



Maryland Children's Alliance, Inc.

2024 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. 2024 was a pivotal year for MCA! Our team is steadfast in our commitment to ensure that every child in the State of Maryland has access to research-based and trauma-focused services. We are establishing statewide standards of care which will take effect in a few months. In 2024, we launched our partnership with Voyce translation services. Now, every child advocacy center (CAC) in the state can access real-time language interpretation within seconds for more than 250 languages. Every child should be heard and we are listening.



We strive to ensure that every CAC has the resources they need in order to focus on the children they serve. In 2024, MCA provided 380 hours of training for 618 Maryland child abuse professionals. All 24 Maryland CACs are valued members of MCA and all were active within our network last year. Additionally, every CAC in Maryland is a member of National Children's Alliance (NCA). We connect local communities to the state and national resources required to elevate the response locally. We all work together to strengthen the child welfare system. MCA provides a protective circle around the professionals who support child victims in communities across our state to stabilize the response to child abuse. Every child should feel protected and our CACs are safe and stable.

Last year, 5,387 children arrived at a Maryland CAC when they needed help as a result of physical or sexual abuse, exploitation, assault, witness to violence, and/or trafficking. These children and teens required services, support and advocacy. Maryland CACs listened, responded to their needs, and connected them with the members of our teams who conduct forensic interviews, provide medical and mental health services, and investigate and prosecute offenders. Our vision is to remove barriers so that professionals are supported and children can experience healing. Every child should feel supported and we are ready to help.

We are joining hands to improve our impact across the state. We advocate for legislation which positively impacts children and the professionals who serve them. Establishing relationships within our communities is critical to awareness of child abuse, prevention, and long-term resource sustainability. As we create new partnerships and programming to better support the needs of our 24 CACs, we positively impact the health of the thousands of children we serve each year. We depend on our communities across the state to support this movement and protect our most vulnerable Marylanders. We share this responsibility with each 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 an informative post on social media, share it. If you are able to help, please do. Help us ensure that every child is heard, protected and supported.



Wendy Myers

Our Mission

The mission of MCA is to promote the well-being of children by supporting the development, growth, and continuation of children's advocacy centers throughout the state of Maryland through advocacy, training, and technical assistance.

MCA's Investment in our Members in **2024**

380 hours of training were provided to MCA members, including:

30 unique trainings and conferences

618 attendees participated in MCA sponsored events

290 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

\$150,300 was spent on trainings and scholarships



Maryland Child Advocacy Center 2024 Data

As reported by 24 Maryland CACs between January - December 2024

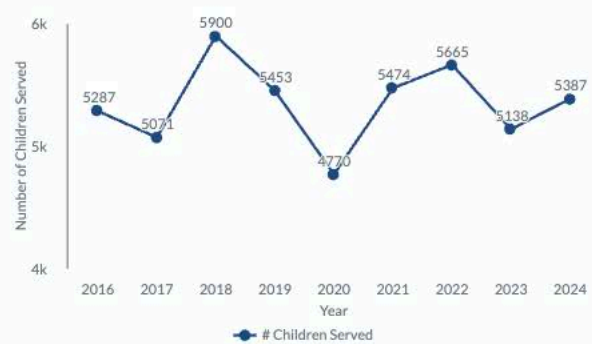
5,387 Total children served

Member CACs
24 (100%)

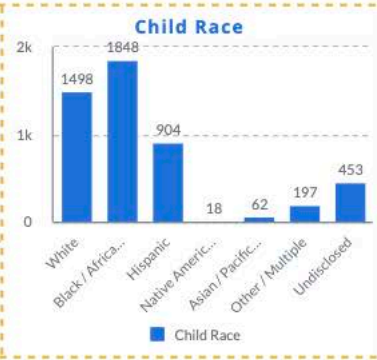
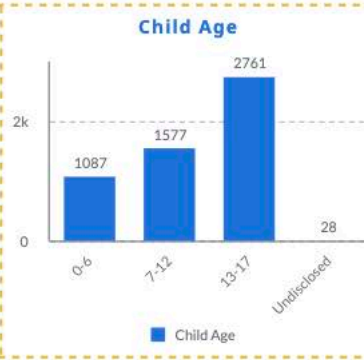
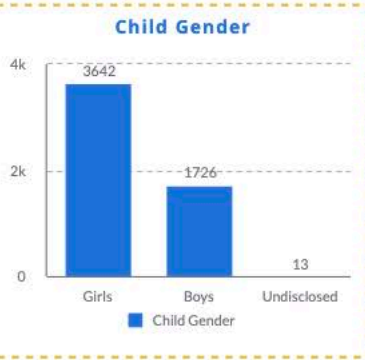
Accreditation Status
17 Accredited 6 Associate 1 Affiliate

Organizational Types
79% (Government-based) 21% (Nonprofit)

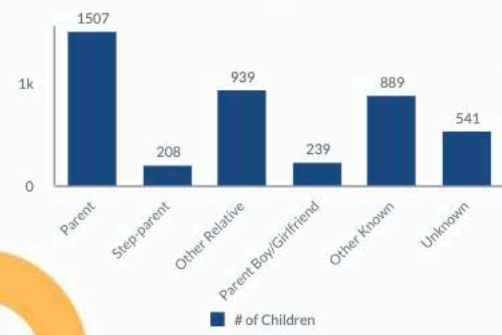
Children served by Maryland CACs between 2016 and 2024



Demographic Breakdown



Offender Relationship



Sexual abuse continues to be the primary allegation investigated by Maryland CACs, representing **60.2%** of cases in 2024.

Member CACs provided **5,692** instances of prevention services to children and adults

Member CACs provided **2,312** case management services to children and **2,064** case management services to adults

Capacity Building in 2024

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 solidified our partnership with experts at Funk & Bolton with a 3-year contract to continue our capacity-building efforts by strengthening MCA's partnerships with legislators and facilitating meetings between MCA and policymakers.

From 2023 to 2024, MCA increased our grant funding by

47.8%

In 2024, MCA had a staff retention rate of

100%

7

new donors supported MCA in 2024

62

meetings were attended with stakeholders to increase stability of the Maryland Child Welfare system

7

in-person trainings were held in 2024 +5 from 2023

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 two 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. **Recantation and Prosecution: Recommendations for the MDT and CAC Response-** This training provided research-based information focusing on identifying risk factors and ways to prevent recantation, practical steps for the MDT to take in the event recantation does occur, steps prosecutors can take to proceed with prosecution case studies, and mock testimony.
3. **Protectors of Hope Gathering-** Participants at this training reviewed the responses of the survey in order to understand the state of the MD CAC network, learned about the development of MD Statewide Standards, engaged in discussion in order to develop a better understanding of the strengths and opportunities available for CAC directors, learned about the NCA standard for MDT Case Review, and discussed barriers to conducting effective case review and learned ways to increase buy-in and effectively review cases.
4. **Interviewing Children with Disabilities-** This one-day training introduced MDT members to practical applications for engaging and communicating with individuals with intellectual Disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, and Physical Disabilities.
5. **Forensic Interview Toolbox (FIT)-** MCA offered three FIT trainings, including one in-person FIT training in Western Maryland. 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. **Coalition Manager training-** MCA's Program Information Coordinator presented to CAC leadership with some tips to utilizing Coalition Manager.

7. **Broadening the Role of the Medical Evaluation in CACs-** Attendees learned about potential roles of the medical evaluation at CACs, learned about broadening the scope of medical evaluations, and learned about how MDTs may implement a broader approach to meeting families' needs.



8. **Grant Proposal Writing and Reporting for Maryland CACs-** Presenters discussed the basics of writing grant proposals and reports, including reviewing NOFA questions as well as some general tips for making the grant writing and reporting process easier.

9. **Trial Skills-** An intensive 3-day workshop designed to help the child forensic interviewer develop and refine their ability to testify in court as an expert and/or lay witness.

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) Consultation Calls** 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. After providing the full training in 2023, we continued to provide consultation calls for all attendees at our 2023 training.

13. **Conferences-** MCA sent CAC and MCA staff to the San Deigo International Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in January 2024, National Child Advocacy Center Symposium in March 2024, the National Children's Alliance Leadership Conference in June 2024, and the Maryland Human Trafficking Professionals conference in October 2024.

View our full [training Uptake Report here](#).

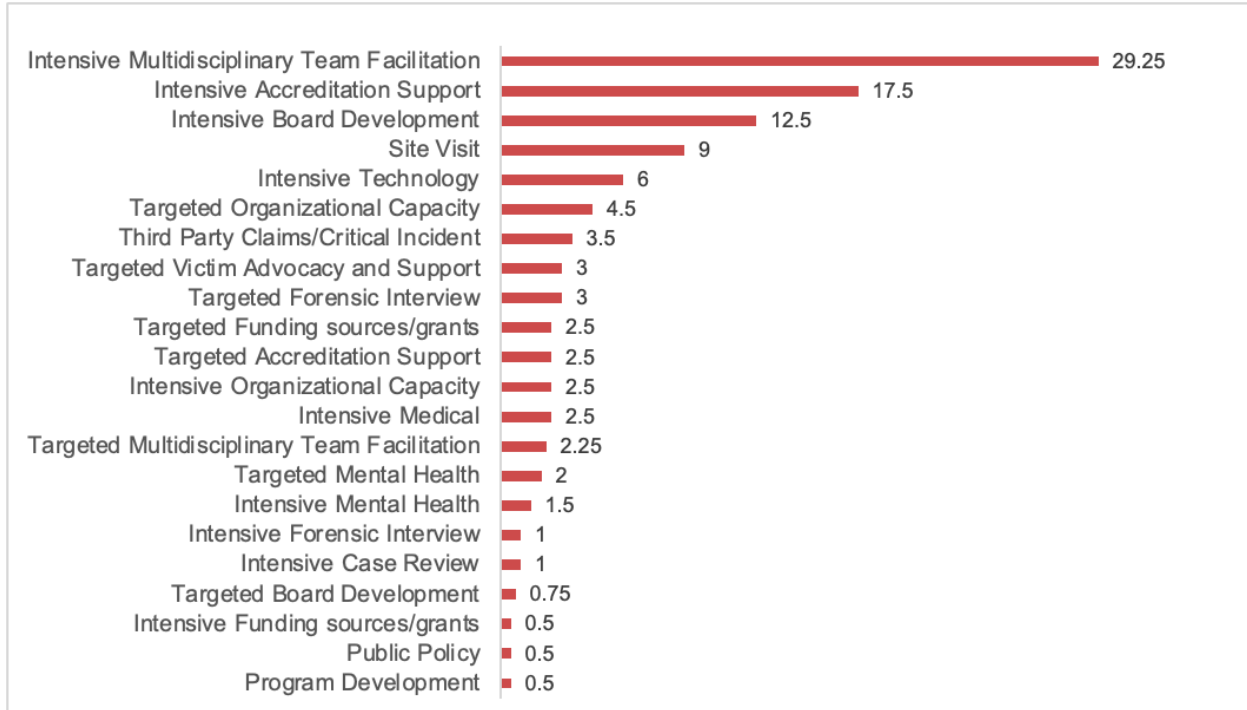




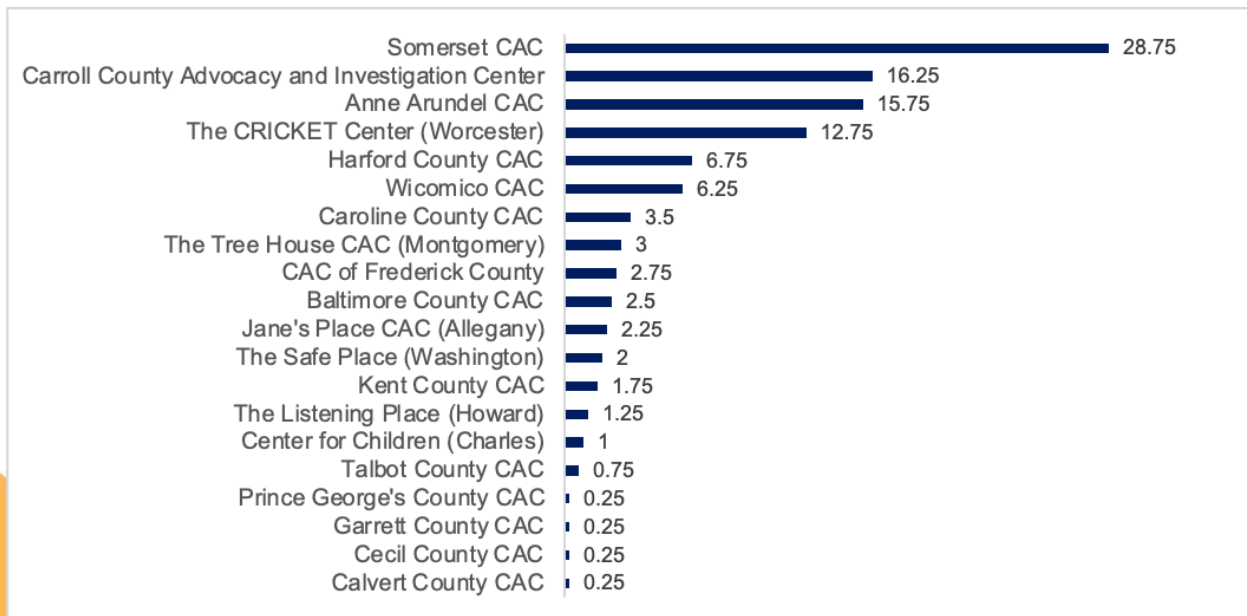
Technical Assistance Uptake Report

In 2024, MCA provided **108.25** Total Technical Assistance Hours.

Hours of Technical Assistance by Category



Hours of Technical Assistance by CAC



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. The National Children's Alliance (NCA) allows MCA to access to statewide survey responses.

> Respondents

Survey Period

January -
December
2024

Way of collection

Survey
completed at the
CAC or by email

CACs using OMS in 2024

79.2%

+16.7% more than 2023

> Highlights

98.6% Agreed that CAC staff were friendly and pleasant.

94.7% Agreed that they felt like their child was safe at the center.

92.1% Agreed that staff provided them with resources to support their child.

97.5% Agreed that they felt like the interview process was clearly explained.

According to our CAC clients, Maryland's strengths continue to be:



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. View the [full report here](#).

Empowering Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers: Our Strategic Plan

Last year, we analyzed the outcomes of our previous strategic plan, surveyed our membership, and formulated a sub-committee of the Board of Directors, and decided on three key areas to focus: Governance, Standards, and Public Awareness. The comprehensive plan was approved by the MCA Board of Directors on October 17, 2023. Below, are our focus areas for 2023 through 2026 and our progress toward our goals:

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.

Progress: This year, we secured an additional \$350,000 designated funding for Child Advocacy Centers and Maryland Children's Alliance. While we are excited that this funding has allowed our Child Advocacy Centers to expand their services, we will continue working to ensure sustainability of this funding and identify additional opportunities for growth. We have begun discussions about board diversification and our team is working to identify appropriate candidates to add to our board. We continue to provide training to all core disciplines of the multidisciplinary team. In 2024, our training events included: TF-CBT consultation calls, introductory and advanced forensic interview, recantation for prosecutors and law enforcement, "broadening the role of the medical evaluation" for medical professionals and victim advocates, a leadership gathering at our in-person membership meeting, and more.

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 workgroup 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.

Progress: This year, we initiated a workgroup to develop statewide standards with a goal implementation date in 2025. The workgroup met 6 times in 2024. Additionally, a focus of our "Protectors of Hope" Leadership Gathering in November 2024 was for all Maryland CAC and MDT leaders to share strengths and challenges in meeting the current NCA standards and for the team to engage in problem-solving, providing workgroup members with valuable input for standard development.

- 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.

Progress: MCA continues to be the statewide expert on issues concerning child maltreatment and the Child Advocacy Center movement. This year, we advocated for and received government recognition of child abuse prevention month and had a voice on several pieces of legislation impacting Maryland children and CACs. We continued to utilize a social media consultant to support our education and outreach initiatives. We reached 2,400 people on Instagram and 6,300 people on Facebook with posts about identifying and reporting abuse, body safety, information about Child Advocacy Services, and information about MCA. Notably this year, we were able to successfully create a mandated reporter "train the trainer" program, including a [training video](#), [one-pager](#), brochures (English and Spanish), minimal facts cards (English and Spanish), and [business cards](#) with the reporting hotline phone number.

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

Financial Information

Year ended on December 31, 2024

MCA Audit

MCA participates in an annual audit of our financial statements utilizing an external auditor, Alta CPA LLC. In 2024, Alta CPA audited MCA's 2023 financial statements with no findings. Alta CPA will conduct the audit of MCA's 2024 financial statements.

MCA's 2024 Funders

In descending order of award

National Children's Alliance (NCA)
Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)
Children's Justice Act (CJAC) (3 awards)
Edward J. Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance (BJAG)
Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)
Membership Dues
Private Donations

Grants

In 2024, MCA successfully submitted grant reports to our funders and spent all awarded grant funds. Additionally, MCA successfully completed two programmatic calls this year with the National Children's Alliance for grant monitoring purposes.

Legislative Impact

MCA had tremendous legislative success in 2024, starting with advocating and receiving a proclamation for Child Abuse Prevention Month by Governor Wes Moore in April 2024. 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 62.5% increase in the State's dedicated funding to Child Advocacy Centers (\$650,000 for FY25 from \$400,000 for FY24) through the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCP) with the help of legislators in the Maryland General Assembly.



MCA's partnership with Funk & Bolton has offered us the ability to stay updated with legislation considered by the General Assembly that would impact crime victims and Maryland's 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 2024 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

This past year has brought some instability, be it funding, legislative, or political; however, Maryland Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) and Maryland Children's Alliance (MCA) remain stable and committed to serving every child and family who needs their help. CACs rely on the dedication of volunteers, the generosity of donors, and the collaboration of local, state, and federal governments to continue their important work. Society's collective effort—whether through financial support, advocacy, or simply showing up to help—ensures that every child who needs a chance to heal has access to the resources they deserve. With the backing of caring individuals and institutions, CACs can continue to offer hope, healing, and justice for children and families. No child should ever have to face trauma alone, and with the care and resources offered at CACs, they don't have to. Together, we can make a difference—one child at a time.

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 2024, 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.

Jerri Sites and Mary-Ann Burkhart

Jerri Sites and Mary-Ann Burkhart co-facilitate several trainings, including "Recantation and Prosecution" and our "Protectors of Hope Leadership Gathering" for Maryland CAC staff and leaders.



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 facilitated two ChildFirst forensic interview trainings and two ChildFirst Refresher courses for Maryland CAC 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 2024. Our Mandated Reporter 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. This year, we were able to translate our mandated reporter materials to Spanish to reach a wider audience. Modify Marketing also manages MCA's social media posts, which reached over 6,000 people in 2024.



University of Maryland

This year, we worked with University of Maryland student, Megan Condon, to evaluate our CACs' current prevention efforts against the National Children's Alliance Optional Child Abuse Prevention Standard. Megan also evaluated, through interviews and focus groups, the reported funding and needs to fully meet the NCA Standard and the needs of their community. You can support MCA and Megan by reading her [full report](#).

Partnerships for Change



Statewide Forensic Interview Peer Review

We have continued our partnership with Center for Hope's Forensic Interview Research and Education Center to facilitate forensic interview peer review for Maryland forensic interviewers. Subject matter expert, Crimson Barroca, facilitates the peer review process with two volunteer interviewers who share a forensic interview. Thus far, this program has seen tremendous success, with 73 interviewers (43 more than 2023) from 15 jurisdictions (5 more than 2023) in Maryland attending peer review.



Evidentia Learning

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



Voyce Global

One of our most exciting partnerships this year is with Voyce Global. MCA partnered with Voyce to provide free, 24/7 audio and visual language interpretation services to Maryland CACs. Voyce, with the highest interpreter standards in the industry, allows CACs to meet the diverse language needs of their communities. Between August and December 2024, CACs utilized 881 minutes of language interpretation through Voyce.

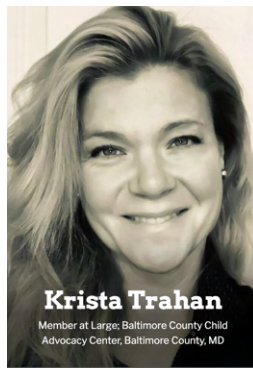


A Message from MCA's Board President

"As President of the Board of MCA, I am deeply honored to work alongside a dedicated network of Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) across the state, whose work embodies hope, healing, and justice for Maryland's most vulnerable children. MCA remains steadfast in our mission to support CACs in their vital work. Over the past year, we have prioritized critical training for multidisciplinary teams, advocated for stronger child protection policies, and secured essential resources to enhance the services CACs provide. We have also expanded outreach to ensure that every child and family knows help is available when they need it most. Maryland's CACs continue to make incredible strides. Together, we have broadened access to services, strengthened collaborative partnerships, and embraced innovative practices to improve outcomes for children. This progress is made possible by the unwavering dedication, expertise, and compassion of CAC staff across the state. As we look to the future, MCA remains committed to expanding the reach of our services, fortifying our network of support, and ensuring that every child has a voice. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend my deepest gratitude for your partnership in this vital mission. Thank you for standing with us to protect and uplift Maryland's children."

Robin Grove

2024 Board of Directors





2024 MCA Staff

"What was a highlight of our work in 2024?"



Wendy Myers
Executive Director

"When I think about 2024, I think of our determination to elevate our practice. MCA added translation services for all CACs, increased statewide funding, training and resources. I am so proud of what we are accomplishing together and so excited for the future."



Meg Marcelli
Program Coordinator

"I was astounded by the turnout at our trainings this year. In particular, I think we set a new MCA record with 114 people attending our Recantation and Prosecution training. The number of CAC and MDT staff who strive for continuous learning so that they can better serve children and families in their jurisdiction is impressive."



Carly Brownstein
Program Information Coordinator

"I enjoyed strengthening my connections with CAC staff and MDT members during our in-person trainings this year and am excited to continue building these relationships in 2025!"



Jamie Smith
Training Coordinator

"I was thrilled MCA was able to offer two in-person trainings in 2024 and hope to further do so as many have requested that we go back to providing in-person trainings and gatherings. As I look ahead to 2025, I am excited about our deep commitment to offering specialized training and resources aimed at empowering our membership to better serve individuals affected by abuse."



Ayesha Taylor
MSW Intern 2023-2024 Academic Year

"The standout moment of working with MCA in 2024 was witnessing Wendy deliver a compelling, data-driven testimony that strongly advocated for increased funding for CACs statewide. Each week, Wendy visited the State's House of Delegates, where her determination and persistence led to a successful increase in grant allocations for all Child Advocacy Centers. Seeing this unfold was a powerful reminder of how crucial it is to have one's voice heard."








Thank you!

Thank you to the Child Advocacy Centers and Multidisciplinary team staff who participated in our programming in 2024. 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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