources. We are creating new partnerships and programming to better support the needs of our 24 CACs and the thousands of children they serve each year.

We need your help. We depend on the community of professionals and supporters throughout Maryland to share information about child abuse and related services. We share this responsibility with every adult. Everyone can help and it will require all of us to improve the way we respond to child abuse. If you suspect abuse, report it. If you see a post on social media, share it. If you are able to help, DO!

Partnerships for Change



National Children's Alliance®

*The Force Behind
Children's Advocacy Centers*

National Children's Alliance

The National Children's Alliance is the accrediting body of Child Advocacy Centers and Chapters. In 2023, NCA released its updated Standards of Accreditation for CACs, revised to include updated research, stakeholder surveys, and feedback from external consultants and task forces. NCA has provided technical assistance and resources to MCA, an accredited Chapter, so that we can better support Child Advocacy Centers in meeting the updated standards and achieving and maintaining accreditation.



Southern Regional CAC

MCA is a part of the Southern Regional network of Child Advocacy Centers (SRCAC). SRCAC provides MCA with support in training development, technical assistance, information about emerging practice in child abuse treatment, investigation, and prevention.

HOME ▶ CENTER FOR HOPE ▶ CHAMP

Maryland Child Abuse Medical Professionals

A network of experts in the maltreatment of children

Child Abuse Medical Professionals

MCA maintained our long-established partnership with the Child Abuse Medical Professionals (CHAMP). The CHAMP network provides training on emerging literature and practice in the child abuse medical field. CHAMP professionals also provide free, expert consultation on medical assessments and exams that take place at CACs, at the request of the CAC's medical professional. Dr. Wendy Lane, Director of the CHAMP program, presented at MCA's June Membership meeting on NCA's Medical Standard and the Optional Physical Abuse Standard.

Partnerships for Change



Zero Abuse Project

In order to provide evidence-based training to forensic interviewers throughout the State, we partnered with Zero Abuse Project. This year, Zero Abuse Project provided three ChildFirst forensic interview trainings, a ChildFirst Refresher course, and a training for supervisors of forensic interviewers. We are dedicated to ensuring that Maryland children have access to high-quality, trauma-informed interviews.



Modify Marketing

MCA's partnership with Modify Marketing has led to successful projects in 2023, notably, our Mandated Reporter training. This training, available for free on our website, provides information about identifying, responding to, and reporting child abuse and meets the criteria for Essential Component G of NCA's Child Safety and Protection Standard. Modify Marketing also manages MCA's social media posts, which reached over 6,000 people in 2023.



Virginia Commonwealth University

We were thrilled to be able to accept a Master of Social Work student intern from Virginia Commonwealth University for the 2023 school year. Our intern, Ayesha Taylor, has been instrumental in several MCA projects, including creating a checklist for the standards of accreditation, generating an elected officials spreadsheet, and analyzing the Outcome Measurement Surveys. We will continue to educate individuals about the CAC world in order to build a stronger network of advocates who are passionate about child welfare.

Partnerships for Change



Statewide Forensic Interview Peer Review

We have partnered with Center for Hope's Forensic Interview Research and Education Center to initiate a forensic interview peer review series for Maryland forensic interviewers. Subject matter expert, Crimson Barroca, facilitates the peer review process with two volunteer interviewers. Thus far, this program has seen tremendous success, with 30 interviewers from 10 jurisdictions in Maryland attending the training.



Evidentia Learning

To assist CAC leaders and staff meet the Standards of Accreditation, MCA has partnered with Evidentia Learning. All Maryland CAC and multidisciplinary team staff now have access to dozens of free webinars on topics such as trauma-informed care, child sex trafficking, recantation, and more. These webinars allow busy CAC and MDT staff to access training remotely and on their own schedule. Many of the Evidentia Learning modules are approved by the National Children's Alliance to meet the Standards of Accreditation training requirements.



Element74

In order to enhance our outreach, education, and prevention efforts, we partnered with Element74 to design and launch a new website. The website includes educational information about child abuse, child advocacy centers, and the Maryland Children's Alliance, as well as an interactive "find a CAC in Maryland" feature, designed to directly support community members in need of CAC services. Visit our website at www.marylandchildrensalliance.org.



A Message from MCA's Board President

"It is truly an honor to serve as MCA's Board President and looking back on 2023, I take pride in our achievements and progress toward the goals of our membership adopted Strategic Plan, *Empowering Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers*. As I read through the report, the constant thread echoed is "support": The Board of Director's dedicated support of MCA's mission and staff, MCA's steadfast support of its 24 CACs, and the CACs vital support of the many children and families who crossed their thresholds last year. The Board is privileged to help guide such important work so our CACs and their multidisciplinary partners can continue to deliver the highest level of healing care, protection, and resources to Maryland's children as we strive for a future where every child grows up safe, healthy, and free from abuse."

With gratitude,

Robin Grove

2023 Board of Directors





Maryland Child Advocacy Center 2023 Data

As reported by 24 Maryland CACs between January - December 2023

5,138 Total children served

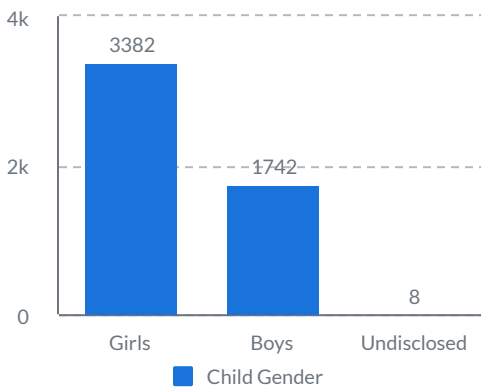
Member CACs		24
		(100%)
Accreditation Status		
17	6	1
Accredited	Associate	Affiliate
Organizational Types		
79%	21%	
(Government-based)	(Nonprofit)	

Children served by Maryland CACs between 2016 and 2023

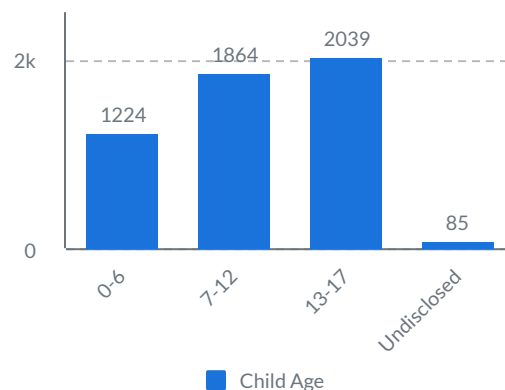


Demographic Breakdown

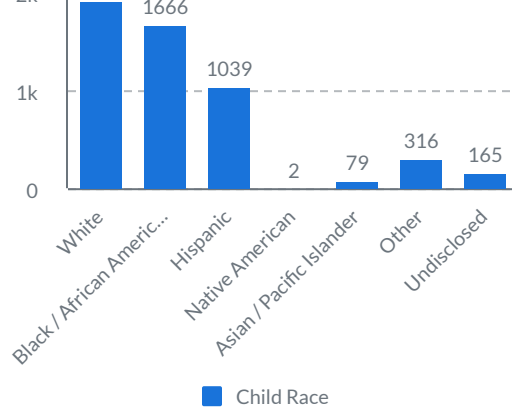
Child Gender



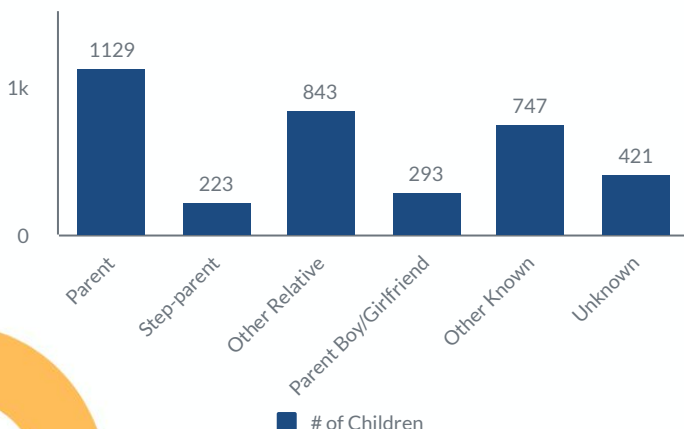
Child Age



Child Race



Offender Relationship



Sexual abuse continues to be the primary allegation investigated by Maryland CACs, representing **64.9%** of cases in 2023.

Member CACs provided **9,532** instances of prevention services to children and adults

+7.14% from 2022

Member CACs provided **2,315** case management services to children

1,820 case management services to adults

Capacity Building in 2023



This year, MCA focused on building capacity within our organization and network to support the longevity and resiliency of MCA and Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers. We established a partnership with experts at Funk & Bolton to enhance our capacity-building efforts by strengthening MCA's partnerships with legislators and facilitating meetings between MCA and policymakers.

From 2022 to 2023, MCA grew our grant funding by

9.3%

From 2023 to 2024, MCA has an anticipated grant funding growth of

34%

In 2023, MCA had a retention rate of

100%

6

new donors supported MCA in 2023

19

meetings were facilitated by MCA with stakeholders to increase stability of the Maryland Child Welfare system

2

in-person trainings were held in 2023

Financial Information

Year ended on December 31, 2023

MCA Audit

MCA participates in an annual audit of our financial statements utilizing an external auditor, Alta CPA LLC. In 2023, Alta CPA audited MCA's 2022 financial statements. Alta CPA stated *"We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Maryland Children's Alliance, Inc (a nonprofit organization), which comprise the statements of financial position as of December 31, 2022 and 2021 and the related statements of activities and changes in net assets, functional expenses, and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements. In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Maryland Children's Alliance, Inc, as of December 31, 2022 and 2021, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America."* Alta CPA is conducting the audit of MCA's 2023 financial statements.

MCA's 2023 Funders

In descending order of award

National Children's Alliance (NCA)
Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)
Children's Justice Act (CJAC) (3 awards)
Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)
Membership Dues
Private Donations

NCA Programmatic Calls

MCA participates in two programmatic calls with the National Children's Alliance for monitoring purposes. At the second programmatic call of the year, our NCA program associate stated *"You have been doing a great job with regard to requirements – keep up the great job!"*

Empowering Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers: Our Strategic Plan

Following the successful completion of our previous strategic plan, we needed a new guide for our work to meet the shifting needs and priorities of Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers and the children they serve. By analyzing the outcomes of our previous strategic plan, surveying our membership, and formulating a sub-committee of the Board of Directors, we decided on three key areas to focus on over the next three years: Governance, Standards, and Public Awareness. The comprehensive plan was approved by the MCA Board of Directors on October 17, 2023. Below, in no particular order are our focus areas for 2023 through 2026:

1. **Governance.** Maryland Children's Alliance's organizational structure and capacity will provide resources to promote operational support and leadership to local Children's Advocacy Centers. MCA will acquire sustainable funding to support existing programs and new initiatives. The Board will be diversified to include additional voices which will broaden the professional *and* personal experience reflected by the MCA Board of Directors. MCA will provide training related to all core disciplines of the multidisciplinary team (MDT) to child welfare professionals in Maryland.
2. **Standards.** Every child in Maryland will have access to services that employ best practices per National Children's Alliance (NCA) standards. MCA will convene a task force comprised of CAC/MDT professionals as well as stakeholders with the support of key legislators to establish statewide standards for Maryland CACs. Maryland CACs will be accredited by NCA and also meet the Maryland standards for best practice services.
3. **Public Awareness:** Maryland Children's Alliance will be the voice of authority and expertise concerning issues of child maltreatment that impact our statewide movement and support of local Child Advocacy Centers. We will increase prevention efforts by publishing original and educational content on various social media platforms to engage with the general public. MCA will establish a mandated reporter "train the trainer" program, free and accessible to all Maryland mandated reporters. MCA will advocate for government recognition of the expertise of MCA and leverage local CAC expertise in the field.

Learn more about our strategic plan at <https://www.marylandchildrensalliance.org/>

MCA's Investment in our Members in **2023**

391

hours of training were provided to MCA members, including:

18

unique trainings and conferences

536

attendees participated in MCA sponsored events

241

different CAC and MDT professionals attended trainings

10

NCA standards of accreditation were included in training topics

24

(100%) of Maryland's jurisdictions were represented at MCA trainings

\$109,643

was spent on training and conferences, expert technical assistance, and supplies for MCA members

Supporting CACs with Training

This year, MCA provided many training opportunities to our membership, including but not limited to:

1. **ChildFirst® Forensic Interviewing-** MCA offered three week-long ChildFirst Forensic Interviewing trainings. ChildFirst® is a model that utilizes best practice and research to employ purposes, considerations and techniques for training those investigating allegations of child maltreatment.
2. **Federal Prosecution-** This training strengthened partnerships between the FBI and Maryland Human Services. Participants discussed the ways that forensic interviews can be strengthened for federal prosecution and were educated about the MDT response to trafficking.
3. **Multidisciplinary Team Training-** The Child Recovery Unit investigates missing children, issues Amber Alerts and Silver Alerts, and investigates human trafficking through collaboration between victim advocates and law enforcement. Presenters discussed their work as part of the Child Recovery Unit and explained how CACs can expand services to survivors of trafficking.
4. **Supervising Forensic Interviewers-** This training provided an overview of the ChildFirst protocol, history, annual updates to the model, and new research in the field of forensic interviewing. Also, participants learned how to best supervise forensic interviewers and strengthen the MDT process.
5. **Forensic Interview Toolbox (FIT)-** MCA offered three FIT trainings, including one in-person FIT training on the Eastern Shore. FIT is a research based, narrative, semi-scripted, and phased approach to interviewing. The FIT class teaches a broad range of best practice tools while also providing interviewers with clear guidelines for questioning.
6. **Medical Standard / Physical Abuse Standard-** This training included a presentation by Wendy Lane, MD who presented an overview of the updated (2023) medical standards for accreditation. Dr. Lane provided a detailed review of the optional physical abuse standard and discussed the importance of medical peer review for CAC cases and how CHAMP is able to provide this opportunity for all 24 Maryland CACs.



7. **Family Advocate Panel-** MCA provided an overview of the changes to the Victim Support and Advocacy Standard. Then, Advocates from throughout the state presented on various topics, including building rapport with families, and fostering relationships with families.
8. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion-** Dr. Michael Dorsey presented on the impact that unity has on team camaraderie and effectiveness and explored the broad scope of culture. Dr. Dorsey provided participants with information about the C.O.L.O.R.S. Paradigm™ to explore the DEI culture of their organization, examine cultural humility and some common challenges, and build a personal leadership strategy for cultural competence.
9. **NCA Institute for Better Mental Health Outcomes-** The National Children's Alliance (NCA) launched its new academy, the NCA Institute for Better Mental Health Outcomes, which focuses on building the workplace and targeting child trauma. MCA welcomed Dr. Libby Ralston from the NCA Institute to provide training opportunities available through the Institute.
10. **ChildFirst Refresher-** This workshop provides those who have successfully completed the 5-day basic ChildFirst course with a refresher that examines the annual updates to the model.
11. **Forensic Interview Peer Review-** Peer Review is a forensic interview standard for ensuring best practice. The process allows interviewers to review question types, maintain best practices, enhance their knowledge of current research, and have their interviews reviewed and critiqued by other forensic interviewers.
12. **Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)-** TF-CBT is a gold-standard, evidence-based treatment for children and adolescents ages 3-17 with trauma-related symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress.
13. **Conferences-** MCA sent CAC and MCA staff to the National Child Advocacy Center Symposium in March 2023, the National Children's Alliance Leadership Conference in June 2023, and the Maryland Human Trafficking Professionals conference in October 2023.



Outcome Measurement System

The **Outcome Measurement System (OMS)** is a way to gauge how Child Advocacy Center clients view their experience with the Child Advocacy Center (CAC). An adult caregiver of a child who visited the center answers survey questions, which allow CACs to improve their services based on feedback.

> Respondents

Survey Period

January -
December
2023

Way of collection

Survey
completed at the
CAC or by email

CACs using OMS in 2023



62.5%

> Highlights

99.3% Agreed that CAC staff were friendly and pleasant.

94.9% Agreed that they felt like their child was safe at the center.

90% Agreed that staff provided them with resources to support their child.

96% Agreed that they felt like the interview process was clearly explained.

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According to our CAC clients, Maryland's strengths are:



Friendly and pleasant staff



Clarity about the CAC process



Timeliness

.....

Areas for improvement are:



Providing resources



Understanding the child's trauma response



Expectations for the future

Feedback from clients who visit Child Advocacy Centers is a crucial part of the CAC process. If we are not collecting feedback from clients, we cannot know the true impact of our services. Analyzing this data and providing succinct recommendations to CACs is one way that Maryland Children's Alliance can support Child Advocacy Centers in effectively serving children.



SOCIAL MEDIA

REPORT

(JANUARY 1, 2023- DECEMBER 31, 2023)

INSTAGRAM

Reach

2000

Followers

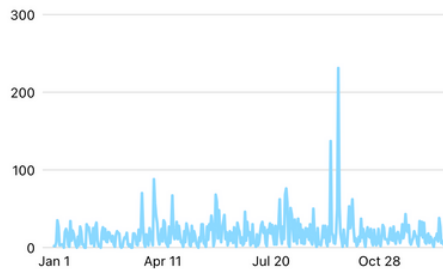
496

Profile Visits

571

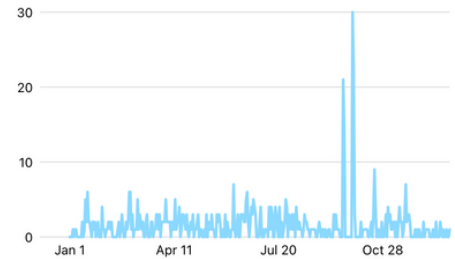
Instagram reach ⓘ

2.0K ↑ 750.4%



Instagram profile visits ⓘ

571 ↑ 217.2%



FACEBOOK

Reach

4700

Followers

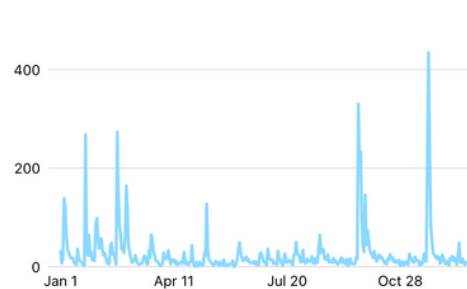
119

Profile Visits

1300

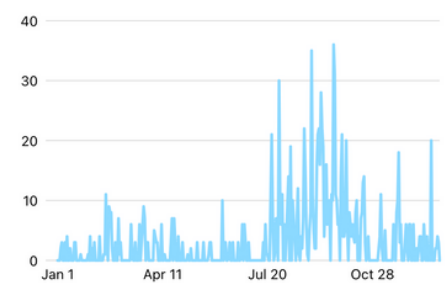
Facebook reach ⓘ

4.7K ↑ 181.2%



Facebook visits ⓘ

1.3K ↑ 471.7%



TWITTER

32 Followers

+13 in 2023

LINKEDIN

377 Followers

+184 in 2023

Legislative Impact

MCA had tremendous legislative success in 2023, starting with advocating and receiving a proclamation for Child Abuse Prevention Month by Governor Wes Moore. The proclamation signals to Maryland CACs and MCA the State's priority in addressing, treating, and preventing child abuse. This proclamation was followed by a 33% increase in the State's dedicated funding to Child Advocacy Centers through the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) with the help of legislators in the Maryland General Assembly including Senators Sarah Elfreth and Guy Guzzone.



MCA's partnership with Funk & Bolton has offered us the opportunity to stay current with legislation considered by the General Assembly that would impact crime victims and Child Advocacy Center work. MCA also advocated for legislation on behalf of Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers by submitting written and oral testimony in the Maryland State Senate and House of Delegates. MCA's Executive Director Wendy Myers met with 15 different Maryland State Senators and Delegates from across the State in 2023 to provide information and awareness about Child Advocacy Centers in Maryland.

[Photo above left to right: Funk and Bolton's Luke Pinton, Matthew Celentano, Neal Karkhanis, Phil Kendzierski]

Looking Forward

We at MCA move forward with hope for 2024. While trauma is a possible response to adverse childhood experiences, resilience and healing are also possible with the support provided by Child Advocacy Centers. Child Advocacy Centers are responding to child abuse on a personal level, working with the children and families directly impacted by abuse to process their experiences and seek justice. However, child abuse is a widespread societal issue. It is experienced in all communities and by children and families of all gender, race, culture, and socioeconomic status. The risk of child abuse is increased as a result of poverty, stress, isolation, and personal experiences with violence. Societal problems require collective, societal support. In 2024, we need your help, be it advocacy, donation, or sharing our mission, to enhance our efforts to prevent and address child abuse. When we equip communities to provide timely support to children and families who have experienced abuse or neglect, we make resilience and healing a possibility.



2023 MCA Staff



Wendy Myers
Executive Director

"I am consistently awed and humbled by the dedication of our team and the 24 MDTs across our state. Together, we are changing the world for our children!"



Meg Marcelli
Program Coordinator

"I enjoyed deepening my connections with CAC staff and leaders as we engaged in more in-person trainings and conferences this year. I believe these connections will only help our network grow in 2024!"



Carly Brownstein
Program Information Coordinator

"I am happy to have helped provide CACs and communities access to new training opportunities in 2023, such as Evidentia Learning modules and the Mandated Reporter training. I look forward to continuing to support CACs in the future by helping to deliver new training and report on their hard work."



Jamie Smith
Training Coordinator

"I am really looking forward to introducing new topics for trainings and more advanced training that will benefit all of our Maryland CACs."



Ayesha Taylor
MSW Intern

"As a social work intern at MCA, I came in with hopes of being developed as a practitioner within my local community, yet I had no idea the level of services, connections, and resources I would be introduced to along the way. I was excited to be a part of a team that actively engaged in building relationships across CACs, while simultaneously investing resources within each member's professional development. I witnessed how advancing social, economic, and environmental justice goes beyond the local community and extends across the state and the national communities."








Thank you!

Thank you to the Child Advocacy Centers and Multidisciplinary team staff who participated in our programming in 2023. Your dedication to serving the children in your community who have experienced abuse cannot be measured. We can not thank you enough! We are also grateful to our funders: The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP), National Children's Alliance (NCA), and our private donors who made it possible for MCA to support Maryland Child Advocacy Centers through training, technical assistance, and more. Finally, many thanks to all those who have supported MCA, whether it be with your voice, time, attention, or expertise. You have helped us make a difference for children in Maryland.



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-  www.marylandchildrensalliance.org
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-  <https://twitter.com/MDChildAlliance>
-  <https://www.instagram.com/mdchildrensalliance/>
-  <https://www.linkedin.com/in/maryland-children-s-alliance-a2091b250>